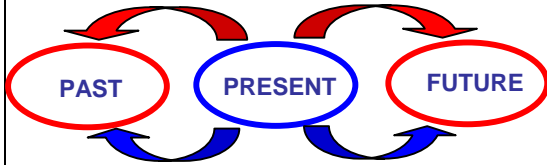


## CONTROLLING THE MEETING

Whether you are meeting a prospect at a face-to-face meeting or spending time on the phone with them, the intention is to learn as much as possible about the company and the person you are talking too. The correct use of open closed, probing, reflective and challenging questions is essential but you also need to control the meeting in such away that builds confidence and rapport at the same time. I have tried many different systems over the years and this is my favourite: Present – Past – Future.

## PLANNING THE PROCESS

The questioning skills we use to gather information are based on



Later on we will cover the strategy of what we are looking for. For the moment we will concentrate on how to obtain information.

### THE PRESENT

Ask the prospect to explain how they currently operate in the area you're interested in. What they do, how they do it.

### THE PAST

At a time that is right, move into the past. You are looking for things that have changed and why. Perhaps make a statement about how interesting something is and use it as an excuse to move into the past.

Hopefully the prospect will describe what they did to purchase in the past and how/why things have changed, how the changes came about and the effect on the they way they now buy.

### THE FUTURE

Whilst weighing your options and considering the information you have been given, you should choose a suitable time to move to the future. "So, your company is nearly three times bigger than it was a few years ago" "What about the future?" "How are you going to achieve this?"



**PETER CLAYTON** - Author, International Speaker, Columnist, ITN and BBC Radio Consultant and Leading Business Trainer

It may be that you have had bad news up until now. Now your prospect may explain that the company is planning a new office or a new campaign.

## A TYPICAL MEETING

So, if you have handled it right you should know all about the company as it is today plus plenty about the past and how it got to its present position; and how your prospect and others in the company feel about the way things have changed.

You will know about the future and how they expect to get there, how they feel about it and what has happened to them on the way. You can build a relationship on the way and you may even be able to help them solve real problems and win business as well.

### THE STORY

Most prospects like to talk. Let your prospects tell their story in their own way. All you need to do is listen, whilst moving from the present to the past and then to the future to get the best out of their story. Be prepared to listen and learn.

#### 1. AREA OF INTEREST

Eventually your prospect will get to the "area of interest". This is where you may get an idea as to the reason for agreeing to see you.

#### 2. MEASURE THE EFFECT

This is where you look at the problem together. Measure the problem and the effect whilst costing the solutions.

#### 3. PREFERRED SOLUTION

If you have worked hard enough on the various solutions and the one you both select includes both companies working together, then you have a real prospect on your hands.

#### 4. ACTIONS

Agree an action plan in the same way you would with a colleague from work. You are part of the team now. If your prospect is okay with the actions, then asking for an order will be much easier.

(REMEMBER - ALWAYS ASK FOR THE ORDER)

**Peter Clayton**

[peter@aprc.co.uk](mailto:peter@aprc.co.uk)  
or Tel 023 80 844125