



PITCH

25 Discovery Questions That Move a Deal Forward

Ask fewer questions. Learn more.

Suncoast Spark · Free Resource for B2B Account Executives

Discovery should feel like a conversation, not an intake form.

These questions are organized by what you need to understand — not by what order to ask them. A good discovery moves with the buyer, not against them.

→ Choose based on what the buyer says

Let their answers guide which direction to go next. You don't need to cover every category in every call.

→ Follow useful answers — go deeper

Ask for examples. Push on vague language respectfully. "Can you give me a recent example of that?" is often the most valuable follow-up.

→ Don't ask what you already know

If you've done your research, skip the basics. Asking questions you already know the answer to signals you weren't listening.

The best next question often comes from the buyer's last answer.

The goal is to understand what's actually true for this buyer — not to fill in a qualification template.

PROBLEM

What is actually happening?

1

What is happening today that made this worth discussing?

2

Where does the current approach create the most friction?

3

Who feels that problem most directly?

4

Can you give me a recent example?

5

What have you already tried?

IMPACT

What is it costing them?

1

What does this affect downstream?

2

What does the problem cost in time, money, risk, growth, or customer impact?

3

How does leadership think about the issue?

4

What becomes harder because this remains unresolved?

5

How are you measuring the impact today?

LISTEN FOR — PROBLEM

Specificity over generality

Vague answers ("things are a bit slow") signal the problem isn't urgent or isn't owned. Specific answers ("we lose two weeks every quarter to X") signal a buyer who has lived with it long enough to measure it.

Who else feels it

If the problem only lives with one person, urgency and budget authority become harder conversations. Look for signals that pain is shared across roles or levels.

What they've already attempted

Prior attempts reveal scope, investment appetite, and what hasn't worked. They also tell you how sophisticated the buyer's understanding of the problem is.

LISTEN FOR — IMPACT

Named business consequences

Revenue, retention, throughput, risk, customer outcomes. When a buyer names a consequence in business language — not IT or ops language — it means someone above them cares.

Whether leadership is aware

A problem leadership doesn't know about rarely gets funded. If the buyer says leadership isn't engaged, that's a gap worth exploring — not ignoring.

Absence of measurement

"We haven't really quantified it" is a signal, not a dead end. It often means no one has made the case internally yet — and that you can help them do that.

URGENCY

Why now?

1

Why address this now rather than six months from now?

2

Has anything changed recently?

3

What happens if nothing changes?

4

Is there a date, initiative, commitment, or event creating pressure?

5

Where does this sit relative to other priorities?

DESIRED OUTCOME

What does better look like?

1

What would better look like?

2

What would have to improve for this investment to be worthwhile?

3

How would you know the change worked?

4

What would the business be able to do differently?

5

Which outcome matters most?

How does this actually get decided?

1

Who else needs to be involved?

2

Who is likely to challenge this?

3

How are decisions like this usually made?

4

What would need to be true for you to move forward?

5

What is the most useful next step from here?

External events vs. internal intent

A contract renewal, a board commitment, a new executive — these create real urgency. "We'd like to do something this year" does not. Know the difference before you build a timeline around it.

The people not in the room

The most dangerous person in any deal is the one you haven't met. When a buyer hesitates on question 21 or 22, there's usually someone — a skeptic, a gatekeeper, a budget holder — worth surfacing now rather than at the end.

Outcome language that is measurable

Vague outcomes ("we want things to run smoother") are hard to build a business case around. Help the buyer get specific: by how much, by when, measured how? That specificity protects the deal later.

Conditions, not just steps

Question 24 is the most important question in this category. What needs to be *true* — not just done — for them to move? The answer reveals what you're actually competing against.



AE ON DEMAND

The question matters. So does what you do with the answer.

Good discovery produces raw material — notes, transcripts, impressions, gaps. What you do with that material is where most sellers lose ground.

Prepare stronger discovery

Know what you still need to learn before you walk in — and why it matters for this specific deal.

Analyze notes or call transcripts

Separate what the buyer actually said from what you inferred. Distinguish evidence from assumption.

Identify gaps and determine the next move

Know exactly what's unconfirmed, who you haven't met, and what would have to be true for this deal to close.

AE on Demand turns ChatGPT or Claude into a company-specific sales operating system — so you can decide what to do next and get help doing it.

Explore AE on Demand at aeondemand.com

Suncoast Spark · Free Resource for B2B Account Executives