

EXCLUSIVE PREVIEW

LIGHTS, CAMERA, SELL

Sales Techniques for
Independent Filmmakers

+

Discovery Question Guide

STAGE 2 OF THE SALES PROCESS

DISCOVERY

DEFINING DISCOVERY

At this point in the sales process you have already prospected your candidate by using research and the initial outreach methods outlined in the previous chapters. You have requested to meet with them to introduce yourself and learn more about their goals. The discovery phase is exactly that. It's the process where a salesperson qualifies a prospect and uncovers their objectives. It's also a time where the prospect discovers more about the salesperson and what their offerings can bring to the table.

As the second stage in the sales process, discovery is a two-way conversation aimed at building a positive business relationship. Before you can sell an individual on your project, service, or idea, both parties must first introduce themselves and learn about each other's hopes and plans.



DISCOVERY GOALS

Discovery is one of the important stages in the sales process to make certain you are:

- ✓ Building rapport and establishing a relationship with your prospect
- ✓ Unearthing your prospect's pain points and personal goals
- ✓ Vetting your prospect to ensure they are a good fit for your project or service

DISCOVERY STEPS

There are three main steps in the sales discovery process: planning the meeting through research and agendas, leading the call by building a vision as a response to your prospect's pain points and goals, and scheduling next steps to move you one step closer to striking a deal.

STEP #1: PLAN YOUR DISCOVERY

You scavenged the entire internet and borderline stalked this person, reached out to any shared connections, and you succeeded in getting the prospect to respond to your outreach. They have accepted a call with you, and the last thing you want to do is come unprepared. It will not only make your prospect feel like he or she is wasting their time, it will make you look unprofessional.



Planning a discovery call consists of building a list of thoughtful questions that can't be answered by a simple Google search. It also consists of creating a call agenda that keeps the conversation on track. These techniques will guarantee a productive meeting that leads to not only a closed deal, but also a prosperous business relationship.



On the chance you get a meeting with a high-profile actress and her agent after sending them your script, the last thing you want to do is look like an amateur by not taking the time to build a list of thought-provoking questions. If you finally get on the phone with a sought-after distribution company but have no plan on how you are going to convincingly pitch your project, wouldn't your prospect feel like you are wasting their time? Lastly, through your research and preparation, if you were able to find out that a financier has a track record of investing in feature films centered on LGBTQIA+ rights, wouldn't it make sense to strategize how you are going to match his initiatives with your project ahead of time?

Create a List of Discovery Questions

Creating thought-provoking questions designed to uncover more than surface-level information is considered an art form. In order for a prospect to feel comfortable revealing their own personal motivations and challenges, you must ask a series of exploratory questions, requiring the prospect to internalize the deeper reason behind their ambitions. The secret is to guide your prospect in a consultative way, sort of like how a doctor would ask a patient questions before being able to diagnose a disease or prescribe a treatment.

The most successful salespeople hold discovery calls centered on the hopes, fears, and work to be done by the prospect, and never only as a place to pitch another one of their products. The questions they ask is the method of making their prospect feel comfortable enough to share.



How to Ask Great Questions

There are a variety of tips and tricks on how to ask great questions. There are thousands of books written on the topic as well. I find the following pointers are the most important to keep top of mind:

✓ Plan Your Questions

Using the research you have done on your prospect coupled with your personal objective of having a conversation, you should have a good idea on what you want to cover on your call. The first thing you want to ask yourself is what your goal is. The questions you put together should all work together to get you closer to your goal. Holding a brainstorming session (either by yourself or with others), writing a list of potential questions on notecards, and referring to areas of the research you did on your prospect are all techniques you can perform to ensure you are coming up with creative and engaging questions. For example, when speaking to an international sales agent, you need to first identify your goal, which is to land a representative who will market your film internationally and outside the United States. Think about all the important questions you would want answers to when it comes to marketing your film to international distributors. Researching “questions to ask an international sales agent” on Google might provide a healthy list of ideas. In addition, by taking the research you have done on this international sales agent, you can ask them about specific projects they have worked on in the past.

✓ Don't Ask Yes–No Questions

As a salesperson you want to keep the conversation natural and flowing. By asking yes–no questions, you will most often get incomplete answers that don't provide you with much to work with. Instead, a salesperson should ask open-ended questions. With open-ended questions you gain insights and even more information because your prospect will provide you with a complete answer. It invites the prospect to talk further and not respond with a short reply. Questions that start with the words “should,” “would,” “is,” “are,” and “do you believe” all lead to a yes or no answer. However, starting questions with “who,” “how,” “what,” “when,” and “why” will result in your prospect giving some more thought to their responses, ultimately resulting in more discovery for you as a salesperson.



✓ Dig Deeper

By following up with specific questions after asking a general question, you are ensuring you are getting the full picture. Building a hierarchy of questions that begins with general topics will allow you to stay organized in your question asking. Sometimes a prospect's answer will come up short; he or she may assume you know what they are talking about. Asking them to clarify one step further will result in them uncovering more about their true feelings. For example, if you were to ask an actress to tell you about her favorite project she's worked on and followed up by asking her why it was her favorite project, you can potentially uncover a piece of information that will allow you to connect the value proposition of your project.

✓ Use Neutral Wording

: If you want to uncover what your prospect's viewpoints are on certain subject matter, the last thing you want to do is ask leading questions. A leading question is a question prompting or encouraging a desired answer. For example, "You would rather work on a comedy next, right?" insinuates the prospect is more of a fan of the comedy genre over all other types of films. By asking questions like this you are not letting your prospect share their feelings. A better question to elicit an honest response would be: "What genre are you looking forward to working on next?"

Build a Bullet-Proof Call Agenda

A military general would never let his troops go out to battle without a strategy in place. By the same token, a defense lawyer would not have any chance of defending his client without a plan of action. And a successful salesperson would never attend a discovery meeting without a call agenda.

Meetings need an agenda in order to move things along efficiently. Whether it's a one-on-one meeting or a meeting with a dozen attendees, it's important that all parties are on the same page.



Meeting agendas are only necessary if you are the one commencing the meeting. If the other person reached out to you regarding a job opportunity on their film project, they would be in charge of leading the meeting. The last thing you want is any sort of confusion from your meeting attendees, ultimately costing you the ability to effectively perform your discovery on them. Here are some important tips to keep in mind when creating your meeting agenda:



✓ Put together an outline of all possible topics

After brainstorming all of the potential questions you would like to ask your prospect, you can identify common themes and ultimately group them into main areas. For example, when formulating questions for a screenwriter, some of the questions might have to do with some of their past projects, while some focus on a specific screenplay you read. If you are a cinematographer speaking to a director, you can ask about their favorite shooting style. When outlining your call agenda, you can establish two topics of conversation, one being the past projects the writer has worked on, and the other on their screenplay.

✓ Determine the length of each topic

Most discovery calls are usually anywhere from thirty to sixty minutes, depending on the nature of the conversation and what's being discussed. Because you don't have time to dive deep into every single topic you created from your list of questions, you must ask yourself what topics warrant more time and attention. When speaking to a potential investor, it doesn't make sense to spend a majority of your time talking about their achievements, risking you not being able to pitch your project for their investment consideration. Although it's important to allow your prospect to feel good about what they have accomplished, you don't want it taking up too much real estate on your call.

✓ Communicate your agenda with a strong opener

In order to set the tone of the meeting, it's imperative you refrain from selling them on your project or services right away. These types of calls are not meant to try to get your prospect to sign the dotted line right away. This is a two-way process, and both parties should aim to build a relationship and contribute valuable information. In the beginning of your call, you want to first thank them for their time and outline what they can expect from the call, the high-level topics on your discovery call agenda. Proceed in asking questions from your list but be sure to have a casual flow. You don't want to come off like you are interrogating your prospect.

Doing your homework before a discovery meeting will set you up to have a productive and insightful conversation with your prospect. With your goal of starting the relationship off on the right foot, asking the right questions, building a call agenda, and connecting your project's or service's value proposition, you will ensure that you uncover an opportunity that makes sense for both parties. Planning will ensure you are successfully able to perform the next step of the discovery process, unearthing and intensifying goals and pain points.

STEP #2: LEADING YOUR DISCOVERY

Before you arrive at your meeting or dial their number, it's important to take a deep breath. You should feel confident you are going to win your prospect over with all the preliminary research and work you have conducted up until this point.

Start the conversation by thanking your prospect for joining the meeting. Take everything you have learned about this person and come up with initial friendly questions to set the stage. For example, if the person is based in New York City, you can ask them how the weather is at the moment. If it shows on IMDb that they are currently working on an HBO television series, ask them how everything has been going with the production. The last thing you want to do is nervously rush right into your list of questions and make it seem like a police interrogation.

Leading your discovery call consists of key areas that contribute to a harmonious relationship. Some of these areas include building a sense of rapport, unearthing pain points and goals, using listening techniques, and building a vision of your project or service.



Building Rapport

As an independent filmmaker, you are constantly working with other people from all walks of life. Since we are all in the business of people, wouldn't it make sense to find ways to relate with others? The act of building rapport with another person is exactly that. Rapport building is the initial step in finding common ground—building trust from another person with the goal of making others feel comfortable. Whether you are trying to form a romantic, platonic, or business relationship, it all starts out with rapport building.

Here are a few ways you can initially build rapport with your prospect:

Check Your Appearance

There's no doubt first impressions make a huge impact. The first five seconds with someone can determine how a relationship can evolve. The clothes you wear and the way you groom yourself contributes to how another person can perceive you. If you are meeting with your prospect in person or over video conference, it's important to pay attention to the way you look. Sometimes being overdressed is as bad as being underdressed. Before your meeting assess what you should wear by taking into account the meeting's location and the types of people who will be attending. If you are meeting an executive producer at his production office, it would make more sense to dress professionally than if you are meeting with a cinematographer at a coffee shop. Don't wear anything that can potentially be deemed inappropriate or offensive to your prospect.

Mirror and Match

There are countless studies that conclude people prefer to be around others who they perceive to be like themselves. Psychologist Albert Mehrabian has discovered the words we speak only account for 7 percent of our communication regarding attitudes and emotions. And while the nature of our voice makes up 38 percent, our body language makes up a staggering 55 percent. When it comes to building rapport, watching the other person's body language, posture, and expressions and subtly mirroring them will make the other person feel closer to you. If you notice the person speaks in a quieter tone or at a faster speed, make sure to match it. For example, if you are speaking to a fast-paced producer from New York who wants to get down to talking about your proposed editing services, be sure to match his style and complete his request. On the other hand, if you are speaking to a slow-talking financier who wants to take their time walking through one specific area of your business plan, it would be in your best interest to follow their lead if you want to win them over.

✓ Ask General Opening Questions

These questions should be lighthearted and fun and should be asked at the beginning of the conversation. They serve the purpose of getting your prospect talking right away to make it easier for you to learn more about them. By asking open-ended questions like “What are you looking forward to this weekend?” or “What have you been working on today?” you are inviting your prospect to put down their wall and make themselves comfortable talking to you. Because your goal is to eventually get your prospect to share what’s keeping them up at night in terms of business problems and some of the goals they have set, the general questions you start with contribute to setting the stage. For instance, if a producer is overlooking your suite of music services and you find out that they’ve already finished shooting their movie, you can ask them what their favorite part of the shoot was. You want to ask questions that will solicit a positive response to ensure your prospect is in a happy state of mind. If they are in a negative mood, it will be harder for them to let their guard down to share what’s on their mind.

✓ Find Common Ground

People love talking about themselves, and the more genuine interest you show in them, the more likely they are to let you in. Perhaps in your research you realize this person went to the same college as you or lived in the same area in the past. Maybe they have worked with someone you know. Through your initial research you will most likely be able to find some common ground. However, you don’t want to come off creepy. Paying attention to your tone and how you strategically mention a shared bond will ensure your prospect isn’t put off. Remember to also never use their social media as a resource to identify something they have in common with you.

Telling a director you also visited the same all-inclusive Mexican resort pictured on his Instagram will not score you any sort of brownie points. Nor would communicating any sort of common ground that can be perceived to be negative. For instance, if you realize both of you have worked with the same person in the past and you both harbor negative feelings about them, it’s not in your best interest to talk negatively about this person. This is because it can potentially make you look unprofessional.



✓ Make Them Laugh

Laughter is the best form of medicine. Laughter has been shown to ease anxiety and tension, relax your muscles, boost immunity, and even helps prevent heart disease! The social benefits of laughter include diffusing conflict, promoting group bonding, and ultimately strengthening relationships. When it comes to building rapport with your prospect, telling a joke or sharing a funny story will make them feel comfortable. Reminding others you are human too and not some faceless robot will make your call more casual and enjoyable. People will look forward to talking and doing business with you because they know they can relate to you on more than a business level. Some potential ideas on how to make your prospect laugh include telling a funny story about something that happened to you during a project you've worked on in the past, or sharing a comedic scene out of a movie they might find entertaining. Have a list of funny stories in your back pocket in case you ever need to use it.



✓ Know When to Pivot to Business Talk

The first three to ten minutes of your conversation should be focused on rapport building and light introductions. You don't want to spend too much time building rapport or else you will never get to the meat of the conversation. By mirroring and matching your prospect's communication style, you should be cognizant of the way your prospect is reacting. Usually when the chit-chat dies down and there is a second or two of silence, it's time to bring up the agenda of the discovery call. At this point, you should quickly thank them again for joining the call and provide a concise breakdown on the topics you want to discuss and what you hope to achieve from having the conversation. When speaking with an actress, for example, you can swiftly review the topics of her resume and background, her goals as an actress, and the role in your project you have in mind for her to play. You can mention you hope to learn more about her and see if your project and the character would be a good fit for her.

Unearthing and Intensifying Goals and Pain Points

We all have things that either keep us up at night or keep us motivated. Everyone experiences pain in different ways, but oftentimes we don't know how to articulate what the pain is. This can be anything from teamwork conflicts, inefficient processes, or a lack of sufficient budget. As a salesperson, one of your key assignments is to be able to help your prospect realize they have a problem and ultimately convince them your project or service will help solve it. The same task holds true for your prospects goals. Asking your prospect what their goals are will later allow you to find connections with your offering.

The questions you ask will aid you in the process of unearthing and intensifying goals and pain points. Try asking your prospect questions like "What is the biggest challenge you are facing?", "What takes up most of your day?", and "What area do you need the most help in?". As your prospect provides you with more information, you will be able to paint a clearer picture of what their goals and roadblocks are.



Types of Pain Points

✓ Financial

They are spending too much money and want to reduce the amount they are spending (e.g., a producer working within a limited budget).

✓ Productivity

Your prospect feels like he or she is wasting too much of their time and wants to use their time and resources more efficiently (e.g., a casting director holding a casting call for thousands of actors).

✓ Support

They are not receiving an adequate amount of support from others, whether it's the support from others or technology (e.g., a director not having enough support in the art department).

✓ Productivity

Your prospect feels like he or she is wasting too much of their time and wants to use their time and resources more efficiently (e.g., a casting director holding a casting call for thousands of actors).

Goals are also ideas prospects are heavily focused on. Goals inspire us, increase our success rate, and genuinely make us happy and fulfilled. The objectives we set for ourselves amplify our identities and what we aim to achieve in all areas of life. Whether it's your career, relationships, money, or health, goals push us to be our best selves.

Types of Goals

✓ Outcome

Specific goals that spell out the result you hope to achieve in the end. Outcome goals are usually compared with one's performance or one's competitor (e.g., the amount of money an independent film makes on VOD).

✓ Performance

These types of goals set the degree of excellence in how well we perform our process goals. They are the results you produce from your process goals (e.g., a producer who has committed to scheduling five weekly investor calls to pitch his feature film).

✓ Process

Goals that follow the behaviors or the strategies that will aid us in performing well and increasing our chances of achieving our objectives. Process goals are within our control and help us achieve our overarching mission (e.g., a screenwriter who has committed to writing every day for the next five days).



The Art of Listening

At this point in the show, you have your prospect in a vulnerable position because you have uncovered their issues and objectives. You need to signal to them you are trustworthy and you are listening. Asking the right questions is one technique you can use. However, being sure to closely listen to what your prospect is saying is another technique that will ensure you get the full breakdown of their problems and initiatives.

Here are some general tips on how to listen to your prospect more effectively:

✓ Consistent Eye Contact and Nodding

Body language plays a huge role in how to communicate with others. Naturally gazing at your prospect while he or she is talking will express that you are listening to them. Be sure you do not stare at them for too long or else it may come off as unsettling. Nodding your head up and down will establish you are interested and fully understand what they are saying to you.

✓ Listen to Understand

Oftentimes people act like they are listening to show they are being polite to the person speaking. However, listening to be polite is not enough. You need to take it one step further and be genuinely interested in what your prospect has to say. Bringing an authentic desire to listen to your prospect will help make them feel comfortable sharing what's on their mind. Everyone likes to know they are being heard and understood. Listening with a sense of curiosity will achieve exactly that.



✓ Quiet Your Mind

How many thoughts do you think run through your mind on a daily basis? If you are like every other human being, the answer is too many. Experts have found that we have anywhere between 60,000 and 80,000 thoughts cross our mind on a daily basis. When asking questions to prospects, most salespeople are so focused on the questions they ask, they miss the answers the prospect responds with. The gold is found in the answers, not the questions. Silence your mind and try to pay attention to the answers you receive.

✓ Be Aware of Your Talk-To-Listen Ratio

Don't be that person who spends an entire meeting talking the other person's ear off. Since the main goal of the discovery call is to learn about your prospect, the way you are going to achieve this is by letting them talk. You of course want to have time to communicate who you are and what you can bring to the table; however, the spotlight should be on them. Being fully cognizant of how much talking you are doing versus them will ensure you take a step back if needed.

✓ Repeat What You Hear

Parrots do it all the time. Active listening is the act of repeating back to the speaker what you heard. By paraphrasing what your prospect has said, it will demonstrate your understanding. If for some reason there was a miscommunication in what your prospect has said, this will allow them to reword their statement to be clearer to the listener.



Build a Vision

At this point in the discovery meeting, you have uncovered what is important to your prospect. You have asked thoughtful questions and have actively listened. They have shared some knowledge on what is holding them back and what they want to achieve. With this information, you're now ready to build a vision on how your project or service is the answer to their prayers.

On this first discovery meeting, building a vision on who you are and how your project or service can benefit your prospect should be fairly high level. You want to gauge enough interest from your prospect without overloading them. The same thing goes with a first date. Listing all the reasons why you are the perfect romantic partner and the many ways you will prove it to them will result in your date getting up and leaving. The objective is to give them enough information for them to confidently feel like they know who you are and what your project or service can bring to the table.



Master Your Elevator Pitch

You have heard the term many times before. But what exactly does it mean? And do you need to be in an elevator to use it? An elevator pitch is a short persuasive speech about yourself, your company, and your idea, project, or service. A bullet-proof elevator pitch is quick while also captivating. The name, of course, derives from the idea that you should be able to deliver your pitch within thirty to ninety seconds, the length of time on a typical elevator ride.

As an independent filmmaker, you want to be able to clearly communicate your role as a filmmaker and some background on the project you are working on or the service you are offering. If you are an experienced independent feature-film producer, you would tell your prospect you have over ten years of experience producing high-quality feature films, which includes the project you are currently working on.

You would proceed to give a brief overview of what your film project is about. If you are a freelance cinematographer, you would tell your prospect you are a skilled and passionate cinematographer who has worked on a variety of projects, naming a few. Lastly, you would provide your prospect with insight on the types of services you offer.

Create and Connect Your Value Propositions

A value proposition is a valuable tool to pique your prospect's interest by communicating who you are, what your project or services consist of, and ultimately enticing this person to work with you. As a succinct explanation of both the emotional and functional benefits of your project or service, a value proposition isn't about who you are and what your project or service consists of. It touches on how it can solve your prospect's problems and complement their goals. In simple terms, your value proposition is what makes your offering unique.

You should always be trying to find ways to connect your project or service offerings to your prospect's background, goals, and pain points. Ideally, a discovery call will either establish a sales opportunity based on both parties sharing similar initiatives or it will disqualify your prospect. If you have an opportunity that aligns with the other person's wants and needs, it will be easier to get their buy-in. By establishing your project or service's value propositions before learning more about your prospect, you will effortlessly be able to strategize the flow of your discovery meeting.

Here are a few tips when establishing your value proposition:

✓ Recognize the Advantages of Your Project or Service

Make a list of all the benefits your project or service has to offer. Did your screenplay win any screenwriting competitions? Do you have a well-known actor attached to play a supporting role? Go through every area of your project, from the phenomenal characters, beautiful shooting locations, extensive post-production budget, and make note of what your prospect will most likely appreciate. You can do the same thing for the services you provide. Do you own the most cutting-edge editing software? Are you quick and reliable dealing with on-set lighting equipment? Ask yourself what you can bring to the table.



✓ Describe What Makes These Advantages Valuable

Now you have compiled a list of every benefit of your project or service, you should elaborate on why each one is potentially valuable to your prospect. For example, if you have a well-known cinematographer attached who is working with a state-of-the-art camera, this can be very valuable for the production quality of the film. If you are speaking to a distributor, this will be valuable to them because it will make it easier for them to secure exhibition channels. In addition, if you are speaking to an actress, high production quality means great captured footage of her, which in turn will enhance her performance and ultimately land her more gigs in the future. Think about how someone like your prospect would find your project or service valuable.

✓ Identify Your Prospect's Main Stumbling Block

This is performed after asking the right questions in your discovery call. However, through your initial research on your prospect you can collect enough information to build a few assumptions about the prospect's main problems. For example, if you are a producer and notice a screenwriter has a few scripts available for option, but none of them have been produced, you can make a strong guess it's a major initiative for them to get their script made. The same thing applies if you are a set decorator. If you find out on a discovery call with a producer that their director is having a hard time finding the right kind of aesthetic for one of the locations, this information can correlate with the type of value you can provide. Keep in mind, most of this will be speculation due to not getting the full picture from the prospect yet. Once you hop on a discovery call with your prospect and ask them questions to gauge what their roadblocks are, you are able to effectively connect how your project or service can solve their problem.



✓ Connect Your Value Proposition to Your Prospect's Problem

Once you confidently know the prospect's roadblocks, you can proceed to connect the dots on how your project or service will help your prospect solve their problems. For example, if you are making a feature film and you are speaking to the owner of a struggling restaurant where you want to shoot a few scenes, you can connect how your film can help publicize his eatery to a whole new group of individuals. If you are talking to an investor who has disclosed he's been burned in the past by another filmmaker, you can explain how you value transparency and communication, which is highlighted in your film's business plan and other marketing materials.

✓ Set Yourself Apart From Other Providers:

With so many other filmmakers out there in the world, what sets you apart from everyone else? What makes your project stand out from the rest? Whether you are a gaffer who's looking to land her next on-set gig or a producer who's trying to get funding for his film, you must be able to articulate how you are different. Your prospect has shared their goals and pain points, and it's pivotal to vocalize how your project or service is different from all the others out there providing solutions to your prospect's roadblocks.



STEP #3: SCHEDULE NEXT STEPS

Your discovery call should be going extremely well at this point. You know this if you have successfully set an agenda and a list of questions through preliminary call planning, unearthed and intensified your prospect's pain points and goals through active listening, and built a vision on how you can help them by delivering your elevator pitch and connecting your value propositions.

More important, you have built enough rapport with your prospect and demonstrated you genuinely care about them and didn't attempt the hard sell. This is the complete opposite of what some call a "pushy car salesman." The final step in the discovery process is scheduling next steps, which happens to be the third stage in the sales process: demonstrating value.

Successful salespeople can either move into the demonstration of value phase in the same meeting or they can choose to schedule another time. Strategically, setting the meeting for another time will build a prospect's enthusiasm to learn more on how you can work together. Although you already built a vision through your elevator pitch and high-level value propositions, the demonstration of value stage is more in-depth. This is where producers will bring out their business plans and pitch decks.

At the end of your discovery call, be sure to use the statement "Based on what you have mentioned earlier, I believe our next steps should be..." If you are a producer speaking to a screenwriter about potentially optioning their screenplay, your proposed next step might be you reviewing the many ways you will be able to achieve their goals if they gave the screenplay option to you and not any other producer. If you are a filmmaker trying to secure some financing for your next project through your family friend, your next step may be to send over a detailed business plan and the shooting script. In the filmmaker's follow-up email to the potential investor, he or she can even reiterate how some of the investor's goals align with those of the filmmaker or the movie.

DISCOVERY SUMMARY

As the second stage of the sales process, the process of discovery is what is going to set you apart from everyone else. Especially those like you, who are aiming to get your prospect's attention. The proven and most successful way to establish a relationship with someone is through building rapport and genuinely showing interest in their hopes, fears, and dreams.



Next time you are with a salesperson and he or she is trying to hard sell you before asking you questions, you can now be certain they skipped a crucial part of the sales journey. How are they going to know what is good for you if they didn't even bother to get a glimpse of what's important to you? How are they going to know their product or service is a solution to your needs and wants? They didn't take the necessary step to find out.

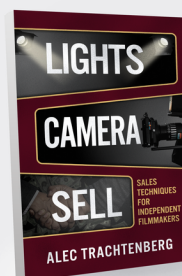
Through pre-call research measures like brainstorming the right questions and building an agenda, you are demonstrating you care. As you lead your discovery meeting you are keeping it casual while simultaneously unearthing and intensifying their pain points and goals, building a vision of how you and your project or service can help them, all while actively listening to them. At the end of the discovery phase, you are directing them on the necessary next steps, which ultimately display how you and your offering can be of value to them.

In the independent filmmaking world, whether you are presenting your film to a room full of investors or demonstrating to a distributor why your film should be on their roster, the discovery stage will make your life a whole lot easier to build the relationship and ultimately get the contract signed.



Purchase a copy of the entire book at LightsCameraSell.com

Film producer and sales consultant Alec Trachtenberg argues that one must adopt a sales mindset in order to be successful as an independent filmmaker. By highlighting a variety of sales strategies that have worked for him in the world of startup technology companies, Alec shows how you can use the same sales strategies in every stage of filmmaking.



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Whether you are a budding freelance cinematographer searching for your next gig, a first-time director ready to shoot your first feature-film, or an indie producer acquiring funding for your next project, *Lights, Camera, Sell* will teach you how to succeed through strategic sales techniques used by cutting-edge tech startup companies. Walking you through the five stages of the sales process, Alec shows you relevant case studies involving a variety of scenarios in the low-budget independent filmmaking process. Alec will teach you how to:

- ✓ Prospect a screenwriter and option a feature-length screenplay
- ✓ Lead a discovery call with a prospective domestic distributor
- ✓ Demonstrate value with a powerful pitch deck to a financier
- ✓ Close a deal with a non-union actor by creating an initial talent agreement outline
- ✓ Resolve conflicts with crew members by understanding the principles of relationship success

Lights, Camera, Sell will debunk the negative myths surrounding salespeople formed by our media and society, reveal best practices on asking the right questions, explain how to present your ideas and services in a compelling way, and more.



**DISCOVERY QUESTION
GUIDE**

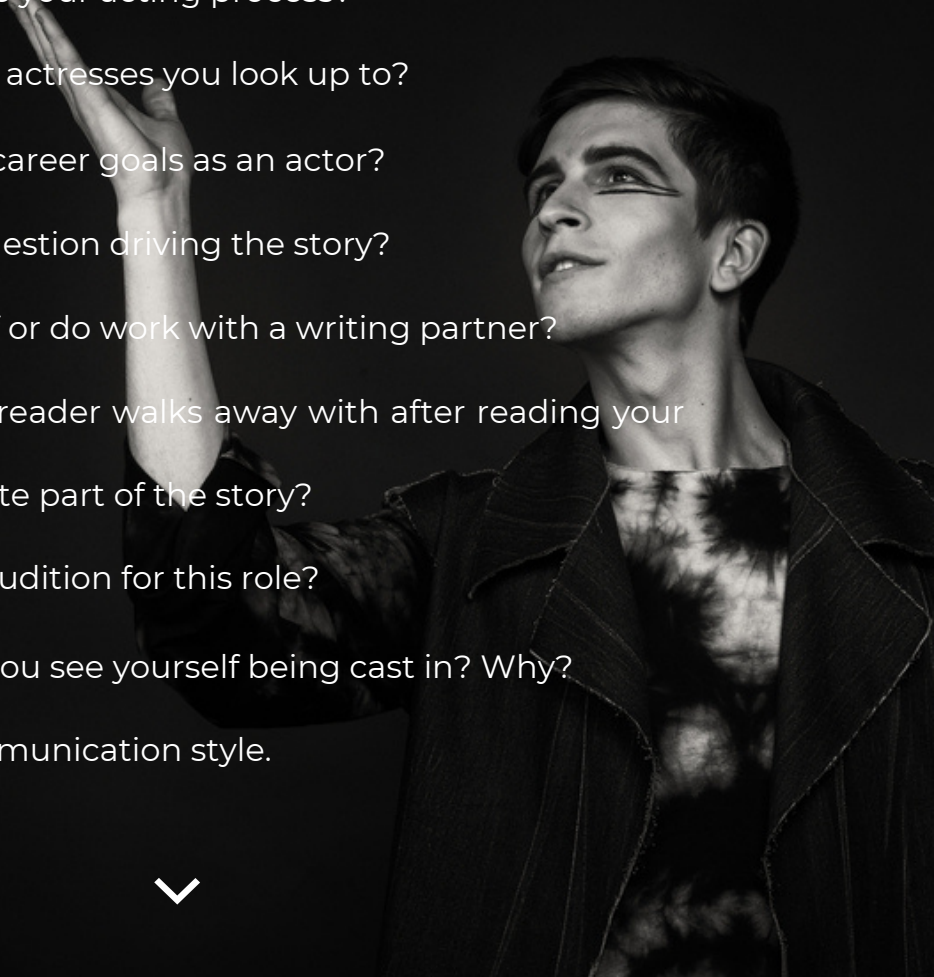
Screenwriters

- 1 What genres are you most passionate about?
- 2 What is the most important aspect of building a great character?
- 3 Who are two writers that have inspired you? Why?
- 4 What are two films that have inspired you? Why?
- 5 Do you usually outline before you start writing?
- 6 What's one surprising (non writing related) fact about you?
- 7 What type of plots excite you?
- 8 What does your writing process look like?
- 9 When did you start writing?
- 10 Do you have any formal education in screenwriting, or did you teach yourself?
- 11 Where did the idea of your screenplay come from?
- 12 What type of scripts do you want to write in your career?
- 13 What are your personal goals for this project?
- 14 What is the narrative question driving the story?
- 15 Do you work by yourself or do work with a writing partner?
- 16 What do you hope the reader walks away with after reading your script?
- 17 What is your least favorite part of the story?
- 18 What element or character do you feel needs to be worked on?
- 19 What are you looking for in a producer?
- 20 What's the target market for your story? Why?



Talent

- 1 How is this character like you? How are they different?
- 2 What do you love about this character?
- 3 What do you hate about this character?
- 4 What makes a good cast and crew?
- 5 Tell me about a time where things didn't go as planned on set and how you personally handled the situation.
- 6 What was your favorite role to play? Why?
- 7 What was your hardest role to play? Why?
- 8 When did you first perform?
- 9 What do you look for in a director and/or producer? Why are these important to you?
- 10 How did you know you wanted to pursue a career in acting?
- 11 How would you describe your acting process?
- 12 Who are some actors or actresses you look up to?
- 13 What are some of your career goals as an actor?
- 14 What is the narrative question driving the story?
- 15 Do you work by yourself or do work with a writing partner?
- 16 What do you hope the reader walks away with after reading your script?
- 17 What is your least favorite part of the story?
- 18 What attracted you to audition for this role?
- 19 What types of roles do you see yourself being cast in? Why?
- 20 Tell me about your communication style.



Crewmembers

- 1 Why are you personally interested in joining this production?
- 2 How is this production bringing something new to this type of story?
- 3 How would you describe your communication style?
- 4 What's your experience with ____ equipment/software?
- 5 Do you prefer to work independently or with others?
- 6 How do you stay organized and prioritize tasks?
- 7 Tell me about a time when you went above and beyond in your role.
- 8 What do you look for in a production to work on?
- 9 What do you think you can personally provide to this production that others might not?
- 10 Tell me about your education and work experience.
- 11 What project have you worked on that you are most proud of? Why?
- 12 Tell me about a time on set when everything wasn't going as planned. How did you handle the situation?
- 13 What are your top 3 favorite films of all time?
- 14 Tell me about a time when you had to handle some form of conflict with another person on set. How did you handle it?
- 15 Where do you see yourself in 5 years?
- 16 In what ways does this production compliment your personal goals?
- 17 If we are running behind, what is a technique you use to get us back on track?
- 18 What excites you the most about this project?
- 19 What does the ideal film set environment look like to you? Why?
- 20 Tell me about your communication style.



Financiers

- 1 What type of stories speak to you the most?
- 2 What sparks your interest about this project?
- 3 What projects have you financed in the past?
- 4 What project(s) are you most proud of? Why?
- 5 What project(s) are you least proud of? Why?
- 6 What are the most important elements for you when deciding on a project to finance?
- 7 What's your favorite movies of all time? Why are they your favorite?
- 8 If you could have been involved in the financing of any film, what film would it be? Why?
- 9 How did you get into financing films?
- 10 What could I improve on the pitch?
- 11 Who else would be interested in funding this project?
- 12 What's your timeline on funding?
- 13 What is your top concern with this project?
- 14 What's the first thing you would want me to do after funding?
- 15 How much are you interested in investing and committing to today?
- 16 What does success look like to you when investing in film projects?



Distributors

- 1 What did you like about my film?
- 2 What do you find most valuable about my film compared to other titles?
- 3 Where do you see it finding an audience?
- 4 What do you see as a viable return for my film?
- 5 What is the rollout strategy for my film?
- 6 What deliverables would you need from me if we were to make a deal?
- 7 Which territories do you handle?
- 8 Does your rollout strategy differ depending on the territory?
- 9 What film festivals and film markets do you attend?
- 10 Who are some of your exhibition partners?
- 11 What are some similar films you have acquired in the past?
- 12 What sort of marketing presence do you have?
- 13 How long do you typically keep your titles in each digital streaming stage?
- 14 Do you have any relationships with press and publicity sources?
- 15 What are some of your company's roadblocks?
- 16 What types of films is your company passionate about? Do they all share a common theme?
- 17 Do you believe there is a pre-existing audience for my film? If so, what do they look like?
- 18 What sets you apart from other distributors?
- 19 What does your accounting and payment process look like?
- 20 What are you most proud of at your time with the company?