BUYER QUESTION GUIDE

What do you need to learn before the next campaign?

Decide what to ask buyers, who can answer and how the findings will change your campaign. Includes a fictional example and a fill-in brief.

Start with the decision.

The worked example in this guide is fictional. It is not a client result or a market benchmark.

Your team may already have a topic, a list of accounts and a content plan. The question is what you still need to learn before spending more.

Write one sentence: We need to decide whether to ____ by ____.

If the blank contains three different decisions, choose the one that affects the others. A short research program needs a question small enough to answer and important enough to change the plan.

A worked example

A cloud services firm wants to run a campaign for infrastructure leaders. Its team plans to lead with lower cloud costs. Sales hears a different concern: application owners delay change because they cannot afford service disruption.

The decision is: Should the campaign lead with cost control, or with reducing the risk of moving critical applications?

The team can act on either answer. It can change the lead message, the expert it interviews, the example it uses and the first question sales asks. This makes the research worth doing.

The team writes down what it knows and what it assumes.

The team must not treat those sales notes as a market-wide finding. They show a reason to ask a better question.

- Known: some recent sales conversations raised service disruption. These are notes from a limited set of conversations.

- Assumed: most target buyers see cost as the main reason to act.

- Unknown: which concern affects the next decision for the specific accounts in the campaign.

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Ask the right people. Leave room for a different answer.

Decide who can answer.

A title alone does not tell you whether a person has faced the issue. In this example, the team needs people involved in moving or running critical applications. It also needs to know whether the organization is planning a change, already making one or staying with its current setup.

Define the role, company context, region and exclusions before outreach. If customers and prospects are both included, keep those groups separate in the report. Their experience and relationship with the firm may affect the answers.

Write: The people we need to hear from are responsible for ____. They work in organizations where ____. We will exclude ____.

Agree a feasible sample with the research team. A convenient set of respondents may reveal themes, but it cannot automatically show how common a view is across the whole market.

Ask questions that allow a different answer.

Avoid starting with: "Would better cloud cost control help your business?" Most people can agree without saying anything about their next decision.

Try a sequence like this, adjusted to the agreed call length and scope:

- What is your team planning to change in how it runs critical applications?

- What is making that change difficult?

- Which concern has the greatest effect on whether the work moves ahead?

- What would your team need to see before taking the next step?

Let people say that neither cost nor disruption is their main issue. Record other answers and unanswered questions. If you use set answer options, include a way to capture a concern you did not anticipate.

Do not ask all four merely because four are available. Keep the questions that help make the decision.

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Turn answers into a decision.

Agree what the answers would change.

Do this before reviewing the findings. Otherwise the team may choose whichever answers support the campaign it already wanted.

In the example:

- If respondents describe disruption as the main barrier, the team reviews a campaign led by planning, responsibility and operational risk.

- If cost matters but buyers cannot identify what drives it, the team considers content that helps them examine those costs.

- If concerns differ by role or buying stage, the team narrows the audience or creates separate paths.

- If the responses are too limited or inconsistent, the team keeps the conclusion open and chooses a smaller follow-up test.

These are decision options, not fixed statistical thresholds. Set any quantitative rule only with a method and sample that can support it.

Keep the buyer's answer and permission separate.

A person can answer a question without asking to hear from sales. They may request a guide, agree to a call or decline both.

Keep a separate record for each of these:

- The question and what the person said.

- The content they asked to receive.

- Any permission for a call, including its purpose and timing.

If a person declines a call, do not turn that into a content opt-in. Ask only where appropriate and record the person's actual choice.

Sales should begin with the issue and action the person agreed to. A broad pitch can lose the context that made the original exchange relevant.

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Read the findings. Choose the next step.

Read the findings without forcing a conclusion.

Ask for the audience definition, recruitment method, question wording, response counts and missing answers. Look at what differs by role or situation before combining the results.

Separate three things in the review:

What people said: the recorded answer or a clearly marked summary.

What we think it means: the team's interpretation, with its limits.

What we will do: a change to the message, audience, content or follow-up.

Report counts with their denominators. Keep names and personal details in the approved contact system, not in a public findings document.

Use the brief to choose the next step.

If the decision is unclear, agree it with the people who can change the plan. If the decision and audience are clear, choose the research method and scope. Use the worksheet to record what you know, what remains open, and who will review the findings.

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Your buyer question brief

Using the worksheet

Save a copy before typing, or print it and write by hand. Fill in what you know; write "To confirm" for an open decision. Save and reopen your copy to check that entries remain. If your preview does not accept typing, open the saved file in a PDF app that supports forms. Each box is for short notes; use a separate page for a longer answer. Nothing is sent automatically.

1. What decision do you need to make?

Name the choice the research should inform, such as which message to lead with or which buyer concern to address. A broad goal such as "grow awareness" does not tell you what to ask.

Up to 300 characters

2. Who will make that decision, and by when?

Name the person or role that can change the plan, plus the review date. This may differ from the person collecting the answers.

Up to 300 characters

3. Who can answer from experience?

Describe their responsibility, relevant experience, company or account type and region. Say who is outside the scope. For example, an application owner may know more about disruption than someone with a senior title but no role in the change.

Up to 300 characters

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Your buyer question brief

4. What do you already know, and where did it come from?

List the observations or records, their dates and any contrary evidence. Separate "three sales notes mention delays" from "buyers usually delay". Keep personal details in your approved system.

Up to 300 characters

5. What are you assuming that still needs checking?

Write the belief the team might be wrong about. Include what could challenge it. In the example, the untested belief is that cost is the main reason buyers act.

Up to 300 characters

6. What will you ask?

Draft the main question in the words a participant will hear. Ask about their situation before offering your explanation. Leave room for another concern, disagreement or "not sure".

Up to 300 characters

7. How could different answers change your plan?

Write at least two plausible answers and what you would do in each case. Include what you will do if the evidence is mixed or too limited to decide.

Up to 300 characters

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Your buyer question brief

8. How will you collect and interpret the answers?

Note how people will be selected, the proposed method and what needs review with the research team. State what this group cannot tell you. A few convenient conversations or a peer discussion do not represent the whole market.

Up to 300 characters

9. How will you record each person's choices?

Record research participation, any requested content and any permission for a sales call separately in the approved system. Answering a question does not by itself permit commercial follow-up.

Up to 300 characters

10. Who owns the findings and the next action?

Name who will review the evidence, who will handle any permitted follow-up, and the next action and review date. If something is unresolved, give it an owner instead of treating it as agreed.

Up to 300 characters

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Notes and the next review

What remains open?

List the unresolved decisions, without repeating answers already given.

Up to 225 characters

Who needs to review it?

Name the people or roles whose input is needed before the brief is agreed.

Up to 225 characters

What is the next action and date?

Choose one next step, its owner and the date for checking progress.

Up to 225 characters

Before using the brief

Check that each question could affect the decision, that someone can disagree with the premise, and that your interpretation stays within what the method and participants can support.