



# Marketing Research Interview Guide

QUESTION CATEGORY & INTENT	SAMPLE QUESTIONS
<p><b>Segment Qualification</b>---Here you are trying to confirm that the person you are interviewing is really a member of the segment or group you are intending to research. To make the best use of limited time and resources, you'll want to quickly validate that you're talking to the right people by asking some qualifying questions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can you tell me a little bit about yourself and your company?</li> <li>• Are you a purchaser or user of _____ products or services?</li> <li>• How much _____ type business does your firm handle?</li> <li>• Can you tell me about your role in the decision-making process?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Priority Needs &amp; Values</b>---Determine how the person would rank their major needs or values in order of importance. Keep in mind that you aren't looking for product or service features. You want to understand what benefits or outcomes the person is looking for and how they value those benefits relative to each other.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the big things you want to accomplish with _____?</li> <li>• With _____, what do you think is critical versus nice-to-have?</li> <li>• When it comes to _____, what are the three most important things?</li> <li>• What three things would you tell a close friend about _____?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Problems &amp; Frustrations</b>---Determine what problems and frustrations you may be able to address more effectively for the customer or prospect. Sometimes people don't recognize the elimination of a problem or frustration as a benefit. Therefore, it's important to ask about problems and frustrations more directly and specifically.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When trying to _____, what really drives you crazy?</li> <li>• What really frustrates you most about _____?</li> <li>• What problems do often you encounter when _____?</li> <li>• What have been the biggest headaches with _____?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Expectations &amp; Ideals</b>---Determine what the prospect or customer expects to happen—positive and negative. People will sometimes not realize how many problems they've just come to accept. They also may not recognize the significant gap between what they think they need and what they really, truly want.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What things do you expect to go wrong when _____?</li> <li>• With _____, how do you think it will play out, really?</li> <li>• What do you really hope will happen when _____?</li> <li>• What do you expect to be a "given" when _____?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Skepticism &amp; Doubts</b>---Determine what's lurking in the back of customers' and prospects' minds that you will have to overcome. Skepticism, disbelief, and doubt are hidden objections you will want to dispel with respect to your company—and quite possibly highlight when it comes to your competitors.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When vendors say they are great at _____, what do you think?</li> <li>• How do you feel about the claims many _____ companies make?</li> <li>• Are you really confident that you'll be able to solve _____?</li> <li>• What do you think the real story is with _____?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Pain, Fear, and Risks</b>---In most cases, people will go to greater lengths to avoid loss or pain than they will to seek gain or pleasure. To leverage this, you need to understand the risks and fears that are already present in peoples' minds. Remember, you simply want to speak to fears that already exist, not create new ones.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If _____ doesn't work, what's the worst that could happen?</li> <li>• If you don't take care of _____, what's the realistic downside?</li> <li>• When it comes to _____, what's the nightmare scenario?</li> <li>• When you think about _____, what concerns you the most?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Drivers of Their Needs</b>---Determine what causes a person or organization to begin thinking they might need what you offer. This helps you understand where you can engage a prospect when they first identify a problem—giving you a much better chance of ultimately winning the business, and at better prices.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When did you first realize you needed _____?</li> <li>• What would have to happen for you to _____?</li> <li>• Why did you begin considering _____?</li> <li>• What really got you thinking about _____?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Situation &amp; Circumstances</b>---Determine the situation and circumstance your offering must function in. Understand the “environment of problems” your offering might be brought into—so that you might address the customers' and prospects' problems more comprehensively and more effectively than your competitors.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can you walk me through a typical day in your world?</li> <li>• When dealing with _____, what else is going on?</li> <li>• What happens before, during, and after _____ occurs?</li> <li>• With _____, can you describe the before and after picture?</li> </ul>

<p><b>Importance &amp; Urgency</b>---Determine how important the benefits are in the grand scheme of things for your prospects and customers. Determine how urgently they need a solution once the problem surfaces. This can help you understand many aspects of your positioning, pricing, and delivery.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How critical would you say solving _____ is to you?</li> <li>• Once you recognized the problem, how long could it continue?</li> <li>• Is _____ something you can live with for a long time?</li> <li>• Does not addressing _____ pose a problem in and of itself?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Education &amp; Experience</b>---Here you are trying to determine how much experience and education a person already has with respect to the types of products or services you offer. This helps you understand how much education you really need to provide for the prospect to make a sound and informed decision.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How much do you know about _____?</li> <li>• Do you have experience purchasing _____?</li> <li>• What would you tell a friend about buying _____?</li> <li>• Did you gather a lot of information before buying _____?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Information Gaps</b>---Determine the information people have to work hard to get. Determine what information could be provided in order to ease decision-making process. The gaps between what the prospects or customers know and the information being provided to the marketplace are an opportunity.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What kind of information did you have to seek out on your own?</li> <li>• What information would have made your decision process easier?</li> <li>• What information do you think is lacking in the marketplace?</li> <li>• Is it easy to find the answers to your questions and concerns?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Information Gathering</b>---Determine how Prospects and Customers gather the information they need in order to make an informed decision. Understand the process they go through when trying to gather information. This will give you insights into their processes, once again helping you see the issues from their perspective.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can you describe your information-gathering process?</li> <li>• How do you determine exactly what information you need?</li> <li>• How did you go about getting the information you needed?</li> <li>• How would you tell a friend to learn about _____?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Communication Methods</b>---Determine the communication methods and media people are most receptive to. Determine what formats will be most useful and utilized (white papers, brochures, Web sites, videos, etc.). This helps you to avoid waste and gain efficiency in the tactical delivery of your information and education.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What media did you use to learn about _____?</li> <li>• What materials about _____ have you found most useful?</li> <li>• What media do you prefer for learning about _____?</li> <li>• How should vendors provide information about _____?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Information Sources</b>---Determine whether there are any major information sources that people would expect to rely on in their decision-making process. Understand if there are any specific resources that people consider to be “go-to” sources for information related to the issue at hand.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where should others to go for _____ information?</li> <li>• What’s your favorite source of _____ information?</li> <li>• For _____ information, where would you go first?</li> <li>• Where would you expect to find _____ information?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Involvement &amp; Influence</b>---Understand who else may be involved in the purchase decision or process. Influencers can be resellers or distributors, managers, consultants, colleagues, etc. And anyone who can play a make-or-break role in the purchase-decision needs to be identified and further explored.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who else is typically involved in purchase decisions?</li> <li>• Who do you ask when making a decision about _____?</li> <li>• Is there anyone you have to check with prior to buying?</li> <li>• Whose opinion might cause you to change your mind?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Decision &amp; Purchase Cycle Time</b>---Understand how long it takes to move from initial problem identification through final purchase. This helps you understand just how long you have to cultivate prospects in order to keep them engaged on through to the purchase decision.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Once the issue was identified, how long did it take to solve it?</li> <li>• How long were you in “shopping” mode before making a decision?</li> <li>• How long did it take to begin shopping for a solution?</li> <li>• Then, how long did it take to select an appropriate solution?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Key Vendor Criteria</b>---Determine what the person considers to be important attributes when choosing a specific vendor to do business with. These attributes often go unspoken and can be disastrous if there is a mismatch. By getting these attributes out on the table, you are in a better position to address them upfront.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What criteria must a vendor meet to be on your short-list?</li> <li>• Can you describe the attributes of vendors you do business with?</li> <li>• What would you tell a friend to look for in a _____ vendor?</li> <li>• What throws a vendor out of the consideration set for you?</li> </ul>

<p><b>Solution Consideration Set</b>---Determine what other solutions the prospect or customer considers to be viable alternatives. Here we are looking for those things that may satisfy the broader need or problem. These things may be completely outside your product or service category, but may still be formidable competitors.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What solutions did you explore when _____?</li> <li>• Did you consider other ways to solve this problem?</li> <li>• How might you solve this problem yourself?</li> <li>• What solutions would you tell a friend to consider?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Vendor Consideration Set</b>---Determine the specific vendors that the prospect or customer considered—or would consider—buying from. This provides insight into your competitive set from the market’s perspective. After all, when you think of competitors, your list may be very different than a prospect’s list.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can you name the vendors that made it to your short-list?</li> <li>• In your opinion, which companies have a viable _____?</li> <li>• Who are the top three vendors in the _____ space?</li> <li>• Which companies would you tell a friend to check out?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Industry Perceptions</b>---Understand how people view the industry you’re a part of. Understand whether or not prospects enter the market with their guard up because of preconceived notions. Sometimes you need to work to overcome the negative industry perceptions created by those who have come before you.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What’s your perception of the _____ industry?</li> <li>• Do you have a positive or negative view of _____?</li> <li>• What could the _____ industry do to improve?</li> <li>• How would you describe the _____ industry?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Best Competitor</b>---Understand which competitor people feel is doing the best job. Determine who is viewed as the best provider in the category. This gives you some idea of what you are up against. Keep in mind that the “best of bunch” may not be all that great—they are just the best of the perceived alternatives.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Which company is doing the best job of _____?</li> <li>• Is there a _____ company that stands out in your mind?</li> <li>• Which specific vendor would you recommend to a friend?</li> <li>• Who is the “preferred provider” in the _____ space?</li> </ul>