

Ask Questions and Make Money

If you're running short of money, maybe it's because you're not asking enough questions. Especially when it comes to asking for discounts when you buy something. It's amazing what results you can get sometimes by simply asking a question. Let me explain what I mean by sharing several actual case histories with you.

I had been looking for an anniversary gift for my daughter, Janet and son-in-law, Tommy. While browsing in a gift shop, Joanne spotted the ideal item...a bird cage in the form of a hot air balloon, hanging from the ceiling of the gift shop. Janet and Tommy own a restaurant-tavern by the name of Knickerbockers, and their logo is a hot air balloon. So this would be the perfect gift. When I asked what the price was, the clerk said, "\$107.00" I used the "shock" technique and said, "How much?" She repeated the price and I said, "Wow, that's a lot of money, you can do better than that, can't you?" She hesitated a moment and said,

Yes, I can give you a 15 percent discount. I mumbled, "15 percent, how much would that be, what would that make the price?" She looked at the ceiling for several seconds and said, "I'll let you have it for \$89.00, that's better than 15 percent". I hesitated, mumbled the price several times and said, "hmmm, that's still a lot of money, but I'll take it." Then I asked her if she accepted Master Card and Visa. She said she did. As I was just about to hand the card to her, I asked, "How much discount will you give me if I pay cash?" She looked at the ceiling again and said, "If you pay cash I'll let you have it for an even \$80.00." Now it was my turn to be shocked, I hadn't expected a \$9.00 discount just for paying cash.

I usually don't get more than 3-5 percent when I ask that question. (She didn't know it, but I would have bought the thing if she had given me no discount.) So in about two minutes of asking questions and making comments, I was able to get a discount of \$27.00 on a \$107.00 item. For a minimum wage worker, that about 5 hours work. Talk about yield, plug those numbers in your calculator. Now for another actual case.

Another time I was in Barnes & Nobles book store. I picked out 5 books and placed them on the counter. The clerk was ready to start ringing the prices up and I said, "Now you do give a discount for this many books, don't you? He just smiled and said, No, I'm sorry we don't". I frowned, looked very disappointed and said, "No discount? I always get a discount?" He finished adding the prices and when he quoted me the total amount due, he said, "Well, I went ahead and gave you a 10 percent discount". The discount amounted to \$15.46.

Just one simple question resulted in \$15.46 staying in my pocket instead of winding up in the cash drawer. And it was fun, too. (That would be about 3 hours of work for a minimum wage worker.) Another time I was negotiating to buy a mobile home and asked the question, "If I can get you the money today, what is the absolute best cash price you will sell for?" The seller dropped the price \$2,000. One question equals \$2,000. How's that for efficient use of your time? Here's another actual example of how asking questions gets good results. I was negotiating to sell a mobile home and the buyer asked, "How much is the down payment?"

I gave him my standard answer, "We don't have a certain amount, it's negotiable, but if it's reasonable I'll try to work with you. How much of a down payment can you make?" His answer was "\$8,500". I would have been happy with \$1,000. (You need to learn how to hold a good poker face when something like that happens). Another time when I asked a buyer how much they could pay each month, the answer was "\$400." I would have been happy with \$200.

Suppose I had already stated that I wanted \$200, what's the chances the buyers would have said, "No, we want to pay \$400." Several years ago we were shopping for three oil paintings for Christmas presents. After asking questions and negotiating the best price I could on one picture, I then asked the question, "Suppose we bought two pictures, how much discount will you give us?" When a price for two pictures was firmed up, (you guessed it) I then asked, "If we could afford to buy three pictures, what kind of a special price could you give us?" When the price for three pictures was established, I then used the "how much discount will you give if I pay cash instead of putting it on a charge card?"

We walked out with three pictures for the price of two. It was much easier to ask some questions and get a big discount, than paying full price. But how many people never learn to ask questions and don't even know, or realize they can buy for much less by simply asking questions. If you haven't been asking for discounts, or trying to negotiate better prices on items you buy, let me suggest you start doing it with your next purchase.

And don't be shy about asking for discounts. The worst that can happen is that you don't get it. But many times you will. So learn to ask lot's of questions, especially when it involves your money. Always ask for a discount whenever you buy anything. You will normally need to negotiate with the person who has the authority to make a decision and grant the discount. If the employee you're negotiating with has no such authority, ask for the manager or person in charge. Give it a try and I'll bet you'll get some pleasant surprises. It doesn't always work, but then, what does?

Happy negotiating,
Lonnie Scruggs