

The Clueless Close

Of all the closes we'll cover, this first close has resulted in more gifts for our coaching and training alumni than all the other closes – combined. It represents the **EASIEST** way to ask and it's one way to ask if you either have no idea what to ask for or if you have some internal fears and need a go-to line to close with.

Use the Clueless Close is for visits where: 1) Great **timing** but **lack of information lowers confidence** (this is an important “situation”, many readers can relate), and 2) you don't know what to ask for.



In its simplest form the Clueless Close is one question:

Where do you see yourself?



One great way to do this is with your presentation tool that includes a funding plan or traditional campaign pyramid (example below).

1 @ \$1,000,000
2 @ \$ 750,000
4 @ \$ 500,000
8 @ \$ 250,000
10 @ \$ 100,000
20 @ \$ 50,000
30 @ \$ 30,000

After you've walked through the vision and funding priorities you might come to the funding plan and ask, “Based on everything we've talked about, I would love to talk to you about being part of this plan. Mr. X, I'm not really sure where to go. I don't know much about your capacity but you've indicated you would 'like to make a really big difference'. We have several funders on board with us [checking off – with a pen – committed gifts]. I would like to go this route and ask you, based on everything we've discussed, where do you see yourself?”

You can let the prospect think about it and respond. Like any question – it's critical that you **LISTEN** to the answer and **PROCESS** the response.

I used the Clueless Close on a project– using this same funding plan and the prospect responded by saying “I think I could only do this [pointing to \$50,000] this year.”

Key words: THIS. YEAR.

My mind immediately processed... in the course of our conversation this prospect revealed he gives a lot to the local college. The \$8.0M+ plan we discussed included a program that sends formerly homeless single mothers to that college. Furthermore, I knew we were looking for \$200,000 to fund the balance of the program over three years.

We were able to use the Clueless Close and then tie the answer back to a project to create a rationale for \$200,000. “Mr. X, THANK YOU! That’s awesome. I know you really understand the value of education. One idea that comes to mind is to think about applying your investment to our College Access for Mothers program. [We had discussed this earlier in the visit... now pointing back to the program on the presentation tool]. We need to find about \$200,000 to fully underwrite this program over three years – sending about 400 women to college [the IMPACT]. Would it be possible to look at that gift amount [\$50,000] for the next three years to fund the bulk of that program?”

The dynamic of the visit was such that we didn’t feel pushy in our request. Quite the opposite, having Mr. X. give us an indication of capacity was the ‘rationale’ around which we built the rest of the dialog.

Important: Obviously you can’t use the Clueless Close when you’re with your top prospects. If you know you NEED to ask for \$1M or you NEED to ask for project funding (tied to a specific number) you can’t afford to be clueless. Use the Clueless Close with first time funders when your funding plan is not dependent upon a specific commitment.

Be prepared for the answer. The chart I’d included had a lowest level at \$30,000. With another prospect on the same project I tried to ask the question – he started laughing before I finished. “Nick, I’m not on your chart.”

I paused and waited for him to elaborate.

“My wife and I are committed to seven big projects right now.” Read: These are big community philanthropists in the middle of some huge funding commitments. He was telling me that though he loved our project, it could be one of the top projects right now.

Key Words. RIGHT. NOW.

The prospect committed to \$10K. The goal is always to maximize the relationship at any given moment. We did that... RIGHT NOW. Clearly, there is a lot of potential for the future as he and his wife finish up with other projects.

The Takeaway:

The Clueless Close is a great way to ask when you don’t know what to ask for. More than getting a gift you should also not be ‘clueless’ after this close. Use the ask as the foundation for your rationale – now and in the future.