Asking Powerful Questions

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Why are questions powerful?
The 7 Powers of Questioning
(The 7 Powers of Questions)

1. Questions demand answers
2. Questions stimulate thinking
3. Questions give us valuable information
4. Questions put you in control
5. Questions get people to open up
6. Questions lead to quality listening
7. Questions get people to persuade themselves

Questions create “Buy-In”
Questioning
(Leading with Questions)

1. Creates Reflection
2. Generates Empowerment

3. Challenges Assumptions - Questionee and Questioner

4. Enhances a Better Understanding of the Situation
   • Width
   • Breath

5. Initiates Change

6. Finds the Best Solution

7. Challenges Biases (added by Debbie)

Foster a questioning environment
“The leader of the past may have been a person who knew how to tell, but certainly the leader of the future will be a person who knows how to ask.”
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Bias and Heuristics</th>
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<td><strong>Anchoring bias</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Availability bias</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Bandwagon bias</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Blind-spot bias</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Choice-Support bias</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Clustering illusion</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Pro-Innovation bias</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Selection perception bias</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Survivorship bias</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Zero Risk bias</strong></td>
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What do you expect to learn today?
What is important to you?
Why is that important to you?
How does that make you feel?
What made these questions powerful?
What made this questions powerful?

1. Open Ended
2. Focused on the objective
3. Unbiased
4. Thought Invoking
5. Focused on YOU
Powerful questions are open-ended
Examples

- What is your rationale?
- How do you feel about that?
- How do I feel about that?
- What assumptions did you make?
- What assumptions have I made?
- What are our next steps?
- Are there any other thoughts?
- What factors did you consider?
The only questions that matter are the ones you ask yourself?
Objective of Powerful Questions

1. Direct Probe – Why is that important?
2. Clarify – The reason that is important is?
3. Confirm – It sounds like you’re saying
4. Leading – Are there other possible alternatives?
5. Keep Ideas flowing – What else?
6. Get acknowledgement – This is important to you?

Most important aspect of questioning is LISTENING
Active Listening
(Leading with Questions)

• Pause at the end of the question
• After asking a question … listen
• Steady eye contact … supportive nods
• Demonstrate you want to understand …
  • Ask clarifying questions
  • Restate what you heard
• DO NOT interrupt
• Ask un-biased questions

_Covey’s habit #5:_ Seek first to understand, then to be understood

_Drucker:_ “Think first, speak last”

Help people learn by answering your questions
Considerations to help someone clarify their thinking (The 7 Powers of Questions)

1. Timing is important
2. Never ask the person to defend their feelings
3. Learn how to disagree while still preserving mutual respect
4. Seek information without being intrusive or judgmental
5. Restate a problem in terms of a question
6. Voice tone and body language matter
7. Do not think of yourself as a litigator, even if you are one
8. Let them come to their own solutions
9. Never offer immediate solutions
10. Always leave the person some wiggle room
“Sometimes the questions you ask are more important than the answers you get.”

Rabbi Matthew Gewirtz
Critical Thinking (Paul & Elder)

Intellectual Standards
- Accuracy
- Clarity
- Relevance
- Logical
- Sufficiency
- Precision
- Depth
- Significance
- Fairness
- Breadth

Elements of Reasoning
- Purposes
- Questions
- Points of View
- Information
- Inferences
- Concepts
- Implications
- Assumptions

Intellectual Traits
- Humility
- Autonomy
- Fair-Mindedness
- Courage
- Perseverance
- Empathy
- Integrity
- Confidence in Reasoning

Questioning Your//Their Beliefs and Biases
Exercise #1

Your boss is outlining the following new tasking to you:

“Please develop an approach to increase our efficiency in processing paperwork. I think it takes far too long for our organization to complete routine tasks. This is important and I need it completed in a timely manner.”

What Powerful Question could you ask?

Possible POWERFUL questions:

1. Why do you believe it takes too long to complete routine tasks?  
2. Can you explain what you mean by develop an approach?  
3. Can you provide additional insight on what you mean by a “timely manner”?
Exercise #2

You discussing a situation with a fellow member of your IPT team. They make the following statement which you believe is in error:

“The most important aspect of a budget is to ensure there is sufficient funding for every organization or activity. I think each “Resource Advisor” knows their requirements better than I do, so I never question their budget submission or Basis of Estimate (BOE).”

What Powerful Question might you ask?

Possible POWERFUL questions:

1. How does the development of a BOE relate to a requirement?  
2. What is your responsibility in regard to submitting a budget?  
3. Can you explain the motivation of a Resource Advisor to submit a fully justified budget request?
You are in an IPT meeting. The team’s performance is behind schedule and the briefer is presenting potential alternatives to the boss. The presenter says:

“This is a systematic problem. We’ve tried several alternatives in the past. Although Alternative A didn’t resolve our problem, it was the most successful. I recommend we try it again.”

What Powerful Question might you ask?

GOOD Powerful question:

• What other alternatives are there?

BETTER Powerful question:

• What factors caused these approaches to have limited success?

BEST Powerful question:

• Since this is a systemic problem, what is the root cause of the problem and how can we eliminate it?
Exercise #4

You come back to your cubical after a short workout and lunch. Your cubby-mate and BFF turns to you and says:

“I really don’t know what to do. The boss gave me two tasks that have to be done COB today. I can’t get the first one done, because the Jim hasn’t completed the paperwork. The second task is just too confusing … I don’t know what he wants.”

What Powerful Question might you ask?

Possible POWERFUL questions:

1. What is the impact to the organization if these tasks are not completed today?

2. Why did the boss tell you they both have to be completed by the end of today?

3. How could you have managed your time to ensure both tasks got completed within the time frame?
Learning versus Judging Questions
(Leading with Questions)

Learning

Mindset
• Accepting of other ideas
• Responsive and thoughtful
• Flexible and adaptive
• Responsibility
• Inquisitive
• Questions Assumptions
• More Possibilities

Relationships
• Win-Win Relationships
• Values differences
• Dialogues
• Critiques
• Listens for:
  • Facts
  • Understanding
  • Common Ground

Judging

• Judgmental
• Reactive and automatic
• Know-it-already
• Blame
• Self-Righteous
• Defends Assumptions
• Limited Possibilities

• Win-Lose Relationships
• Fears Differences
• Debates
• Criticizes
• Listens for:
  • Right/wrong
  • Agree/Disagree
  • Differences
The Fifty Smartest Questions
The 7 Powers of Questions

**Getting to Specifics:**
1. Can you clarify that?
2. Can you give me an example of what you mean?
3. What specifically do you mean by that?
4. Do you have any questions about what I just said?
5. What specific results are you looking for?
6. What do you plan to do with this information/report/project?
7. What is the real problem here?

**Tuning Into Others**
8. From what standpoint are you asking?
9. How do you feel about it?
10. How strongly do you feel about it?
11. What do you think about it?
12. What’s most important to you?
13. What are your priorities?
14. If I were in (his or her) shoes, how might I be feeling?
**Tuning Into Yourself:**

15. How do I feel about it?
16. What do I think about it?
17. What is my purpose?
18. What assumptions am I making?
19. What am I really trying to say with this message?
20. What is the best way to phrase this question?

**Getting Feedback From Others:**

21. Did I understand you correctly when you said “...”?
22. Did I answer your question?
23. How am I doing?
24. Have I done what you requested?
Giving Feedback to Others:
25. What type of feedback would be most helpful to you?
26. What do you plan to do with the feedback?
27. Do you want me to just listen?
28. Do you want me to ask questions and interact with you?
29. Do you want me to give you advice?

Closing:
30. Are we in agreement?
31. Are you ready to go ahead?
32. Is it a deal?

Consequences:
33. What if ...?
34. Is it worth it?
35. What will I regret not doing?
36. What might the short-term results be?
37. What might the long-term result be?
The Fifty Smartest Questions
The 7 Powers of Questions

Personal:
38. Can you help me?
39. Can I help you?
40. Am I where I want to be?
41. What do I want to do?
42. Where do I want to spend the rest of my life?
43. And with whom?
44. What are my options?
45. What questions should I be asking?
46. What do I need to do to meet my goals?
47. What am I willing to change to get there?  What am I willing to sacrifice to get there?
48. What did I accomplish?
49. What could I have done better?

Last:
50. What should I ask?
References

• **The 7 Powers of Questions** by Dorothy Leeds
  • How to question
  • What questions to ask

• **Leading with Questions** by Michael Marquardt
  • How to influence subordinates by questioning
  • Developing a questioning (learning) environment
  • Using Questions to:
    • Manage People
    • Build Teams
    • Shape Strategy
    • Enable Change
Why do we ask questions?
• Get information
• To Understand
• Obtain feedback
• Confirm what you heard

Is there more?
Objectives of Questioning
(The 7 Powers of Questions)

1. To open a discussion
2. To call attention to a point, an idea, a fact or situation
3. To get information
4. To uncover causes or relationships
5. To test ideas
6. To keep a discussion to the point
7. To summarize or end a discussion
8. To bring out opinions and attitudes
9. To bring out reactions to a point made
10. To suggest an action, idea or decision
Advantages of Questioning Environment
(Leading with Questions)

1. Learning (Individual, Team, and Corporation)
2. More synoptic activity
3. Improves Trust
4. Shared Focus
5. Better Dialog
6. Minimizes Erroneous Assumptions
7. Removes the Threat of Questions
8. Makes People Feel Important
9. People Discover for Themselves

Most important aspect of questioning is LISTENING
Powerful questions help...