

Foreword by Bob Beaudine
Compiled by Bob Tiede



**THE TRANSFORMATIVE
POWER OF QUESTIONS**

**The Articles that Taught Leaders
to Ask Smarter Questions**

LeadingWithQuestions.com

SUCCESS UNLOCKED

THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF QUESTIONS

The Articles that Taught Leaders
to Ask Smarter Questions

LeadingWithQuestions.com

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DEDICATION

*Dedicated to Andrea Buczynski, my Cru Colleague,
who 13 years ago encouraged me to start a blog!*

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FOREWORD

For over three decades, I've had the privilege of calling Bob Tiede a WHO-Friend—a special title reserved for those who truly matter in life.

And Bob has surely been that kind of friend to me. For years, we've had our monthly breakfasts—always a time to catch up, laugh, and share life. But these breakfasts were never just about food. They were deep conversations that stretched me, challenged my thinking, and forced me to go beyond surface-level ideas.

Bob's insightful questions weren't just small talk—they were powerful tools that helped me delve deeper, embrace vulnerability, and boldly pursue the vision for my books, *The Power of WHO* and *2 Chairs*. His ability to ask the right questions has been instrumental in shaping the direction and impact of my work—more than he probably even knows.

Bob's journey with Cru spans an impressive 54 years, during which he's served on the U.S. Leadership Development Team, passionately guiding leaders to transition from merely providing answers to fostering a culture of inquiry. His blog, LeadingWithQuestions.com, has, for over 13 years, been a beacon for leaders worldwide, offering curated wisdom and practical insights.

This latest compilation, *Success Unlocked: The Transformative Power of Questions*, capsulates the essence of Bob's mission. Each post is a testament to the transformative

power of questions in leadership, providing readers with tools to cultivate trust, inspire innovation, and drive meaningful change.

Bob's unwavering kindness and genuine interest in others have magnetized people from all walks of life. He is a people-first leader, always more focused on others' growth than his own recognition. He embodies the principle of being "interested, not interesting," always prioritizing others' stories and perspectives. This approach not only fosters trust but also ignites energy and collaboration, leading to ideas that are truly transformational.

If you're serious about becoming a more effective leader, this book is a must-read. Bob's wisdom and the insights in these pages will transform the way you lead, connect, and inspire.

—Bob Beaudine, President and CEO,
Eastman & Beaudine National Bestselling
Author of *The Power of WHO* and *2 Chairs*
February 17, 2025

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INTRODUCTION

The story of this book began in 2006 when I discovered the first edition of *Leading With Questions* by Dr. Michael Marquardt at a Borders bookstore. I only perused a few pages before deciding this book was going home with me. I had no idea at the time that reading this book would change my leadership forever and start me on a whole new path of helping leaders everywhere increase their leadership effectiveness.

I was already on the U.S. Leadership Development team for Cru and began to teach from the first edition. I put together an eight-session “Leading With Questions” seminar, and it was really well received.

In 2012, one of my Cru colleagues started a blog and encouraged me to do the same.

I didn’t want to do just another Leadership blog, because there were already so many good ones. Then this question came to mind: “Is there a niche of leadership I could blog on?” And as soon as I had that question—my instant answer was, “YES! Something related to “Leading With Questions.”

My first blog post was on March 15, 2012.

When I launched my blog, I decided to post twice a week on Monday and Thursday mornings. Fifteen posts later, I had a crisis—I was completely out of content! I had shared everything I knew about “Leading With Questions.” I had used every part of my eight-session “Leading With Questions” seminar and

had nothing more! I suddenly understood why I had seen other blogs with a flurry of activity and then nothing—most likely, they ran out of content!

That morning, I whispered one of those very short prayers that was actually a question: “Lord, What Do I Do Now?”

Instantly, the answer came to me: Do a Google search to identify some great “Leading With Questions” type posts, and then email the authors to ask if I might have their permission to “Repost” their “Post” as a “Guest Post” with full attribution to them.

I identified five great posts and sent out five email requests. I had no idea if this would work, but within 24 hours I had five positive responses. The first one came from Mitch Ditkoff and his guest post, “Why You Need to Ask Why,” posted on May 10, 2012.

Today, I am much more of a “Curator” of “Leading With Questions” content than an “Originator.” There have now been over 1200 Guest Posts from more than 550 Guest Post Authors, along with excerpts from over 125 books!

You and all my subscribers, including Leaders from over 200 countries, are the beneficiaries. Together, we are all learning how to increase our leadership effectiveness from the greatest leaders on the globe!

Anticipating the 13th Anniversary of LeadingWithQuestions.com, we took time to identify the most popular posts from the past 13 years. Once identified, we reconnected with all the authors to ask their permission to include their posts in this new book. (The chapters have been placed in chronological order based on the original post date.)

As you read through this book you will learn from the Best of the Best!

CHAPTER 1

HOW JESUS USED POWERFUL QUESTIONS IN HIS MINISTRY

Andrew Sobel

Originally posted on June 18, 2012

JESUS WAS A MASTER OF QUESTIONS

He used them to engage people and draw them in.

He asked questions to make others think about important issues and help them understand who he was and what he had come to do. He also used questions to blunt attacks by the religious authorities of the day, turning confrontations into an opportunity to teach.

Jesus did more than simply ask lots of questions. He always began his relationships by focusing on the other person's agenda. In a famous scene in John, for example, he goes at

Andrew Sobel is coauthor, with Jerold Panas, of *Power Questions: Build Relationships, Win New Business, and Influence Others*. Each chapter highlights a powerful question that transformed a conversation. Andrew is the leading authority on building long-term client and other professional relationships. He can be reached at www.andrewsobel.com.

night to meet Nicodemus, a top Jewish religious leader. What do they talk about? Theology, of course! Jesus tells him, “No one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again” (John 3:3).

When he meets the Samaritan woman at the well, he talks about her most important issues, which are isolation, spiritual emptiness, and a profligate lifestyle. He says, “The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband.” He then offers her the antidote: a “spring of water welling up to eternal life”—God’s love, forgiveness, and acceptance through Jesus (John 4:18).

In the Gospel of Luke, there is a scene where Jesus sees the “arch” tax collector Zaccheus up in a fig tree, looking for a glimpse of Jesus amidst the large crowd that had gathered. He tells him, “Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today” (Luke 19:5). As a tax collector serving the Romans, Zacchaeus would have been a despised outcast. Jesus immediately addresses his need for social acceptance by offering—in public—to visit with him at his home.

Jesus, in short, had an uncanny ability to immediately focus in on each individual’s particular needs. This led to immediate rapport and engagement.

Here are just a few examples of different types of questions he employed:

Questions to engage others. Jesus used simple, short questions to create a connection and draw people in. In the Gospel of Matthew, for example, he frequently asks his disciples “What do you think?” On the road to the village of Emmaus, described in Luke, the resurrected Christ says to the two unsuspecting men, “What are you discussing together as you walk along?” (Luke 24:17). When he takes his disciples through Samaria and

stops at a well, he asks the lone woman, “Will you get me a drink?” (John 4:7).

Empowerment questions to instill faith. When Jesus encounters Bartimaeus, the blind beggar, he asks, “What do you want me to do?” (Mark 10:51). In John 5:6, at the Bethesda springs, he asks the lame man, “Do you want to get well?” He is seeking an affirmation of a desire to change and of their faith.

Questions that force his listeners to think about who he is. In Luke chapter five, Jesus is about to heal a crippled man who has been lowered through the roof of the house. The Pharisees are disapproving of Jesus, thinking, “Who can forgive sins but God alone?” Jesus, knowing their thoughts, asks them, “Which is easier: to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up and walk’?” His point is that it’s harder to forgive sin, and he is the one who can do both—forgive sins and make the crippled man walk. Later, before entering Jerusalem to face his death, he asks his disciples one of the most significant questions ever posed, “Who do the people say I am?” (Matthew 16:13). When they give a somewhat equivocal answer, he turns to Peter and demands, “But what about you? Who do you say I am?” (Matthew 16:15 but also Mark 8:29 and Luke 9:20)

Counter-questions to fend off his attackers. In Mark chapter 11, Jesus is in the temple courts, and the religious authorities challenge his authority to be there and teach. In reply, Jesus says, “I will ask you one question. Answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I am doing these things. John’s baptism—was it from heaven, or of human origin? Tell me!” His interrogators are caught in a bind. If they say “From heaven” they will effectively recognize Jesus’ divine authority and origin; if they say “From men,” the people, who believe that John’s baptism

was indeed from heaven, will become furious with them. Since whichever way they answer undermines their credibility, they flee.

Questions that teach. In Luke chapter 10, Jesus tells the story of the Good Samaritan. It begins with a question from a religious authority, "And who is my neighbor?" When Jesus finishes the parable, he asks, "Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" And the religious authority can only answer, "The one who had mercy on him."

Thoughtful questions are your most important tools for connecting with others, learning who they are, and building deep relationships with them. Powerful questions also help define the real problem and frame the right issues. There is no better role model for how to do these things than Jesus Christ.

QUESTIONS FOR YOU

1. How adept are you at asking good questions and understanding the other person's agenda?
2. Are you able to frame your message in a way that resonates with the other person, given their particular situation and concerns?
3. Are your conversations all about you or are they balanced, with healthy give-and-take?
4. Do you have a strong sense of curiosity about other people?

Put Your Learning into Action. For the next three days, ask more, thoughtful questions of each person you encounter. Try and learn something new about each of them. Don't just ask "How are you?" Go deeper:

- "How is work going for you? What are you focused on these days?"
- "What are you most excited about in your life right now?"
- "What did you take away from this morning's sermon—what spoke to you?"
- "How did you spend your weekend?"
- "What did you learn from that experience?"
- "What do you think about...(fill in whatever you want)?"
- "You've achieved a lot already...what are your dreams going forward?"
- "Where did you grow?"

CHAPTER 2

MISS PRAY JOEL MANBY

Originally posted November 5, 2012

Excerpted with permission of Joel Manby from his book, Love Works

Miss Pray was my seventh-grade teacher at Woodrow Junior High School in Battle Creek, Michigan. She was in her seventies back then but sharp as a spear. Her thick white hair was always perfectly groomed, and her skin was taut across her strong cheekbones. She was intense, a disciplinarian who didn't choose to smile much. And I loved her—she was a wonderful instructor.

Joel Manby has served as the CEO of four major corporations for over 25 years: SeaWorld Entertainment, Saab Automobiles USA, Herschend Family Enterprises, and an Amazon start-up venture. In addition, he authored, *Love Works: Seven Timeless Principles for Effective Leaders*, detailing how to integrate love, the verb, into the leadership ethos and philosophy of any organization. *Love Works* has sold over 100,000 copies and has been re-released in an expanded and updated version. Joel received an M.B.A. from Harvard Business School and a B.S. from Albion College.

One day Mom and I attended my parent-teacher conference together with Miss Pray. It wasn't normal for the student to attend, but Miss Pray had requested my presence. I assumed it was going to be a great meeting. Perhaps she would bestow some kind of honor on me; after all, I had straight A's and perfect attendance.

Miss Pray began the meeting by speaking directly to my mother and explaining that I was an excellent student. She said I grasped concepts quickly and was able to apply them in various situations. She appreciated my focus, attendance, and behavior while she was teaching. Things were going just as I'd expected.

Suddenly my eyes widened when she said, "Mrs. Manby, I wanted Joel to be here so we could discuss an issue together. I would like to speak to him directly, but I wanted you here so you could hear my words and help Joel become a better person."

Forty years later, thinking about that conversation still opens a pit in my stomach. It came as a complete shock, and I had no clue what she was about to say. Miss Pray looked directly at me. "Joel, you are a gifted leader. I have seen many people come through these halls, and you are at the very top in your ability to gain people's trust, take control of a situation, rally those around you, and get things done."

I still wondered where all this was headed. So far it sounded pretty good, but I knew more was coming. Miss Pray continued, "However, you are a very poor listener. I have watched you take over a class project group when you were not even assigned to be the leader. Then, what's worse, you didn't listen to others in the group when they tried to speak. You interrupted them and often cut them off."

She wasn't finished. "I have also watched you on the kick-ball field during intramurals. You weren't the captain, but you took over and wouldn't listen to people—you just directed

them where to go. Your friend Jeff was very upset because you wouldn't listen to his thoughts about who should play where."

As the truth of her words began to sink in, she made her closing statement. "Joel, when you don't listen to others, it sends them a very negative and unflattering message. You are telling them they are not important. You are telling them you are better than they are. You have the natural ability to be a great leader, but you are going to have to fix your listening skills or you will be limited in how far you can go."

I sat there in silence, a bit stunned. I felt horrible, and deep down I knew her assessment was accurate. Mom thanked Miss Pray for her care and concern, and we left. I never forgot that day. Miss Pray cared enough to call me out, and that made me a better leader going forward. I was failing to trust my classmates and friends, and that failure would have crippled my ability to lead.

Trust me, Miss Pray was right. When we interrupt or respond without taking account of what others have said, we send several messages—none of them good:

My idea is greater than your idea, so I don't have to listen.

Interrupting you is okay because your response isn't that important.

I'm not listening to you because I'm already preparing my response.

The truth is this: Interrupting is a sign of distrust.

That's a strong statement, but it's undeniable. Hard-driving leaders who often interrupt will always justify their behavior. "I already know where that person's headed, and I want to save time." Or, "I'm just efficient and don't have time to waste." If interruption is seen as simply being rude, many leaders don't think it needs to be changed—a little rudeness in an organization

isn't the end of the world. However, when leaders understand that interrupting others shows a lack of trust, the notion of rudeness gains significance.

Would your employees or coworkers rate you as a good listener or a poor listener? Would they say you listen without interrupting? Would they say you hear them? If you struggle with listening well, as I did early in my life and career, these simple steps can help:

- 1. Don't say, "I understand how you feel, but ..."** Most people won't feel that you understand, especially if you discount their thinking and immediately move in a different direction.
- 2. Instead, summarize what you've heard.** If you really trust them, they will agree with your summary and feel as if their idea has been given a fair hearing.
- 3. If you go a different direction, articulate why.** Always try to explain your logic when differing with some of your team. They may not agree, and that's okay, but you'll all know what everyone is thinking.

Listening well is critical because it demonstrates trust and builds a team's sense of camaraderie and cohesion. Poor listening is more than forgivable rudeness; it's a breach of trust and not a quality of leading with love.

CHAPTER 3

WHAT DO YOU NEED TO: START – STOP – CONTINUE? FRANK LIO

Originally posted March 28, 2013

START

**What should we/
I start doing?**

List ideas/items:

- Things are not being done, but should be done
- Things to begin doing to get better results
- Things worth trying or experimenting for better results

STOP

**What should we/
I stop doing?**

List ideas/items:

- Things that are not working or helping
- Things that impede or are not practical
- Not delivering desired results
- We or others dislike

CONTINUE

**What should we/
continue doing?**

List ideas/items:

- Things that are working well
- Things that we want to keep
- Worth continuing to see if they're worthwhile
- We like or need

This exercise is a great way to pause, be mindful, reflect, and take action. We use the Start – Stop – Continue method to discuss processes, values and behaviors at work. I initially

Frank Lio is a Product Manager, Strategist, and Change Agent in the Hi-Tech industry. His growing track record of successes include creating 3 winning software products, leading nationwide seminars, and turning around failing businesses. He is currently serving a dual role as Global Product Support Lead at Instron ITW.

thought that it was corny but have learned to embrace it for its simplicity and results and now even apply it to my personal life.

It's very useful for creating respectful, honest and meaningful communication in group meetings. Choose a topic, behavior, situation, or subject for discussion, e.g., Sales Support, Customer Communication, Being Respectful, etc. and then follow the next three steps:

Step 1. START – List things/behaviors that would be beneficial to START doing.

Step 2. STOP – List things/behaviors being done that that are not working (I/we should STOP doing them).

Step 3. CONTINUE – List things/behaviors currently done that should CONTINUE being done.

It's that simple! For groups, you can use a whiteboard with the three headers (Start – Stop – Continue) on three separate blank sections and fill in the sections together, or dedicate three separate flip charts for each discussion topic. You may want to start with a particular section (recommended) or you can jump back and forth depending on what thoughts come to mind. You may also want to break a large group into three subgroups with each smaller group tackling one section and then have all three subgroups share their work in a final wrap-up discussion.

Here's my (short) example reflecting on a role as a Husband (I am definitely a work in progress):

START

- Paying full attention when wife talks
- Waking up earlier to help get kids ready for school
- Helping with the dishes
- Giving wife a break on weekends from the kids, etc.
- Talking more when she asks about my day at work
- Helping with the kids' homework
- Flushing the toilet after use

STOP

- Grumbling when wife mentions her brother
- Mumbling when wife takes too long in the bathroom
- Telling the kids to look for mommy for everything
- Napping on week-ends
- Buying frozen food that no one else eats
- Nudging wife when one of the kids wakes up a night

CONTINUE

- Saying "I love you" before going to bed
- Helping with the food shopping
- Leaving the toilet seat down (or is it supposed to be up?)

The technique may seem rather simplistic but it is proven and works.

CHAPTER 4

ASSUMING AND GUESSING

Kent Stroman

*Originally posted on June 24, 2013.
Excerpted with permission of Kent Stroman
from his book, Asking about Asking*

I have seen countless mistakes made in fundraising. Perhaps the most natural mistake would be for us to assume or to guess. The problem with assuming or guessing is that it is time consuming, counterproductive, and eventually frustrates everyone involved.

The very act of asking is, in itself, a certain kind of discipline. In a lot of ways it's much easier to simply guess. It seems that we all have a natural inclination to guess about things we're not certain of. But guessing is a very risky business.

M. Kent Stroman teaches passionately, consults wisely, writes creatively, speaks inspirationally and helps willingly. He is a Certified Fund Raising Executive (CFRE) whose counsel has been honed by more than forty years' experience in nonprofit leadership, fundraising, strategic planning, capital campaigns, major donor solicitation and financial management. Kent loves learning, reading, traveling, singing, cooking, eating, and fun! You can connect with Kent at: www.stromanconsulting.com. His books are most readily available on Amazon.

When involved in a simple transaction it really doesn't matter if we guess incorrectly. When you step up to the counter at your local hamburger joint the server may guess that you want ketchup, onions, pickles, and mustard on your burger. And if he guesses wrong, the fix is rather simple. Not a big deal. Right?

When the stakes are greater—as in the case of a major gift decision—why would we even consider not asking? Here are some of the excuses I have heard:

"It takes too much time."

"I will look ignorant if I ask about something so elementary."

"I already have a 'pretty good idea' without asking."

"This topic seems a little too personal for me to be asking about."

"If I ask it may seem like I don't already know something I should."

"I don't want to seem as if I didn't do my homework beforehand."

Etc., etc.

These are some of the fears and concerns that will nag at the back of our mind, causing us to take the bigger risk of guessing.

How do people react when we ask the kind of questions recommended on these pages? My experience is that they realize and appreciate our genuine interest. They find a certain enjoyment in talking about themselves. Oftentimes they will learn something about themselves. Or organize their thoughts in ways they haven't done before. Or recall a happy memory that seemed to have been long forgotten.

So let me offer my strongest recommendation: Never guess when you can ask. Why not use some of the real questions we suggest throughout this book? Such as:

"How did you become so successful in your career?"

"How did you learn to give?"

"What would you like your gifts to accomplish?"

"How do you decide which projects to support with your own time and money?"

"What are your top three charitable interests this year?"

"What gift did you make that has brought you the most joy?"

"Why?"

Be ready to listen. Be ready to learn. And be ready for your relationship to grow. It's inevitable.

If you're particularly hesitant to ask an important question—simply ask for permission first. *"Could I have your permission to ask how you learned to be so generous?"*

Certainly the possibility exists that someone may respond negatively to such a request for permission. But that has never happened to me. My experience is: When a polite request is made, with a genuine interest, and sincerity of purpose—people are happy to grant their consent. And they often will respond in a way that answers other questions that you might not even think to ask.

Sometimes the consequences of assuming and guessing are minimal. Other times they are enormous.

Pete Alonzo was one of those persons described in the book, *The Millionaire Next Door*. He maintained a very modest

lifestyle and had acquired his wealth by years of hard work and extreme frugality. Harley Drummond was an aggressive fundraiser, but was much better at telling than asking. He had been calling on Pete for many years, and was frustrated at his seeming lack of progress toward securing a large gift that Pete could easily make.

When I was brought into the solicitation process, I wanted to understand the background as fully as possible. So, I began to ask. I asked about the prospect; his giving history, his preferences and priorities, his family and his plans for the future. Then I asked about the previous attempts Harley had made to engage Pete. After some time I discovered several problems with the solicitation efforts. Rather than cover all of them at this time, let me illuminate the most serious.

Harley was aware that Pete's children were married and had families of their own, and that Pete lived by himself. Assuming that Pete's wife was deceased, Harley had repeatedly approached Pete with the proposition that he might make a sizeable gift to memorialize the mother of Pete's children. The sad reality was that the woman was not dead. They were divorced!

Needless to say, the naming gift never materialized. The fact that a gift of several hundred thousand dollars did transpire is almost miraculous. But there was a long season of 'repair work' necessary before a successful 'ask' could ever be made. Of course it's easy to see the problem now: one mammoth-sized assumption that could easily have been avoided with one or two simple questions.

Always ask. You'll save yourself immeasurable embarrassment and difficulty.

CHAPTER 5

10 BEST QUESTIONS EVER

Dan Rockwell

Originally posted on October 23, 2014

If you're interested in building relationships, start asking questions. If you're interested in enhancing your opportunities and reaching higher, start asking questions. If you want to honor someone, ask them a question.

Asking questions is the smartest thing you can do.

Most important, asking a question creates silence and silence is the ultimate opportunity.

10 Best Questions Ever

1. At the end of a conversation—"Is there anything I should be asking?"
2. While talking with a passionate person—"What's important to you, right now?"

Dan Rockwell's daily leadership blog LeadershipFreak is designed to help leaders reach higher in 300 words or less. He is currently surpassing a million views a year. Dan also presents, trains, coaches and mentors current and emerging leaders/managers. And in addition, enables individuals and organizations to leverage social media to achieve strategic objectives.

Learn more at www.leadershipfreak.blog/

3. At the beginning of a meeting—"Why are we here?"
4. At the end of a meeting—"Who does what, by when?"
5. Any time—"How can I help?"
6. When receiving criticism or advice—"Where will your suggestions take us?"
7. With your wife—"What can I do that makes you feel loved?"
8. With your husband—"What can I do that makes you feel respected?"
9. With your children—"What am I doing that frustrates you?"
10. Within your own mind—"What vision drives me right now?"

Bonus question when conversations are ending—"Do you have any questions?"

Bonus stupid question—"Why do psychics have to ask your name?"

Reminder: Always follow a question with silence.

Which question can you use today? What questions do you like asking?

CHAPTER 6

ARE YOU ASKING QUESTIONS THAT EMPOWER OR DISEMPOWER?

Michael Marquardt

Originally posted on February 16, 2015

*Excerpted with permission of Michael Marquardt,
from his book *Leading with Questions*, Second Edition*

One of the reasons that questions cause trouble is that we often ask the wrong questions—that is, questions that disempower others.

Questions that disempower focus on the reasons why the person did not or cannot succeed. Such questions result in a defensive or reactive mode, immediately casting the blame on the other person. (Sometimes leaders purposely do this to escape any blame or responsibility themselves.) Poor questions

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drain energy from the individual and cause reaction rather than creation.

Here are some examples of disempowering questions:

Why are you behind schedule?

What's the problem with this project?

Who isn't keeping up?

Don't you know better than that?

We end up creating that which we focus on. By asking disempowering questions, the leader closes the gateway to identifying paths to success. Such questions prevent people from having the opportunity to clarify misunderstandings or achieve goals. What's wrong? Questions threaten self-esteem and thereby cause people to get mired in their problems. And once in this defensive mode, people are more likely to see themselves as part of the problem rather than as the source of possible solutions.

Empowering questions, on the other hand, get people to think and allow them to discover their own answers, thus developing self-responsibility and transference of ownership for the results. Such questions can help them realize how they are contributing to the whole. Empowering questions build positive attitudes and self-esteem; they remove blocks and open people up to unexpected possibilities while inviting discovery, creativity, and innovation.

Empowering questions help develop alignment within teams and draw out the optimum performance from individual members and the team as a whole. They create a high-energy, high-trust environment and enable people to identify, clarify, and express their wants or needs. Such questions encourage people

to take risks, nurture deep relationships, and dissolve resistance to change.

Empowering questions enhance your energy level as they focus on what is already working, what can become energizing and supportive, and how best to clarify and achieve common objectives. They also focus on benefits and yield responses that support movement forward toward the objectives.

Jean Halloran, HR manager for Hewlett-Packard, notes that in empowering others, the leader must resist the urge to give people advice. When people ask for help, the leader needs to ask questions so that they come up with their own answers.

So Marilee Goldberg suggests that, instead of asking dis-empowering questions—such as “Why are you behind schedule?” or “What’s the problem with this project?”—Empowering Leaders ask questions such as these:

- How do you feel about the project thus far?
- What have you accomplished so far that you are most pleased with?
- How would you describe the way you want this project to turn out?
- Which of these objectives do you think will be easiest to accomplish?
- Which will be most difficult?
- What will be the benefits for our customers if you can meet all these objectives— for our company, for our team, for you personally?
- What key things need to happen to achieve the objective?
- What kind of support do you need to ensure success?

CHAPTER 7

ASK PROFOUND QUESTIONS . . . GET PROFOUND ANSWERS

Bobb Biehl

Originally posted on February 22, 2016

**If you ask profound questions, you'll get profound answers;
If you ask shallow questions, you'll get shallow answers;
And if you ask no questions at all, you get no answers at all.**

The key to focusing your thinking is asking profound questions. Without focusing and getting to clarity you cannot lead. You cannot motivate. You cannot plan. You cannot communicate. Without a clear head you cannot stay confident, keep balanced, maintain motivation, or become or keep organized.

Bobb Biehl is an executive mentor. He has consulted personally with over 500 senior executives. In that time, he has met one-to-one with over 5,000 executives. Based on these thousands of hours of practical "rubber-meets-the-runway" experience, he has originated 40 leadership / management tools (books, tapes, notebooks) in the area of personal and organizational development—all of which are available to you at www.bobbbiehl.com.

Focusing is the key to growing into your full potential. See yourself as a lifelong student: always growing, always seeking, always clarifying, always taking the next step. There are three key words I'd like you to understand because it's a principle I want you to understand for life: *focusing by asking*.

The way to get your focus clearer is by asking profound questions. This article is about teaching you what profound questions to ask to turn the fog in your head into crystal-clear energizing, unlocking, releasing, and expanding in your ability to focus.

WISDOM

Who's the wisest person you know? Let me suggest that one of the characteristics of this person is that they ask profound, penetrating questions.

I've collected questions for about 20 years, but until recently I couldn't tell people why it was so important. I just didn't have the language. I didn't have the concept to tell them. But here's why it's so important. *If you ask profound questions, you get profound answers; if you ask shallow questions, you get shallow answers; and if you ask no questions, you get no answers at all.* Without good questions, you are left in the position of making unwise decisions because you haven't thought things through for yourself. You're just parroting other people's thinking.

MATURITY

The single-word focus that I would give you about asking is the word maturity. A mature person asks great questions. Maturity is putting process between opportunity and decision. An example would be this: The immature person gets the opportunity to buy a car. The person selling the car says, "Hey, how do you like my Jaguar?" The immature buyer says, "I like it! I'll buy it!"

There's no process between the opportunity to buy it and the decision to buy it.

A mature person, on the other hand, says, "I like your Jaguar, may I ask you a few questions? How many miles does it have on it? What are you asking for it? Has it ever been in an accident?" This person asks a few questions that put process between an opportunity to buy something and a decision to buy something. *How do you find the questions that let you think for yourself and have crystal-clear focus on what you're about?*

Number one, ask profound questions before deciding anything. Number two, make a hobby of collecting questions for a lifetime. Number three, carry questions with you all of the time.

FACTS

Back to number one. Peter Drucker, who was the father of modern management—he probably wrote 20 books on management in America and consulted with the presidents of both government and industry—made this statement, "Once the facts are clear, the decisions jump out at you." You know that if you've got all the facts, making the decision is easy. What's hard and stressful is trying to make a decision without the facts. So before you make any kind of decision, make sure you've got some good questions to place between the opportunity and the decision.

COLLECT QUESTIONS

Secondly, make a hobby of collecting questions for a lifetime. I would encourage you to start today making your collection of questions. Ask your best friends, ask the leaders you know in your life, "What are your all-time favorite questions? What questions do you ask before making a major decision? What ques-

tions would you ask before you risk money? What questions would you ask at this point in my career? What questions would you ask before you decide to sell something or buy something or adopt a child or build a house?"

CARRY QUESTIONS

Third, carry a copy of the questions that you collect. Somewhere in your briefcase, in your purse, or in your computer, keep a list of questions that you put between opportunity and decision.

One question I've added to my own lifelong list came as a result of a board meeting. We were having a discussion involving several million dollars and the direction we should head on a new building project. We had been discussing it and debating it and wrestling with it for probably two hours. Then Bill Hybels asked a question that was an absolute fog cutter. He asked one simple question:

"What would be the ideal solution long term?"

The minute he asked it, everyone in the room knew what the answer was. We were trying to deal with it on a short-term basis. He asked one profound question, the discussion lasted about 30 seconds more, and it was done. It was done.

One question cut the fog out of the entire discussion. When you find questions like that, grab them, collect them, and keep them with you. Ask them at just precisely the right time, and people will say, "Wow! What a profound question that was. What an amazing leader this person is." Where do you get questions like that? You don't have to create them, just collect them.

CHAPTER 8

CAN YOU ACTUALLY HELP PEOPLE BY JUST ASKING THEM QUESTIONS?

Hal Mayer

Originally posted on March 3, 2016

Over the years I have discovered when people bring me their problems and ask for help, if I am able to use this questioning model—it is a win/win. Here is an actual coaching conversation I had with an individual in front of 70 people. I was attempting to model how to use questions to lead. I have changed names, except mine.

Hal Mayer is an accomplished Executive Coach, devoted husband, proud father, and loving grandfather. With years of experience in shaping and developing leaders, Hal has become a trusted guide for those aspiring to achieve excellence in leadership. His book, *Smart Ask? Questions That Lead Your Team to Win*, delves into the art and science of question-based leadership, offering valuable insights on how and why effective questioning drives team success. Learn more at www.halmayer.com.

Hal: Who has a real problem or situation they are struggling with and would like some coaching? I will not embarrass you. Tanisha raised her hand and I invited her to the front.

Hal: Tanisha, what is the problem you would like some help with?

Tanisha: I am the children's minister here and I need more volunteers.

Hal: Ok. Let's talk about that. Let's set a goal for the meeting. Can we do that?

Tanisha: Yes, if you could help me get 10 new volunteers; that would make a productive day for me.

Hal: Let's clarify our goal a little bit. What can we do in this meeting that will help achieve your goal? We are not going to call people and list them here. So, what could we do?

Tanisha: Okay. If I could leave with a couple good ideas on how I could enlist new people that would make for a productive meeting.

Hal: Perfect! Let's go. Tell me what is happening now in children's ministry and what you have tried?

Tanisha: The church is growing fast, we have been adding services and are behind on enlisting children's leaders, we lost some people to moving away. All this happened at a really crucial time and I needed to build the children's pipeline back up. I tried pulpit announcements and e-mails and it hasn't worked and I need something new to do.

Hal: Let me ask you this question. If you could try and do anything, and money was not an object, what would you do to find new volunteers? Would you mind if I write these down—I will give the sheet to you at the end?

Tanisha: OK. Anyone who volunteered to serve I would buy them movie tickets.

Hal: Alright lets build a list, what else?

Tanisha: I would give them \$100.00 to serve.

Hal: OK. What else?

Tanisha: We could give an announcement from the pulpit.

Hal: Anything else?

Tanisha: We could send an e-mail with a link they could click, which would reply back to my leaders and me.

Hal: OK, anything else?

Tanisha: We could have lemonade stand in the lobby during all the services and staff it with kids and workers and have applications available?

Hal: OK, Anything else?

Tanisha: I could hall tackle 3 people a week and ask them if they would serve?

Hal: Alright, anything else? At that point she was out of ideas. I said, OK, let's talk about these. I read and show the list to her; you mentioned offering movies tickets, paying people \$100.00 to serve, a pulpit announcement, sending an e-mail, a lemonade stand, and you mentioned hall tackling people. Which one of those interests you and you would like to talk further about?

Tanisha: I would really like to talk about the lemonade stand.

Hal: Ok, tell me about your ideas for the lemonade stand? (I continue to take notes.)

Tanisha: We would give free lemonade and staff it with kids and workers. We would have a video running in the background about our ministry and applications available to

complete. We would focus on talking to people who would stop and look.

Hal: If you did this, when would you do it?

Tanisha: This is Tuesday; I would do it this Sunday.

Hal: Wow, that is a quick turn around. What would you need to get ready?

Tanisha: I would need a TV from AV and get it set up. I would need to enlist people to be there and would need the lemonade.

Hal: Is there anything else?

Tanisha: No, I think that is everything.

Hal: Is there anything that could derail this plan? Something unforeseen? (She thought for a moment.)

Tanisha: Well, I better involve leadership and make sure they are on board with this plan. I don't want to move forward if there is a problem and we need to cancel.

Hal: That is a good plan. Anything else?

Tanisha: No.

Hal: Alright, here is the deal. (I show her my notes, again.) You said, you will set up a lemonade stand and staff it with kids and workers, have a video in the background on how exciting it is to work in children's ministry. Have applications available to get people started with volunteering. Right?

Tanisha: Yes.

Hal: And, you are going to do it this Sunday?

Tanisha: Yes.

Hal: And, you have the things you need?

Tanisha: Yes.

Hal: OK, when you do it, I am not going to be here, but would you to take a picture and tag me on Instagram.

Tanisha: Yes!

Hal: (Show her the notes again) Did we reach our goal? Our goal was to get an idea or a few ideas?

Tanisha: Yes, we did.

Hal: (Debrief for those wondering why I did each level)

The meeting took about 20 minutes. I began with the question, "Tell me what is going on?" Let them say what their needs are. This will allow them to draw focus on their challenge. Then ask, Let's set a goal. What is important with the goal is to set one, which can be completed in that meeting. Then talk with them about what they have tried and the things that are happening within the ministry. Then ask them, "If money wasn't an object what would they try?" The reason for these questions is to listen, build a list, and not evaluate by saying no. I don't want to qualify their ideas. I only write them down. I always ask permission to take notes, because I give them a copy of the notes.

This helps to get the flow going as long as I am not evaluating their ideas. People may begin with ideas they often know will not work. But, it is ok to let them get it out of the way. They will continue moving down the list and I will ask many times, "is there anything else?" I may ask them this 10 times. It may feel like I am asking the question a lot but it doesn't feel that way to them. Then I would read the list back to them and ask, "Any one of these interests you?"

Then they will talk about the one they are interested in. The key to understand is people are going to do the best work on what they are interested in not necessarily what you think is the best idea. As long as it makes sense and it fits within our vision, that is OK. Their buy-in is the key.

Then I help them set some objectives. I ask, "What would it take to get this idea ready?" They would make the list. Then I would ask, "What could happen that might block this?" They may not have thought of something. They may mention a few thoughts and you would talk through those challenges and solutions. Afterwards, you say, "OK, great! Let me know how it goes."

I used questions the whole way through, not to tell Tanisha what to do—she was the expert but to help her work through the maze." What happens often times for leaders is we get this haze going and this mist where it is hard to see what is going on. With questions we can help them draw focus. You will notice that I did not qualify anything she said, I did not pick the item she wanted to work on. All I did was ask questions to help her draw focus. It is often the case a few weeks after the meeting. They will try to contact me, but I am unavailable and they begin to ask themselves the same questions. What they realize is that they do not have to ask Hal the questions. They can ask themselves the questions. Then they begin what is called self-coaching. Just a few ideas I have used to coached individuals and I hope you find these helpful.

CHAPTER 9

“IS THIS THE BEST YOU CAN DO?” —HENRY KISSINGER ON WORK ETHIC

Brad Sullivan

Originally posted June 2, 2016

Nobody is perfect. I think it's safe to say that at some point or another in our professional and personal lives we have for lack of a better word, “slacked off.”

We didn't meet the boss's expectations but instead settled for mediocrity. Maybe we under delivered our canned response, “I will give 110% in everything I do!” that we desperately repeated ad nauseam during our first job interview.

Our work may not always amount to perfection but one thing we can control is the ability to manage our attitude towards it. It's called “work ethic.”

I'd like to share a fun little anecdote I was told while interning in Washington D.C. years ago about the importance of being confident in your work ethic featuring former Secretary

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of State, Henry Kissinger, and his speech writer at the time, Winston Lord.

THE STORY

During the late sixties & early seventies, Winston Lord had been tasked with three of the biggest foreign policy projects: the opening to China, bringing the Vietnam War to a close, and attempt to improve relations with the Russians.

Speech writing for Henry Kissinger and Richard Nixon fell under one of the many political duties as the Ambassador to China. Not the easiest job considering Kissinger was a speech writer himself and harsh critic.

The story goes that Lord prepares and submits a “first” draft of a speech to Kissinger one evening.

Kissinger then calls Lord the next morning for feedback on the speech and asks:

“Is this the best you can do?”

Lord replies “Henry, I thought so, but I’ll try again.”

Lord then goes back to the drawing board, tweaks, revises and resubmits another a draft a few days later.

The next day, Kissinger calls Lord into his office and again asks “Are you sure this is the best you can do?”

Lord begins to question his work and says “Well, I really thought so. I’ll try one more time.”

Believe it or not, this uncomfortable and rejecting process goes on for EIGHT times; EIGHT drafts; each time Kissinger standing firm to his original feedback of “Is this the best you can do?”

Lord returns to Kissinger’s office with the now NINTH draft and awaits his response.

Surely enough, Kissinger calls Lord in the next day and asks him the same question, “Is this the best you can do?”

Lord, now completely fed up, furiously replies “Henry! I’ve beaten my brains out—this is the ninth draft! I know it’s the best I can do; I can’t possibly improve one more word!!!”

Kissinger then looks at Lord and nonchalantly says “Well, in that case, now I’ll read it.”

THE TAKEAWAY

While you may never encounter a boss as ruthless as Henry Kissinger, his bittersweet lesson should serve as a reminder to always challenge yourself to perform the very best work you’re capable of doing.

The next time you are preparing for a big presentation or assignment, really ask yourself “Is this the best work I can do?”

Be confident in your abilities, demand excellence of yourself and don’t ever settle for anything less than great work.

CHAPTER 10

THE 3 BEST QUESTIONS TO ASK MILLENNIALS

Dan Negroni

Originally posted on December 12, 2016

The only way to get powerful answers is by asking powerful questions. And powerful questions are the key to creating authentic relationships and connecting with anyone—especially millennials. As a manager, finding a way to relate with your millennial workers is critical . . . and not just because generation Y is way different than boomers and gen Xers, but because they will soon be the most dominant group in the workforce. Don't know what to ask? Here are some great questions that will help you get to know your millennials in no time.

Dan Negroni, Author, Speaker, Attorney, Business Consultant, Coach, and proud Dad of a few Millennials delivers actionable solutions. Different from all other millennial experts, Dan's empowering business approach at LaunchBox, creates quick value and seamless connections with millennials and management each on their own terms. Using unique content and delivery methods that audiences respond to immediately he leverages results from the inside out. Learn more at www.dannegroni.com.

1. What do you need from me to help you learn, grow, and provide value?

Understanding the needs of your millennial workers is key to creating powerful relationships. Expressing you care enough about them to teach them is what they (and all of us) are seeking. This question will allow you to discover what your workers honestly need and in turn find challenging. And since you made it about them, you can trust the answer. Another surprising benefit is that your millennials may reveal potential flaws and inefficiencies within your company or your direct relationship with them. These 20 somethings are smarter than we give credit. This simple question may lead to discovering the strengths and weaknesses of your millennials and connection. As a manager, this will give you insight into what areas you need to focus on to deliver value to your team while also understanding what your workers excel in and where they would perform best. We call it bridging the gap on their terms, not yours.

2. What do you care most about?

Everyone loves this question because it is directly about them. It's well known that millennials skew more toward seeking purpose in the workplace. This question will allow you to get to know your millennial workers on a deeper level—it will reveal your employee's "why." Once you understand what inspires and drives your millennials, you can figure out how to align individual, team and company's goals. Understanding what motivates millennials is key to your success. This crossover is where the magic happens.

Bonus, you may find that your millennials have similar values and ambitions, which opens the way up for an authentic relationship to form. Millennials want you to be a trusted resource, a mentor, not just their boss. This question shows you are

making an effort to get to know them personally and show up for them. It designates respect for them. Make an effort, show you care and be authentic. This question will help you accomplish all three!

3. How can you be most helpful to the company?

At LaunchBox, we teach millennials to identify their strengths so they can communicate what they are best at. We operate best when we lead from our strengths and can articulate and communicate our value. Personal interests usually correlates with skill, so if this question doesn't get the answer you want, go deeper, ask them about what they enjoy doing (an activity where they lose track of time, forget to eat, etc.)

Don't judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree. This question will help you place your millennials in the optimal position for the company, which is likely the most optimal position for them personally.

Bottom lining you. . . . Ask, ask, ask! Unless you make an effort to reach out and ask your millennials questions, you won't bridge the generational gap. Use the power of questions and create awesome, authentic relationships today!

CHAPTER 11

LISTEN—I HEAR A GIFT

Jerold Panas

Originally posted on December 5, 2016

If you have read anything I've written or have heard me at a Seminar, you know the importance I give to the art of listening. It's the gospel I preach. I consider it the single most powerful ammunition in your arsenal of fundraising, marketing, and selling skills. Best of all, it's a talent that can be learned and acquired.

Here are some observations I want to pass on.

If you listen carefully, very carefully—you will hear a gift.

1. It often shows an extraordinary command of the language to say nothing.
2. There is no greater compliment to a person than demonstrating a keen interest in them. You do this by listening intently.

Jerold Panas (1928–2018) was the world's leading consultant in philanthropy and the CEO of Jerold Panas, Linzy and Partners, the largest consulting firm in the world for advising nonprofit organizations on fundraising.

3. We are each blessed with two ears and one mouth—a constant reminder that we should listen twice as much as we talk.
4. Keeping quiet at the right moments is an important ingredient for an open communication and a good conversation.
5. Listening is the most effective possible to build and enhance a relationship.
6. Probe and ask questions. You do this not for the sake of having something to say—but to gain information and better understanding.
7. What should you listen for? The little things. Everything.
8. Listen with your eyes.
9. Listen with your body.
10. Unless you know what you're listening for, it may be difficult to know if you have the information you need when you hear it. Prepare carefully before your meeting.
11. You don't listen to respond. You listen to gain information.
12. Tilt your head slightly when listening. It demonstrates interest.
13. Studies show that occasionally you should nod slightly three times (yes, three times!). People will talk three to four times as much when you follow this process.
14. Listen to context, listen for content, and you'll listen effectively.
15. The better you listen, the smarter you get.
16. Make certain you know more about the person than they know about you. You do this by listening.
17. Maintain positive eye contact. It shows interest.
18. What you don't know or you don't find out might hurt you if you don't listen.

- 19.** What you do know will only help.
- 20.** The better you listen, the more you realize how little you know.
- 21.** Smile! It dramatically affects how people respond to you. And they will smile back.
- 22.** Most of us know how to keep silent. But few know when. (Most of the time! Except when you are probing and asking questions.)
- 23.** When you talk too much, it is hard to remember all you said—and harder still to remember what they said.
- 24.** If you don't ask the right questions, you'll never get the right answers.
- 25.** Open questions (How? Why? What? When?) allow the respondent an opportunity to provide a full and revealing answer.
- 26.** If you find yourself talking more than twenty-five percent of the time, there's a good chance you will never hear the necessary information. Listen seventy-five percent of the time.
- 27.** Successful selling and marketing is not as much about knowing the right answers as it is about knowing the right questions.
- 28.** Questions unlock hearts and minds.
- 29.** A question not asked is a door that's not opened.
- 30.** Instead of a to-do list, consider a to-ask list to see what questions you really need answers to.
- 31.** When you ask a question and you pause, suddenly the listener is once again the focal point.
- 32.** When you want to persuade, you always get further by asking a question than by making a statement.

- 33.** You don't have all the answers. But what you must have are all the questions.
- 34.** If you want to change hearts and minds, ask questions.
- 35.** I never learn anything when I talk. I only learn when I ask questions.
- 36.** You honor the other person when you ask questions.
- 37.** Listen as if you're hard of hearing!

CHAPTER 12

IF YOU ASK A QUESTION, YOU GOTTA LISTEN TO THE ANSWER

Edward Elliott

Original post on January 30, 2017

Walking between flights at Newark Liberty Airport today, a woman standing at a sales kiosk spoke to me, “Sign up for our credit card. 30,000 frequent flier miles for signing. Wouldn’t you like a free flight?”

“I already have your card.”

“Sign up for our credit card,” she said—again.

She hadn’t listened to my answer.

It’s embarrassing. You ask a question. You’re being polite—maybe not interested in the answer. Your friend answers, and

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you follow with silence. What did he say? Oops. Awkward. And the friend gets the message. You weren't really interested.

I suppose we've all done it. A couple months ago there was an article in the *Wall Street Journal: While You're Talking, the Therapist is Thinking*. . . . Dr. Paul Hokenmeyer, a psychotherapist was interviewed.

WSJ: "Does your mind wander?"

Dr. H: "Frequently. Most of the time it wanders back to the session I had with the last patient and what I should have done differently."

Whoa. When my mind wanders in the middle of a conversation, it's pretty easy to know what I wish I had done differently. I wish I had concentrated!

Dr. H: "It can also wander if the patient is avoiding connecting and filling the time with superfluous details. I'll start to think about the dry cleaning or what I can have for dinner."

We're not alone. Minds wander. But it's not a good idea! What does it say to the person we're talking with? Maybe, "You're not important to me." Or, "I was asking the question just to be polite."

In his book, *Great Leaders Ask Questions: A Fortune 100 List*, Bob Tiede suggests stimulating questions that will spawn thought and generate conversation in a myriad of situations. It's practical. And it made me think that if I ask a question, I had better listen to the answer!

I've observed people asking important questions that could result in a meaningful conversation, but not listening to the answer. They missed the opportunity for the conversation. There is a danger of using the question as an insincere tool in the process of accomplishing what one wishes to accomplish.

Here's two questions for you:

- **Why do we make an appointment or set up a business meeting?**
- **Why do we use our cellphone or text someone?**

Chances are our goal is to present our point of view. Sure, we ask for the other person's point of view, but we're only interested in it if it relates to our purpose. If the other person is persuaded to do what we want, to look at things the way we look at them, we have been successful. But have we?

To an extent, the answer is yes. If we make the sale, persuade the person to take responsibility for the project, or solve the problem the way we want it solved, we have experienced a measure of success. Nothing wrong with being successful at our task, but asking a stimulating question, listening carefully to the answer, and asking follow up questions, opens up a whole new world of possibilities.

People love to teach what they know. People sense false motives pretty quickly. Let's say that I'm in sales—something I understand well because much of my early career was serving key accounts. Let's say that I ask a series of questions to make my client consider the strengths of my product. The questions work. She buys the product. The sale is made.

Now let's say that I alter my approach. I decide to ask questions with the sincere intention of learning what is important to my client and to her company. I want her to teach me what she knows. Let's say that the questions are focused on learning how my company can make her successful in her job at her company. The questions aren't routine, they are focused on finding out how my company can be of use. And I listen carefully, take notes, go back to my office and talk to my associates. I figure out if there is a way not only to sell her my product, but to provide her with tools that will make her even more successful at her job.

And I follow up not so much to persuade her to purchase my service, but to provide answers to the issues that came from our discussion—to provide tools that she can use to meet her goals.

By focusing on her answers, my company can have a serious positive impact on her company and her career. I become a valued associate. The product I provide becomes critical to her success. My business grows as hers grows. Not only that, but I learn from that relationship how to better serve other clients. My career, my value to my organization grows. If I work for a ministry, my work in the Kingdom of God, gains traction. It's impact increases.

For that to happen we must ask thoughtful questions AND listen to the answers. In response we must serve well. And then, we all will benefit.

CHAPTER 13

15 QUESTIONS GREAT LEADERS ASK OTHER LEADERS JOSEPH LALONDE

Originally posted on March 23, 2017

Great leaders never stop learning. That's why great leaders never fail to ask other leaders questions about leadership.

These leaders are hungry. They want to grow. They know they can't lead by themselves.

So they ask. And ask. Then ask some more.

Are you asking other leaders questions?

In my interview with Michael Bungay-Stanier, he brought up a great point about leaders need to be curious to coach well. I believe we can take this to the next level.

Not only is curiosity needed to coach well. Curiosity is needed to LEAD well. This leads great leaders to ask questions of those they're around.

Joseph Lalonde has dedicated his life to helping students transform themselves into responsible leaders. He has a strong desire to see young men and women fulfill their calling in leadership. Joseph is an award-winning blogger at www.jmlalonde.com and hosts the Answers from Leadership podcast.

So, what kind of questions do great leaders ask of other leaders? Let's take a look.

1. Who has had a major impact on your leadership? Why?
2. What do you wish you would have known about leadership in your early 20's?
3. How have you coped with failure?
4. Can you share what you've learned from past failures?
5. Is there one book that has impacted your leadership more than any other?
6. Who do you know that I should know?
7. Where do you find your inspiration?
8. How do you decide who to mentor?
9. Do you separate your work life and family life? Why?
10. When faced with two great opportunities, how do you decide which one to go with?
11. What advantages have you seen with social media (or any emerging technology) in business?
12. What steps have you taken to become a better leader? What has been its impact?
13. How do you relax?
14. How do you create a vision for your business that everyone on your team can latch onto?
15. What do you do to stay grounded?

Are you doing what great leaders do? Are you asking other leaders for advice and answers to your burning questions?

Question: What questions are you asking of other leaders?

CHAPTER 14

THE ART OF ACTIVE LISTENING

MARILENA MINUCCI

*Originally posted on April 28, 2017
Excerpted with permission of Marilena Minucci
from her book, Quantum Coaching Questions*

Every time I see Bob Tiede's LWQ in my inbox, I know my brain is in for a treat! It is always a blessing when we come across others who are like-minded and who share our same passions . . . and I am certainly passionate enough about questions to have written a whole book about them.

This is why I was honored to be featured in Bob's blog as I know he has created a truly powerful leadership community of fellow questioners, explorers and all-around curious people.

Marilena Minucci, MS, PCC, NBC-HWC, author of *Quantum Coaching Questions* is the creator of the Quantum Coaching Method™ offering Health & Wellness Coaches a pathway to both National and International certification. Marilena has trained and mentored thousands of coaches sharing her mastery in working more deeply, dynamically and sustainably with clients to create the fulfilling lives they desire. You can learn more at www.quantumcoachingmethod.com.

I am delighted to be included in such great company of those who know that questions not only fill our toolkits but can shape our lives.

As another question lover, Socrates, said, “the unexamined life is not worth living.” Thank you, Bob, for shining a light on this path for me and for all your readers, so that we may continue to seek and find the answers to our most important questions!

In order to ask good questions and to even know what questions to use, one must be a good listener first.

Listening is at the heart of helping. It should be considered your Home Base. When you are not sure what to say, first listen. Then, reflect back what you are hearing and as needed, ask questions.

Beginning coaches often rely too much on asking questions. So do more experienced coaches. I often tell practitioners we have two ears and one mouth. Therefore, we should be listening twice as much as we speak.

Many coaching traditions advocate for as much as 80% listening, especially in the initial sessions. The bottom line is to listen more and talk less. Many people think they are good listeners, but because we live in such a fast-paced world, it is easy to be a summarizer or a person who draws conclusions and diagnoses too quickly. Remember, this is not part of the coaching job description.

Because they are so passionate about serving their clients well, coaches can be easily distracted searching for the next question. A mistake of many new coaches is that they move to solution-finding too quickly. Again, coaching is never about “fixing” but we all have to check in with ourselves when that desire to “make it all better” and provide value for our clients shows up—and it will—from time to time.

Good listening is like slow cooking. That is the rhythm. What needs to be mastered is the Art of Active Listening. This means

listening not only to what is being said, but to what is not being said. To listen between the lines . . . for the feelings, the unsaid thoughts, fears, and desires. This is the place from which the best questions will arise.

REFLECTION/ MIRRORING

Part of Active Listening is reflecting back to the client what you have heard. Reflection is equal in importance to asking powerful questions. We often think we must immediately know the best next question when in fact simple reflection back to your clients can allow their own internal process to blossom and still allow you plenty of time and space to intuit an even more powerful question.

Basic reflection is a simple repetition of or paraphrasing back to the client what you have heard from them.

Client: I am feeling like I am making no progress with my weight.

Coach: You feel you are making no progress with your weight.

More advanced reflection not only holds up the mirror, but also offers a confirmation of the feelings and thoughts that are being expressed. This can sound like:

Coach: It seems you are angry and frustrated about not losing any weight so far—OR—I hear that you are frustrated about not having made more progress—OR—You seem really frustrated and disappointed with yourself for not having made progress with your weight so far.

Then, the client will usually confirm or deny the statement. They may take your implied invitation to go deeper or you can ask them next to “say more about it.” As mentioned earlier,

when the coach does their own work, they are able to hold a much clearer space for their clients.

Attention to when and how to get out of the way of the client is key. This includes always being OK with being wrong. The goal is not for you to get the reflection perfect or to ask the exact, right question or to be a mind-reader coach. It is to create space for the client to explore, express, and refine their thoughts, feelings and actions, and help them get and stay unstuck so they can move forward in their lives.

The most soul-centered description of this process was described best to me by Tom Daly, Ph.D., the creator of 4 Gateways Coaching: "Listen until you disappear." This feels about right to me.

SILENCE AS A QUESTION

When silence comes up between a coach and a client, there arises an inferred question: "And then what?"

When a practitioner is able to be comfortable with silence, they will take their coaching to the next level. Beginners are often quick to fill the silence out of their own need to be helpful. However, the truth is, if a coach can practice holding the silence just a few seconds longer, it is most often the client who will fill the gap. This is when some of the richest parts of the session can emerge.

SHIFTING PERSPECTIVE WITH REFRAMING

Clients often look at a situation through a single lens. As coaches, one invaluable tool we have is to help the client reframe what they are seeing. As its name suggests, when we take an event, belief, or situation out of one particular frame and put

it into another, the client can experience an immediate shift in perspective.

Consider an old picture hanging on the wall day after day which you see only one particular way. Pop it out of its frame, put it into a new one, and hang it on a new wall and you might see things about this scene that you never noticed or appreciated before.

A client feeling disappointed that they have only lost 5 pounds in the last month might feel a little differently about their progress if the coach were to hand them a 5 pound bag of potatoes. They could simply ask the client to consider the possibility that this could look like a great success in light of the fact that they have finally managed to lose weight for the first time in years and keep it off rather than yo-yo up and down.

It is important that the coach does not dismiss the client's feelings, but rather affirm them, and then ask how else they might look at the situation. For example, if a client loses their job and they seem ready to explore the situation a bit further, a coach might say:

- I appreciate your exploring your feelings about what happened and your fears about the future.
- Is there any part of you that has other thoughts, feelings or perspectives about what has happened?
- Could you see any other possibilities coming out of this for you?
- Why might you suppose all this is happening now?
- Could you see how this is happening for you vs. to you?

HONORING THE CLIENT

Practicing the Art of Active Listening keeps the client in the driver's seat and honors that they are the expert of their life and master of their own destiny. When we come from the perspective that the client is not broken and in need of "fixing" and speak to them as if we know they have most of the answers they need within themselves, it can be very affirming and hope giving for the client.

It can also take a lot of pressure off the coach to have to "make magic" and add ease to the coaching relationship. Our work is about holding a sacred space for the client where they can see themselves as whole and capable. Nothing does that faster than offering them the gift of our confidence in them along with our loving attention and presence.

CHAPTER 15

15 OUTSTANDING QUESTIONS LEADERS ASK THEMSELVES EVERYDAY

BRIAN MOHR

Originally posted on April 25, 2017

One trait successful business leaders have is asking themselves important questions each day. By asking themselves the questions below, leaders are able to stay relevant and grow as individuals.

Brian Mohr is co-founder and managing partner for Y Scouts, a purpose-based leadership search firm that connects organizations with exceptional leaders. Y Scouts operates under the belief that people are the only real competitive advantage in business and the best employer/employee connections start by connecting through a shared sense of purpose and values. Previously, Brian worked as a talent strategist and in leadership management for major corporations, including P.F. Chang's China Bistro and Jobing.com. He is a graduate of the Advanced Executive Program at Northwestern University's Kellogg School of Management. Learn more at www.yscouts.com.

WHAT QUESTIONS SHOULD LEADERS ASK THEMSELVES EACH DAY?

We polled the Y Scouts Leadership Community and selected the 15 questions below.

1. What can I hand over?

Leaders sometimes try to take on too much. By asking the question, "What can I hand over," a leader can identify the responsibilities they can afford to let go of and transfer to other members of their team. This allows progress to happen much more quickly.

2. What did I NOT do?

A great leader knows that there isn't time to do it all. By asking the question, "What did I NOT do," a leader can be conscious and deliberate about the things that take time and don't add value.

3. What do I want to accomplish today?

With so many things that happen each day, it's easy to get distracted. By asking yourself what you want to get accomplished, leaders can keep their focus and finish the things that are important.

4. Are my values evident in my leadership?

Great business leaders have a strong set of personal core values, but not every leader leads with these values in mind. Taking the time to ask this simple question will force you to evaluate whether you practice what you believe.

5. Am I doing my best work?

This simple question will cause a leader to evaluate whether they're at their best, or if they're operating at a less than opti-

mum level. The natural follow up question, if the answer is “no,” is “why not?”

6. What can I learn from this?

Leaders fail. It’s a fact of life. Some leaders learn from their mistakes by going to directly to the source and discussing what went wrong. Take the time to talk with your team and learn from your experiences.

7. Who succeeded today?

The success of others ultimately makes your business successful. Good leaders take the time to focus on the success of their team to make sure they’re providing them with opportunities to succeed each day.

8. Why did I get out of bed today?

Not to be confused with the question, “Why am I now in bed right now,” this question focuses on one thing: purpose. Asking the question of what drove you to jump out of bed helps identify what motivates you, and what your purpose for working may be. By keeping this motivation in mind, leaders are able to focus their energy in the right places.

9. What are my sticking points?

Leaders have to get through the bottlenecks and every day problems of their business. By identifying the stumbling blocks of the business, a leader can focus on creating a workable strategy for getting through the issues.

10. What will I do today that will matter in the future?

At the top of every leaders to-do list should be one bigger picture task that will matter in the long run. Just having this big

picture item on the list will help leaders focus on today to create change for the future.

11. Am I enjoying this?

A leader's enthusiasm is contagious and trickles down throughout the organization. If a leader isn't enjoying what they do, then this lack of enjoyment will effect the entire team. Taking a minute to ask if the enjoyment is there will help leaders identify what they enjoy most, and refocus their attitude towards work.

12. Did I work toward my goals?

Purpose-driven leaders rarely lose sight of their goals. Every leader should do an evaluation by asking themselves every day if they've worked toward their goals.

13. What did I achieve?

Keeping track of your daily achievements is a wonderful motivator. Strive to achieve at least one task that gets you closer to your personal goals.

14. How did I treat people today?

Every one from the lunch waitress to the VP of Operations takes notice of how they're treated by a leader. In fact, people often don't remember much else about you other than how they're treated. Asking this simple question will help remind you to treat people well.

15. Did I set the example?

No matter how large your organization, leaders can always lead by example. What kind of example did you set today?

What questions do you ask yourself each day as a leader?

CHAPTER 16

THE DANDELION QUESTION

ROBERT HODGE

Originally posted on June 27, 2017

It all started with a dandelion in an alley in Calgary. A weed in the wrong place, it became the impetus for discovery that may eliminate much petroleum-based pollution. The wonder is in the question that led to innovation.

Most of us might merely pluck such an offending plant. Some might plot a means to permanently eliminate such occurrences. Kelcie Miller-Anderson, 15 at the time, simply wondered:

“How it is that dandelions thrive where other plants do not?”

Starting with her reframed question, Kelcie, now 27, has found answers that may remediate thousands of square miles of soil ruined by oil production in Calgary. Some think her work may become a billion-dollar industry. Kelcie wants to make an impact on the world.

A summary of her work begins in the lab she created in the basement of her home. Kelcie found that a particular fungus

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attaches to the dandelion roots. That fungus “eats” petroleum, releasing sugars that the dandelion feeds upon to not just survive, but thrive. Attaching the fungus to soy beans was thought to offer a solution to a broader need for food, and without all the dandelions. Then, on to oyster mushrooms that can handle Canadian winters better. Ultimately, she is focusing primarily on the fungus. It just gets simpler as she goes along.

There are now about 1,000 references to this young lady on the internet. From oil industry trade magazines to a TED Talk and many awards, people appreciate her ingenuity, drive and results.

WHAT MIGHT WE LEARN FROM KELCIE'S EXPERIENCE TO APPLY ELSEWHERE?

Kelcie was not informed, educated, or limited to more typical research and problem-solving approaches. What may seem to be the best methods to one person may be viewed as a high-walled maze for others who can simply walk to the solution.

Along the way, Kelcie was encouraged by a teacher who did not understand the technology but understood how to learn and how to encourage learners.

Her solution is natural and straight forward rather than exotic. She quotes Einstein that “Imagination is more important than knowledge. For knowledge is limited to all we now know and understand, while imagination embraces the entire world, and all there ever will be to know and understand.” Kelcie looked for what was already working well, then imagined how that could be used in other situations.

Moving between dandelions to tar sands required an openness to cross the boundaries of disciplines.

Kelcie's question demonstrates an appreciative inquiry approach compared with more common problem solving and planning techniques. "What are the strong forces that we may harness for good?" focuses on the dandelion's success. That is a different view than "How do we get rid of it to maintain or improve what we have?" Google "appreciative inquiry" to see the difference.

An Application Example

Rules-oriented people have a reputation of digging their heels in at any suggestion of change in policy or process. They may not handle nuanced suggestions that the "rules" could be slightly revised, altered in interpretation, or ignored, because it is anathema to values of compliance and authority they hold dearly. Are these people just dandelions that should be plucked and tossed?

These fine people can provide the greatest support for new processes or directions. With a well-defined new direction or process as a new rule, and the clear termination of the old rule, they will rush to be in compliance. They will not allow others to undermine or subvert the new direction. They may be some of the greatest supporters of clear and distinct change; less so for slow, vague, or nuanced change. Find out how people around you accommodate change and pave that pathway, leading them their way.

To Ponder

- What is the dandelion question in your leadership and work? Instead of trying to minimize the points of pain within the present plan, how might you reframe the issue to gain new insights and innovation, focusing instead on what is working well?

- That which continues to cause unwanted or unintended problems in your work and life must be powerful. How might you redirect that power to some greater good?
- Where might you find innovative answers outside of your area of knowledge and experience?
- How might you engage others to bring their different knowledge and experience to the table?
- How will you encourage the Kelcie's in your life to learn and grow to their potential?
- How will you provide opportunities for others to experiment, learn and grow, apart from the "high walled maze" of current processes and best practices?

CHAPTER 17

THE ONE TRICK THAT SEEMS RIDICULOUS BUT WORKS EVERY TIME

DAVID KERPEN

*Originally posted on February 22, 2018
Excerpted with permission of David Kerpen
from his book, The Art of People*

"This is stupid and a total waste of my time!" I didn't say that, but boy, was I thinking it. I had taken an entire day off from work for this group I had just joined called the Entrepreneurs' Organization. I was excited to join this forum of seven to nine CEOs whom I'd meet with on a monthly basis, but I had to be trained first. So here I was attending "Forum Training" with seven other entrepreneurs, where I had just been taught about something called mirroring.

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Mirroring, we were told, means repeating back exactly something that someone else in the forum said, word for word, preceded by “I hear you saying” or “I heard you say.” For example, if I heard a forum member say, “I’m feeling worried about losing our biggest client,” I would mirror that person by replying: “I hear you saying you’re feeling worried about losing your biggest client.”

In those few minutes after we were taught how to mirror and began practicing it, I was cynical. I had just spent thousands of dollars to join this organization and had taken an entire precious day off from work to attend this training, and I felt like I was back in kindergarten. What good could saying the exact words back to someone possibly do? It seemed frivolous, fake, and, well, stupid.

Then it was my turn to be mirrored, and everything changed.

I talked for several minutes about pretty deep stuff from my past—my father’s mental illness, my unrequited love for a married woman, my struggles with weight—and the feelings associated with those issues. Afterward, we went around the table, and each person mirrored me by repeating one thing he or she heard me say:

“I heard you say you’ve struggled all of your life with weight and that it feels like a constant battle.”

“I heard you saying you’ve had to deal with your dad’s bipolar disorder for over twenty years and that sometimes it feels really lonely.”

“I heard you say you were in love with a married woman and that felt impossible at the time but that eventually you let her go, and then you ended up together, and that felt amazing.”

"Wow," I thought. I felt heard. I felt listened to. I felt that they really cared about me. I had just met these people that morning, and I felt so close to them. It was the power of mirroring, and it felt amazing. My feelings about mirroring changed forever.

As it turns out, mirroring is a massively powerful concept that allows you to connect deeply to people. It's easier said than done, however. Simply repeating back what you're hearing can help you forge a bond with other people and win their trust, but it also can be interpreted as insincere and inauthentic. There's only one very simple solution to this: *You have to actually care about what you're mirroring.*

If you repeat back out loud what you're hearing in a robotic monotone, people are not going to believe you actually care about what they are saying. But if you repeat it back with emotion, with an emphasis on the important words and feelings that were just spoken, you give it meaning. You help the other person feel heard and listened to. You demonstrate that you care.

People in general don't want advice even when they ask for it. They just want to feel heard. As you practice and get good at mirroring, you will help people feel heard, and they will love you for it. Focus on really emphasizing the "feeling words" you hear as well; mirroring feelings is much more valuable than mirroring thoughts.

Of course, the greater the emotional depth of the conversation is, the more powerful the mirroring can be. If someone says, "I'm feeling okay. Took the kids to school and did some laundry," simply mirroring back "I hear you say you're feeling okay after taking the kids to school and doing some laundry" won't make as big an impact as mirroring a deeper statement would. Even so, as ridiculous as it seemed to me at first and as

ridiculous as you may think it is, mirroring is an incredible tool for connecting with others.

One caveat: Don't bungle their words. Remember, the reason mirroring is so powerful is that the person being mirrored feels totally heard. If she says, "I'm upset over the work that you did; it's sloppy," and you reply with "I hear you; you're angry with me over poorly done work," it's not quite the same, and rather than feeling heard, she will feel that you weren't listening carefully. Therefore, it's essential to keep practicing those listening skills in order to mirror well.

One more caveat: Never use the word *but* after a mirroring statement. Imagine you're angry because your husband said he would take out the garbage and forgot to do it. Then imagine saying to him, "I'm angry because you said you'd take the garbage out and you didn't," and him replying, "I hear you. You're angry that I said I would take the garbage out and didn't." Now imagine that he adds, "But I've been really busy with work stuff, and it just slipped my mind." His attempt at mirroring has been ruined by just one word. *No buts.*

Five years after that forum training, I still meet with my EO forum every single month, and we share updates on our lives and mirror one another. My seven forum mates have become my closest friends in the world, and I owe a great debt of gratitude to that "stupid" training in mirroring.

CHAPTER 18

25 FAVORITE QUESTIONS TO GET TO KNOW SOMEONE

C. B. DANIELS

Originally posted on August 30, 2018

Getting to know someone takes time and often a good amount of effort. And unless they are exceptionally verbose, you'll probably need to ask quite a few questions to get to know them on a deeper level.

Here I've compiled some of my favorite questions for getting to know someone. They are some of my favorite questions from the list and ones that I think are particularly effective at getting to know someone.

Keep in mind that many of these aren't your run of the mill "get to know you" questions. I find the most unexpected

C.B. Daniels is the writer behind *Conversation Starters World* and the author of two question-based journals *100 Questions Every Person Should Ask Themselves* and *Question of the Day Journal 365 Days of Questions*. It should come as no surprise that he loves a good conversation, preferably with good company and good food or drink. When he isn't talking someone's ear off or working; he enjoys traveling with his wife and son. You can learn more at www.conversationstartersworld.com.

questions are more likely to get unexpected and truthful answers.

CASUAL QUESTIONS TO GET TO KNOW SOMEONE

Let's start with some questions that are ideal when first getting to know someone. This section has the most questions because when first getting to know someone you usually don't want to get too personal.

- If you didn't have to sleep, what would you do with the extra time?
- What job would you be terrible at?
- If you could turn any activity into an Olympic sport, what would you have a good chance at winning medal for?
- Who's your go to band or artist when you can't decide on something to listen to?
- What question would you most like to know the answer to?
- What are you interested in that most people haven't heard of?
- What could you give a 40-minute presentation on with absolutely no preparation?
- What are you most looking forward to in the next 10 years?
- What piece of entertainment do you wish you could erase from your mind so that you could experience for the first time again?
- What movie title best describes your life?
- Where is the most relaxing place you've ever been?
- What are some things you've had to unlearn?
- What do you wish you knew more about?
- What's the last adventure you went on?

SOMEWHAT PERSONAL QUESTIONS TO GET TO KNOW SOMEONE

These questions are great if you're really hitting it off with someone you just met, or if you've known the person for a while and want to get to know them better.

- When was the last time you changed your opinion/belief about something major?
- When do you feel truly "alive"?
- Who is/was your most interesting friend?
- What risks are worth taking?
- What's the best and worst piece of advice you've ever received?
- What makes a life well lived?
- What are you really good at, but kind of embarrassed that you are good at it?
- What are some of your personal "rules" that you never break?

VERY PERSONAL QUESTIONS TO GET TO KNOW SOMEONE

These questions are more for people you know well already but want to get to know them on a deeper level. I've only chosen a few for this category because most of questions you'll be using to get to know someone will be in the previous categories.

- What's the most surprising self-realization you've had?
- What gives your life meaning?
- What lie do you tell most often?

CHAPTER 19

WHAT IS THE LEGACY OF THE LEADER?

CHERYL BACHELDER

*Originally posted on September 27, 2018
Excerpted with permission of Cheryl Bachelder
from her book, Dare to Serve*

On Tuesday, February 21, 2017, CNBC ran this headline: “Restaurant Brands in Deal to Acquire Popeyes Louisiana Kitchen for \$1.8 billion.” The deal announcement stated that Restaurant Brands International (RBI) would pay \$79 a share in cash for Popeyes, “a 27 percent premium to Popeyes.

RBI communicated its \$79 offer to the Popeyes board of directors on Presidents’ Day weekend of 2017. The board deliberated and deemed the proposal was in the best interest of the shareholders. I announced the decision to the franchisees and

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employees early Tuesday morning, February 21, and then the press release hit the Associated Press wire. With the news of the sale, there would be a new owner, a new strategy, a new culture, and a new leadership team.

My tenure as CEO ended with the sale closing on March 27, 2017. That afternoon, the CEO of RBI, Daniel Schwartz, came to my office, shook my hand, and wished me well. I went to the People Services department and gave them my employee badge and office key and carried my box of photos and mementos out to the car. Nine years and five months from beginning to end.

One week later, I drove to Charlotte, North Carolina, to honor a long-standing commitment to speak at a leadership event for about one hundred executives from companies across the Southeast. I gave my prepared speech and then asked if there were any questions. The first question was "People say that the legacy of a leader is best expressed by what happens after they leave the role. How do you feel about your exit from Popeyes?"

I answered the question by saying, "A public-company board of directors hired me to lead Popeyes. I loved the Popeyes team and the results we created for the franchisees, but I was never the owner of the company. My work was in service to this organization. I am grateful to the board for giving me the opportunity to lead by the principles I believe drive superior performance. It has been an incredible capstone career experience. I rest well knowing that, for nearly ten years, this leadership team has served well. That will be our legacy."

More than a year has now passed since the sale of the company, and I have had time to rest and reflect on the experience. I've even had the wonderful opportunity to teach about the Popeyes transformation to a group of second-year MBA students at Indiana University, my alma mater. The process of preparing

for this course reminded me of the essential elements of turning around an enterprise. For those of you needing to change the trajectory of your organization, here is a summary of the framework we used to lead a successful transformation at Popeyes.

1. LISTEN FIRST

Always listen first. We began the turnaround of Popeyes with a listening tour of seven cities—hearing from franchisees, restaurant managers, and guests. Every strategy we selected stemmed from what we learned on this trip. Over the next nine years, if we hit a bump in performance results, we went back out and listened again.

2. ARTICULATE A PURPOSE: “WHY”

Simon Sinek’s popular book tells us to “start with why.” And it’s a compelling principle. Knowing why you are doing something is essential to your inspiration and motivation to act. Until the organization knows the why of the work, they won’t view the work as very important or meaningful. The purpose we selected at Popeyes was “We inspire servant leaders to achieve superior results.”

What did we believe? We believed that serving performs. That was our thesis for the turnaround. That was the purpose that rallied people to perform. But perhaps the most important why to understand is why the people come to work. At Popeyes, the Journey to Personal Purpose helped individuals become conscious of their values, their strengths, and their life experiences so that they could articulate why they came to work at Popeyes. This understanding led to a significantly higher level of engagement and commitment to the enterprise.

3. CHOOSE ROAD MAP STRATEGIES: “WHAT”

Decide what needs to be addressed to return the company to a prospering position in the industry. What are the top three to five things that must happen to change the performance trajectory? They should be daring, gamechanging ideas, far from the status quo. The strategies become the what that you will ask the organization to do. Every strategy has a goal attached to it that defines what a win will look like. There is clarity about the daring destination. At Popeyes, we initially chose brand repositioning, speed-of-service improvement, restaurant P&L improvement, and better real estate selection as our four strategic pillars. These were the vital few, courageous steps we needed to take to get guests back in the restaurant for a better experience and to provide the franchise owners with a viable business model. Basic, but big, steps forward.

4. DETERMINE PRINCIPLES: “HOW”

Carefully select a half dozen principles that will guide how you accomplish the work ahead. These are value statements. They tell the organization how to behave and how to arrive at the right decision. If you have a principle of collaboration, it directs the organization to work with others to accomplish the goal. If you have a principle of learning, it suggests that you encourage taking risks and learning from mistakes. To help the organization understand the principle, provide a detailed explanation of what that principle looks like in daily behaviors. Model the principles. Correct when you see errors.

5. SELECT AND DEVELOP LEADERS: “WHO”

Review talent in every area of the organization, looking for the capability you need to execute the strategies and for the character traits you need to live the purpose and principles. Competence is important. Character is even more important. See talent as a full-blown strategy with detailed plans, tools, and systems. Hire a human resource leader with substantial depth of experience in talent management processes. These are not soft skills. These are concrete processes that plan, execute, and track the growth of your leaders. My observation is that few organizations have a rigorous talent management system that is executed consistently.

6. COMMUNICATE CONSISTENTLY AND FREQUENTLY

Leaders often underestimate the importance of good messaging to every stakeholder—to give clarity to the plan and expectations, to inspire and encourage, and to reassure and calm. Develop messaging skills in the leadership of the company through training and real-life practice. Be consistent in messaging so that people remember and trust the direction.

7. TRACK RESULTS MONTHLY, QUARTERLY, ANNUALLY

When I teach on Dare-to-Serve leadership, the audience often thinks the strategy is a “philosophy,” not a path to performance. The only way to change that mind-set is to demonstrate results. Start with crisply stated, concrete goals. Create a dashboard to track progress against the goals. When the team falls short of goals, stop and regroup. Find another way to get to the goal. Until performance results occur, you are not serving the people well.

8. THE LEGACY OF THE LEADER

*“Things might have been different,
but they could not have been better.”—J.R.R Tolkien*

In wrapping up the Popeyes story, I share with you what I believe is the most important legacy of this leadership team. We taught, encouraged, and prepared dozens of leaders to exhibit Dare-to-Serve leadership. These leaders are now taking those principles far and wide in new leadership roles. In retrospect, the sale of Popeyes has been a “sending out” of leaders who are ready to serve. From my perspective, the Popeyes story ended too soon, but perhaps the real ending is yet to be written.

CHAPTER 20

TEN OF BOBB BIEHL'S ALL-TIME FAVORITE QUESTIONS BOBB BIEHL

Originally posted on September 24, 2018

What is the very best question you've ever been asked?

What are the favorite questions you ask others?

Doesn't it feel great to ask, or be asked, just the right question at just the right time?

If you ask shallow questions you get shallow answers.

If you ask profound question you get profound answers.

If you get if you ask no questions you get no answers at all!

Bobb Biehl is an executive mentor. He has consulted personally with over 500 senior executives. In that time, he has met one-to-one with over 5,000 executives. Based on these thousands of hours of practical "rubber-meets-the-runway" experience, he has originated 40 leadership / management tools (books, tapes, notebooks) in the area of personal and organizational development—all of which are available to you at www.bobbbiehl.com.

HERE ARE 10 OF MY ALL-TIME FAVORITE QUESTIONS

1. One of life's most powerful questions: Why? . . . Why? . . . Why? . . . Why?

When you ask this question, you get to the bottom of any issue very quickly. It addresses purpose, reason, foundation. Once you ask the question "why" go back and ask "Well why is that important?" You get ever deeper into any subject.

2. An ideal question: What is the ideal long-term?

This question moves you past shallow solutions. It moves past temporary solutions. It moves you toward ideal solutions for the deep future.

3. A question to help you gain a quick big picture: "If we could only do 3 measurable things in the next 90 days which would make a 50% difference, what would we do?" (Steve Douglass)

Steve Douglass taught me this question years ago. I've used it hundreds of times since. If we could do only three things (focuses your priorities), in the next 90 days (addresses time), to make a 50% difference (clarifies results) what would we do? This one question immediately addresses priority, time, and result. Great question Steve!

4. To quickly focus your next year, ask: If I could only accomplish 1 measurable thing in the next year . . . what would I do?

This is a very profound question, as it clarifies your activity for an entire year. It moves to a 50,000-foot view of what you would

like to do. In seconds, it gets you beyond day-to-day detail into the largest picture possible for the coming year!

5. To understand your (or another's) adult comfort zones ask: What was your life like in the 4th grade?

The 4th grade? (Age 9) is the single most shaping year in a human being's existence. Age 9 is where our comfort zones are established. What you were comfortable doing the fourth grade is what you're comfortable doing today as an adult. When you get to understand a person's fourth grade you get to know a person's adult comfort zones.

6. To help get to know a person's life long dreams ask: How do you plan to make the most significant difference in your lifetime?

With this question, you get to know how a person plans to make a difference that will last for eternity. This question gives you a very fundamental and deep insight into who the person really is—and, what their life long values are today.

7. When you know a person really well ask: What three changes in your life would be most pleasing to God?

This question gives you a very deep insight into a person spiritual development. It gives you a look at where the person really wants to grow personally, and needs to grow spiritually.

8. To maximize a person ask: Of all the things you do well—What do you see as your single greatest strength? What do you do the very best?

When you get a look at the person single greatest strength you know the most effective way to work with them—to help her/him to reach full life potential.

9. A great non-threatening counseling question to ask friends: Is there something heavy on your shoulders today?

This question can be answered quickly with a very specific need the person has. Or, your friend can simply answer, "Nothing today—thank you" which in essence says, "No but thanks for asking." Or, "Stop asking!" It is a nonthreatening question that has led to many deep and very personal discussions.

10. A great career counseling question: If you could do anything you wanted, had all the time, money, staff, education you needed, and knew for certain that you couldn't fail, what would you do?

This question opens up many discussions in terms of persons ideal direction in life. It also gets the person beyond a frequent answer, "I would do this if I couldn't fail." It has helped hundreds of people clarify their future direction very quickly!

Friend, what are your 10 favorite questions—why are they your favorites?

CHAPTER 21

THE POWER OF HOW AND WHAT AND THE WEAKNESS OF WHY QUESTIONS

Will WiSE

*Originally posted on October 4, 2018
Excerpted with permission from Will WiSE's book,
Ask Powerful Questions*

Recently, I found myself sitting in a fancy corner office, leading an energetic coaching session with an executive who had just shared that he'd said something to his boss and was now wondering if his words had been a mistake. I responded: "Why did you say that?" The conversation screeched to a halt as he looked at me with puzzlement, his forehead a mountain range of ridges.

Oops. I just made a mistake. Was it fixable? We had just been hitting a productive flow, but now it seemed like my client

Will WiSE, M.Ed. (1970–2021), had over two decades of experience custom building leadership programs for corporate and nonprofit groups. Leaders call Will when there is a lack of trust getting in the way of results. Tens of thousands of people have been empowered with positive communication skills after spending some time with WILL and We!™ WILL's book, *Ask Powerful Questions: Create Conversations that Matter* was a #1 Amazon Bestselling Book.

was getting defensive. He was about to exhale, lean back in his chair, and cross his arms (I had seen him do this before). "Wait just a moment, that was not a great question," I said; "Let me rephrase. What compelled you to say that to him?"

His response was a complete shift. He exhaled, placed his hands on the table, and said, "I feel like someone should share with him the fallacy of his thinking." Then he shared more. We were back in the flow.

How did one question cause him to nearly shut down? What happened with the next question that began to open him up again? Let's look at which trap I fell into.

TRAP: ASKING *WHY* QUESTIONS THINKING THEY ARE OPEN

What is the question we ask most often when we believe we are asking an open-ended question?

Why?

While *Why* is considered an open-ended question, it does not elicit powerful and fresh answers. *Why* questions actually create defensive and scripted responses.

Think about times when someone asked you questions like these:

Why were you late?

Why did you do that?

Why are you wearing that?

What did you feel like? Most often, people feel defensive. When you have been asked these kinds of questions, do you feel the need to defend why you are late, explain your reason for doing something, or justify your choice in clothes? Do you

think about anything new or just give the responses you have already considered giving?

ANTIDOTE: DROP THE *WHY* FROM YOUR QUESTIONS

If you find that people are responding to your questions with defensiveness or non-engagement, they may be reacting to your judgment. Although it is true that you can ask questions full of judgment that create defensiveness, that do not begin with “why”—especially when using a certain tone—a good place to begin the process of asking powerful questions is to drop the *Why* in your questions and see how people respond. Examine the following tool to replace the *Why* in your questions.

TOOL: POWERFUL QUESTIONS BEGIN WITH *HOW* AND *WHAT*

Dropping the *Why* in our questions requires us to use something different to fill the void. Use *How* and *What* instead. Chances are, the heart of your *Why* question has some good material in it. So, drop the *Why*; use a *How* or *What* instead, and then do whatever is required to make the question make sense.

For example: “*Why . . . ?*” becomes “*What . . . ?*”

“*Why did you go to the market when you had what we needed?*” becomes “*What compelled you to go to the market?*”

“*Why are you wearing that?*” becomes “*What do you like about wearing that hat?*” or “*What is appealing about wearing that hat?*”

“*Why were you late?*” becomes “*What happened?*” or “*What happened that made it difficult to get to work?*”

“WHY ...?” BECOMES “HOW ...?”

“Why did you do this?” becomes “How did this happen?”

“Why do you charge so much?” becomes “How was this pricing structure decided?”

“Why do you think like that?” becomes “How is it that you learned that?” or “How did you come to that understanding?”

You will notice that in the examples above, the words in the original sentence changed in order to make the question clear. You will do this naturally as you try to find ways not to sound judgmental.

When you create questions for which people will not feel the need to defend themselves, you will notice something else happening to your questions. The word “you” will show up less. The word “you” in a sentence may be perceived as a direct attack on the person (or persons) you are talking to, rather than what you are talking about. “Are we talking about ‘me’ or this thing around me?”

If you can begin to make conscious choices around using “you,” you will notice questions that are more powerful in your life. For instance, let’s look at a question in three iterations:

First, “Why did you complete that so fast?”

This question is filled with judgment and the person will need to defend themselves, proving both the outcome and the process of how they got there.

Second, compare the first question to “How did you complete that so fast?”

Here the question is being asked with curiosity, about an observation you’ve made. The person can answer by simply explain-

ing what they did (maybe they developed a shortcut!). They still may need to defend, depending on your rapport, because the presence of the word “you” might confuse and lead them to believe that they are being attacked.

Third, compare the second question to “How was that completed so fast?”

Now the question is about the process and not about the person. There is less to personally defend against. There is much more to talk about now, and the focus can be on the process and how it was different than before. This will happen naturally, as you drop the *Why* and attempt to create less defensiveness.

I suggest not focusing on the “you” component at first. That is a lot to think about. First, work on dropping the *Why*. That is enough of a mind workout to start with.

Dropping the *Why* from our questions requires us to think differently. We need to translate our *Why* questions into *How* or *What* questions. If your mind is anything like mine, this will give your brain a real workout. It is not easy because we have many years of practice in *Whys*, but the payoff is great. It is worth your time and effort. However, if you don’t believe me, go practice and see for yourself.

CHAPTER 22

HAVE YOU EVER QUESTIONED GOD?

BOB TIEDE

Originally posted on November 29, 2018

I am a follower of Jesus. If you are not, please know that you are still respected and always welcomed by me.

Sometimes I will ask friends who share with me that they are atheist or agnostic, "Do you believe in Biblical Prophecy?" And of course their immediate answer is "No!" Please note that this is just my "Set-Up" question! Next I ask: "Can I share with you one Biblical Prophecy that Jesus made and then ask if this prophecy has been fulfilled in your life?" They almost always kindly say "Sure." I share that in John 16:33, Jesus said "In this world you will have trouble." And then I ask, "Has this Biblical Prophecy been fulfilled in your life?" They almost always smile and agree that indeed they have experienced "trouble!"

I wish that being a "Follower of Jesus" would mean that neither I nor any member of my family would ever experience any trouble. But that has not been my experience.

A bit over a year ago I flew to Sioux City, Iowa to be with my sister and brother-in-law during some of the final days of his courageous battle with lung cancer. One morning I left my sister at their home so that she could have some time to herself and

drove to the hospital to spend the morning with Joe. As I got near the hospital it started to rain and a song came on the radio that I think I had heard before—but had never really listened to. But that morning, with rain falling as I drove into the hospital parking lot I heard every word. I sat in my car—with tears running down my cheeks. The song “Blessings” by Laura Story reached deep into my heart! The questions this song asks gave words to what I was feeling. So many people from around the globe had prayed for Joe’s healing and yet he was not healed. I knew it was likely that my sister Carol would soon be without her Joe.

Here are the lyrics to her song, *Blessings*.

Blessings

Written and performed by Laura Story

We pray for blessings

We pray for peace

Comfort for family, protection while we sleep

We pray for healing, for prosperity

We pray for Your mighty hand to ease our suffering

All the while, You hear each spoken need

Yet love is way too much to give us lesser things

‘Cause what if your blessings come through raindrops?

What if Your healing comes through tears?

**What if a thousand sleepless nights are what it takes
to know You’re near?**

What if trials of this life are Your mercies in disguise?

We pray for wisdom

Your voice to hear

We cry in anger when we cannot feel You near

We doubt your goodness, we doubt your love

As if every promise from Your Word is not enough

All the while, You hear each desperate plea
And long that we'd have faith to believe
When friends betray us
When darkness seems to win
We know that pain reminds this heart
That this is not our home

What if my greatest disappointments

Or the aching of this life

**Is the revealing of a greater thirst this world can't
satisfy?**

What if trials of this life

The rain, the storms, the hardest nights

Are your mercies in disguise?

Blessings lyrics © Capitol Christian Music Group

That morning as I listened to Laura sing “Blessings” I knew nothing of her story. When I shared my experience with my sister—she handed me Laura’s book, *When God Doesn’t Fix it: Lessons You Never Wanted to Learn, Truths You Can’t Live Without*.

Laura’s story—like Joe and Carol’s story does not have a fairy-tale ending.

Newly married, “Worship leader and recording artist Laura Story’s life took an unexpected turn when her husband, Martin, was diagnosed with a brain tumor. Their lives would never be the same. Yes, with God all things are possible. But the devastating news was that no cure existed to restore Martin’s short-term memory, eyesight, and other complications. The fairy-tale life Laura had dreamed of was no longer possible. And yet in struggling with God about how to live with broken dreams, Laura has found joy and deeper intimacy with Jesus.” (from the back cover of her book)

Those of us who are Followers of Jesus can think that if we share all the good things that Jesus has done for us that those who do not know Him will want to come to the Savior. It is a bit counter-intuitive, but when we only share the good things those who are far from the cross many times may think, "I guess if God had blessed me like He apparently has the Follower of Jesus, who has only shared the good things in his/her story, then I too might want to be a Follower of Jesus. But apparently the 'Follower of Jesus' has never experienced any troubles and he/she would never understand someone like me who has and is experiencing scores of trouble!"

But when we, who are "Followers of Jesus," share our whole story—sharing heartaches, broken relationships, illness, death, criminal acts done against us, lost jobs, financial setbacks, family members struggling with drugs or pornography or alcohol or gambling, suicide by a mate or child—challenges/hurts which are still present—then many who are not "Followers of Jesus" will actually come closer—thinking/feeling that even though their challenges may be different than ours, we might actually understand what they are going through.

Laura shares in her book that there was a time when she was hesitant to share her whole story—especially sharing her doubts—her questions about why God had not answered her prayers for Martin's healing. She shares the:

MYTH: God can only use my story when there is a Happy Ending.

TRUTH: God can use my story when I trust Him in the Journey.

From Chapter 10 of her book:

Why?

Questions and doubts plague my mind more than I care to admit. the single word WHY haunts me most. Like a stuck needle on a

vinyl record, there are days when it replays over and over again. In those dark moments when I'm obsessed with finding out why, if I just had an answer to my question, I'd feel better. Even on those occasions when I do get an answer, it rarely leads to satisfaction and always leads to more questions.

I'm not the only one who feels this way. Everyone wants to know why bad things happen. When I lead worship at a church or perform in a concert, hurting people come up afterward and share their stories with me. And each person's story comes with its own list of unanswered whys. Here are some I've heard dozens, and in some cases hundreds, of times:

"Why did my husband commit suicide?"

"Why did my daughter die so young?"

"Why did he start using drugs?"

"Why can't I have children?"

"Why was he born disabled?"

"Why did she get sick?"

"Why did I lose my job?"

"Why did she betray me?"

"Why did he molest my child?"

In the midst of broken circumstances, we ask why. We're not the first to ask, and we won't be the last. Ever since God gave us the ability to ask questions, we've been asking that question of him.

"Why, God why?"

Laura shares that she was driving to Bentonville, Arkansas with Martin in the passenger seat. They had passed through Birming-

ham, Alabama at 10:30 pm and driving through the night she began to think about their first five years of marriage.

"While thinking about these things, words, seemed to flow and a tune came to mind. When we neared our exit, I knew I wanted to capture my thoughts and prayers, so I took a Sharpie and a gas receipt out of the cup holder and started jotting down the words:

We pray for blessings

We pray for peace

Comfort for family, protection while we sleep

We pray for healing, for prosperity

We pray for Your mighty hand to ease our suffering

All the while, You hear each spoken need

Yet love is way too much to give us lesser things

'Cause what if your blessings come through raindrops?

What if Your healing comes through tears?

What if a thousand sleepless nights are what it takes to know
You're near?

What if trials of this life are Your mercies in disguise?

So now that you know just a bit of the "Rest of the Story" you will want to buy Laura's book: *When God Doesn't Fix It*.

Yes, my brother-in-law, Joe Huff passed. It's now been over a year and my sister has found strengths she never knew she

had. But she also continues to experience both grief and God's tender mercies.

It won't surprise you to know that Carol requested that "Blessings" be sung at Joe's service.

In closing I want to say thanks to Laura Story—for sharing her and Martin's whole story! For being real! And for ministering to all of us through this incredible song—really a hymn "Blessings" that continues to touch our hearts!

Listen to Laura Story sing her song, "Blessings."



CHAPTER 23

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

J.W. (BILL) MARRIOTT

Originally posted on December 10, 2018

Back in 1954, I came home from the U.S. Navy Supply Corps School for Christmas. My father was a good friend of Ezra Taft Benson who was at that time the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture. Somehow they finagled to get Eisenhower to come down to our family farm in Virginia. Eisenhower was President

J.W. Marriott, Jr. is Chairman Emeritus of Marriott International, Inc., the largest lodging company in the world. Mr. Marriott's leadership spans more than 60 years, as he guided what was once a family-run root beer stand and restaurant to a global hospitality company that is today comprised of 6,500 properties across 30 brands in 127 countries and territories. In September 2016, Marriott finalized its largest acquisition ever, acquiring Starwood Hotels and Resorts. Mr. Marriott served 40 years as Marriott's Chief Executive Officer, before stepping down on March 31, 2012. In January 2007, *Marriott on the Move*, one of the first regular corporate CEO blogs was launched. Mr. Marriott's award-winning blog extended his global reach and influence that complemented his well-known visits to hundreds of hotels annually before his retirement. This post, What Do You Think?, was originally posted on Marriott on the Move in February 2014. Throughout his career, Mr. Marriott has been known industry-wide for his hands-on management style, which is built on the company's founding values of putting people first, embracing change, pursuing excellence, acting with integrity and serving our world.

of the United States at the time, and of course I'd never met a president.

It was a cold winter day; it was about the 22nd of December—wind was blowing, it was 20 degrees outside. The staff had put a lot of quail and pheasants out there for Ike to shoot because they knew he loved to shoot birds. And they said "Mr. President, what do you want to do? It's awful cold out there. Do you want to go out and shoot birds or do you want to stay in by the fire?" And I was standing behind him and he turned all the way around, looked me in the eye, and he said "What do you think, Bill?" And I thought, "Oh my goodness!" I said, "Mr. President, it's awful cold, let's stay in the by the fire." He said "Good Idea!" So we stayed in by the fire.

The whole point of that is, those words "*What do you think?*" are really a key to good leadership. They give you an opportunity to express your opinion, they show that your boss is interested in you, interested in your opinion and that he or she is willing to pursue what you are thinking about.

I think that's how Eisenhower got along with all those people he had to deal with during the Second World War as a general. He had to deal with Patton, Stalin, and Roosevelt, and with Marshall, Churchill, De Gaulle, and crazy Montgomery. They were a real bunch of characters. Ike got through it all and led us to victory. Because I'm sure a lot of times he asked that question, "*What do you think?*" He didn't necessarily do what they told him to do but they knew he was interested in what they had to say.

And that's so important in our business. I want to know what the Marriott leaders are thinking and what direction they want to take our company in. Is your company's leader asking you what you think? Don't be afraid to share your opinions. A great leader listens and evaluates before making a decision.

CHAPTER 24

20 QUESTIONS TO CREATE A POSITIVE MINDSET TO OVERPOWER NEGATIVITY, WORRY & DEPRESSION

ADAM GRAGG

Originally posted November 25, 2019

We all have seasons in our lives when it's very hard to be positive.

Focusing on gratitude has helped me on my darkest days. It helps me get focused on what's right rather than what's wrong. What I FOCUS on the most, I MAGNIFY.

"When I stopped living in the problem and began living in the answer, the problem went away."

—The Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Clients come to me stressed out over things outside their control. I ask questions to challenge their thinking. If I can get their mind focused on gratitude, their perspective changes.

Adam Gragg is a Legacy Coach, Blogger, Podcaster, Trainer & Licensed Clinical Family Therapist for over 20 years. Learn more at www.decideyourlegacy.com.

Here's 20 questions to ask yourself in order to change your perspective. Take no more than 30 seconds to answer each. You will see how quickly your mindset can shift.

20 GRATITUDE QUESTIONS

1. What is a unique skill or talent I have?
2. Who is a person in my life I'm blessed to know and why?
3. What is a life experience (good or bad) that has made me a better person?
4. What am I probably taking for granted?
5. What's a modern convenience I get to enjoy?
6. What is something positive about my home environment?
7. Who can I thank today and why?
8. What is one thing someone has done for me that has improved my life?
9. What is an opportunity, big or small, ahead of me?
10. What's something I've learned recently that has improved my life?
11. What did I fail at recently and what did I learn from the failure?
12. Where can I volunteer and help people?
13. What happened yesterday in my life that was positive?
14. What's something I'm excited about doing later today?
15. What about today has been better than yesterday?
16. What's the last song you heard recently that you enjoyed and why?
17. How is your life better now compared to this time last year?

18. What have you seen in nature recently that's pretty cool?
19. Have you recently imagined a worst-case scenario that didn't come true?
20. How's the weather today, and what's one good thing about it?

TAKE ACTION

Answer these questions the next time you're in a funk and notice how it impacts your mood. Print off this article and use it as a worksheet with yourself, your kids, and friends. Even if your answers are the same each time, they will remind you of the good things in your life.

*"Gratitude unlocks the fullness of life. It turns what we have into enough, and more. It turns denial into acceptance, chaos to order, confusion to clarity. It can turn a meal into a feast, a house...
—Melody Beattie*

CHAPTER 25

FIVE “WISDOM” QUESTIONS LEADERS SHOULD ASK THEMSELVES

TOM HARPER

*Originally posted on June 8, 2020
Excerpted with permission of Tom Harper
from his book, Servant Leader Strong*

How do we as leaders grow in wisdom? The following self-inventory questions may help point out a potential area of focus in your personal quest for wisdom.

1. Have I asked for wisdom?

Even the wisest leaders in the Bible continually asked God for wisdom. That’s a wise practice to follow.

Tom Harper is Executive Chairman of Networld Media Group and publisher of www.biblicalleadership.com, a free online source of encouragement, tips and how-to for leaders seeking to learn and apply biblical principles. He is the author of *Servant Leader Strong: Uniting Biblical Wisdom* and *High-Performance Leadership* (Deep-Water Books, 2019) as well as the Christian business fable *Through Colored Glasses* and its sequel *Inner Threat* (DeepWater, 2022).

"Give me wisdom & knowledge that I may lead this people" (2 Chronicles 1:10). Already a success, Solomon wanted more wisdom.

"Give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people" (1 Kings. 3:9). A young king wanted wisdom before success.

2. Do I act wisely?

Thinking and doing are inseparable in a life governed by wisdom. Christ lived this out for us, modeling the right kind of action.

"Wisdom is proved right by her deeds" (Matthew 11:19). Jesus' leadership was criticized, but his actions established him.

3. Do I measure my words?

When we speak, our words sometimes get us into trouble. Therefore we must measure them, just like we number our days, so *"we may develop wisdom in our hearts"* (Psalm 90:12).

"When words are many, sin is not absent, but he who holds his tongue is wise" (Proverbs 10:19).

"A man who lacks judgment derides his neighbor, but a man of understanding holds his tongue" (Proverbs 11:12).

4. Do I patiently look under the surface?

When we remember there's a lot going on behind the scenes in everyone's lives, this helps us develop wisdom. And when we overlook someone's surface reactions, we can discover a better way to lead him or her.

"The purposes of a man's heart are deep waters; but a man of understanding draws them out" (Proverbs 20:5). Leadership goes behind the curtain.

"A man's wisdom gives him patience; it is to his glory to overlook an offense" (Proverbs 19:11). Leaders must sometimes overlook.

5. Do I try too hard to understand God's ways?

"God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy & hardens whom he wants to harden" (Romans 9:18). We must bow to a mysterious God.

"As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:9).

This last point may be the wisest of all: No matter how much wisdom the Lord grants us, or how many questions we ask, we will never understand all his ways. Fortunately, his Word reveals what we need to know here and now.

CHAPTER 26

THE POWER OF STRATEGIC “NAME GAMES”

HEATHER HOLLEMAN

Originally posted on November 5, 2020

At Penn State, I’m known as the “Name Game” professor because students know I’ll invite them to introduce themselves and answer a strategic question every single time we gather. Over the past 25 years of teaching, I’ve gathered the kinds of questions that help students understand themselves, connect more deeply with others, and usher in the kind of vulnerability that opens the classroom to better learning and writing.

Dr. Heather Holleman is an associate teaching professor of advanced writing at Penn State, speaker, and author. She has written 10 books, including the bestseller *Seated with Christ: Living Freely in a Culture of Comparison*. Heather also serves with Faculty Commons in the professor ministry of Cru. When she’s not writing or teaching, Heather is growing plum trees, looking for turtles in the woods, or gathering with friends for dinner and a movie.

70 BUILDING COMMUNITY QUESTIONS: ©2019 HEATHER HOLLEMAN

1. What is the most interesting course you have ever taken in school?
2. What is your favorite quotation?
3. What is one item you might keep forever?
4. What were you known for in high school? Did you have any nicknames?
5. If you could have witnessed any event in sports history, what would it be?
6. What is something you consider beautiful?
7. What was your first song you played over and over again?
8. What accomplishment are you most proud of?
9. If you could be an apprentice to any person, from whom would you want to learn?
10. What are three things that make you happy?
11. What's one movie you think everyone should see? What's a movie nobody should see?
12. Who inspires you?
13. What's one thing you want to do before you die?
14. Get in groups of three people. What's the most bizarre thing you have in common?
15. Whenever you are having a bad day, what is the best thing you can do to cheer yourself up?
16. Have you ever experienced something unexplainable or supernatural?
17. What was your best Halloween costume?
18. What's the last item you purchased and why?
19. What was the last thing you Googled out of pure curiosity?

20. What YouTube video / meme do you watch over and over?
21. What's the kindest act you've ever witnessed?
22. Tell us one thing you know you do well (a talent?) and one thing you know you cannot do.
23. What is your favorite way to procrastinate?
24. What is your favorite home-cooked meal?
25. What was your favorite childhood toy?
26. What clubs are you involved in?
27. What was your first job?
28. Have you met a famous person? Who?
29. What's the story behind your name?
30. Do you believe in anything that most people might not believe in?
31. How would you answer this: I wish everyone would_____
32. What's the best sound effect you can make?
33. What's the funniest thing you did as a kid that people still talk about today?
34. What idea do you think is worth arguing about?
35. Tell us something quirky about you.
36. For what reason do others often seek your help or input?
37. Share your guilty pleasure.
38. What is one thing that's important for others to know about you?
39. Do you still do anything today that you also loved to do as a child?
40. Do you have any daily rituals?
41. What is the most misunderstood word you can think of?

42. What is the first book you remember changing you somehow?
43. Pass on one piece of wisdom to the class.
44. Do you have an irrational fear or strange addiction?
45. What's been the most surprising thing about this stage of life you're in now?
46. What is your biggest pet peeve?
47. Tell us about any animal friends you have.
48. What would you like to be true of your life in 10 years?
49. What's something new you've learned this week?
50. What thought keeps you up at night?
51. What's a question you like people to ask you?
52. What's one thing that truly fascinates you?
53. Think of the best community you've been apart of? What made this community so great?
54. If you had to pick a song for your "entrance music," what would it be?
55. What's something funny or surprising that happened to you lately?
56. When did you do something you thought you couldn't do this year? When were you brave?
57. What are you learning?
58. What is your latest victory in life?
59. When was the last time you felt really good about yourself? What was happening?
60. Tell us about an encounter you had with a stranger, a strange place, or a strange animal.
61. What's something that made you experience wonder or awe this year?

62. What's something you experienced in childhood that children today don't experience?
63. Share one piece of good news.
64. What's stressing you out most today
65. What changes when you enter a room?
66. If you had to sing a karaoke song, which one would you choose?
67. What could be the best complement someone could give you?
68. What trait do I most admire in someone else?
69. How would I want others to describe me?
70. What do I look forward to each day?

I continue to love the Name Games for what they can do: develop a student professionally, build rapport, and change the mood of the room. And they also give students a toolbox of questions to use in any situation as they seek to know others better. I tell them to use the questions in their dating life, in their fraternities and sororities, and in their internships. "Remember," I tell them, "good questions like these build the conviction that we might develop interpersonal curiosity, perhaps the best professional skill of all."

CHAPTER 27

TEN QUESTIONS YOU CAN ASK TO HELP ANYONE ACHIEVE THEIR GOAL(S)

KEVIN EIKENBERRY

Originally posted on May 3, 2021

Lots of people set goals.
Far fewer achieve them.

There are lots of reasons that happens, not the least of which is that people treat the goal setting process as an achievement; which it isn't really.

We don't set goals as the outcome! We set goals to achieve them!

Yes, setting them is a necessary first step, but achieving them is the real purpose, isn't it?

Kevin Eikenberry is a world renowned leadership expert, a two-time bestselling author, speaker, consultant, trainer, coach, leader, learner, husband and father (not necessarily in that order). Kevin is the Chief Potential Officer of The Kevin Eikenberry Group, a leadership and learning consulting company that has been helping organizations, teams and individuals reach their potential since 1993. Kevin's specialties include leadership, teams and teamwork, organizational culture, facilitating change, organizational learning and more.

So I propose that you ask your staff these ten questions (and of course listen to their answers) to help inform their plan for achievement of their goals.

Asking these ten questions will quickly show if their goals are on track for achievement. Of course the best time to ask them is as soon as they have set a new goal(s). But whenever you ask them will inform them, redirect them, and improve their chances of achieving their goal(s).

Here is the list . . .

1. Why is achieving this goal important to you?

This is the most important question of all. Without a clear and compelling reason why, you likely won't do what is necessary to reach the goal. Answer this question and keep your answer clearly focused in your mind.

2. What will success look like?

Visualize the end result in a three-dimensional way. Think about what you will be seeing, feeling, hearing and smelling when you reach this goal. This question helps your brain picture success in a more real way.

3. How will you benefit from reaching this goal?

This connects the first two questions together and helps you see the value in the work and effort required to achieve your goal.

4. What is your first step?

There is always a first step. It may be small, or it may be large. Actually if it is a small step, it gets you going. Either way, without a step you will stay right where you are.

5. What step will take you furthest, fastest?

I love the first step question but this is about leverage. You want to get moving, but you also want to move intelligently.

6. Who can help you achieve it?

No person is an island. What tools and resources do others have that can assist you in reaching your goal?

7. Who will support you?

If you have cheerleaders—people who believe in you and your ability to reach this goal—you might share it with them. Thinking about this early is very helpful.

8. Who won't support you?

This list may be more important than the last one. Don't let the nonbelievers taint your attitude, energy, and belief. These people don't need to hear about your goal. Just quietly go about achieving it. Surprising them might be one of biggest rewards that comes with your success!

9. What will be your biggest barrier?

Avoiding or denying it won't help. Figure it out early and you are part-way to overcoming, reducing, or sidestepping that barrier altogether.

10. How will you stay focused during the process?

Reaching most goals takes time, energy, and focus. Realizing that at the beginning and building a plan to stay focused and knowing how to get refocused is critical.

These ten questions can accelerate your goal achievement whenever you ask them. If you have any goal today—whether new, in progress, or stalled—ask yourself these questions.

Then put your answers to work.

CHAPTER 28

ONE IMPORTANT QUESTION FOR GETTING YOUR TEAM ON THE SAME PAGE

ROBYN McLEOD

Originally posted on August 16, 2021

Often when we work with an organization, we conduct a data-gathering and assessment process we call the Organizational Effectiveness Assessment™ to further understand dynamics within the organization and dig deeper to discover what is really going on.

Robyn McLeod, Principal at Chatsworth Consulting Group, partners with senior executives as they focus on building and supporting high-performing managers, leaders, teams, and organizations, and as an Executive Coach, she works with leaders to help them achieve breakthrough personal and professional goals. A member of several professional organizations including the International Coach Federation, the Society for Human Resource Management, and the National Black MBA Association, Robyn holds degrees from Syracuse University's Newhouse School of Public Communications and School of Management and an MBA from Columbia University. You can connect with Robyn on LinkedIn.

In interviewing employees or other stakeholders, one of our favorite questions to ask is:

“In your own words, what is the mission or purpose of your organization/department/team? Why do you exist?”

The intention of this question is to test for consistency and agreement among the people we interview to be sure that they are all working toward the same main goal. It gives us a glimpse into the level of alignment, understanding, and uniformity within the team or organization. Unfortunately we often find that the answers show very differing views of the purpose of the group’s work and its core mission.

“So what?” you may be asking. “Why is that important?” If people working together have different understandings or beliefs about what their group was created to do, it is usually an indication of potential problems for a team, often revealing the source of existing symptoms of dysfunction or challenge within a team. For example, if half of the people in your organization believe that the purpose of the organization is to provide medical services to the greatest number of patients possible and the other half believe that the core mission is really to develop state-of-the-art medical technology, then the way in which they approach their work, the goals they set for themselves, and the priorities they determine for their individual work could be not only different but at odds with each other.

As Noel Tichy, Ram Charan and their colleagues described in their Goals-Roles-Process-Interpersonal Model of high-performing teams, a clear and uniform understanding of a team’s core mission and purpose sets the stage for a well-aligned, high-functioning team capable of developing goals and achieving results that fully support that mission. Without

this understanding your organization can face conflicting goals, departmental silos, competition for resources, and overall frustration as your employees struggle to understand how their work fits into the bigger picture.

So, ask yourself the question: *"How well do my team members understand the purpose and mission of our organization?"* Better yet, ask them and know for sure, and then take steps to clarify and realign around a strong and inspiring purpose.

CHAPTER 29

4 QUESTIONS THAT BROUGHT AN ENTIRE HIGH SCHOOL TO ITS KNEES

PAUL SMITH

Originally posted October 7, 2021

Chad was a high school senior in Salt Lake City, Utah, and the captain of the basketball team. The night before a big game, the entire team came to Chad's house for dinner.

At one point in the evening, the conversation turned to a girl at school. But not just any girl. It was a very special girl we'll call Jenny.

And the things they had to say about her were, to say the least, unkind. What's more, the instigator of those unkind words was the captain of the team, Chad Hymas.

Paul Smith is one of the world's leading experts on business storytelling. He's a keynote speaker, storytelling coach, Paul Smith and bestselling author of the books *Lead with a Story*, *Sell with a Story*, *The 10 Stories Great Leaders Tell*, *Parenting with a Story*, and *Four Days with Kenny Tedford*. Connect with him via email at paul@leadwithastory.com.

Jenny was a very smart young lady. She had a lovely smile that she always wore and long dark hair. But she also had a number of visible disabilities.

Jenny was confined to a wheelchair and was blind in both eyes. She was missing one arm, and her other arm and hand had limited functionality. When she ate, she wore a pink bib to protect her clothes from the inevitable spill. She also had difficulty with speech, so she carried a computer with her that could speak for her when she typed out words on an oversized and simplified keyboard.

A few minutes later, Chad's father knocked on the door and walked in. "I cannot believe what I've heard for the last twenty minutes," he said. "But it's not your fault. I'm mostly disappointed in your captain."

After considering that for a few seconds, he continued, "Actually, it's not even my son's fault. It's my fault. I raised him. I owe you all an apology." And without saying another word, he left the room.

THE NEXT DAY AT SCHOOL . . .

The team mostly wanted to pretend the night before had never happened, which they were having some degree of success with . . . until Chad's father unexpectedly walked into the school cafeteria.

"I'm here to teach you how to stand up," he said. "And I need you and the team to follow me right now and take me to Jenny." Tentatively, the whole table of boys stood up. Chad pointed to the lonely table in the middle of the room where Jenny was eating lunch by herself.

As Chad described to me what happened next, he said, "Dad went over and gently touched her arm to announce their

presence. Jenny started to shake. But it was clear she wasn't shaking out of fear. She was actually nervous with excitement that someone—anyone—wanted to be next to her and to talk to her."

Chad's father introduced himself and the team to Jenny, then started asking questions so everyone could get to know her better. It took half an hour for her to answer only four questions, but it was worth the time.

Because the questions he asked, and the answers she gave, taught them more than they could have imagined.

THE FOUR QUESTIONS THAT BROUGHT A HIGH SCHOOL TO ITS KNEES

1. "Who's your best friend?"

Jenny responded, "My mother, Stacy." This teenaged girl had to count her mother as her best friend, which spoke volumes about her social life at school.

2. The second question was, "What does your dad do for a living?"

Jenny's chillingly simple response: "I don't know who my father is."

3. The third question he asked was, "How long have you been in a wheelchair?"

Jenny answered, "My . . . whole . . . life." For a group of boys who spend every day running and jumping up and down on a basketball court, this was a sobering answer.

But even that paled in comparison to the last question's answer.

4. "What is it you dream of and love to do the most?"

Jenny responded, "I like listening to the girls cheer at the basketball games."

What Jenny loves to do the most is listen to the girls cheering for the very boys who the night before had said such awful things about her.

A CHANGE IN PERSPECTIVE

Over the next week, the talk in the school rightfully centered on Jenny: who she was as a person, and how everyone treated her. Jenny was elected captain of the cheerleading squad. She was outfitted with a skirt, joined the rest of the girls courtside, and learned to twirl circles in her wheelchair.

As the captain, it was Jenny's job to call each and every one of the cheers the girls performed.

Her story made the local news, which was quickly picked up in syndication and reprinted in newspapers across the country. Soon people that usually didn't come to basketball games were showing up, but not to watch the game. They came to watch Jenny.

For the rest of her high school career, Jenny still sat at the same table for lunch. But it was no longer empty. "They couldn't make a table big enough for everyone that wanted to sit with Jenny after that," Chad said.

THE TAKEAWAY

Looking back, Kelly Hymas could have responded to what he heard downstairs that night any number of ways. He could have just let it slide, thinking it's just how teenage boys are. Or he could have quietly confronted Chad when the evening was over and the team was gone.

The following day, I'm sure he had other things he needed to be doing in the middle of the workday.

But in both cases, he took the time and the risk to make a point to his son in a way he will never forget.

Would you do the same?

CHAPTER 30

THE ART OF ASKING POWERFUL QUESTIONS AND 51 POWERFUL QUESTIONS TO ASK IN DIFFERENT SITUATIONS

SUMIT GUPTA

Originally posted on November 11, 2021

After leading teams for the last decade and a half, if there is one skill that has made the biggest difference in my ability to improve individual and team performance, it has been my ability to Ask Powerful Questions.

After a 16-year tech career, **Sumit Gupta** realized that too many leaders were playing small—stuck in stress, hesitation, and overwork. Today, he coaches CEOs, former athletes, and changemakers to unlock immediate momentum, eliminate blind spots, and create exponential growth in business and impact. His direct, no-BS coaching style challenges leaders to create results faster than they ever thought possible. He is also the author of the weekly *Choosing Leadership* newsletter.

This is not to say that other skills like listening, emotional intelligence, and conflict resolution are not important—they certainly are. But asking powerful questions is that precise and sharp tool that opens up so many options for leadership and coaching which aren't available otherwise.

Whenever I find myself in a logjam—a difficult or a tricky situation—I go over my ever-expanding list of powerful questions, and I always find a way out by asking one or more of these questions.

Below are different situations and the exact powerful questions you can ask in each of these situations. Before diving into the list, let's spend some time thinking about what powerful questions really are, and what makes a question powerful?

ARE YOU ASKING ENOUGH POWERFUL QUESTIONS— TO YOURSELF AND YOUR TEAM?

Powerful Questions are not what you hear normally. A powerful question comes up as an unexpected surprise to the listener and stops them in their tracks. For example—"How are you doing?" is not a powerful question. Instead "What was your favorite moment thus far today?" is one such powerful question.

We have well-rehearsed and scripted answers for the usual questions from our colleagues, friends, and leaders. Powerful Questions makes one think and come up with original answers. If a question makes you think about your life, priorities, values, etc, it is a powerful question.

Powerful Questions goes deep into topics people don't normally think or talk about. They don't linger on the surface where there is emotional safety. Instead, powerful questions force you to be vulnerable. It requires some courage to face the discomfort of answering a Powerful Question.

Powerful Questions can lead to deep and valuable insights. They take longer to answer, but they often end up revealing something important about yourself which you were not aware of before. I am still enjoying the benefits of many such valuable insights when others have asked me powerful questions in the past.

Now that we have covered what powerful questions are, let us go over some questions which you can use in different situations. They can become your most important tool to influence people and produce results.

*"I would rather have questions that can't be answered
than answers that can't be questioned."
—Richard Feynman*

PURPOSE—TO MEASURE YOUR OWN EFFECTIVENESS AS A LEADER

Whom to Ask—Yourself

Powerful Questions

1. Do my reports regularly bring their biggest challenges to my attention?
2. Would my reports gladly work for me again?
3. Do my reports feel I have helped them grow by providing challenging opportunities?
4. Do my reports say that I have supported and coached them whenever they have felt stuck or challenged?
5. Do my reports trust me when I make a promise? Can they count on me?

PURPOSE—TO CREATE A MOTIVATED, ENGAGED, AND EMPOWERED TEAM.

Whom To Ask—Each Individual In Your Team. You are looking for a resounding “YES”

Powerful Questions

- 1.** Do you know what is expected of you at work?
- 2.** Do you have what (tools, resources, etc.) you need to do your work right?
- 3.** At work, do you have the opportunity to do what you do best every day?
- 4.** In the last seven days, have you received recognition or praise for good work?
- 5.** Does your supervisor or someone at work seem to care about you as a person?
- 6.** Is there someone at work who encourages your development?
- 7.** At work, do your opinions seem to count/matter?
- 8.** Does the mission/purpose of your company make you feel your work is important?
- 9.** Are your co-workers committed to doing quality work?
- 10.** Do you have a best friend at work?
- 11.** In the last six months, have you talked to someone about your progress?
- 12.** This last year, have you had opportunities at work to learn and grow?

PURPOSE—HELP PEOPLE FIND THEIR INNER PURPOSE

Whom to Ask—Each Individual In Your Team

Powerful Questions

1. What are you good at doing? What have you gotten noticed for throughout your career?
2. What do you enjoy? What do you look forward to doing? What energizes you? What do you love about your work?
3. What feels most useful? What kind of work makes you proud? Which of your tasks are most critical?
4. What are your highest priorities in life? Where does work fit in?
5. What creates a sense of forward momentum? What are you learning now that will be useful in the future? Where do you see yourself headed next? What are you doing today that will help you achieve your long term goals?
6. How do you relate to others? What would a team of your favorite people look like? How does your work enhance your family and social connections?
7. What word do you want people to use to describe you? Do they describe you this way now?
8. What is “on hold” in your life? What is that you want to do someday / one day? What are you waiting for?
9. What is the one thing you would regret if you never did anything about it?
10. What do you want your legacy to be? What do you want people to say at your funeral?

PURPOSE: TO UNDERSTAND YOUR EMPLOYEES AS HUMAN BEINGS AND TO TAKE CARE OF THEIR MOTIVATION, ENGAGEMENT, AND GROWTH

Whom to Ask—Each Individual In Your Team

Powerful Questions

- 1.** What motivated you to be part of this company and team in the first place?
- 2.** How do you hope to personally and professionally benefit from working on this project?
- 3.** If you were to receive a lifetime achievement award, what would you want to be recognized for?
- 4.** What is important to you outside of the work environment—family, vacations, adventure, faith?
- 5.** What are a couple of the most defining events from your personal narrative—both good and challenging—that have defined who you are and you behave today?
- 6.** How do you take care of yourself?
- 7.** How do you like to be rewarded most—with extra bonus cash, extra vacation time, public recognition, title promotion?
- 8.** Where would you like to be in 3, 5, and 10 years?
- 9.** What do you do for fun?

PURPOSE: TO COACH PEOPLE. TO GET THEM TO SEE AND REMOVE THE ROADBLOCKS IN THEIR WAY

Whom to Ask—Each Individual In Your Team

Powerful Questions

1. What would success look like?
2. What would tell you that you've reached your goal?
3. What is holding you back? What is in the way?
4. What concerns you? What might be the unintended consequences?
5. What are your options? What else can you try?
6. Who else needs to be involved? Who can help you?
7. What is the one step you can take today?
8. What is your back up plan?

PURPOSE: TO ASK PEOPLE IN YOUR 1-ON-1'S

Whom To Ask—The Person Sitting Next To You

Powerful Questions

1. Tell me something I don't know about you?
2. What are you excited about? What are you worried about?
3. What did you do recently that you are proud of?
4. When was the last time you laughed at work?
5. What do you do after work? What are your hobbies?
6. What in your life is 'on hold'? Until you lose weight, until you retire, etc. What are you waiting for?
7. If you were in my position, what would you do differently?

*"You can tell whether a man is clever by his answers.
You can tell whether a man is wise by his questions."
—Naguib Mahfouz*

ONE POWERFUL QUESTION CAN TRANSFORM YOUR LIFE

What To Do With The Answers?

The above questions can be provocative and open up new pathways for people which weren't available before. These questions might force people to look at things differently, and they can build on the answers to create a long-lasting impact. The process of asking these questions can be painful at times, but the rewards are significant and worth it.

Powerful Questions lead people to clarity in thought and swiftness in action. These questions are generally open-ended and increase the possibility of new learnings, fresh perspectives, and bold action.

Journalist and author Warren Berger has written two wonderful books on the topic of questioning—*The Book of Beautiful Questions* and *A More Beautiful Question*. He argues that one of the most powerful forces for igniting change in business and in our daily lives is a simple, under-appreciated tool—asking deep and imaginative questions with the curiosity of a child.

CHAPTER 31

LOVE 'EM OR LOSE 'EM

BEVERLY KAYE AND SHARON JORDAN-EVANS

Originally posted on December 6th, 2021

Excerpted with permission of the authors from Love 'em or Lose 'em

ASK WHY DO YOU STAY?

When do you think most leaders ask questions like “What can I do to keep you?”

You’re right: they ask during the exit interview. At that point it’s typically too late. The talented employee already has one foot out the door!

Have you ever wondered why we ask great questions in exit interviews but neglect to ask early enough to make a

Dr. Beverly Kaye is recognized as one of the most knowledgeable professionals in career development, employee engagement and retention. Beverly’s bestselling books include *Love 'Em or Lose 'Em* and *Help Them Grow or Watch Them Go*. Learn more at www.talent-dimensions.com.

Sharon Jordan-Evans, Sharon Jordan-Evens is the found of the Jordan-Evans Group and a pioneer in the field of employee retention and engagement. She is a Professional Certified Coach, coaching the leaders companies can least afford to lose.

difference? Love 'Em Leaders do ask. They ask early and often, they listen carefully to the answers, and they collaborate with their talented people to help them get more of what they want, right where they are.

CONDUCT STAY INTERVIEWS

Two decades ago, we coined the term *stay interview* to describe a conversation that leaders need to have with the people they cannot afford to lose. It all started when we answered the call to help a Silicon Valley company increase the odds of holding on to key talent.

When we suggest asking employees why they stay or what would keep them, we hear, "You've got to be kidding," "Isn't that illegal?" or "What if they give me an answer I don't want to hear?" Managers dance around this core subject usually for one of three reasons:

1. Some managers fear putting people on the spot or putting ideas into their heads (as if they never thought about leaving on their own).
2. Some managers are afraid they will be unable to do anything anyway, so why ask? They fear that the question will raise more dust than they can settle and may cause employees to expect answers and solutions that are out of the managers' hands.
3. Some managers say they don't have the time to have these critical one-on-one discussions with their talented people. There is an urgency to produce, leaving little time to listen, let alone ask. (If you don't have time for these discussions with the people who contribute to your success, where will

you find the time to interview, select, orient, and train their replacements?)

GUESSING IS RISKY

What if you don't ask ? What if you just keep trying to guess what Tara or Mike or Akina really wants? You will guess right sometimes. The year-end bonus might please them all. Money can inspire loyalty and commitment for the near term. But if the key to retaining Tara is to give her a chance to learn something new, whereas Mike wants to telecommute , how could you ever guess that? Ask—so you don't have to guess.

Asking has positive side effects. The person you ask will feel cared about, valued, and important. Many times asking leads to stronger loyalty and commitment to you and the organization. In other words, just asking the question is an effective engagement and retention strategy.

HOW AND WHEN TO ASK

How and when do you bring up this topic? How can you increase the odds of getting honest input from your employees? There is no single way or time to ask. It could happen during a developmental or career discussion with your employees. (You do hold those, don't you?) Or you might schedule a meeting with your valued employees for the express purpose of finding out what will keep them. One manager sent an invitation to give his key people some time to think and to prepare for the conversation.

Regardless of when you start this dialogue, remember to set the context by telling your employees how critical they are to you and your team and how important it is to you that they

stay. Then find out what will keep them. Listen carefully to their responses.

HE DARED TO ASK

Charlie set up a meeting with his plant manager, Ken, for Monday morning. After some brief conversation about the weekend activities, Charlie said, "Ken, you are critical to me and to this organization. I'm not sure I've told you that directly or often enough. But you are. I can't imagine losing you. So, I'd like to know what will keep you here. And what might entice you away?"

Ken was a bit taken aback— but felt flattered. He thought for a moment and then said, "You know, I aspire to move up in the organization at some point, and I'd love to have some exposure to the senior team. I'd like to see how they operate, and frankly I'd like them to get to know me, too." Charlie responded, "I could take you with me to some senior staff meetings. Would that be a start?" Ken said, "That would be great."

Charlie delivered on Ken's request one week later.

STAY INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

For a decade now, we've collected managers' favorite stay interview questions. Here are the top 11, in no particular order.

1. What one change in your current role would make you consider staying in this job?
2. If you had a magic wand, what would be the one thing you would change about this department, team, organization?
3. As your manager, what could I do a little more of or a little less of?

4. If you had to go back to a position in your past and stay for an extended period of time, which one would it be and why?
5. What do you need to learn to work at your best?
6. What makes for a great day?
7. What can we do to make your job more satisfying?
8. What can we do to support your career goals?
9. Do you get enough recognition? How do you like to be recognized?
10. What do you want to learn this year?
11. In what ways do you feel valued and included by the team?

Let these ideas serve as catalysts for your own thinking. Create a list of your favorite questions. Ask them of your talented people. And ask again, listen carefully, and then act. Collaborate with your employees to find ways to fulfill their requests.

Note: Don't ask until you're ready to act!

IF YOU MANAGE MANAGERS

Are the managers you manage conducting stay interviews? If so, that's outstanding. If not, they need to start. Your job is to teach those you lead how to ask these crucial questions of their talent, how to prepare for employees' responses (including the tough requests), and then how to make something happen! Hold managers accountable for conducting stay interviews with all those they hope will stay on the team and in the enterprise. Ask them to share with you the personalized creative strategies they create with their talent. Better yet, bring your team of leaders together and have them share their experience with stay interviews. This joint sharing will spark great ideas.

BOTTOM LINE

Stop guessing what will keep your talent happy and on your team. Gather your courage and conduct stay interviews with the employees you want to keep, no matter their age, gender, or cultural background. Set aside time to start the dialogue. Don't guess and don't assume they all want the same thing (like pay or a promotion). Schedule another meeting if they need to think about it for a while.

CHAPTER 32

45 GREAT LEADERSHIP PANEL QUESTIONS KRISTIN ARNOLD

Originally posted on January 20, 2022

A colleague of mine is moderating a high-level leadership panel and asked, “What are the best leadership panel questions?” Like most open-ended questions, I had to counter with four fundamental questions:

1. What is the objective? Leadership panel objectives are typically organized to:
 - Gain insight into what is happening in the organization or industry
 - Inspire high potentials to become future leaders

Kristin Arnold, MBA, CSP, CPF | Master, high-stakes meeting facilitator and professional panel moderator is on a quest to make all panel discussions lively and informative. Check out her free 7-part video series on how to moderate a panel and other resources to help you organize, moderate, or be a panel member. www.powerfulpanels.com.

- Learn lessons from experienced leaders
 - Provide access/visibility to the audience who don't see them much!
2. Who are the panelists? Once you get the names, research their leadership philosophy and practices and weave interesting thoughts and ideas you have learned that your audience cares about into your questions!
 3. Who is in the audience?
 - Employees within the organization
 - Members of an industry association
 - Members of a broader community
 4. What does the audience want to know? Research the topical issues that would be relevant for the audience e.g., return to the office, resiliency, the economy etc.—anything relevant to the objective of the panel.

The line of leadership panel questions can be vastly different, depending on the answers! The most typical leadership panel is to share leadership lessons with a broad and diverse audience. Let's start with my top 45 potential leadership panel questions. You won't ask them all, but perhaps they might provide some inspiration as you develop your own list.

STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP PANEL QUESTIONS:

1. What is your definition of "leadership" and how was it formed/has it transformed?
2. Describe your leadership style and how you "lead" others.

3. What would you classify as the most defining leadership behavior?
4. What was your most satisfying leadership role? Why?
5. What do you look for in a leadership role? How do you assess what is right for you?
6. What are some reasons you pursued leadership roles?
7. What are the most important decisions you make as a leader?
8. What makes a great leader?
9. Who was/is your role model and/or leadership mentor?

BENEFITS/CONSEQUENCES

10. What benefits have you received from your leadership experiences?
11. Did you aspire to this leadership position? What was your path to get here?
12. Have you been in a leadership position where the experience was very different than you anticipated? What did you learn? Were there unexpected benefits or unintended consequences?
13. What has been one of your biggest joys as a leader?
14. What has been one of your biggest challenges as a leader?
15. What's the biggest challenge facing leaders today?
16. What's the biggest lesson you've learned?
17. What would you want to "do-over"? Why?
18. What's the biggest risk you took? Why?
19. What's the most dangerous behavior/trait that you have seen derail leaders' careers?

LEADERSHIP PANEL QUESTIONS THAT BEG FOR SPECIFICS

- 20.** How do you rally the team to take on a big goal?
- 21.** How can organizations balance the tactical versus the strategic imperatives?
- 22.** How do you balance planning for the future and being present for your employees?
- 23.** How do you keep your team on track with the mission, vision, and values of the organization?
- 24.** How do you inspire others while keeping yourself inspired about the organization's mission?
- 25.** At what stage in leadership should you start thinking about succession planning?
- 26.** What skills do you use most often in your leadership role?
- 27.** How have you grown those skills?
- 28.** What leadership skills are you continuing to work on?
- 29.** What are the most important qualities you look for in a future employee? Why?
- 30.** What do you consider before promoting an employee into management?
- 31.** What are the most effective ways you incentivize your employees?
- 32.** How do you foster a positive work environment?
- 33.** How do you encourage creativity among team members?
- 34.** How do you encourage honest, open employee dialogue?
- 35.** How do traits like empathy and vulnerability play a role in your leadership?
- 36.** What does work-life balance mean for you?

- 37.** How do you motivate employees to do their best to sustain business, and at the same time, have compassion for their peers in uncertainty?
- 38.** How do you make room for continued learning?
- 39.** What do you do in your personal time that helps you be a leader?

QUESTIONS ABOUT APPLICATION TO THE AUDIENCE

- 40.** What are the best ways that leaders can support other leaders?
- 41.** What resources do you suggest for new leaders (books, podcasts, apps, etc.)?
- 42.** What's one thing you wish someone told you during your career journey?
- 43.** What strategies are most effective for prioritizing myriad tasks?
- 44.** What's something you wish someone told you early on in your career journey?
- 45.** What's one piece of advice you have for those in our audience currently in leadership roles or preparing to be a leader?

A big thank you to Caffeine Marketing, Michael Hyatt, and peopleHum for inspiration in building this list of great questions for any kind of leadership panel discussion!

CHAPTER 33

5 ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS IN LIFE

DEAN JAMES RYAN

Originally posted on May 23, 2022

Following is an excerpt from the incredible commencement address to the graduating class of 2016 by Dr. James E. Ryan, who was then the Dean of the Harvard University Graduate School of Education.

There are five truly essential questions that you should regularly ask yourself and others. My claim is that, if you get in the habit of asking these questions, you have a very good

Dr. James E. Ryan is the 9th President of the University of Virginia. Before coming to UVA, Dr. Ryan served as dean of the Harvard Graduate School of Education. He received his A.B., summa cum laude, from Yale University and his J.D. from the University of Virginia, which he attended on a full scholarship and from which he graduated first in his class. After law school, Dr. Ryan clerked for Chief Justice William H. Rehnquist, and then worked in Newark, N.J. as a public interest lawyer before entering into teaching. Jim and his wife, Katie, have four school-age children. His book, *Wait, What? And Life's Other Essential Questions* can be ordered on Amazon.

chance of being both successful and happy, and you will be in a good position to answer “I did” to the bonus question at the end.

The first is a question my own kids are fond of asking, and it’s one you may have heard other teenagers pose—or maybe you still pose it yourself. The question is “Wait, what?”

My kids typically pose this question when I get to the point in a conversation where I’m asking them to do a chore or two. From their perspective, they hear me saying something like: “blah, blah, blah, and then I’d like you to clean your room.” And at that precise moment, the question inevitably comes: “Wait, what? Clean what?”

“Wait what” is actually a very effective way of asking for clarification, which is crucial to understanding. It’s the question you should ask before drawing conclusions or before making a decision. The Dean of Harvard College, Rakesh Khurana, gave a great master class this year, where he emphasized the importance of inquiry before advocacy. It’s important to understand an idea before you advocate for or against it. The wait, which precedes the what, is also a good reminder that it pays to slow down to make sure you truly understand.

The second question is “I wonder” which can be followed by “why” or “if.”

So: I wonder why, or I wonder if. Asking “I wonder why” is the way to remain curious about the world, and asking “I wonder if” is the way to start thinking about how you might improve the world. As in, I wonder why our schools are so segregated, and I wonder if we could change this? Or I wonder why students often seem bored in school, and I wonder if we could make their classes more engaging?

The third question is: “Couldn’t we at least...?”

This is the question to ask that will enable you to get unstuck, as they say. It’s what enables you to get past disagreement to some consensus, as in couldn’t we at least agree that we all care about the welfare of students, even if we disagree about strategy? It’s also a way to get started when you’re not entirely sure where you will finish, as in couldn’t we at least begin by making sure that all kids have the chance to come to school healthy and well-fed?

The fourth question is: “How can I help?”

You are at Harvard University Graduate School of Education, I presume, because you are interested in helping others. But you also know, from your time here, to be aware of the savior complex, of the stance where you are the expert or hero who swoops in to save others. We shouldn’t let the real pitfalls of the savior complex extinguish one of the most humane instincts there is—the instinct to lend a hand. But how we help matters as much as that we do help, and if you ask “how” you can help, you are asking, with humility, for direction. And you are recognizing that others are experts in their own lives and that they will likely help you as much as you help them.

The fifth question is this: “What truly matters?”

You can tack on “to me” as appropriate. This is the question that forces you to get to the heart of issues and to the heart of your own beliefs and convictions. Indeed, it’s a question that you might add to, or substitute for, New Year’s resolutions. You might ask yourself, in other words, at least every new year: what truly matters to me?

So these are the five essential questions:

"Wait, what" is at the root of all understanding.

"I wonder" is at the heart of all curiosity.

"Couldn't we at least" is the beginning of all progress.

"How can I help" is at the base of all good relationships.

And "what really matters" gets you to the heart of life.

If you ask these questions regularly, especially the last one, you will be in a great position to answer the bonus question, which is, at the end of the day, the most important question you'll ever face.

This bonus question is posed in many ways, and you have surely heard a version of it before.

To me, the single best phrasing of this question is in a poem by Raymond Carver, called "Late Fragments." It's one of the last poems he wrote. I came across it recently on the very sad occasion of a memorial service for one of my dearest and closest friends, my former law school roommate Doug Kendall, who died in September at the far too young age of 51. The poem was printed on the back of the program for his memorial and it starts with this question, what I'm calling the Bonus Question:

"And did you get what you wanted out of life, even so?"

The "even so" part of this, to me, captures perfectly the recognition of the pain and disappointment that inevitably make up a full life, but also the hope that life, even so, offers the possibility of joy and contentment.

My claim is that if you regularly ask: wait, what, I wonder, couldn't we at least, how can I help, and what really matters, when it comes time to ask yourself "And did you get what you wanted out of life, even so," your answer will be "I did."

So the poem asks “And did you get what you wanted out of life, even so,” and then continues:

“I did./And what did you want?/To call myself beloved. To feel beloved on the earth.”

The word “beloved” is important here as it not only means dearly loved, but also cherished and respected. And while I promise I’m very near the end of my speech, let me just say that when I read these lines, it’s hard for me not to think about students. We spend a lot of time, here and elsewhere, thinking about how we might improve student performance, which is how it should be. Yet I can’t help but think that schools, and indeed, the world, would be better places if students didn’t simply perform well but also felt beloved—beloved by their teachers and by their fellow classmates.

To tie this all together into one slightly misshapen package, and to bid you a final farewell: [...] let me express my sincere hope and belief that: if you never stop asking and listening for good questions, you will feel beloved on this earth, and, just as importantly, you will help others, especially students, feel the same.



Commencement address by Dr. James E. Ryan
to the graduating Harvard School of Education
class of 2016

CHAPTER 34

14 GREAT QUESTIONS TO ASK LEADERS FOR CAREER GROWTH

INDEED EDITORIAL TEAM

Originally posted on December 8, 2022

Leaders are exceptional individuals who have the skills, values, and knowledge to direct the affairs of an organization or group. A leader's vast experience and expertise often mean they have valuable insights into a variety of topics. You need to prepare yourself to ask the right question to maximize your relationship with a leader. In this article, we discuss the importance of asking leaders questions and highlight some important questions to ask leaders around you.

Indeed is the #1 job site in the world* with over 250M unique visitors every month. Indeed strives to put job seekers first, giving them free access to search for jobs, post resumes, and research companies. Every day, Indeed connects millions of people to new opportunities.

IMPORTANCE OF ASKING LEADERS QUESTIONS

It is always useful to ask leaders insightful questions when you have the opportunity. Having a few minutes with them can make you better prepared for success. Here are some reasons why asking leaders questions is a good idea:

It teaches you valuable lessons

Leaders usually have years of experience and knowledge to reach their status. Their positions mean they're exposed to more complex issues and responsibilities. For these reasons, leaders usually have a unique way of thinking and a wealth of knowledge. Asking leaders questions can expose you to valuable lessons about their lives and careers. It can also expose you to a fresh approach for solving a problem or understanding an issue.

It can help you build your network

Asking questions is a great way to get to know a person and establish connections. Asking leaders questions can help them warm up to you. A question you ask may lead to a meaningful conversation that begins a positive relationship. You may also discover things you have in common with the leader. This can help expand your professional network and can even secure you a mentor.

It allows you to demonstrate your intelligence

Asking insightful questions can show that you're thoughtful and intelligent. It is unlikely leaders meet many people that have a mental list of interesting questions for them. This shows that you're intellectually curious and you take the time to prepare. An added benefit is that asking questions also improves your thinking.

It can help you solve current problems

Solving problems creatively and efficiently is a foundation of leadership. If you ask a leader a question, they may share a similar problem they've faced in the past. You may also get advice on how they solved their challenge, which can help you solve your own.

It can aid your career

Engaging with leaders exposes you to new knowledge that can be a significant boost to your career. For instance, asking the right question can expose you to quality mentorship and give you the opportunity to impress the leader. As a result, you have someone to provide you with advice and speak on your behalf, which can be essential for your career.

14 EXAMPLES OF QUESTIONS TO ASK LEADERS

When you meet a leader, you have limited time to make an impression, so you need to ask the right questions. Here are some strategic questions to ask leaders:

1. What's something you wish you knew earlier in your career?

As people advance in their careers, they develop more efficient ways of navigating the industry. They also discover valuable insights about personal systems, values, people, and life. When you ask this question, the leader considers the knowledge they have gained that has shaped their careers. This can be an invaluable source of self-optimization tips and other ways to advance quickly. This question is especially great if the leader is in your industry, so you can apply their advice to your own professional life.

2. Who are the mentors that have had the greatest impact on you?

Leaders typically have multiple mentors in their professional life. This question makes them think about their most beneficial mentorship relationship and why it was important. In their answer, they may provide essential tips about picking a mentor for yourself and maximizing mentor relationships. Engaging with a mentor may challenge you, but insight might improve your experience. It is also possible that you and the leader admire the same people. They may introduce you to that person and speak highly of you. This can be a way to bond and create a stronger relationship.

3. What is your biggest regret in your career?

Everyone makes mistakes, even the most qualified leaders. Asking leaders about their past errors and how they learned from them can help you avoid similar errors. The leader can also expose you to certain problematic values or thinking patterns that lead them to the error. Using their insights can help you save time and avoid mistakes.

4. What do you do to encourage creativity in your organization?

Encouraging creativity among others can be a tasking ordeal, even for competent leaders. It requires creativity, communication skills, and people management skills to inspire creativity among employees. Asking this question can expose you to uncommon tips for managing people and improving your creativity. This can also help you better understand how creativity serves an organization.

5. What qualities do you think leaders today lack most?

As a leader or aspiring leader yourself, this question can be an immense benefit to you. There are limits to which we can assess ourselves and there may be mistakes you make that the leader can point out. Hearing from someone who has progressed in your field can help enrich your perspective and help you become a better leader.

6. What drives you currently?

Regardless of how successful they are, leaders still have goals that are important to them. Asking a leader this question can help inspire you to challenge yourself. As the leader discusses their goals and strategy, it can offer you essential tips for goal-setting and strategic thinking. This can help you prioritize your goals and manage your resources more efficiently.

7. What is your greatest achievement?

This question can help you learn more about the leader and connect on a more personal level. The achievement might be a relationship, skill, or adventure that's unrelated to their professional life. Even when the achievement is professional, they can tell you about the personal context that makes the achievement stand out. This can expose you to a personal side of the leader and help you gain valuable life lessons from their answer.

8. What do you do to improve yourself as a leader?

Effective leaders commit to continually bettering themselves and have systems to improve their skills. Asking this question can expose you to effective methods for self-development and improved leadership. Reading, mentorship, teaching, and meditation are common ways people sharpen their minds. You can improve your existing strategy with tips from the leader's answer.

9. What things do you consider before a new hire?

It is challenging to navigate the hiring process of employees. Many times, candidates have great resumes and cover letters without being able to meet the company's needs. Companies often choose employees based on their values, work ethic, and determination. Asking this question can expose you to insightful tips for more effective recruitment.

10. What are your favorite books?

Leaders are usually voracious readers since books are one of the greatest tools for gaining wisdom. It is likely the leader you're speaking with has books that affected them, which can contain insights from other industry leaders that they look up to. You can add these books to your reading list and go through them to enhance your knowledge.

11. What behaviors should good leaders avoid?

Outstanding leaders have learned many of their skills, and they likely have had to adjust undesirable traits as they advanced in their careers and learn lessons about which traits hinder their advancement. Asking this question can help you identify if you have any of those problematic traits. This allows you to work on managing your weaknesses before they negatively affect your career.

12. Which leadership qualities are you still trying to improve?

Leaders are constantly on a journey of self-development and self-rediscovery. It is likely the leader you're speaking to has a certain quality they still struggle with. This can encourage you to be humble and always willing to learn and grow. They may also be working on something you are currently struggling with.

Their insight can inspire you to continue to pursue your goals and help you figure out how to overcome the challenge.

13. How do you keep your organization committed to your vision and mission?

What sets outstanding leaders apart is their ability to use their resources efficiently. Inspiring people and directing them to do productive work is one of the core responsibilities of a leader. Learning how a leader has navigated that responsibility can teach you important lessons. It can help inform and improve your personal strategy for managing people.

14. How do you promote a positive work environment?

The work culture at an organization affects staff morale and overall productivity. Responsibility falls on the leader to promote a warm and conducive work environment. They can have useful tips for boosting employee morale or ensuring standard customer service. Learning how a leader has handled this responsibility can help you improve your own strategy and become a better leader.

CHAPTER 35

31 FUN QUESTIONS TO ASK EMPLOYEES

INDEED EDITORIAL TEAM

Originally posted on February 16th, 2023

Whether you're conducting an interview, meeting new employees or practicing team-building exercises, asking employees fun questions can be a great way to get to know them better. It can also make them feel more relaxed, comfortable and welcomed in the workplace. The types of questions you ask employees can tell you more about who they are as a person and an employee. In this article, we share a list of fun questions to ask employees when they first start with a company.

FUN QUESTIONS TO ASK EMPLOYEES

Asking employees unique questions is a great way to build strong relationships between coworkers and can make all employees feel more comfortable around each other. Here are the different types of questions you can ask employees:

Indeed is the #1 job site in the world* with over 250M unique visitors every month. Indeed strives to put job seekers first, giving them free access to search for jobs, post resumes, and research companies. Every day, Indeed connects millions of people to new opportunities.

1. Do you prefer staying up late or waking up early in the morning?

Talking about employees' lives outside of work is a great way to make the entire team feel more relaxed and comfortable with one another. This question can help you learn more about employees' routines. It also a great way to learn when team members feel most productive and energized during the day. For instance, if you learn that many of the employees enjoy early mornings, you can hold meetings or brainstorm sessions during those times.

2. Name a role model who has inspired you in your career.

Some employees may have interesting stories about people they look up to who inspired them to pursue a role in their particular field. Learning about someone's role model helps you gain a strong idea of the kind of person they aspire to be and the characteristics they hope to one day hold.

3. Tell me about the first job you've ever held.

This question can either be about the first job employees held within their current field or one they had during high school. They may have many entertaining stories to share about what they learned at their previous jobs and how it differed from the role they hold now.

4. What led you to work in this field?

Learning why an employee decided to pursue their current role can help you understand what makes them passionate about it. They may have enjoyed learning subjects related to the role during their college courses or they may have a family member who works in the field, which made them want to pursue a similar role as well.

5. What energizes and drains you when you're at work?

Asking this question tells you what kinds of tasks employees prefer to complete and which they feel less motivated about. This can make it easier to delegate tasks according to employees' interests and preferences. If employees work on tasks they're excited about, they may put more effort into each assignment and contribute more valuable work to the company.

6. Where are you from?

Employees can often feel more comfortable in the workplace if they gain a sense of familiarity. Knowing where certain employees are from can tell a lot about who they are and the types of cultures or people they grew up around. Some employees may even realize they're from the same area, which could be a great talking point and the start to a workplace friendship.

7. Are there any misconceptions people outside of your field have about your job title?

With this question, employees can share what tasks others believe they're responsible for in their roles. Sharing these misconceptions with other employees who hold similar job titles can make employees feel more comfortable, understood and relatable. These can also be funny stories to share with others.

8. If you could have one superpower, what would it be?

This is a fun question that can help employees loosen up and discover unique qualities about one another. It can be a great question to ask at the beginning of a meeting or brainstorm session when you want employees to warm up their creativity and critical thinking abilities before moving to the main talking points of the meeting.

9. What's your process for turning a bad day into a good one?

Employees can share their strategies for remaining positive on days that may seem difficult or overwhelming. Others can listen to their answers and apply them toward their own situations when they're struggling with complex or challenging tasks and need to think positively.

10. Describe one of your favorite work memories.

You can ask employees to talk about one of their favorite memories in their current role if they've worked there for a while or they can share a fond memory at a previous workplace. This is a great way to get employees to share stories with one another and create a more positive and cheerful atmosphere.

11. If you were to write a memoir about your life, what would you title it?

This question is another great way for employees to get creative and share experiences with their team members. It also allows you to learn more about different aspects of their lives outside of work. When they share the title, ask them to explain why they chose that title to learn more about their personality and traits.

12. Tell me a fact that most people don't know about you.

When employees share details they haven't shared with many other people, they develop a stronger connection and relationship with you and other employees. This allows team members to feel closer with each other, which can make it easier to collaborate and ask questions when needed.

13. Share the best piece of advice anyone has ever given you.

This answer can tell you more about who the employee is and certain pieces of advice that they still remember and follow each day. Employees can also share this advice with other employees to inspire and motivate them in their personal and professional lives.

14. Tell me about a compliment you've received that you're most proud of.

This is an effective way for employees to boost their self-confidence by reminding them of positive comments others have shared with them. Their answer also tells you what their strengths are, which you can keep in mind when assigning tasks or looking for help on certain assignments.

15. What did you want to be when you were younger?

Employees can have a fun way to reminisce on old memories by sharing their answer to this question. It can also be entertaining to learn how much their answer differs from the actual role they currently work in. You can also ask them to elaborate on why they wanted that role as a child to learn more about who they were when they were younger.

16. Share three words that your close friends would use to describe you.

This question can help employees feel more confident in their abilities. You can ask this question if you see employees struggling on certain assignments or if they receive a disappointing performance review. This answer can remind them of their positive characteristics. It also tells you what others think about them outside of work.

17. What activities do you participate in over the weekend?

Another effective way to gain more insight on an employee's personal life is by learning what activities they enjoy outside of work. Other employees may share a similar hobby which could lead both employees to spending time together as friends outside of work.

18. Do you have any hidden talents?

Learning an employee's hidden talents can be a fun way for them to express themselves and impress others with their abilities. You may even learn that one of those talents could be beneficial to their career or they could use it to help others complete their tasks.

19. Are you reading any books currently?

There may be several employees who enjoy reading, so sharing book recommendations with one another can be a great way to encourage relationships and discussions between team members. If many employees share an interest in similar books, they may even start a book club for everyone to join.

20. What destination do you hope to visit one day?

Many employees may enjoy discussing where they'd like to visit one day. Answering this question may lead other employees to mention their own goals of visiting the same destination one day as well. Others may share that they have already visited that area and can provide travel tips with employees.

21. List three items on your bucket list

This question helps you learn what types of goals employees have set for themselves. It also tells you what they hope and plan to eventually achieve. Employees can share their bucket

lists with one another and give each other tips on how to meet their goals.

**22. Which fictional character do you feel you're most like?
What traits do you share with them?**

Explaining the type of fictional character they're most like allows you to gain insight into what type of characteristics employees hold and the people they strive to be. By asking what traits they share with these characteristics, you can identify employees' positive qualities and skills.

23. Do you have any pets? What are they like?

Talking about pets is a great way for employees to feel more familiar and comfortable around other employees. Team members can also share pictures of their pets for everyone to view on their breaks to create a more positive and fun office environment.

24. Tell me about the craziest thing you've ever done

Employees can use this question to talk about any risks they've taken in life. It's also a great opportunity for employees to share stories with one another to bring all team members closer together.

25. What's one thing that has made you smile recently?

To create a more positive environment, especially on challenging or stressful days, you can have employees talk about events that happened to them throughout the week that made them smile. This can put employees in a better mood when completing tasks.

26. How would you describe your job and its responsibilities to small children?

Some employees have roles with duties that may be difficult to understand. Having employees explain their jobs and tasks in incredibly simple terminology can be a fun and silly way to break down any complex responsibilities, while also making employees laugh.

27. If you could quickly and easily learn any new skill, what would it be?

This is a hypothetical question that can tell you more about employees' goals and about certain milestones they strive to achieve. You can find ways to help them build upon these skills or other employees may volunteer to teach them new skills.

28. What's your Myers-Briggs personality type?

Myers-Briggs personality types are 16 potential personality types that relate to different traits and ways of thinking. Knowing what an employee's personality type is can tell you a lot about their work ethic, values and perspective on the world.

29. Have you lived in a different state or country?

This question allows you to learn more about an employee's background. They may have lived in interesting cities, state or countries and have fascinating stories to share with other employees.

30. What animal do you believe most closely matches your personality and why?

This is another effective way to gauge an understanding of your employees' personality types. It's also a fun and interesting way for people to describe themselves to other employees. Team

members may also share a laugh comparing each other to certain animals.

31. What's the best thing that has happened to you so far this week?

If employees are undergoing a difficult workweek, take a few moments to share the best part of the week with one another. This helps employees remind themselves of why they enjoy their jobs to help them be more positive and optimistic.

CHAPTER 36

30 ENGAGING QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR SENIOR LEADERS

BENJAMIN WANN

Originally posted on August 28, 2023

In the entire stretch of your professional career, there is a slight chance that you will get to talk to another influential person—even possibly your senior leaders in the industry—that you look up to.

So if the chance to ask an influential person or a leader presents itself, it is better to be prepared with questions that can pave the way for a breakthrough in your company or industry.

Talking to those who hold leadership positions in your organization is essential to your career's progress and one of the most effective ways to enhance your procedures and methods.

As the world strives to thrive under a global pandemic, now is the moment to learn from the leaders. It is amid challenging

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circumstances that true leaders are revealed; we should use this opportunity to further our education.

Encourage leaders and remind them that this is what they were trained for, but also use this opportunity to engage with them and learn from them.

Learning takes place when one is actively engaged with the activities of others.

Asking questions is one of the most effective intellectual and personal development methods. Inquire with the senior leaders who are already accomplishing what you want to accomplish and what it takes to get there. Also, take time to learn about experiences with those in leadership positions who took completely different routes.

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT YOUR LEADERS

Understanding how to maintain humility is one of the most essential skills for aspiring leaders to acquire. Leaders need to be conscious that their leadership does not come from anything; they need to nourish themselves with the traits of the figures who inspire them.

They need to be aware that their leadership only emerges from something which requires a certain amount of effort to prove that they are indeed efficient. Therefore, openness to other people's experiences is indispensable to investigate the factors contributing to great leaders' success.

Having a brief conversation with a leader and talking about how your separate paths have led you to where you are now can be highly formative and inspirational in a sense. A professional will increase the likelihood of success in achieving their set objective if they proceed in this manner.

Preparing engaging questions to ask leaders can assist one in identifying the most relevant topics for both sides. Below is

a list of 20 questions to ask senior leaders that will get them talking.

1. What would you say is the primary motivating factor behind your leadership?

First, knowing what drives and motivates leaders to embark on the leadership path is wise. It is especially true when determining how to lead others best.

If you listen to what people who have achieved success in your industry have to say, you will be able to recognize yourself in their way of thinking, which is encouraging.

In addition, it may cause you to reconsider your goals and objectives in life. It is good to align your principles with a senior leader's experience; think of it as having a map that could help you get to your career's success.

However, it is crucial to remember that various people have different goals, and there is no "right" or "wrong" response to this question. However, almost all leaders will emphasize working together as a team.

A leader's success is entirely contingent on the efforts of his people. His group can evaluate the quality of his output. As a result, the desire to succeed in life as a whole serves as a component of the leading motivation of each individual.

2. Who are your role models, and why did you choose them?

The majority of today's most successful leaders can reflect on their lives and identify the individuals who served as mentors to them along the way. Mentors help mold their mentees into future leaders.

Because people from diverse walks of life can serve as mentors, the characteristics of mentoring can take on a variety of forms and could share different values and principles.

Whether the mentor is an older family member, a professor from an earlier school, or someone met through a networking event, the people who impart knowledge and lessons to today's leaders can reveal a great deal about a person's background and character.

A glimpse of what a successful leadership path can be gained by listening to a leader discuss who their mentor is and why they admire them.

3. What life-changing lessons did you pick up from the people who helped guide you?

This particular question is a follow-up to the preceding one. It asks for additional information about what insights a leader got from those who mentored or supported the leader throughout the leadership journey.

Lessons learned through mentors can frequently be the wisdom that people keep with them forever, longer than what is known in a class or seminar.

These lessons may be beneficial to you as well and may transfer to other aspects of your journey. Guidance is accompanied by evidence demonstrating its efficacy, with the leader serving as the evidence.

Asking this specific question can help give you a clear understanding of the emphasis of a mentor's impact on a leader's life and leadership progress. Gaining valuable advice can be a catalyst for your professional journey.

4. How do you ensure that others benefit from the life-changing knowledge you gained from your mentors?

In line with mentoring, this question tries to gain an even deeper understanding of how a leader takes information and passes it to others. A good and successful leader recognizes that passing their knowledge to others is the key to their success.

It might be tough to teach others consistently, an essential quality that a leader should possess actively. However, the willingness to teach and share knowledge is an essential factor.

Leaders willing to enlighten others and educate them with what they have discovered may garner more respect from people they interact with and be seen as more engaging with their audience.

5. If members of your team have differing views, how do you resolve the conflict?

When the methods implemented are different from one another, there is a greater possibility that the response you get will highlight the communication skills of your counterpart.

It is of the utmost importance to maintain one's composure when circumstances so demand is of the utmost importance. It is also vital for a leader to mediate disagreements to preserve a peaceful and healthy environment conducive to debate and decision-making.

The ability to manage this kind of issue so that each party can clarify their reasons, which will assist in finding a standard solution, does not require the leader to be partial.

A competent leader will be able to do this. Always remember that a leader's role within his team includes that of a mediator.

6. What is the most difficult choice you have ever been required to make?

Only a few leaders can navigate their way to the top without encountering obstacles along the way. You can better grasp the thought process and prepare yourself for the challenges you will face at some point in your career if you are aware of the difficulties others have faced along their path and how they overcame them.

A professional's level of success is directly proportional to two factors: first, the ability to recover from setbacks, and

second, the capacity to avoid allowing oneself to be debilitated by exceptionally trying circumstances.

Because regardless of the magnitude of the challenge, there is no such thing as an insurmountable barrier; nonetheless, there are situations in which one must make compromises or even sacrifices.

7. What advice do you wish someone had given you earlier in your career?

This question flips away from the mentor-related questions. It pushes a leader to reflect on a valuable lesson they may have had to learn on the spot when they were in a position of authority over others.

What kind of guidance could have better prepared them for that situation?

It presents an opportunity to discover the specific and individual lessons a leader has to offer while reflecting on past experiences. A leader can't be prepared for every imaginable scenario.

Still, the lessons they take away from such scenarios provide them additional insight to pass on to their people.

8. Do you believe personal qualities such as empathy and vulnerability play a part in your ability to lead?

Although this question may sound specific, it draws attention to frequently ignored qualities in leadership roles. These characteristics have progressively been proven crucial to leadership in light of the unique conditions in which our world currently finds itself.

During these trying times, many of the world's most revered leaders gained acclamation for their selflessness, which is why they are respected today.

To be an effective leader, you need to possess qualities such as empathy and vulnerability, to name a few. However, knowing how these qualities are involved in a particular leadership role is helpful in learning how to develop them.

9. How can you inspire others while also maintaining that you continue to be inspired by the organization's overall mission?

It is easy to feel like you are spreading yourself too thin when you are trying to motivate yourself while also trying to motivate others, yet leaders must always do this, and people often demand it from them.

Given the difficulty of the assignment, it is an excellent question to ask senior leaders to learn what they have learned through their own experiences in the role.

One's development as a leader can benefit from understanding the strategies and resources that great leaders employ to attain balance successfully.

10. What are some aspects of leadership you are still striving to improve?

There is no predetermined period in a leader's life at which they stop maturing and expanding their knowledge. Someone who consistently works on improving himself and their passions can be highly considered a leader.

When studying a great leader, it is something that is frequently overlooked. On the other hand, as a corporate leader, you will be better equipped to persevere if you are aware of the projects other leaders are working on.

They may be working on something you are also struggling with, and their response may help you develop a particular characteristic. It offers an opportunity to gain more knowledge that

you can apply later. Learning is always a continuous process, even for leaders.

11. How do you create time to continue learning while simultaneously leading others?

As a supporting question to the previous one, this question intends to inquire how the leader finds the time to improve their leadership abilities while also completing their regular responsibilities. The following question prompts leaders to discuss organizing their time to incorporate learning.

This particular question addresses the topic of time management but does it from a leadership perspective. While you are working hard to become a leader, it is easy to get swept away by the day-to-day initiatives and responsibilities.

However, making room for you to continue growing is crucial for you and the people working for you or your teams. It can benefit the audience receiving this shared knowledge as they can learn how to become more efficient and productive with their time.

12. What are some of the day-to-day strategies in which you ensure your staff remains focused on the organization's mission and vision?

Asking a straightforward question like this can sound intimidating, but it's a practical one. Leaders need to do more than stand around and yell orders at the people in their vicinity. They make it possible for everyone in the organization to pursue the mission and vision by utilizing the particular set of skills that they already possess.

The routine, day-to-day work must be clear of the purpose and vision, but the question is how to instill that mission and vision in the members of your teams. This is where a leader

comes in, so it is essential to ask this question to others in leadership positions.

Knowing how a leader manages the people in the organization shows how effective and efficient their leadership skills are.

13. Do you have any questions that encourage deep thought that you frequently ask your employees?

Even when you ask a leader, the leader most likely has questions of their own that they ask their people.

As a result of the dual role that leaders are expected to play—that of encouragers and challengers—they frequently ask their employees questions designed to stimulate analytical thinking and creative problem-solving with time.

These types of inquiries are fun questions to ask senior leaders. It allows them to peek at the qualities they could find valuable in their staff and possible future leaders.

14. As a leader, what do you consider to be one of the most difficult obstacles you've faced?

As cliché as this question may be, it is one of the essential questions to ask a leader. It can be a question that warns about potential difficulties and offers guidance on preparing for anything that might arise.

Either it is an all-encompassing and ongoing difficulty or very personal to you. When you ask leaders open-ended questions, you are extending an invitation to them to share additional information about themselves and the experiences they've had.

15. What are some of your biggest strengths and weaknesses as a leader?

As aforementioned at the beginning of this article, vulnerability is one of the essential characteristics of an effective leader. Therefore, any competent team leader can take a step back

from their actions and openly convey what they feel to be their shortcomings.

The work done can be understood better due to this. Realizing that you still have the potential to develop into an effective leader even when you are aware of the inadequacies in your character that keep you from acting is another helpful realization.

The flaws that another person has been able to change into strengths are the source of the assets they describe.

16. What things you do in your spare time enable you to be a more effective leader in your professional life?

For a leader, creating good habits that fuel leadership and a positive work outlook begin in their personal life. These habits could be things like exercising or meditating, or they could be something else entirely.

These are some entertaining questions to ask the CEO of your company. Asking inquiries and striking up conversations helps cultivate healthy relationships, whether maintained in a social or professional setting.

17. How clear is your vision for what the future of corporate responsibility should look like in your organization?

When it comes to a company's future, the employees' level of comprehension is the most critical factor. If the staff members cannot articulate the organization's goals, they will likely not fully get the vision. This might result in confusion and frustration, impeding the organization's forward movement.

It is crucial to effectively communicate the goals and objectives of the firm to guarantee that a leader and all staff members are on the same page.

Everyone will work toward the same goal in this manner and be aware of their roles in accomplishing that goal. Crossing the

finish line when everyone is rowing in the same direction is more straightforward.

18. In what direction does the company see itself going?

What are the goals that the company hopes to accomplish? How does it want to develop its strategies and approaches toward its goals?

These are the two most important questions that every company should address to build a future strategy that is crystal clear and well-focused.

It is helpful for the organization to have several vital goals they want to achieve in multiple years to keep the business on course and prevent it from becoming distracted by less significant goals or objectives,

It is critical to devise an efficient action plan to accomplish these objectives. However, it is essential to incorporate some degree of adaptability into the strategy if the organization needs to shift its focus or make other adjustments along the road.

Finding the answers to these questions can assist any company in developing a strategy for future success.

19. Do you currently have any strategic uncertainties?

Any goal or objective the organization may have difficulty accomplishing is considered a strategic risk. A leader must identify any strategic concerns the firm may have. Doing so can assist the organization in avoiding any obstacles and ensuring the success of the strategy a leader has devised for the company.

As a leader, it is essential to identify and evaluate your firm's strategic issues. Given the facts and information that is currently available, it is not possible to make an accurate prediction regarding these goals.

It is essential to take into account the firm's goals and the data required to attain those goals to assess these uncertainties accurately.

20. What do you believe to be the most important piece of advice for a learning leader to follow?

Providing an answer is typically more challenging because there is so much room for interpretation in this issue. As a result, some leaders will respond to it more effectively than others.

Consequently, conducting interviews with various successful leaders and consolidating the many pieces of advice you obtain is beneficial. In either case, those who have succeeded look back on their journey with gratitude and are happy to share the wisdom they have gained with future generations of influential people.

This may be the question that will be the most helpful to someone's professional career. The senior leader you're interviewing may know you well enough to recommend a modification that you should make to your behavior.

Be willing to put effort into bettering yourself, and embrace change enthusiastically.

10 FINAL ENGAGING QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR SENIOR LEADERS:

1. What inspired you to pursue a career in your field, and how did you get started?

This question is a great way to get senior leaders to share their personal stories and provide insight into their career journeys. Their answers can inspire junior professionals and provide valuable lessons on career development.

2. What are the most important qualities you look for when building a high-performing team?

This question can offer insight into a leader's management philosophy and highlight what they believe is most important for creating successful teams. The answer can also provide junior professionals with ideas on how to build their own teams.

3. How do you stay current with industry trends and innovations and encourage your team to do the same?

This question can offer insight into how senior leaders prioritize ongoing learning and development. It can also provide junior professionals with ideas on how to stay current in their field.

4. What is your approach to dealing with conflict within your team or organization?

This question can provide insight into a leader's conflict management style and offer junior professionals guidance on navigating difficult situations in the workplace.

5. What has been the most significant challenge you've faced in your career, and how did you overcome it?

This question can provide valuable lessons in perseverance and problem-solving and can offer inspiration to junior professionals who may be facing similar challenges.

6. What are the most important lessons you've learned in your career, and how have they influenced your leadership style?

This question can offer insight into a leader's management philosophy and guide junior professionals in developing their leadership style.

7. How do you foster a culture of innovation and creativity within your team or organization?

This question can provide insight into how senior leaders encourage creative thinking and foster an environment of innovation. It can also offer junior professionals ideas on how to do the same.

8. What do you think sets successful leaders apart, and how do you strive to embody those qualities?

This question can provide insight into a leader's personal values and beliefs about leadership. It can also guide junior professionals in developing their leadership styles.

9. What do you think are the biggest challenges facing our industry today, and how do you see us overcoming them?

This question can offer insight into a leader's perspective on industry trends and challenges. It can also provide junior professionals with ideas for preparing for the future.

10. How do you prioritize work-life balance, and what advice do you have for junior professionals who are struggling to find balance?

This question can offer insight into a leader's perspective on work-life balance and provide junior professionals with guidance on managing their work-life balance.

CONCLUSION

One of the essential takeaways from the following questions is to remember that leaders, like everyone else, are only human.

Because these influential people are humans with lives much like ours, it is essential to ask them in a detailed and personal way

rather than merely inquiring, “How did you do it?” Remember that having humanistic qualities is essential to being a leader, and ensure that your questions show this comprehension.

We need to put thought and purpose into the questions we ask other leaders to get the most out of the conversations we have with them.

Please do not go into this hoping to find all the answers; instead, use it as an opportunity to add more tools to your collection of leadership resources.

Because each leader’s journey is unique and their counsel is distinct, the more excitement and interest you bring to your interactions, the more you will take away from them.

CHAPTER 37

4 QUESTIONS TO HELP YOU DECIDE WHAT TO STOP DOING

MARK MILLER

Originally posted on October 5, 2023.

Did you know that some of your most important decisions as a leader are what to STOP doing?

The “Stop Doing List” is an idea introduced to the world by Peter Drucker (he called it “Planned Abandonment”) and popularized by Jim Collins. The idea is both simple and complex at the same time...

The SIMPLE part—Stop doing the activities that add little or no value, or those activities requiring time and energy that could be redeployed to more value-added activities.

The COMPLEX part—Trying to decide what to stop doing, overcoming the emotional attachment to current work, and mustering the courage to make the call.

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How do you decide what to stop doing? Here are four questions that may help:

1. What is the real value of the activity?

The work we do and the activities of our organizations should add value. If there is no value, why would we do it?

2. What are alternative uses for the time and resources?

Let's say you are evaluating something you do that requires four hours a week of your time. Make a list of alternate uses for those four hours. Let your imagination run wild.

3. What are you afraid will happen if you stop the current work?

Confronting our fears is rarely fun but often profitable. One popular fear associated with stopping work is the reaction from others. Many times, our fears are unfounded, and the risk of stopping a program or activity is minimal.

4. What are the likely benefits, tangible and emotional, for stopping the work?

You know as well as I do, the future is a tenuous place. There are no guarantees our actions will have the desired effect. What benefits do you believe you will accrue if you stop doing the work in question?

There are no great leaders without great courage.

A "Stop Doing List" is an outstanding tool to strengthen our courage and our leadership.

CHAPTER 38

STARTING THE CONVERSATION AND KEEPING IT ROLLING

DEAN NELSON

Originally posted on January 11, 2024

Excerpted with permission of Dean Nelson from his book, Talk to Me

STARTING THE CONVERSATION AND KEEPING IT ROLLING

It may seem obvious, but the best questions are the open-ended ones, where the source has a chance to explain something, and even provide an anecdote to illustrate it. If you prepared properly, you won't need to ask a closed-ended question like "Where did you serve in World War II?" or "What is voodoo?" On the other hand, you don't want to ask questions that are so open-ended that they paralyze the interviewer into giving meaningless answers. You may be headed in a direction, but you want to

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have a clearer sense than just knowing whether you are north or south of the equator.

The quality of your questions will have a direct impact on the quality of your interview.

I mentioned in Chapter 2 that my father spent a year in a weather station on the Arctic Circle during World War II. If you want to see him hem and haw and clear phlegm awkwardly and furrow his eyebrows and look out the window, ask him, "What was it like being on the Arctic Circle for a year?" That kind of a vague question won't get much of a response other than something equally vague, like "Cold." Why? Because nothing is like being on the Arctic Circle for a year. To get the kind of answer you're hoping for, you have to ask this question differently. Something like, "What did you do for food up there?" Or, "What was the most difficult part about being there?" Or, "What was the most fun part about being there?" "Did you date any of the indigenous women while you were there?" I really did ask him that last one. He gave me a politically incorrect response that I can't really share here, but the short answer is "No." Those kinds of questions will get you into topics such as loneliness, seeing polar bears, trading cigarettes for ivory carvings—something that will provide insight, not just an obvious fact.

This presumes, of course, that you have done enough preparation that you will have the kind of questions that will lead your source into saying something interesting. If you were going to interview my father, for instance, then you would probably already have found out where he was during the war, which means you would have done some reading about what the conditions were like up there, what the hardships were, who the inhabitants of that region are. If you know those things going in, then you'll be more prepared to ask him to give you some insight, some understanding, some anecdotes.

Leaning forward, keeping eye contact even when taking notes, giving nonverbal cues to keep talking, looking quizzical if something doesn't make sense—all are part of conducting an interview. Effective interviewers know how to keep the conversation going. And that's what an ideal interview really is—a conversation.

The Tao of How

If you want to conduct a good interview, you simply must know a great deal about the topic before you start. Then when the interview does start, you can lead it more intentionally and get something useful rather than a vague platitude.

Interviews after Olympic events are prime examples. A runner or a skier or a skater or a gymnast has just completed something that only a freak of nature could complete—something the athletes have been obsessing about for the last four years of their lives—and the interviewer asks, “What was it like to be out here?”

I rarely shout at my television, but I almost get hoarse during the Olympics. Note to reporters who interview Olympic athletes: Nothing is like being there. Ask a better question. Ask “How you were able to focus after that false start?” Ask how this victory or loss ranks with other wins and losses in that athlete's career. Ask about the impact of having a child during training two years ago and whether it made them a different kind of competitor. Lead the conversation with specifics. The vaguer your question, the more pointless the answer.

Doing your homework allows you to ask questions that begin with “Why” or “How,” which are guaranteed to get you further than “When” or “What” or “Who” or “Where.”

Still at a loss? Here are some other tried and true paths of inquiry that are sure to get your source talking:

Juxtaposition

The line “Would you rather . . .” is the first line of a fun conversation-starting game, where you come up with strange and unrelated topics, just so the person will explain how he or she feels about something. But it’s also a good interview question.

Ira Glass was asked on a podcast what he does when he doesn’t get a satisfactory answer from a source, and one method he uses is to give people something to riff on: He’ll propose a theory to the source just to get the person thinking and responding. “I find myself in a lot of interviews saying, ‘Well is it more like this or is it like this? I can imagine it would be this way or this way. What is it?’ . . . They’re forced to go somewhere—to bat away one of your theories and to run at one of the others,” he said.

I asked a tangent to this question to a former NFL player who is now the pastor of a megachurch. “Which is harder,” I asked him—“playing professional football or being a pastor?” He gave me a strange look when I asked him, because those two things aren’t even close to being related. Finally he said, “That’s a serious question?” I nodded. He thought for a few seconds and gave me a great answer about the similarities and differences of a profession where people are trying to crush you, and playing professional football. Kidding. He really did give me a thoughtful response, and it was because of the juxtaposition of the two elements. Then I followed it up with “How are they similar and how are they different?” which was just a way to get him to amplify what he previously said. Ira Glass once said in an interview that if he’s ever feeling stuck, he thinks of public radio journalist Noah Adams and remembers that there is one question that you can always, always count on: “How did you think it was going to work out before it happened? And then how did it really work out?” The question works so well, Glass said, because it always yields two stories in response. “You get

'Here's how I thought it would go,' which is one story. And then 'Here's how the reality is different than the dream of that.' The jump between the two is just kind of interesting."

"What first got you interested in . . ."

I asked this of Deepak Chopra regarding his early interest in medicine. Since I knew the answer already—the novel *Arrowsmith* was a big influence—it gave us a chance to discuss the power of reading, of literature, and of identifying with a character. I'm pretty sure that the band Aerosmith had little to no influence on him.

Legacy

Asking sources how they want to be remembered is a chance for them to tell you what is really important. It goes right to their values and helps them formulate what they consider their greatest contributions.

"What do you make of . . ."

This gives you a chance to bring up an issue that your source can expound on. But it can't be so narrow that it's paralyzing. A good question would be, "What do you make of the people who say that climate change is a hoax?" I asked that of the environmental writer and activist Bill McKibben, and it launched him into a deep, articulate response. If I would have asked him, "What do you make of climate change?" he would have looked at me like my dad looked at people when they asked what it was like being in the Arctic for a year.

"What would you take if you . . ."

There are many varieties to this question. It could be the cliché "What would you want with you if you were stranded on a desert island?" or "What would you grab if you had to evac-

uate your home quickly?" We have had to face that question twice because of wildfires in our neighborhood, and we had little time to get out. It's very revealing. A different riff on this was when I auditioned for a reality television show that was going to be recorded and broadcast in Sweden. That's right, it was a Swedish reality show, and I wanted in! I made it to the second stage of auditions, thanks to a video testimonial that my son recorded of me making the case. When it came time for the Skype interview with the Swedish producer, we had a delightful conversation, but I could tell that she lost interest when she asked me, "If you come to Sweden to be part of this show, what would we find in your suitcase?" It's a fair question. A good one. Because it reveals something about my personality. And that's where I blew it. I said I would have lots of books and a journal. In retrospect, I know that answer put a big label on me that said "BORING!!!" (more accurately, the word in Swedish is "tråkigt"), which meant I would be a horrible reality show candidate. What should I have said? IKEA gift cards?

The Jeopardy! question

I have used this question several times, and have seen it used in job interviews. It's "If you were a contestant on *Jeopardy!*, in what category would you excel?" It's a great way to get a person talking about his or her interests, expertise, and passion.

"Help me understand . . ."

This puts your source in the role of expert, which is usually useful. If there is a difficult topic, saying something along the lines of "Help me understand how virtual currencies work" will get you further than "What is Bitcoin?"

“Excuse me?”

Use this when you really don’t understand what the person said, or if the person said something outrageous and you want to give her the opportunity to explain. It’s a great follow-up to something complicated, offensive, puzzling—it’s an invitation for the person to keep going.

“How would your life have been different . . . ?”

I love asking this question, because it makes the source consider alternatives to how his or her life turned out. It reveals a lot about the person’s personality and interests. I asked, only jokingly, this question of Kareem Abdul-Jabbar when we discussed his love for writing. “Did you ever think about how your life would have been different if you would have pursued journalism instead of basketball?” I asked him. “You could have been somebody!” He clearly saw that I was kidding, and said, “Yeah, we’ll never know.”

“You have said . . .”

This takes preparation, because it means you have read what this person has written, or listened to comments. But bringing up something someone said in the past is a chance for the person to show that he still feels strongly about the topic, or (even better) that he has changed his perspective.

“What is your favorite unimportant thing to do?”

This gets your source evaluating a number of things at once, and it often creates something personal and revealing. The interviewer Jesse Thorn asked this of the documentary filmmaker Werner Herzog. Herzog said it was watching soccer, which then allowed Thorn to delve into what interested Herzog about the sport.

Your Mom Was Right

But there's more to it than just asking good questions. How you ask the questions will affect the answers as well. Your mom was right—it's not just what you say; it's how you say it.

Remember, a good interview is a conversation, not an interrogation.

BODY LANGUAGE MATTERS

When you ask questions, you want to show your source that you are listening with your whole body. Eye contact matters. Try to keep looking at your source, while only occasionally looking down at your notes. This takes practice. When your source is speaking, lean forward a little. Let your facial expression show that you are agreeing or confused or challenging. The occasional "Mm-hmms" and "Uh-huhs" are encouragements for your source to keep going. Be very aware of whether you are cutting the person off. You will learn a lot about whether you interrupt, cut off, disrupt, or dominate the conversation if you listen to a few of your interviews. It's humbling and instructive. That's why you should do it.

Keeping eye contact while taking notes is an acquired skill. Like texting and driving. Wait. Bad example. Anyway, you aren't born with this ability. But if you work at it, you'll get better.

Those nonverbal "Uh-huhs" will keep the source going. When you relax, they relax. If the purpose of your interview is to get more than just a fact or two, then the kinds of questions you ask and the way you ask them will have a great impact on whether you hear anything useful.

That's true for any profession. If you're a human resources person conducting an interview with a job candidate, and you see on the person's resume that she rode a bicycle across the

United States, or climbed Machu Picchu, or won a gold medal in cup stacking (it's a thing—I know a guy who does it), that's a better place to start than asking "What was your first job?" At the beginning of an annual physical, my doctor (who must have looked at my chart before coming into the exam room) said, "So you're still teaching journalism, eh? Why? I thought journalism was dead!" He didn't say it in an aggressive or mocking manner. He said it as a means to get us open with each other.

CHAPTER 39

STOP ENDING YOUR SPEECHES WITH “ARE THERE ANY QUESTIONS?”

BOB TIEDE

Originally posted on March 10, 2025

There are times when you should not ask a question! You are thinking, “Did I read that correctly? Did the Blogger of LeadingWithQuestions.com really just say there are times when you shouldn’t ask a question?”

YES—He Did!

You are giving a great speech—superb opening—great stories—instantly implemental content. So far your speech is a 10 out of 10!

Then you reach the end of your speech and ask your audience, “Are there any questions?” and you hear nothing but crickets—awkward silence and it doesn’t end—the deafening silence continues—no one raises their hands to ask a question—so you finally say, “Thank You Very Much!” and walk away from the podium.

Your incredibly well done speech ended with a nose-dive. It crashed! Your last impression was a “0” out of 10. Yes, you shot yourself in the foot! Yes, it was a self inflicted wound!

So what can you do differently?

Might you want to save your best story for the end?

Might you want to end with a terrific quote?

Or might you want to end with a different kind of question?

A bunch of years ago I was in the audience when I saw the speaker (I would tell you his name if I could remember—I do remember the speaker was a man) make incredible use of his cell phone and everyone's cell phones in the audience. Instead of asking everyone in the audience to turn off/silence/put away their cell phones, he asked everyone to get out their cell phones. He then shared his number and asked everyone in the audience to text him their answer to a question. He then shared 10–15 of their answers and then asked another question and shared 10–15 of their answers.

Once or twice more he repeated this process during his talk. You could feel the audience engagement. They were not just listening to a talk, they were participants in his presentation.

And near the end of his talk he did ask the audience a question! No—he didn't ask, "Are there any questions?" Instead he asked them to again pull out their cell phones and share one thing they were going to implement as a result of his talk!

WOW! He scored a 10 out of 10 from beginning to end! Truthfully, I seldom come up with great new ways to do something! But, I love to copy brilliance! And I have been using what I observed that day in every "Leading With Questions" presentation I have done since!

And now here is my question for you: My cell is 214-213-2179. What are you going to be doing differently next time you give a speech/make a presentation? Can't wait to read your text! Oh—please share your name with me when you text.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book would not be possible without the help of so many people! Each post was selected with the goal of equipping you with the tools, perspectives, and strategies to lead more effectively—by asking better questions. The insights in this book and on my blog come from some of the most thoughtful and experienced leaders across industries, and I am deeply grateful to each contributor for allowing me to share their wisdom.

I want to express my deep appreciation to my friend Bob Beaudine for writing the Foreword. His tremendous support, encouragement, and friendship is invaluable to me. And special thanks to each contributor to this book allowing us to benefit from their incredible wisdom and insight into asking better questions!

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And above all else, I must express my gratitude to my amazing wife, Sherry, whose love and encouragement constantly motivates me to be a better man!

WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING ABOUT LEADINGWITHQUESTIONS.COM



"Bob Tiede's blog, LeadingWithQuestions.com, consistently helps me to ask better questions—not just to my audiences and to my staff, but also to my family and friends!"

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Leading with Questions and President
of World Institute for Action Learning



"As a business owner, speaker and author, I encourage my clients and audiences to take their businesses to a higher level of excellence. With his blog, LeadingWithQuestions.com, Bob Tiede provides us with practical tools and inspirational insights for achieving this."

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at Harvard Business School Publishing



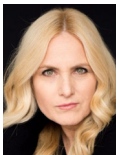
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Cheryl Bachelder, Former CEO,
Popeyes Louisiana Kitchen, Inc., from 2007 to 2017



"Thanks to Bob Tiede's LeadingWithQuestions.com... Keeps me questioning."

Lolly Daskal,

Founder and CEO of Lead From Within;
Coach, Consultant, Speaker and Author



"Bob Tiede understands why we are on this earth...to add value to others. LeadingWithQuestions.com is a glimpse into his wisdom and insight which are a direct result of his passion for people and leaving every person in every interaction with him better! I'm grateful to call Bob a friend!"

Logan Stout, Best-selling author, speaker, Founder and CEO of IDLife; Founder and CEO, Dallas Patriots Inc.



"I look forward to being inspired and challenged by Bob's blog each week. It has been so beneficial to us, it led to a great sermon series at our church, 'Questions Jesus Asked.'"

Lamarr Lark, Sr., Chick-fil-A Operator,
Gurnee, Illinois



"My Dad, Zig Ziglar, always said: 'Questions are the answer!' If you are looking for answers to life's most challenging questions there is no better place than Bob Tiede's blog, LeadingWithQuestions.com"

Tom Ziglar, President at Ziglar Inc.



"My role as a leader mandates the prolific, internal dialogue with questions for self-direction, life-management, and people-leadership. Bob Tiede excels in both the content and timing of questions. Each time I am with him, whether in person or by his blog, I come away deeply refreshed."

Dr. Ramesh Richard, President of RREACH
and Professor at Dallas Theological Seminary



"Bob Tiede is a great leader as well as a highly effective coach, who is committed to increasing the leadership understanding and effectiveness of others. His unique contributions on leading with questions is an incredible resource for those who want to lead through the empowerment of others."

Delanyo Adadevoh, PhD, President,
International Leadership Foundation



"Ever since I have known Bob he has asked me the questions which have helped me to develop my thinking, improve my decision-making skills and in turn lead others more effectively through asking good questions. *Leading with Questions* is a skill every growing leader needs to be fruitful and effective. I highly commend Bob in helping you with this."

Lesley Cheesman, National Director
of Agape United Kingdom

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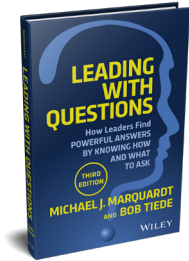
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Bob Tiede has been on the staff of Cru for over 54 years and currently serves on the U.S. Leadership Development team.

Helping develop the next generation of leaders for Cru is Bob's focus. His role includes recruiting outstanding leaders from business, education, government, medicine, military, and non-profits to coach Cru leaders.

Bob started his blog LeadingWithQuestions.com as a way to better connect with his target audience: Cru's emerging leaders who are 20- and 30-something.

Today, his blog provides a continued source of new tools (new questions) for all of Cru's coaches and leaders and is viewed by leaders in more than 200 countries.

A leader who leads with questions will often be 10 times more effective than a leader who only leads by telling!

Bob and his wife, Sherry, are proud parents of four adult children and super proud grandparents of nine incredible grandchildren—all of whom love to ask their Papa Bob questions!

Visit Bob Tiede's blog ►



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