

QUESTION TYPES

Chief Optimization Officer: Shattering the Status Quo

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Question Tips

POWERFUL QUESTIONS

Beginning coaches are tempted to give people advice – or worse yet – answers. But that’s not what coaching is all about. Coaching is about asking powerful questions and allowing people to find answers. Asking rather than telling is the foundation of coaching.

- Powerful question examples:
- So what?
- What might happen?
- What options do you have?
- For instance?
- What do you hope to accomplish?
- What’s your take of the situation?
- What’s it going to take?
- What’s next?
- Now what?

BOTTOM LINING

Bottom lining is simply succinct communication. It’s the executive summary. It’s the bare facts without embellishment.

Some people simply have an expansive method of communication. Others like to tell story after story in order to make their point. And then there are the individuals that feel like they need to share every detail – no matter how minute. Yet – all of the information can get in the way of finding solutions and moving forward. To cut these kinds of conversations short use a bottom line request:

- Bottom-line it for me.
- Give me the executive summary.
- What’s the headline version?
- Give me the 30 second overview.

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REFRAMING

Reframing provide another perspective. It is like turning the kaleidoscope to see another image. When a you reframe a situation they take the original data and interprets it in a different way.

For example: The individual you are working with was just informed that they did not get the job they posted for. They are very disappointed and are questioning the politics that happened behind the decision. A reframe of the situation could include a discussion of the chosen candidate's education, previous work experience and networking skills.

INQUIRY

Inquiries are powerful questions that allow individuals to grapple with ideas over time and from a number of different perspectives. For example you might ask: "What would be three things that you could do next week that would be simple and easy for you to implement?"

To make inquiries effective:

1. **Encourage Thinking.** Ask them at the end of a meeting something that will allow the individual to mull over the issue in order to explore options and alternatives.
2. **Require expansive responses.** We live in a world where people often think there is only one right answer. As the COptO – you may need to remind the individual that you are not looking for a right answer – rather you are asking the individual to explore possibilities. Curiosity is key.
3. **Attach inquiries to a call for action.** For example you might ask them to write the inquiry in their planner or post it on their PC – and then when they notice it to take the time to look at the inquiry in a new way, at a different angle, and with a fresh perspective.
4. **Follow-up.** Follow-up will promote accountability.

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Twenty Powerful Questions

1. Tell me more about that...
2. Help me understand. Walk me through your thinking.
3. What have we done in the past? What else is possible?
4. If you were to make the decision, what would you decide to do, and why?
5. Play that out for me. What do you think will happen?
6. What are you/we trying to accomplish?
7. Walk me through the data story.
8. What outcome(s) are you hoping for?
9. What options and/or alternatives did you consider? Why did you choose this option?
10. What are the advantages (strengths, benefits, upside)? What are the disadvantages (weaknesses, downside)?
11. What obstacles might get in the way? How could you overcome them?
12. What concerns might other people have? How could you address these concerns?
13. What teams/departments would see it this way? Why?
14. Who might see it differently? What's their perspective? How is their perspective valid?
15. What contrary evidence did you find? How did you address/work through that/those perspective(s)?
16. Who else needs to get involved? What could their involvement look like? How will that help you achieve your goal/outcome?
17. What else?
18. And...
19. What does your plan look like? How will you go about that? What's next?
20. What worked? What didn't work? What would you do differently next time?

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Make Your Own Powerful Questions