

POWERFUL QUESTIONS FOR POWERFUL LEADERSHIP

A powerful way to create the dynamic in which you're influencing people and they're influencing you, is to ask powerful questions. Asking questions to invite higher level thinking requires that you consider what's right for the person(s), situation, and goals in that moment, and that you communicate verbally and non-verbally that you're genuinely curious and want their thinking to influence your thinking.

The following list of questions can dramatically increase your ability to have powerful conversations.

QUESTIONS TO FOSTER INPUT AND CRITICAL THINKING

Benefits/Concerns/Suggestions (one we use often!):

In response to a proposal, plan, or initiative, ask individuals or teams to consider these questions in this order:

- What are the benefits of this idea? (It's the norm to see the reasons not do something new and innovative. Getting them to think first about the idea's benefits opens them to a more effective assessment.)
- What concerns do you have?
- What suggestions would you make?

Vision/Obstacles/Areas of Focus:

- What are your hopes for the project, department, organization? What does success look like, feel like, live like?
- What obstacles get in the way of success?
- What can you do to get around the obstacles, and where do you need to focus your efforts to mitigate the obstacles?

Getting People to Move Beyond Initial (Often Flat) Response:

- Tell me what went into your thinking? What's your rationale for moving forward in this way?
- Say more about that? or just Say more?

Predicting Impact:

- Imagine describing your plan to the team/department/organization – what do you expect their response will be?
- What do you anticipate will be the ripples of this decision across the organization?
- How does this support our vision? Strategy? Success?

Determining Risk:

- What are the benefits of action? What are the costs of action?
- Is this problem an event or a pattern?
- If there were no risks, what would you do?

Resources/Rules:

- If you had limitless resources, what would you do?
- What rules do we need to follow? What rules should we be breaking?

QUESTIONS TO FOSTER ENGAGEMENT

Communication:

- Do your people / teams know that they matter to you—that you care about them personally and that you value their contributions to the organization?
- How will you know your team is aligned behind this vision? What would team success look like?
- How can this team work together more effectively? How will we handle difference, conflict, and crises together?
- What can I do to support you? What can I do that will support you without diminishing your credibility to our stakeholders?
- What are you doing to increase your ability to have the impact that matters to you?
- What needs to be said that you find yourself not saying?

Infrastructure:

- Do we have the right people, with the right skills, and the right commitment at the right tables?
- Why would great talent join or remain on your team?
- Who are your high potential employees and what are you doing to grow them?
- Who needs to take the lead on this and why?
- Is the infrastructure in place to support the team? What needs our attention and resources?