



Court Leadership and Asking Questions



Why ask questions?

Questions allow access to more information and lead to details on the “why.” Questions promote communication, facilitate uncomfortable situations, may de-escalate disagreements, provide clarification and greater understanding, and often stimulate thinking. Questions aid in assessing the challenge, increase perspectives and understanding, support critical thinking, and stimulate creativity. Questions give leaders a tool for inquiry and learning.

This issue suggests the use of “smarter” questions. A Harvard Business Review article included questions and inquiries identified by executives as a useful framework for strategic decision making or problem solving.

Sample Areas of Questions to Be Profiled

Employee

Smarter

Alignment

Success

Team

Power

Coaching

Court Leader

Smarter Questions	Ideas for Use
<p>Investigative and “What’s Known?”</p> <p>What happened? What is and is not working? What is the underlying cause? What is the goal? What do we want to achieve? What do we already know? What do we need to learn to reach that goal? Who? What? Why? How? When? Where? How can we dig deeper to obtain non-obvious information? How feasible and desirable are the options? What evidence supports the chosen plan/action?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Start by clarifying the purpose, goal, objective, or challenge Work to avoid the usual or generic solutions Ensure focus and rigor occur to apply these questions Mix and match the questions across the categories Find ways to have balance in the types of questions used Try out questions with a topic or challenge that is safe Strive to avoid exclusive use of an individual or team strength Practice, practice, practice using these different queries
<p>Speculative and “What If?”</p> <p>What other scenarios might exist? Could we do this differently? What else might we propose? What can we simplify, combine, modify, reverse, or eliminate? What potential solutions have we not considered?</p>	
<p>Productive and “Now What?”</p> <p>What is the next step(s)? What do we need to achieve before taking that action? Do we have the resources to move ahead? Do we know enough to proceed? Can we identify metrics and milestones? Are there any roadblocks or bottlenecks? Are we ready to decide?</p>	
<p>Interpretive and “So, What?”</p> <p>What did we learn from this new information? What does it mean for the current challenge or future actions? What should be our overarching goal(s)? How does this fit with that goal/those goals? What are we trying to achieve?</p>	<p>Contemplate:</p> <p>Have you used these questions?</p> <p>Are you able to invest the time and structure to benefit from questions such as these?</p> <p>Can you purposely practice with these questions?</p>
<p>Subjective and “What’s Unsaid?”</p> <p>How do we feel about this decision? What aspect(s) most concern(s) us? Are there differences between what was said, heard, meant, learned? Have we consulted the right people? Are all stakeholders aligned?</p>	

Resources: A. Chevallier, F. Dalsace, J. Barsoux, “The Art of Asking Questions,” Harvard Business Review, May-June 2024

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