



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.

In this issue, **questions are offered that can align expectations and relationships** – between a staff member and a boss, and to use with a team. Knowing what is expected can support a staff member in “managing up” and a leader in managing the team and enterprise, resulting in greater effectiveness within the organization and culture.

Of note, across the questions in this series, some may overlap those from other sources. This underscores the benefits of asking questions in a variety of situations and circumstances.

Sample Areas of Questions to Be Profiled

Employee

Smarter

Alignment

Success

Team

Power

Coaching

Court Leader

Alignment Questions

Alignment with the Leader, Manager, or Boss

- What are your goals?
- What keeps you up at night, when considering our work?
- For which actions or changes, looking back in 90 days, would you say “wow, that really made a difference?”
- What do you wish you had more time to work on?
- What does good performance look like?
- What constitutes great performance?
- What emerging trends should we be mindful of and consider?
- What emerging trends should we potentially capitalize on?
- Can you help me understand how this work, project, or task compares to other tasks on my plate?

About These Questions

- Use to check alignment
- Use for understanding of a topic, issue, or challenge
- Use to ensure clear ownership
- Use for consistent follow through
- Remember to pay attention to what is not said

Alignment within the Team

- What are we each prioritizing right now?
- What decisions require collective input versus individual input?
- Where are we relying on assumptions instead of clarity?
- What tension are we not naming or discussing?
- What will break if this goes wrong?
- Who is accountable when tradeoffs occur?
- How will we know this is working?
- What conversations do we need to have next?
- What does success look like to each of us?

- Use to obtain what is needed from a team
- Use to ensure strategies are aligned
- Use for shared understanding

Other Good Alignment Queries

- What should I, or we, or our organization, do more of?
- What should I, or we, or our organization, do less of?
- What should I, or we, or our organization, do differently?

- Good as open-ended inquiry
- Use to obtain broad feedback

Resources: M. Wilding, 7 Questions to Decode Your Manager’s Priorities, LinkedIn, 2/10/25; M. Boone, 9 Alignment Check Questions Strong Leadership Teams Use Before Problems Show Up, LinkedIn, Undated.

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