

POWERFUL QUESTIONS FOR EXPLORATION & ENGAGEMENT

AND POLAR BEARS AND PENGUINS

Powerful leaders ask powerful questions, taking the other to a place of exploration. The qualities of powerful questions are:

1. Open-ended—beginning with “what” or “how”, cannot be answered with yes or no.
2. Lead to greater creativity and insight.
3. Invite introspection.
4. Short in length—typically 7 words or less.
5. Only one question at a time—avoid stacking on top of another.

Some Examples of Powerful Questions*:

Select the question(s) that you feel will best serve you and the relationship.

Options

What are the possibilities?

If you had your choice, what would you do?

What are possible solutions that you see?

Evaluation

What do you make of all of this?

What do you think? (is best?)

How do you see it?

How do you feel about it?

Contextual

What led up to _____?

What have you tried so far?

What do you make of it all?

Clarification

What do you mean?

What seems to confuse you?

Explanation

What was it like?

What happened?

Then what?

Valuation

How does this fit with the organisation's core values?

How does this fit with the organisation's purpose?

What do you think?

Searching

What are the brainstorm ideas you have?

What are the other angles you can think of?

Sample

For instance?

Like what?

Such as?

Expansion

What else?

What other ideas do you have?

Imaginary

If you could redo what you did, what would you do differently?

What would you have done?

How else could this have been handled?

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Identification

What seems to be the trouble?
What seems to be the main obstacle?
What is getting in your way?
What are the concerns you have?

Implementation

What will you have to do to get the job done?
What support do you need to accomplish _____?
What will you do?
By when will you do it?

Information

What information do you need before you decide?
What do you know about it now?
How do you suggest we can find out more about it?

Assimilation

How do you explain this?
What is the lesson/learning?
How would you pull all this together?

Participation

What was your part in this?
How do you fit into the picture?
What are you responsible for?

New beginning

If you had free choice in the matter, what would you do?
If the same thing came up again, what would you do?
If we could wipe the slate clean, what would you do?
If you had it to do over again, what would you do?

Results

What do you want?
What is your desired outcome?
If you got this result, what would you have?
How will you know you have received/reached it?

Forecasting

What do you plan to do about it?
What is your game plan?
What kind of plan do you need to create?
How do you suppose you could improve the situation?

Predictions

How do you suppose it will all work out?
What will that get you?
Where will this lead?
What are the chances of success?

Relativity

If you do this, how will it affect _____?
How does this affect the whole picture?
What else do you need to take into consideration?

Taking Action

What action will you take? And after that?
What will you do? When?
Where do you go from here? When will you do that?
What are your next steps? By when?

Summary

How is this working? How is this going?
How would you describe this?
What do you think this all amounts to?
How would you summarise the work/effort so far?

**Adapted from the Co-Active Coaching Book
by The Coaches Training Institute*