

Question Asking Skills: A Leadership Training Tool

Asking clear and relevant questions is an essential leadership skill. Well focused questions gather important information, identify unspoken assumptions, clarify issues and explore options. Question asking is key in unfamiliar and uncertain problem situations. Building questioning skills is an important part of training thinking skills. Certain questions are associated with certain reasoning and decision skills.

Ask well focused, analytical and reflective questions only	
Interpretation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does this new observation/data mean? • What exactly is happening? • How should we understand that (e.g., what he or she just said)? • What is the best way to characterize/categorize/classify this? • In this context, what was intended by saying/doing that? • How can I/ we make sense out of this (experience, feeling, statement)?
Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can you remind us of your reasons for making that claim? • What is your conclusion? What is it that you are claiming? • Why do you think that? • What are the arguments pro and con? • What assumptions must we make to accept that conclusion? • What is your basis for saying that?
Inference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Given what we know so far, what conclusions can we draw? • Given what we know so far, what can we rule out? • What does this evidence imply? • If we abandoned/accepted that assumption, how would things change? • What additional information do we need to resolve this question? • If we believed these things, what would they imply for us going forward? • What are the consequences of doing things that way? • What are some alternatives we haven't yet explored? • Can we consider each option and see where it takes us? • Are there any undesirable consequences that we can and should foresee?
Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How credible is that claim? • Why do we think we can trust what this person claims? • How strong are those arguments? • Do we have our facts right? • How confident can we be in our conclusion, given what we now know?
Explanation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What were the specific findings/results of the investigation? • Can you tell us how you conducted that analysis? • How did you come to that interpretation? • Can you take us through your reasoning one more time? • Why do you think that (was the right answer/was the solution)? • How would you explain why this particular decision was made?
Self-Regulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our position on this issue is still too vague; can we be more precise? • How good was our methodology, and how well did we follow it? • Is there a way we can reconcile these two apparently conflicting conclusions? • How good is our evidence? • OK, before we commit, what are we missing? • Can we revisit what we mean by certain terms/agreements before making a final decisions?

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