



Developing Your Questioning Skills

This brief document gives you an overview of the different types of questioning skills, when you can use them and maybe, when not to use them.

From an early age we learn to question however, there has been little formal training in this important area.

It is a tough area. Look at the interviewer on TV who have been trained in this area. They ask one question followed by another and then another. The person being interviewed is left asking themselves the question; which one should I answer?

One tip I do recommend is to get someone to observe you and feedback to you the types of questions that you ask. Feedback is useful and will help develop your skills even further. Use the template on the last page to help you.

Good luck and remember developing a skill takes time!

The important thing is not to stop questioning. Curiosity has its own reason for existing. One cannot help but be in awe when he contemplates the mysteries of eternity, of life, of the marvelous structure of reality. It is enough if one tries merely to comprehend a little of this mystery every day. Never lose a holy curiosity.

Albert Einstein (1879 - 1955)

Developing Your Questioning Skills

The effective project manager will use questions to help identify a wide range of issues including:

- understand the scope of the project
- establish whether the project is worth while doing
- develop clear project roles with team members
- manage and communicate with stakeholders
- understand and manage project risks
- develop solid project plans

		Useful For	Not Useful
<i>Open</i>	"How do you.....?"	Exploring and gathering information	With talkative people where time is short
<i>Closed</i>	" Are you going to?"	Probing single specific facts	For gaining inf.' on a broad basis or where person not communicative
<i>Leading</i>	" You don't like leaving work on time do you?"	Gaining compliance BUT... beware!!!	For gaining information about what the person thinks or feels
<i>Chained*</i>	"Why are you doing this? I mean, no one would surely accept this is as acceptable? Surely, you have researched other options?"	Never!	Ever!
<i>Reflective</i>	"You feel upset about....."	Encouraging person to continue talking about issues	Checking information and facts
<i>Probing</i>	" So, what are you going to do...?"	Establishing and checking details of events	Exploring areas of great sensitivity
<i>Comparative</i>	"Would you prefer to meet weekly or monthly?"	Getting the person to reveal own needs	Where the comparisons are unrealistic!

* Some TV interviewers are guilty of asking this type of question!

Developing Your Questioning Skills...continued

During a conversation with a member of staff there will be times when you will not use questions but will use those shown below.

		Useful For	Not Useful
<i>Noncommittal</i> (<i>'lubricators'</i>)	"Yees...."ah- ha...." "Mmm"	Indicating to the person you are listening and want them to continue	Keeping a talkative person to a particular point
<i>Inhibitors</i>	"I see....". or "Oh"	Signalling that the person has said enough	Emotional situations, or when frank and open discussions are taking place.
<i>Summaries</i>	"What we have decided to do then is....."	Avoids discrepancies between both parties. Ensures details are not forgotten	If used too early in the discussion

We take for granted many elements of our daily life. Asking questions effectively is one of those areas.

Try and practice using different types of question. You may not get it right first, or maybe even second time. But, you will be on the road to developing a skill that is transferable into many different areas of your work.

NOTE: You will also need to use and build on other skills. These include:

- listening
- using eyes to make contact
- drawing discussions to an end
- time management

Good luck with asking questions.

Use this template to help identify the types of questions to ask OR get someone to observe you in a meeting situation and score the types of questions you asked.

Type of question	Number of times used	Comments
Open		
Closed		
Leading		
Chained		
Reflective		
Probing		
Comparative		
Lubricators		
Inhibitors		
Summaries		

1. What do you observe from the feedback?

2. What actions do you intend to take next time?