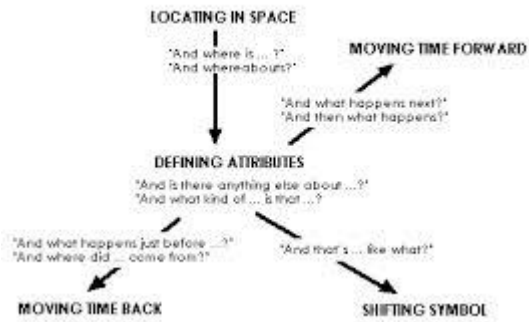


NEURO –LINGUISTIC PROGRAMING

The art of asking questions

9 BASIC CLEAN LANGUAGE QUESTIONS



The art of asking questions

Questions

Successful people ask better questions and as a result they get better answers – Tony Robbins

The most powerful gift that we have in our communication with others is our ability to ask questions. Sadly it is an ability that most people neglect and it is a gift that remains undelivered in most of our communication.

A neglected ability

Why do I talk about it being a neglected ability? We all ask questions, don't we? Of course we do but the art of asking questions is more than making a statement and sticking a question mark on the end of it. It is more than setting an objective eg a sale of a product or service, persuasion of some kind and using questions in order to achieve your objective. It is more than a means of getting your point across, getting your own way, discovering answers to enable you to benefit in some way.

We tend to neglect the real art of asking questions, which is to use them as a gift to others. What do I mean by a gift? Well, the biggest free gift that you can give to someone is to ask them questions with no agenda. Questions with no agenda are questions that you ask someone where there is no preconceived objective on your part other than to discover what the other person thinks. These questions are a gift because the message that they send to others is to say 'you are important.' In fact they say 'you are more important than me at this moment in time.'

Prime Motivations

One of our prime motivations in life other than eating, drinking and staying safe, is our need to feel important. Think about what is motivating you in your life at the moment? Career progression? A change of career? Getting better at what you do? Being a success? Feeling successful? Being a (better) parent? Personal Development? Most of the things that really drive us are done through a subconscious need to feel important.

Questions

So by asking a simple question, seeking an opinion, showing interest in someone, you are sending the message across that 'you are important to me.'

Before I refuse to take your questions, I have an opening statement – Ronald Reagan

Questions without agenda

We mentioned questions without agenda, these are questions that you ask during a conversation where you leave your own beliefs and values at the door of the conversation.

Let's say that I am sitting talking to a friend and I ask him a question, 'What are you doing this weekend?' A seemingly innocent question, and it might in fact be totally innocent, however if I have asked the question in order draw out a similar question in return and knowing that I have a really exciting weekend planned, then it is a question with an attached agenda, it is a mild form of manipulation and the gift is undelivered.

I may ask a series of questions, 'How is work going at the moment?' This is a good opener. Followed by 'Are you still having that problem with your boss?' Now, the use of the word 'still' in the sentence implies that it has been a persisting problem, and it may imply to the others person that they should have fixed it by now. Any implication in a question suggests an agenda. Have I asked the question in order to get across one of my beliefs? Eg A belief that 'problems need to get sorted out quickly.' Or is one of my values behind the question? Eg Openness and frank communication in relationships is important to me, this is one of my values.

My next question reveals all, 'Shouldn't you do something about the problem? I would challenge them about it.' This is a question of sorts but am I really interested in hearing the answer? This series of questions could leave the other person feel manipulated and criticised. Far from delivering a gift, I have only made one person feel more important, and that is myself.

Asking questions is an art form and artists spend most of their lives perfecting their craft. The only way to get better at asking questions without agenda is to practice. Next time you are chatting with someone, here are some tips for leaving your beliefs, values and agenda at the door:

Get in the mindset of being really curious. Get really interested in finding out what the other person has to say.

Really listen to their answer. Quietness your mind, block out any thoughts that you may have when they are speaking, these are often opinions forming and we are not interested in your opinion, it is theirs that we want.

Wait for their answer before forming your next question.

Ask yourself, 'What do I need to know in order to understand the whole picture?' Take your answer and use it as a question. What else do you need to know? Ask that question.

Avoid asking questions using the word 'why?' This word sometimes may lead to the person being asked feeling like they are being asked to justify their actions. Eg 'Why are you going to the shops in the morning?' This could be misinterpreted as 'why do you feel the need to go to the shops?' Or 'Why go in the morning when you can go this afternoon?' It is much better and less ambiguous to ask questions using the word 'what?' Eg 'What are you planning on getting at the shops in the morning?'

Believe in the best in people. Everyone is magnificent in their own right. What do you need to ask in order to let the other persons magnificence to shine through?

Send a gift through your communication today, really listen to people, ask great questions, get curious, show them that they are important. It will make people smile, it is a great way to build relationships and it says 'I appreciate you.'

The Art of Effective Questioning: Asking the right question for the desired result.

The Value of questions

"Asking good questions is productive, positive, creative, and can get us what we want".¹ Most people believe this to be true and yet people do not ask enough good questions. Perhaps one of the reasons for this is that effective questioning requires it be combined with effective listening.

Effective questions help you:

- Connect with your **CLIENTS** in a **MORE** meaningful way
- Better and more fully understand your client's problem
- Have clients experience you as an understanding, competent lawyer
- Work with your staff more effectively
- Help your staff take responsibility for their actions and solve problems within the workplace more easily
- Cross examine more effectively
- Take revealing **depositions**

- Gather better information
- Do more solution oriented problem solving
- Improve your NEGOTIATING SKILLS
- Reduce mistakes
- Take the sting out of feedback
- Defuse volatile situations
- Get cooperation
- Plant your own ideas
- Persuade people

Effective Questions

Effective questions are questions that are powerful and thought provoking. Effective questions are open-ended and not leading questions. They are not "why" questions, but rather "what" or "how" questions. "Why" questions are good for soliciting information, but can make people defensive so be thoughtful in your use of them. When asking effective questions, it is important to wait for the answer and not provide the answer.

When WORKING WITH PEOPLE to solve a problem, it is not enough to tell them what the problem is. They need to find out or understand it for themselves. You help them do this by asking them thought provoking questions. Rather than make assumptions find out what the person you are talking to knows about the problem.

For example: *"What do you think the problem is?"*

Behind effective questioning is also the ability to listen to the answer and suspend judgment. This means being intent on understanding what the person who is talking is really saying. What is behind their words? Let go of your opinions so that they don't block you from learning more information. Pay attention to your gut for additional information.

Powerful Questions

The following are examples of typical questions. These questions can help you improve your communication and understanding of the client or staff member.

1. **Identification of issue:**

These questions can be used in client interviews and meetings, SETTLEMENT NEGOTIATIONS and to work with others in [solving problems](#).

What seems to be the trouble?
 What do you make of _____
 How do you feel about _____

What concerns you the most about _____
What seems to be the problem?
What seems to be your main obstacle?
What is holding you back from _____?
What do you think about doing X this way?

2. **Further information:**

These questions can be used in depositions and to find out what someone has already done to **resolve** a work problem.

What do you mean by _____?
Tell me more about _____
What else?
What other ways did you try so far?
What will you have to do to get the **JOB** done?

3. **Outcomes:**

These questions can be used in settlement negotiations or while working with staff to plan how to do something.

How do you want _____ to turn out?
What do you want?
What is your desired outcome?
What benefits would you like to get out of X?
What do you propose?
What is your plan?
If you do this, how will it affect _____
What else do you need to consider?

4. **Taking Action:**

These questions can be used in working with staff.

What will you do? When will you do it?
How will I know you did it?
What are your next steps?

Listening as Part of Effective Questioning

The client comes to you, not only for your ability to **win** a lawsuit, to negotiate a settlement, or draft a document, but also for your wisdom. You evidence your understanding or wisdom by listening to your client - not just **ASKING QUESTIONS** or delivering the service.

When clients are listened to they feel understood and are more trusting of you. Effective listening is a skill that requires nurturing and needs development. Since lawyers are smart, the temptation is to get by with listening at a minimal level. To connect with your client and have them experience you as an effective lawyer requires you to maintain superior listening skills along with asking effective questions.

Factors that may work against effective listening include:

1. A desire to keep control of the conversation.
2. As **HIGHLY TRAINED** professionals, lawyers want to demonstrate their intelligence and skills so they often want to give the answer before they have fully heard the question.
3. Listening may result in hearing the client express feelings and emotions and some lawyers are uncomfortable with emotions and feelings being expressed. They think it is not within a lawyer's role or that it is unprofessional to do so.

When we really listen to a client, we begin to hear different levels of communication. Getting to a deeper level of understanding, rather than coming up with an immediate answer, is key to more effective problem solving. Listening in this manner allows the client to come up with their own solution or **PLAN OF ACTION**.

Consider the following different levels of listening:

Level 1 Listening:

When we are listening at level 1 our focus or attention is on how the words the other person is saying affect ourselves with minimal concern for the person talking. We listen for the words of the other person to see how they affect us. The attention is on me - what are my **THOUGHTS**, judgments, issues, conclusions and feelings. There is no room to let in the feelings of the person being "listened" to. When listening at level 1 our opinions and judgments arise. Level 1 listening is appropriate when you are gathering information for yourself like getting directions or ordering in a restaurant or a store.

Level 2 Listening:

When we listen at level 2, there is a deeper focus on the person being listened to. This often means not even being aware of the context. Our awareness is totally on the other person. We notice what they say as well as how they say it and what they don't say. We listen for what they value and what is important to them. We listen for what gives them energy or sadness or resignation. We let go of judgment. We are no longer planning what we are going to say next. We respond to what we actually hear.

Level 3 Listening:

When we listen more deeply than the two levels described above, in addition to the conversation we take in all information that surrounds the conversation. We are aware of the context and the impact of the context on all parties. We include all our senses, in particular our intuition. We consider what is not being said and we notice the energy in the room and in the person we are listening to. We use that information to ask more effective questions.

Listening Skills as part of Effective Questioning include:

Articulating

Attention and awareness result in articulation and succinctly describing what we have learned from our client. Sharing our observation clearly but without judgment does this. We can repeat back to our clients just what they said. We can expand on this by articulating back to them what we believe they mean. This helps a person feel heard. For example:
"What I hear you saying is . . ."

Clarifying

Clarifying is a combination of asking and clearly articulating what we have heard. By asking questions our client knows we are listening and filling in the gaps. When our client is being vague, it is important for us to clarify the circumstances. We can assist them to see what they can't see themselves by making a suggestion. For example: "Here's what I hear you saying. Is that right? "

Being Curious

Do not assume you know the answer or what your client is going to tell you. Wait and be curious about what brings them to see you. What motivates them? What is really behind the meeting? Use your curiosity so that your next question can go deeper.

Silence Giving the person we are listening to time to answer questions is an important aspect of listening. Waiting for the client to talk rather than talking for them is imperative for an effective listener.

What is business coaching? A way to achieve faster, better results.

Business Coaching is a professional development process, which encourages action and changes in behavior based on your increased self-awareness and commitment. Through on-going focused conversations with your **BUSINESS** coach, synergy is created resulting in you reaching exponentially greater solutions than working on your own.



Why does business coaching work?

Business **COACHING** works because it increases your awareness of your situation and gives you an opportunity to work on it with professional assistance. You examine options, make choices, and take responsibility to carry out your own personal action plan. Coaching brings out your best!

Coaching is a venue for you to discover and realize your dreams and goals. Having a regular appointed time to check in, recharge, and focus on your objectives motivates and fosters achievement of those objectives.

How does business coaching work?



Business coaching is an on-going long term partnership between you and your business coach that results in steady progress towards your professional and personal goals.

Business coaching sessions are efficient, confidential and typically occur once per week or every other week in a one-on-one thirty or forty minute telephone call.

What can working with a business coach do for you?

Working with a business coach can help you in a number of ways, depending on what's most important to you and what you want to achieve. You can:

- Make **MORE** money.
- Design a **PLAN OF ACTION** and set and reach more exciting and satisfying goals.
- Align your life, business or **CAREER** with your values.
- Make more satisfying decisions.
- Organize yourself and your business.
- Enhance and expand your career or business options.
- Implement your unique action plan.
- Develop a healthier balance between your personal and professional life.
- Look ahead to opportunities that could become a reality.
- Work on achieving **FINANCIAL INDEPENDENCE**.
- Keep you focused on your needs, values, and vision.
- Add more fun to your life.

A Business Coach:

- Promotes effective discussion and ideas that keeps one focused
- Motivates, supports and encourages without judgment
- Offers a means of consistent, thoughtful follow up

Why Use a Business or Executive Coach?

Why does someone who is already doing great use a business coach?

- To create **MORE** excitement, joy and fulfillment in your life and **business** by continually moving forward.
- To set and achieve more challenging and rewarding goals.
- To focus on other personal areas you would like to enjoy more.
- To work on letting go of areas in your **BUSINESS** and life you are tolerating.



- To work for something you really want.

What else can business coaching do for you?

- **Improve skills**
- Plan, discuss and problem solve
- Improve client development
- Reach challenging goals
- Improve delegation skills
- **Defeat procrastination**
- Achieve balance between work and **personal life**
- Clarify goals and values
- Improve business relationships

What goes on during a coaching session?

You come up with good ideas to move forward in your business. You are the focus. Your **business coach** listens and asks good questions. Examination of your situation and options takes place during a confidential one-half hour to two hour telephone **COACHING** session. You have an opportunity to examine situations that are hampering your ability to move forward with the intent of ultimately moving forward. Acknowledgment of you and encouragement of your abilities occurs. Challenges to help you stretch beyond your self-imposed limits are made. Requests for **HOMEWORK** are made of you. You will be supported in your decisions and your actions to carry out your goals.



Business coaching enables busy, successful people to effectively develop and take charge of their practice and **CAREER**.

What about location?

It doesn't matter where you live or work. Business coaching sessions are normally conducted over the telephone at pre-arranged times.

What happens as soon as you hire a coach?

- You set goals you might not have set without a coach.
- You take yourself seriously - you want to get value for your investment of time and **MONEY**.
- Your motivation **level increases** dramatically.

WHO WHERE WHEN WHY

HOW WHAT WHICH

High Power

The Linguistic Architecture of Powerful Questions

Low Power

Most groups working on this dimension of linguistic architecture produce a variant of the following general hierarchy:

High Power

Low Power

Why

How What

Where Which

When Who

Closed-ended (yes/no)

The general thesis is that virtually any question can be converted into a more powerful question by moving up the pyramid. As an example, consider the following sequence:

Are you feeling okay?

Where does it hurt?

How are you feeling in general?

Why do you suppose you aren't feeling well?

As we move from the simple yes/no question towards the why question, you probably notice that the questions tend to motivate more reflective thinking, and are generally more "powerful."

There are refinements within this dimension of linguistic architecture available

to an interested practitioner. For instance, using the conditional tense rather than the present tense will often invite greater reflective speculation:

What can we do?

seems to offer fewer possibilities than...

What could we do?

The dialogue group concluded that clearly one dimension which defines a powerful question is this linguistic architecture. However, other factors are also at play when we consider the relative power of the following two questions:

Why is my coat unbuttoned?

Where can we find spiritual peace?

This is an instance where most people would say that the "where" question has somewhat greater power than the "why" question. After reflection, we hypothesized that there were probably three dimensions which define a powerful question:

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