



Coaching Questions

Asking the right questions is the key to successful coaching. As a coach, your goal is to help your employee develop a stronger understanding of their situation, their goals, and the path to progress. There are many different types of questioning and difficult purposes for each. Explore your options and become familiar with questioning methodologies and strategies. When working with an employee, review these questions to plan for your next coaching session. Ask yourself, what is my goal for this session and what do I need to determine? Then, select questions that will help you achieve your desired result.

Of course, you can always use these questions on yourself, as well.

Types of Helpful Questions:

- Reframing Questions: “What can you learn from this?”—Helps them find a new perspective. Helpful if they’re having a hard time seeing past an obstacle or feeling like a victim.
- Focusing Questions: “What is the first thing you need to do?”—Helps direct them toward action and/or back onto their goal/outcome.
- Expanding Questions: “What would you do if ___?”—Helps them consider how different options would lead to different outcomes.
- Reflective Questions: “You said ___, may I ask you why?”—Helps them reflect on their own thoughts and beliefs. May uncover a deeper reason.
- Challenging: “How do you know that?”—Helps the employee understand why they believe what they believe.
- Rephrasing WHY—“Why” is philosophical. The other question words—who, what, when, where, and how—are much more concrete and useful for coaching. When you want to get to the cause, instead ask questions such as:
 - “What makes you think that?”
 - “What is it that attracts you to this option at this time?”
 - “How did you arrive at this decision?”
 - “What other options have you explored?”

Questions to Avoid:

- Open Ended Questions: “How do you feel about ___?”—**Avoid** these, as they can be time consuming and are unfocused. They *are* appropriate during discovery, although specific questions are better.
- Leading Questions: “Do you want to stay with this organization you've invested so much in?” or “Does that make you feel frustrated?”—**Avoid** questions that imply your opinion or judgment (like the first one) or assume the answer (like the second one). Instead ask “Do you want to stay with this organization?” or “How does that make you feel?” However, when selling your services, leading questions can be helpful. For example, “When would you like to make your next appointment?” and “Are you going to invest in your future by enrolling in this program?”

- Closed Questions: “Are you going to carry out this action this week?”—**Avoid** “yes” or “no” questions. They may be naturally inclined to say ‘yes.’ If, however, if you ask, “on a scale of 1-10 how committed are you to carrying out this action” you are more likely to stimulate the employee to consider the question more deeply and answer honestly.

Probing Questions:

Probing questions help you get to the bottom of what your employee means. Rather than taking what they say or answer at face value, use the following questions to help clarify why they believe what they do and what the reason is behind what they say.

When Your Employee Is:	Ask:
Mind reading: Assuming someone’s internal state. i.e.: “She doesn’t like me.”	How do you know she doesn’t like you?
Judging: Source of judgment is left out. i.e.: “It’s bad to be too friendly.”	Who says it’s bad? According to whom? How do you know it’s bad?
Assuming Cause: Cause is wrongly put outside self. i.e.: “He makes me mad.”	How does what he’s doing cause you to feel mad?
Assuming Equivalence: A=B i.e.: “She’s always criticizing me, she doesn’t like me.”	How does her criticizing mean she doesn’t like you? Have you ever criticized someone you liked?
Generalizing: Words such as always, never, all, no one, everyone, etc. i.e.: “He never talks to me.”	Never? What would happen if he did?
Assuming Necessity: Words such as should, shouldn’t, must, must not, have to, need to, etc.) i.e.: “I have to work on this now”	What would happen if you didn’t?
Assuming Possibility: Words such as can/can’t, will/won’t, may/may not, possible/impossible, etc.) i.e.: “I can’t do that”	What prevents you? What would happen if you did?
Being Vague: Being general i.e.: “He rejected me.”	How specifically did he reject you?