

Leading with Questions

The right question with the right tone of voice facilitates learning. When you ask a good question, the power stays with the person providing the answer. Learning occurs as someone starts to process thoughts surrounding a question. Conversely, a statement aimed at someone is pointed. Statements carry the power of the messenger and their intended targets find them easy to deflect. It is hard for people to accept as their reality a statement cast upon them by another. A good question, however, is easy to own and accept. People “find” their answers through contemplating a question.

And remember, sometimes a question is not really a question. It is a statement in disguise. A good rule to follow is that if you don't know what the answer to your question is and you really care about hearing the answer, it is probably a good question. If you want to make a “point” with your question and you carry a high amount of energy around what the “answer” will be...it might be best to skip the question. Or, make a statement. Statements have a right time and place, too.

The process and product of a task *Adapted from TeleProfessional*

Framed in the negative

- What was misunderstood today?
- What was too complicated?
- What was just plain silly?
- What job involved too many actions?
- What job involved too many people?
- What caused frustration today?
- What should we not do again?

Framed in the positive

- What was clearly communicated today?
- What was streamlined?
- What was meaningful and relevant?
- What job involved the right amount of steps?
- What job involved their right amount of people?
- What caused joy today?
- What should we do again?

Your leadership *Adapted from The Only Thing That Matters, by Karl Albrecht*

- How well do I communicate to you what I expect from you?
- Am I too involved with your work, or not involved enough?
- How do I show that I am interested in your success?
- Do I listen to new ideas?
- Do I treat everyone fairly?
- Do I understand our school and how our team fits into it?
- What do you wish I would do differently?

Other people

- How are you?
- Are you finding the experience to be meaningful and of value?
- What are you currently working on for the group? for yourself?
- What do you need?
- What are you learning about your job and about yourself?
- What are you looking forward to? What is causing you some anxiety?
- What role are you taking in the group?

