

## Volume 41

### The Questions

How can asking Powerful Questions™ strengthen my ability and effectiveness as a leader? What is the potential ROI and impact of asking Powerful Questions™? What are the most effective Powerful Questions™ to ask, and the most powerful listening times in which to ask them?

### A Perspective

The ability to ask Powerful Questions™ is a key leadership skill that can have a huge impact on the engagement and productivity of your people. Several studies bear out the effect of asking questions and allowing people to share their thoughts.

- In a study mapping brain response to stimuli, researchers noticed that the same part of the brain was impacted when people received money, food, or the opportunity to talk about themselves. [["Science Reveals Why We Brag So Much," The Wall Street Journal, 5/7/2012](#)]
- In his book *A More Beautiful Question: The Power of Inquiry to Spark Breakthrough Ideas*, Michael Berger shares a British study that tracked the use of asking questions, reading and writing as methods of learning. Asking questions as a method of learning peaked at age 4 (with an average of 390 questions asked per day!). By age 18, asking questions was a distant third, with just 25% of people actively using the skill. Not coincidentally, engagement in school decreases as the use of asking questions as a primary learning tool decreases. [p. 129 of eBook] ([Click here to see a graphic illustrating the correlation](#))
- Gallup determined that the two most important questions to ask to measure employee engagement are, "Do you know what is expected of you at work?" and "Do you have the materials and equipment to do your work right?" [*First, Break All the Rules: What the World's Greatest Managers Do Differently*, Marcus Buckingham & Curt Coffman, p. 43]

How can you as a leader assess whether your people have the focus and support they need to do their best work? The simple answer is to ask them!

### Your Action Plan

Here are my favorite Powerful Questions™ to ask during the key moments we have as leaders to listen to our people and gather the critical information we need to be effective in our work and our lives.

#### Moment #1 — One-on-Ones with Team Members:

- What's energizing you right now?
- What's frustrating you right now?
- What do you want to make sure we talk about in our time today?
- How have I made your job harder in the last 30 days?

#### Moment #2 — One-on-Ones with Your Leader:

- What are your top three priorities right now?
- What have I done recently that has made your job easier?
- What have I done recently that has made your job harder?
- What do you see as my team's top three priorities right now?

#### Moment #3 — Personal R&R (Reflection & Refocus) Time:

- Did I do my best to set clear goals?
- Did I do my best to make progress toward my goals?
- Did I do my best to find meaning?
- Did I do my best to be happy?
- Did I do my best to build positive relationships?
- Did I do my best to be fully engaged?
- What are the most critical conversations I need to have this week?



## *For Committed People-Centered Leaders*

[NOTES: (1) For users of the Entrepreneurial Operating System® (EOS®), this would be your Clarity Break™ time. (2) The first six questions are from Marshall Goldsmith's book *Triggers: Creating Behavior That Lasts — Becoming the Person You Want to Be*, one of my favorites reads in 2016.]

### Moment #4 — Team Meetings

- What is a professional best for you this week?
- What is a personal best for you this week?
- What is one question you (or your team) would like an answer to?

### Moment #5 — Employee Surveys (or Engagement Surveys)

- If you could ask the leadership team one question, what would you ask?
- If you could change one thing at our company, what would you change?

### **A Final Thought**

A year after completing an employee-survey project for a CEO, we met with him to review the ongoing results. He came in with his binder full of results and told us he took it to every employee meeting and used the dozens of questions his team had submitted when asked, "If you could ask the leadership team one question, what would you ask?" Seeing this people-centered CEO tell his stories, it occurred to me that, as much as being heard is as vital to people as being given food or money, he, too, was being fed by hearing these questions from his team.

Listen. Lead. Repeat often!

**Do you want to be a leader who asks more Powerful Questions™? Is a more people-centered approach the key set of skills you're missing as a leader? Working with leaders to explore these two questions is one of my favorite things to do. Contact me. [Scott@thetrugroup.com](mailto:Scott@thetrugroup.com)**

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