

Facilitation Resource: Powerful Questions

“Questions open the door to dialogue and discovery. They are an invitation to creativity and breakthrough thinking.” — Eric E. Vogt, Juanita Brown, and David Isaacs

A Powerful Question

[Laurie Reuben](#), a professional coach, describes [powerful questions](#) as “what” or “how” questions that focus on the future and stimulates reflective thinking. She says “somewhere between yes/no questions with an obvious right answer and open-ended questions you can drive a truck through is the sweet spot: **questions that spark true collaboration.**”

- Starts with **What** or **How**

- Is **Short and Precise**

What would help? What's missing?

- Is a **Single** (not compound) question

- Is **Open ended**

What's your perspective? (open) instead of Do you agree? (closed)

- **Challenges** current assumptions

- **Stimulates** reflective thinking

When we discount or offer free registration, are we revealing a lack of faith in the member value? What are the key factors in making a decision? How do we need to change as leaders to for this to succeed?

- Focuses on the **future**, rather than the past

What do you need to move forward?

- Does **not lead**

What do you think of virtual meetings? (unbiased) vs What are the problems with virtual meetings? (leading)

- Rare, careful use of “Why”

What led you to those conclusions? stronger than Why did you think that?

What Listening Level Are You?

Asking powerful questions is more natural when you are listening strategically, often referred to as listening at level two or three. The general difference is that when you switch from level one, you shift from yourself to the other person. Level one has your attention on your inner voice. Level two puts the focus on the other person and three goes beyond the words to tapping into body language, tone, environment, etc. Think being aware.

Wondering what your listening level is? *Co-Active Coaching* authors suggest this test: ask what questions are popping up for you?

Level 1: Comparing to own experiences, getting the facts, wondering why

Level 2: Exploring the speaker's thoughts and motivations

Level 3: Articulating what's happening and co-creating the future

Resources

- Check out advice in [51 Powerful Questions to Ask in Different Situations, and the Art of Asking Powerful Questions](#)
- Get powerful question examples in [73 Powerful Coaching Questions to Ask Clients](#)
- Read the [Surprising Power of Questions](#) (HBR)
- Read [Strategic Leadership: The 3 Levels of Listening](#)
- Pick up a copy of [Co-Active Coaching](#) to develop your skills
- Watch a short video on listening: [Three Levels of Listening](#)
- Download [The Feedback Alternative: FeedForward](#) for a look at shifting to a coaching role to develop volunteers