

For Permanent & Positive Change

The Exchange

FEATURED TOPIC: ASK, AND YOU SHALL RECEIVE

Ask and You Shall Receive... Receive What?

By the theme of this newsletter, "Ask And You Shall Receive", you may be sitting on the edge of your seat just waiting for the magical question that, once used, will give you what you want. Relax, sit back, and take a deep breath. While there is no magic in questions, there is a science.

How? This question will typically give you a long and detailed answer and usually one that is symmetrical. People who are introverts are usually more comfortable answering this type of question because it allows them to explain in detail. If you are expected to perform a task, this question will come in handy.

What? This question allows the person answering it to gage the length of their response. They can go into detail or shorten their reply. It is effective with almost everyone so it may win the popularity contest as far as questions go. If it is used without a qualifier (What do you think?), rather than with a qualifier (What do you think about the new policy?), the answer you receive may be wide range. This can be good if you truly want to explore the other person's mind. This word can also be quite a closed question if the qualifier is too restrictive (What is your favorite holiday?) because it can get you a one-word answer.

Why? This one can get you into trouble. You may need the answer, yet there are other ways of phrasing the question. People tend to internalize the "why" word and become defensive. Defensive people usually are not candid with their responses. Substitute "How come?" or "What are the reasons" and you'll get your answer without the negativity.

What Our Clients Are Saying

"I have found that in the past I tended to make changes based on what I THOUGHT people wanted. Now I can better understand people by asking different questions."

Raechel Crumly

When? This question is rather focused and can quickly get you the fact that you seek. It is not a conversation starter so do not use it at your next social event unless you have a second question ready to go.

Who? This one is also short and can receive a defensive response. If you are a supervisor, some will be reluctant to answer this question. A good replacement could be, "What do you know about this?"

Where? Like it's first cousin, "when," this question is focused and can easily be answered in one word. Still, it allows the talkative person to expound upon the answer by giving details, such as directions.

Do? This question belongs in the litter with all of the questions that begin with a verb (are, can, will, have, is). These questions will most likely get you a short response, and often a yes/no answer. This is usually most appropriate near the end of a conversation instead of an opener. The biggest downfall is that you receive limited information. Be sure that the listener understands the terms that you are using or you could end up with a miscommunication.

Which? This question gives a person a narrow set of choices. It works well with a two-year old who doesn't want to go to bed. (Do you want to take your teddy or your dinosaur to bed?) It also works well when multiple choices have been discussed and a decision is needed.

Perhaps the magical question is the one that is well thought out and delivered with sincerity and interest. As Vincent mentions in his article, be sure you listen after asking, or the magic will disappear. ❖

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Looking Forward

Our next issue will focus on See the Sale.

Looking Back

You might also be interested in our March 2008 edition: [Take Business Seriously Rather than Yourself](#) or read other [previous issues of The Exchange](#).

"Successful people ask better questions, and as a result, they get better answers."

Anthony Roberts

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There's No Such Thing as a Bad Question (Or is There?)

Vincent Ivan Phipps

Whether you believe that all questions are bad or that all questions are good, all questions can be improved.

Questions can be bad based on their intent. Asking deliberately loaded questions to make someone defensive is a poor use of questions. Even if you have good intentions, a poorly asked question can provide negative results.

Follow these guidelines to improve your future questions:

Ask one question at a time.

When someone is the recipient of "machine-gunned" questions, the listener will be challenged in answering them all. He may answer the first, or the last, or the one he remembers. You may miss a good answer by asking a bad question.

Bad example:

So what does your company do, and how long have you been there; also, who is your target audience?

Good example:

Question #1: *What does your company do? (Pause & listen.)*

Question #2: *How long have you been with ABC Company? (Pause & listen.)*

Question #3: *Since you provide . . . at ABC Company, who is your target audience?*

Keep the questions short.

Some people feel it is academic or sophisticated to ask long, convoluted, and detailed questions. It only makes questions harder to listen to and more difficult to answer.

Bad example:

Do you want to try the new sales approach for customers that could begin as early as tomorrow if we get management's approval that should have come in by now?

Good example:

What are your thoughts about trying the new sales approach?

Ask. Then stop talking.

Some people suffer from "Niagara Falls" of the mouth when they ask questions! Once they start flowing, it's hard to shut them down. They don't realize their listener goes into answer mode once they've heard a

question. Words such as: what, how, will, where, who, command the brain to find an answer. When you ask a question, stop talking. This frees up the other person's ability to answer.

Bad example:

How do you feel about the new guy? I am only asking because there have been rumors about the real reason he left his last position and I suspect he may even have fabricated on his resume.

Good example:

Paul has been here three weeks. How do you feel he is doing?

Put information up front and ask the question at the end.

People speak at approximately 150 words per minute, yet we process words at 500 words per minute. The more you can place qualifying information in front of the question, the easier it is to answer. This also helps place your question in the proper context.

Bad example:

Where do you think the company is headed since we've lost two accounts in one quarter and the last time this happened we fell behind in our yearly goal?

Good example:

We've lost two accounts this quarter. How do you feel this will affect us this year?

Remove the word, "not."

"Not" questions are confusing. The answers are misleading. Regardless of the answer, the results can cause miscommunications.

Bad example:

Do you not agree that this is the best decision for the customer?

Good example:

Based on our options, which decision is best?

Apply these rules today for immediate improvement in your questions. ❖

Quick Tips

- ✓ Keep questions positive, clear, and solution focused.
- ✓ Know what you want to find out before asking the question.
- ✓ Select the appropriate time to ask potentially negative questions.

"To be on a quest is nothing more or less than to become an asker of questions."

Sam Keen

"Judge others by their questions rather than by their answers."

Voltaire

"You know children are growing up when they start asking questions that have answers."

John J. Plomp

"The important thing is not to stop questioning. Curiosity has its own reason for existing."

Albert Einstein

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Straight from the Horse's Mouth

This is a common expression used today. It refers to going to the source to confirm information. But what does this saying have to do with the mouth of a horse? Here's the answer "straight from the horse's mouth!"

In the 17th and 18th centuries, buying and trading horses were as common as selling cars today. The best horses were un-damaged, well fed and, most importantly, middle-aged. If the horse was too young, it was not strong enough. If it was too old, it was not fast enough. Several tricks were used to deceive a horse's age like cutting its main or filing down the hoofs or even putting on newer horseshoes. The best way was to look at its teeth. An expert could tell by where the horse's teeth were worn how often it had eaten. Certain oats and grains leave stains. An expert could tell what a horse had eaten. Since horses rarely lose teeth, based on how many teeth the horse had, an expert could tell the approximate age of the horse.

If someone wanted to find the truth about the condition of a horse, all an expert had to do to know the horse's true status was to, you guessed it, "get the truth straight from the horse's mouth!"

Rumors, misconceptions, and misunderstandings can result from getting information from some place other than the original source. This month's issue is focused on asking the right questions. Make sure when you ask the proper questions that you get the facts straight from the source, or straight from the horse's mouth!



What Are You Talking About?

Have you ever asked a question and are amazed that the person who is supposed to be answering it is so far off base that you forget what the question was? Be careful or you'll find yourself shaking your head as your internal voice screams, "What are you talking about?"

At TLC, we tell people that they cannot control other people, yet they can control what they talk about through the power of questions. Then along comes the above scenario and you wonder if indeed you have any control at all. You do. You can gently steer them back to the topic. The key word here is 'gently.'

A **Steering Probe** is a question that you use when the person has become a little lost in giving their answer. Instead of saying, "And your point is?" as our dominant extroverts might want to utter, there is a better way. Listen to what the person is saying. At your first opportunity (the end, a pause, a breath) weave a phrase they used into your next question to steer them back to the topic you want them talking about. Here is an example:

You: What is the status on the ABC project?

Them: Oh, it's coming along. Man, you would not believe the distractions we've had. You know Jamie. Her son is big in sports. He is quite a basketball player. Put the ball in his hands and keep your eye on the scoreboard cause it is going to go up! (breath)

You: He does sound good. So if I keep my eye on the ABC project scoreboard, what would it tell me?

Steering Probes allow you to be creative, humorous, and most importantly, focused on what needs to be discussed. It is one type of question that can turn frustration into information and everybody feeling fine. ❖

Remember To

- ✓ Ask questions that begin with "what" or "how" to solicit more information.
- ✓ Use something the other person said to bridge your next response.
- ✓ Place supportive information in front of a question.

"One who asks a question is a fool for five minutes; one who does not ask a question remains a fool forever."

Chinese Proverb

"Friends are those rare people who ask how we are and then wait to hear the answer."

Unknown

"If you are not moving closer to what you want in sales (or in life), you probably aren't doing enough asking."

Jack Canfield

"My advice to you is not to inquire why or whither, but just enjoy your ice cream while it's on your plate – that's my philosophy."

Thornton Wilder

"There are no foolish questions and no man becomes a fool until he has stopped asking questions."

Charles P. Steinmetz

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Featured Service: Why Ask Questions?

Therese Padgett

Daddy, as his daddy before, taught me that the only dumb question is the one you do not ask. My Daddy was a seminary trained minister, so you might think that his philosophy of asking questions would lead to a doubt-filled faith, and that seems an oxymoron. Quiet the contrary, asking questions and pursuing the answers actually led me to an understanding or rejection of questionable ideas and an assurance of things that are unanswerable, the definition of faith. I did not come to this assurance blindly or uninformed, nor was I force-fed pabulum answers. As a child, when I asked the question, "Why?" (that proverbial and unending question of childhood), Daddy would always reply, "What do you think?"

Analytical thinking begins with the asking of questions, to which the answer is often, "I don't know." This leads to another question, and often yet another. If the question you are asking is simply a rewording of a former, you may need to look at the premise of your inquiry. What caused the question to come to mind? What happened before and after that causation? What were the historical and socio-economic contexts? Were particular personalities involved, and if so, what characteristics or behavioral or communication styles were involved?

I am convinced that in today's culture of Internet and controlled media coverage, both television and the press, that we have lost the art of asking questions. We are too quick to accept whatever someone else says as fact. We are unaware that most of the stuff we receive through forwarded emails is contrived and false propaganda because we are too lazy to do our own research into the real facts.

Have you lost the art of asking questions? If you have the desire to learn again, TLC - Talk Listen Communicate, LLC, can help. Call us today at 423-622-8255 or 888-BECAUSE (because you always communicate). ❖

Happy Birthday!

TLC wishes a Happy Birthday to clients celebrating in April:

- » Dianne Talmadge
- » John Ferris
- » Christopher Henry
- » Steve Pear
- » Mary Cleghon
- » Jennie Hubin
- » Blake Evans
- » Theresa Higdon
- » Betty Garalis
- » Keith Palen
- » Didi Pratz
- » Ted Gustufson

Dear TLC

I have monthly status meetings on my job. They are to last only an hour. Lately they have lasted at least two hours and some longer. I get through my content in about 45 minutes. The rest of the meeting I feel like I am playing "Question Dodgeball" with a barrage of questions bombarded at me. I like the Q/A sessions at the end but the questions are becoming longer, sarcastic, and belligerent. Please advise.

Question Dodgeball

Dear Question,

Two things:

Review Vincent's article in this issue entitled, There's No Such Thing as a Bad Question. Before the meeting, gather consensus from participants that these rules will be applied to all questions. This should make some of them easier to answer.

Review Beverly's article in this issue entitled, Ask and You Shall Receive...Receive What? Restate the appropriate question to understand the premise of what others are seeking before answering.

Often high emotion can come across as anger or sarcasm. Know that they are passionate about their question. Before responding with an answer, ask a succinct question and move on. This will speed up your meetings.

"The sun shines and warms and lights us and we have no curiosity to know why this is so; but we ask the reason of all evil, of pain, and hunger, and mosquitoes and silly people."

Ralph Waldo Emerson

"Great minds ask great questions."

Michael Gelb

"A major stimulant to creative thinking is focused questions. There is something about a well-worded question that often penetrates to the heart of the matter and triggers new ideas and insights."

Brian Tracy

"Reason can answer questions, but imagination has to ask them."

Dr. Ralph Gerard

"If you wish to understand a philosopher, do not ask what he says, but find out what he wants."

Friedrich Nietzsche

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CEO Corner

Beverly Inman-Ebel

“Receiving”

I have been taught, and I believe, that it truly is more blessed to give than to receive. This is especially true for me at Christmas. Yet, receiving has its up side as well.

In February, TLC participated in our chamber's expo. I was there about two hours and spent part of that time walking to other booths to meet the other participating businesses. On this quest, I came across one of our vendors with whom we had recently had a mild disagreement. Working the booth was the person that had been part of the conflict. I decided it was important for me to let her know there were no hard feelings so I entered only to find she was on her cell phone. To kill some time, I placed my business card in their glass box to enter a contest for the grand prize. The next day I received a call from that company telling me that I was the winner! The desirable object was a video system that my college senior son wanted but couldn't afford. I had a lot of fun receiving that gift and giving it away the same night to my son. I felt that I received it because I was willing to give a kind word to the vendor. Otherwise, I may not have stopped.

This month's theme is Ask & You Shall Receive. I believe in this. What stops most of us from asking is the fear of the dreaded “no.” If you receive a no, you are at the same place you were before you asked, so what have you got to lose?

I am more afraid of the questions that I do not ask and the things I get from lack of inquiry. I was once at a charity auction in Europe and assumed I was bidding in Euros. Imagine my surprise when I won the bid for a beautiful scarf and found out the auction was in British Sterling Pounds because the event was one of Princess Anne's favorite charities. I paid twice what I thought I was bidding. Asking which currency we were bidding in would have been helpful.

I think this month's theme could well have been Give & You Shall Receive. I am a firm believer in giving of your time, resources, and kindness and it will come back to you in greater proportion. Just like the video system. My son asked me why I didn't save the extravagant gift for his October birthday. My response was that it was given to me and there was great joy in giving it to him for no reason other than I could.

What can you give today? What can you ask for today? It's fun to receive. Whatever you get, you can pass along to another. Simple things like a smile or kind words are easy. Begin there. Then get bold. Give big or ask for something you may not expect to receive. Ask. Give. Receive with joy. Live your dreams! ❖

“Can a mortal ask questions which God finds unanswerable? Quite easily, I should think. All nonsense questions are unanswerable.”

C.S. Lewis

“Asking is the beginning of receiving. Make sure you don't go to the ocean with a teaspoon. At least take a bucket so the kids won't laugh at you.”

Jim Rohn

“We find what we expect to find, and we receive what we ask for.”

Elbert Hubbard

“Keep on asking, and you will be given what you ask for. Keep on looking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened. For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And the door is opened to everyone who knocks.”

Matthew 7:7-8

TLC establishes long-term relationships with our clients. If we have helped you or if you believe our approach to change would work for someone you know, please communicate with us by e-mail tlc@talklisten.com or phone 1-888-232-2873. We work with individuals and groups on the following subject areas: attitude, listening, body language, voice, leadership, compliments and corrections, behavioral style, teamwork, effective meetings, public speaking, accent reduction and much more!

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