P.L.CREW

Professional Learning Community

Effective Questions

P.L.CREW

Professional Learning Community

powered by
sentis
education

sentis
education

"There are no good or bad answers, only good and bad questions."

Have you ever had one of those mornings where everything that could possibly go wrong does? In these times, the question we most typically ask ourselves is, "What else could go wrong?". After this, what typically happens for the rest of the day?

To understand how asking ourselves this question can affect our day, we must consider two key things about the brain. Firstly, we switch the brain on through asking questions. Secondly, the type of question we ask is very important. If we ask negative questions such as "What else could go wrong?" our brain focuses on all the things that can go wrong.

Leadership roles involve an element of challenging, encouraging and influencing people to change attitudes and behaviors in order to improve results – and one of the greatest tools we can have in our toolkit to help achieve this is the art of questioning. By asking carefully phrased questions, we can switch other people's brains on to the opportunities and positives of situations and move them away from focusing on the negatives.

An effective question can promote:

- Deep thinking and reflection in others
- Focused attention
- Removal of assumptions
- Creation of ownership
- Breakdown of barriers and challenges

Different types of questions elicit different responses and as such, some are more useful for information gathering, to shift attitudes or promote self-reflection. The following table contains some examples of the different types of questions to consider using with staff.

TYPE OF QUESTION	DEFINITION	RECOMMENDATION FOR USAGE	EXAMPLES
OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS	Questions that cannot be answered with a simple 'yes' or 'no', or with a specific piece of information	• Help deepen understanding and encourage engagement in others; • Drive the conversation further in the desired direction; • Create opportunities for more meaningful exploration of a topic	• How else could you think about this? • What is another way of looking at it? • What else might be important here?
CLOSED-ENDED QUESTIONS	Questions that can usually be answered with a simple 'yes' or 'no', or with a specific piece of information	• Stop or slow an off-tangent conversation; • Allow for an easy change in the direction of the discussion	• Do you understand? • Does that make sense?
INFORMATION COLLECTION QUESTIONS	Questions that elicit a specific piece of information or an example	• Gain a greater perspective of the thoughts and feelings of the other person	• Where have you seen this happen? • What is the biggest challenge you are having with the process?
ATTITUDE SHIFT QUESTIONS	Questions that encourage a change in perspective	• Help individuals reframe a particular topic	• How might this change influence the performance of our team in a positive way? • Why might this process be important for our students?
SELF-REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS	Questions that prompt personal insight	• Encourage individuals to consider how they might apply various concepts into their workplace	• What would be the benefits of implementing this change to the way you work?

Scenario:

The most experienced employee in your team is refusing to follow the new process because they have always done things a certain way and still achieved good results.

What questions would you ask this team member to help address the situation? What examples/data could you refer to in exploring the issue?

P.L.CREW
Professional Learning Community

sentis
education