



## Advanced Questioning

Questioning is the most powerful tool in a facilitators toolkit. Used correctly questions allow real learning by the team. Remember, “I told me so” is more powerful than “You told me so”.

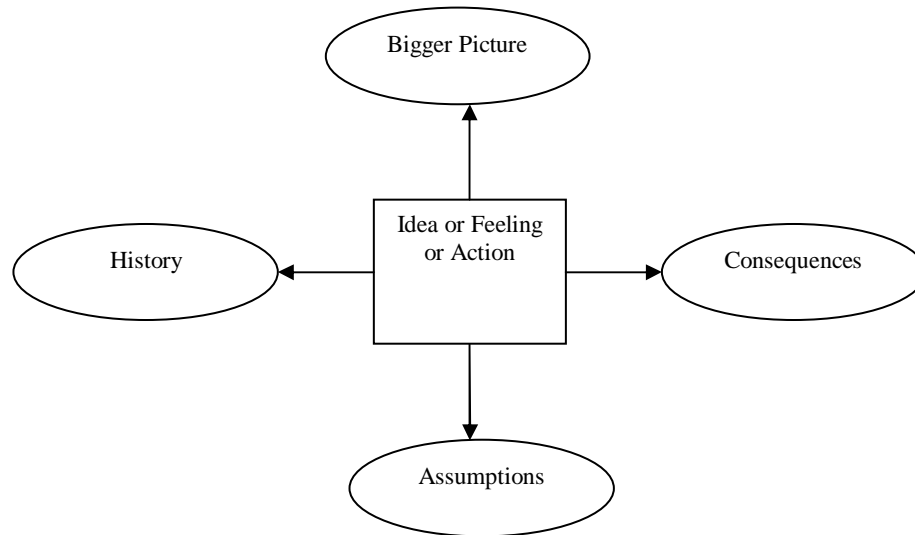
There are a number of types of question you can ask – 4 GOOD, 4 BAD when facilitating:-

Type	Explanation / Use	Example
<b>OPEN</b>	Starts a conversation to obtain information.	<i>What happened during that task?</i>
<b>CLOSED</b>	Summarises a situation or used to gain commitment	<i>Do you agree that Mark's comments were helpful?</i>
<b>PROBING</b>	At first sight another open question. Use following an open question to explore an issue in more depth or gain clarity on an issue	<i>What exactly would you need to do to improve it?</i>
<b>HYPO-THETICAL</b>	A “what if” style question that helps to explore options. A good way of breaking through barriers in a coachees mind by presenting an alternative reality.	<i>Let's imagine I can get you all the time in the world you need. How would you feel then?</i>
<b>LEADING</b>	The answer is given in the question. This is actually a statement in disguise. AVOID as a coach	<i>Do you think you should have listened more carefully?</i>
<b>LOADED</b>	Contains an underlying proposal. It is therefore a suggestion and not a question intended to understand the true situation – AVOID	<i>What do you think of Barney's stupid idea?</i>
<b>MULTIPLE</b>	Contains many questions and therefore gets few answers – AVOID	<i>Why did you stay quiet, didn't you have an idea, when did you want to speak up?</i>
<b>WHY?</b>	A seemingly genuine question – but it often generates a defensive response. Try turning it into a WHAT question to get a more useful reply.	<b>NOT</b> – <i>Why were you worried?</i> <i>Instead try:-</i> <i>What exactly is it that concerned you?</i>



## The Question Compass

When exploring an idea, a feeling or an action with a team you can ask questions in 4 directions:-



History: Looking backward at what led to the idea / feeling / action. The aim is to help a coachee to explore how they arrived at the current situation. This may help them to recognise genuine or self-impose constraints

Examples:

- What led up to this?
- How have you dealt with this previously?
- What have you learned from your experiences?
- Give me an example of what happened in the past
- How has this situation arisen?

Consequences: Looking forward to the impact or consequences of the idea / feeling /action. However, it is also really powerful when exploring how teams feel about something?

Examples:

- How does this affect others around you?
- How will that make people feel?
- What did you hope to achieve?



Assumptions: Every idea / feeling / action will be underwritten by assumptions. More often than not these will not be obvious to the team. One of the most powerful actions of a facilitator is to help a team to identify limiting assumptions. The best place to look for an assumption is when the team appeared to be blocked in some way. For example, a team may feel that they cannot improve because they have tried a method and it did not work. As a facilitator, however, we should help the team to examine their assumptions because they might be limiting their options unnecessarily.

Evidence of assumptions:

"We've never been allowed to do that before"

"This is how I think they feel"

"We've always done it that way"

"We cannot do that"

Examples of Assumption Challenging Questions:

- What do you think will happen if you do this?
- How do you think this will help?
- What evidence do you have for this feeling?
- What reasons lie behind you not.....?

The Bigger Picture: Helps the team to explore the context of their idea / feeling / action. Remember that people will see such connections in different ways.

Examples

- How does this fit with your goals?
- How would they view this in the ..... playground?
- How does the way you act differ from other children?
- What is expected of you when compared with other team members?
- Where does this link up with the values of the school?
- How would Jane see this problem?