

The Power of the Question

BY WILL KINTISH

Introduction

The 2 key skills we need to be an effective networker is asking the right questions and listening carefully for their reply. You don't have to be particularly outgoing to be a good networker; in fact those sort of people tend to do too much talking, consequently leaving a conversation none the wiser.

Asking questions

We attend business events to create new opportunities. These could include:

- Find a new employee for our team
- Gain useful information and market intelligence
- Get known by others and what we do
- Meet key decision makers and centres of influence
- Change your career
- Reinforce and reinvigorate existing relationships
- Help others and make useful introductions

The only way you spot something useful from this list is to ask effective questions. This often gets you the results you want; great results begin with great questions. When we ask questions we:

- Manage and direct the conversation
- Are showing interest in the other person
- Are flattering them saying 'on this topic you know more about it than me'
- Often gain useful information

As long as you ask the questions with genuine interest and don't go into interrogation mode people will be responsive. After all, people generally love talking about themselves; in addition we learn nothing from talking; only listening.



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The value of questions

Asking good questions is productive for you and in the others person's mind they will often begin to like you. *"You can make more friends in two months by becoming interested in other people than you can in two years by trying to get other people interested in you."*

Quote- Dale Carnegie

In addition to the list of opportunities above, effective questions help you:

- Connect with people in a more meaningful way. As a result you may be able to give away free and valuable advice. In view that is the best way to start a business relationship; it can include the 2 key steps of getting them to like and trust you.
- Spot a potential problem area which you, as an expert, may be able to solve in due course. When you look for opportunities to offer help rather than thinking 'sell' you will find business development far more comfortable. We call it the 'ahaa moment'.
- Plant your own ideas in a mild and moderate manner.
- Persuade people to your way of thinking when and where it is appropriate.

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Dale Carnegie



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Effective questions are questions that are powerful and thought provoking. Effective questions are open-ended and tend not to be leading questions. They are not "why" questions, but rather "what" or "how" questions. "Why" questions are good for soliciting information, but can make people defensive so be thoughtful in your use of them. When asking effective questions, it is important to wait for the answer and not provide the answer.

For example: *"What do you think the problem is?"* rather than *"Why do you think there is a problem?"*

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Behind effective questioning is the need to listen to the answer. Suspend judgment and always have a learning mindset and don't pre-judge. This means being intent on understanding what the person who is talking is really saying. What is behind their words? Let go of your opinions so that they don't block you from learning more information. Pay attention to your gut feel for additional information.

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Powerful Questions

The following are examples of typical questions. These questions can help you improve your communication and understanding of a prospect at an event or a client in a meeting:

- What seems to be the trouble?
- What do you make of _____?
- How do you feel about _____?
- What concerns you the most about _____?
- What seems to be the problem?
- What seems to be your main obstacle?
- What is holding you back from _____?
- What do you think about doing X this way?



...“Don’t try and bluff it or pretend you know when you don’t. Start asking more probing and clarifying questions.”

Often we don’t fully understand what the other person is saying or they are talking their industry jargon. Don’t try and bluff it or pretend you know when you don’t. Start asking more probing and clarifying questions. A useful acronym is TED:

- **T**ell me more about _____.
- **E**xplain what do you mean by _____?
- **D**escribe in more details what _____?

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The following questions can be used when you find out the person isn't particularly happy with their existing advisors or suppliers. Never ask these early on a conversation. Spend the early part of a conversation asking about their business or career.

- What would you like them to do differently?
- What is it you're looking for from your advisors?
- Would you recommend them to others?

When people start to complain, don't agree with them about the competition and never go into selling mode. Keep quiet other than gentle probing questions. To gain more information drill down softly using words like exactly, particularly and specifically.

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If someone is truly complaining then do ask a leading question. In a genuine and quizzical manner ask “Do you mind me asking, why are you still with them?” Most people stay with their advisors through inertia; you could well become a disruptive element at this moment!

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