Change Your Questions
Change Your World

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Firm believer in continuous improvement and the power of teams to affect change
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Strong desire to help people arrive at the place they define as success in both personal and professional life.
Coaching People or Fixing People?

- Coaching people means treating them as naturally creative, resourceful, and whole

- Fixing people assumes they aren’t capable of changing their own habits
Coaching People or Fixing People?

Every conversation is not a coaching conversation.
Agenda for this session

- What questions do and why to ask them
- The architecture of powerful questions
  - Recognizing more/less powerful questions
  - Exploring types of powerful questions
  - Asking powerful questions with curiosity
At the first-ever Macy's Day Parade, employees dressed in fun costumes and traveled with Central Park zoo animals and floats. The parade drew a large crowd, and it was difficult to see.
Changing the question

How can we make them taller?

How can we make them more visible?

By asking a different question, a different solution became clear – balloons.

Photo by Macy’s, Inc
What Questions Do

- Think outside the box
- Create solutions they can own
- Motivates to take action
Architecture of Powerful Questions

Construction

Scope

Assumptions
Recognizing Powerful Questions

- What time is it?
- Did you take a shower?
- What possibilities exist that we haven’t thought of yet?
- What does it mean to be independent?
Qualities of Powerful Questions

- Generates curiosity
- Thought provoking
- Surfaces underlying assumptions
- Generates energy & forward movement
- Stays with the participants
- Evokes more questions
Building Powerful Questions

- When have you been the most satisfied with our working relationship?

- Are you satisfied with our working relationship?
Why might it be that our working relationship has ups and downs?

What do you find the most satisfying about our working relationship?
Constructing Powerful Questions

- More powerful
  - Why
  - How
  - What

- Less powerful
  - Who, When, Where
  - Which, Yes/No Questions
What are the boundaries of the question?

How can we improve?
- ...our team?
- ...our department?
- ...our company?
Types of Powerful Questions

Goal
Reality
Obstacles/Options
Way forward
Small Changes Create Powerful Questions

- Why
- How
- What
- Who, When, Where
- Which, Yes/No

Goal
Reality
Obstacles/Options
Way forward
Building Powerful Questions

1. The team has decided on a solution but isn’t moving forward.

2. A team member is rehashing a story of something that happened in the past.

3. A team member is unsure about a course of action.
Practicing Powerful Questions

GOAL: Questions that evoke discovery
- What do you really, really, want?
- What’s perfect about this?
- What is the gift in this?
- What additional information do you need?
- How much is this costing you?
- Who can help you with this?
Practicing Powerful Questions

- REALITY: Questions that help gain perspective and understanding
  - What’s the truth about this situation?
  - Who do you remind yourself of?
  - What keeps you up at night?
  - What else is important for me to know?
OBSTACLES/OPTIONS: Questions that promote clarity and learning

- What if things are as bad as you say they are?
- Where are you sabotaging yourself?
- What’s the cost of not changing?
- What’s next?
- What’s past this issue?
Practicing Powerful Questions

WAY FORWARD: Questions that call for action
- What’s possible today?
- How soon can you resolve this?
- Who do you know that’s going through this?
- What does success look like?
- What’s the first step?
- When will you take this step?
Almost all of the **questions we pose** have assumptions built in

- What did we do wrong, and who is responsible?
- What can we learn from what’s happened, and what possibilities do we now see?
Almost all of the answers we hear have assumptions built in

- I’m not a people person
- I find large crowds to be energy-draining
Using Powerful Questions

- Remain curious
- Don’t provide solutions
- Don’t manipulate
- Explore limiting assumptions/beliefs
Building Powerful Questions

- Why is that important?
- How will you know when you’re successful?
- Where are you sabotaging yourself?
- What are you resisting?
- When will you take action?

- Judgmental
- Expert/Know-it-all
- Empathetic/Supportive
- Curious
What questions do and why to ask them

The architecture of powerful questions
  - Recognizing more/less powerful questions
  - Exploring types of powerful questions
  - Asking powerful questions with curiosity
What Did You Learn, and How Will You Use This?
Resources

- Professional Coach Training ~ J. Val Hastings, MCC
- Coaching Questions ~ Tony Stolzfus
- The Art of Powerful Questions ~ Eric E. Vogt, Juanita Brown, and David Isaacs
- Coaching Agile Teams ~ Lyssa Adkins
- Powerful Questions Exercise by Deborah Preuss, inspired by Carlton Nettleton
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