Experioratory behavior such as moving beyond one’s own job requirements and ability to freely ask questions.

**TACTIC | What works: Culture of Questioning**

What the experts say

One of the ways to foster curiosity is to ask powerful questions. Questions are the fuel for inquisitiveness, and inquisitiveness leads to curiosity, and ultimately innovation. Warren Berger, author of *A More Beautiful Question: The Power of Inquiry to Spark Breakthrough Ideas*, believes that a typical brainstorm to generate ideas puts too much pressure on individuals or groups to be creative, which then inadvertently stifles any creative thinking. Brainstorms should focus on generating questions rather than ideas. Though this may seem counterintuitive, Berger believes that “encouraging people to formulate lots of questions around an issue or a problem can lead to deeper analysis and a better understanding of that problem.” By emboldening individuals to ask questions without repercussion, individual curiosity will increase exponentially. In essence, individuals should encourage themselves to “ask dumb questions.” This changes the culture surrounding questions and allows individuals the freedom to question all aspects of the issue. Though posing ideas and asking questions have some similarities, questions make participants challenge assumptions. For a question formulation exercise, Berger recommends The Question Formulation Technique™ (QFT™) from the Right Question Institute.
The Question Formulation Technique™ (QFT™) created by the Right Question Institute breaks down this process into the following steps:

1. **Design a Question-Focus**: The Question Focus is the stimuli – the catalyst used to generate questions. It can be a topic, image, phrase or situation that will serve as the “focus” for generating questions, and should be centered around a problem that the company is facing. For more relation to curiosity, questions should center specifically upon challenges to innovation. An effective Question Focus should be clear, should provoke and stimulate new lines of thinking and should not be a question, as it in and of itself should be a topic that stimulates questions. For example, individuals could question their current different barriers to innovation.

2. **Generate Questions**: Use the Question Focus to generate as many questions as possible. The first step for generating questions is to review the rules.
   - **Rules for Generating Questions**:
     - Ask as many questions as possible.
     - Do not stop to discuss, judge, or answer any questions.
     - Write down every question exactly as it is stated.
     - Change any statement into a question.

   **Chunking Up and Down**: The chunking technique helps individuals either drill down into question details, or ask broader questions, as a way to garner more information.

   **Example “Chunking Up” Questions: the big picture**
   - What is this a part of?
   - What is this an example of?
   - What is the purpose of this?
   - What is the overall intention?
   - How does this fit into our existing plan or mission?

   **Example “Chunking Down” Questions: the specifics**
   - What is an example of this?
   - What is a component of this?
   - Who/what specifically?
   - What do you mean by this?
One of the ways to foster curiosity is to ask powerful questions. Questions are the fuel for inquisitiveness, and inquisitiveness leads to curiosity, and ultimately innovation. Warren Berger, author of *A More Beautiful Question: The Power of Inquiry to Spark Breakthrough Ideas*, believes that a typical brainstorm to generate ideas puts too much pressure on individuals or groups to be creative, which then inadvertently stifles any creative thinking. Rather, brainstorms should focus on generating questions rather than ideas. Though this may seem counterintuitive, Berger believes that “encouraging people to formulate lots of questions around an issue or a problem can lead to deeper analysis and a better understanding of that problem.” By emboldening individuals to ask questions without repercussion, individual curiosity will increase exponentially. In essence, individuals should encourage themselves to “ask dumb questions.” This changes the culture surrounding questions and allows individuals the freedom to question all aspects of the issue. Though posing ideas and asking questions have some similarities, questions make participants challenge assumptions.

**Improve Questions**: The individual should review the questions, and then group them into two categories:

1. Closed-ended questions that can be answered with a “yes” or “no” or with one word.
2. Open-ended questions that require an explanation.

This part of the process develops as follows:

- Review the list of questions and mark the closed-ended questions with a “C” and the open-ended with an “O”.
- Think of the advantages and disadvantages of asking each type of question.
- Close all of the open questions, and open all of the closed questions.
- Changing the questions will help individuals learn how to edit the questions to meet the main purpose.

**Prioritize Questions**: The individual should then choose three questions based on the actions that they want to take. For example, the three most important questions, three questions they would like to address first, three questions they want to explore further, etc. After choosing the priority questions, the individual should articulate their rationale for choosing.

**Decide on Next Steps**: Question formulation sessions can end in developing an action plan to move forward. For example, an individual may use the questions to do further research, develop a project to improve innovation, use the questions as a guide for curiosity, etc.

**Reflection**: Reflecting on the questions allows for internalization of the question formulation process, evaluates its value, and determines how to apply it further.

When to use the QFT™:

- To prepare to write an assignment or start a new project.
- To prepare for an interview.
- To begin research on a new topic.
- To think more deeply about a challenging project.
- Simply to become “unstuck” in regards to ideas.

How often to use QFT™:

- 30-minute sessions to launch new projects or assignments.
- Use in team meetings when questions arise.
What you’ll need

Paper or white board.

References


