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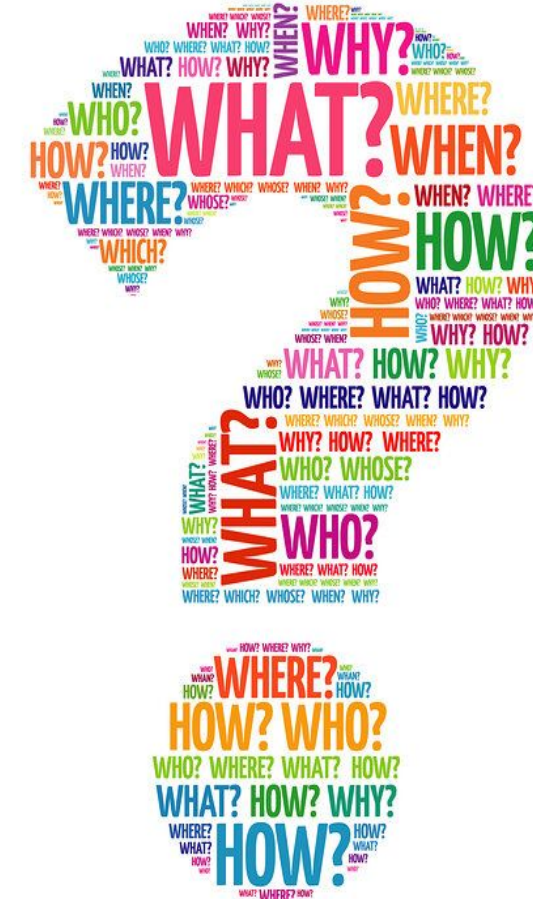
The Art of Asking the Right Questions

Sharpening Facilitation Skills for Insight,
Engagement, and Transformation

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Session Overview

- Understand why powerful questions are essential for effective facilitation
- Explore practices that sharpen your inquiry and listening skills
- Learn different types of questions that spark engagement and deepen conversation
- Participate in activities designed to practice purposeful and impactful questioning



"The questions you ask are more important than the things you could ever say."

- Thomas J. Watson

Reflection:

"What does this quote mean for facilitators?"

Why Focus on Questions?

- Questions guide thinking, exploration, and discovery
- They open minds and deepen understanding
- The right questions drive group ownership, insight, and transformation



“Some keys open simple doors, others open secret passageways, the better our questions, the deeper participants can journey.”

Common Pitfalls When Asking Questions



- **Leading Questions:** Pushing participants toward a particular answer instead of open exploration. Example: "Don't you think this new system is much more efficient than the old one?"
- **Overloading with Too Many Questions at Once:** Confusing the audience and diluting focus. Example: "What did you think about the new training program, how did it compare to the last one, and do you think it will help you improve performance in the long run?"
- **Overuse of Closed (Yes/No) Questions:** Limiting deep discussion and exploration. Example: "Was the meeting helpful?"
- **Insufficient Wait Time:** Not allowing enough silence for thoughtful responses.



What are some types of questions facilitators could ask to spark insight and engagement?



Characteristics of Powerful Questions

- **Open-ended:** Encourage expansive thinking rather than one-word answers - "What experiences have most shaped your perspective on this topic?"
- **Clear and Concise:** Easily understood without unnecessary complexity - "What steps would you take to solve this problem?"
- **Non-judgmental:** Free from assumptions or implied criticism - "How do you see this situation from your point of view?"
- **Stimulate Curiosity and Dialogue:** Invite reflection, engagement, and meaningful conversation - "What questions does this raise for you, and why do you think they matter?"
- **Connected to Purpose:** Aligned with the session's goals and outcomes - "How does this idea support the goal we're trying to achieve today?"

Three Categories of Powerful Questions

1. Exploratory: Spark new ideas and expand thinking

Example: “What possibilities exist?”
“What haven’t we considered yet?”

2. Reflective: Encourage insight and deeper understanding

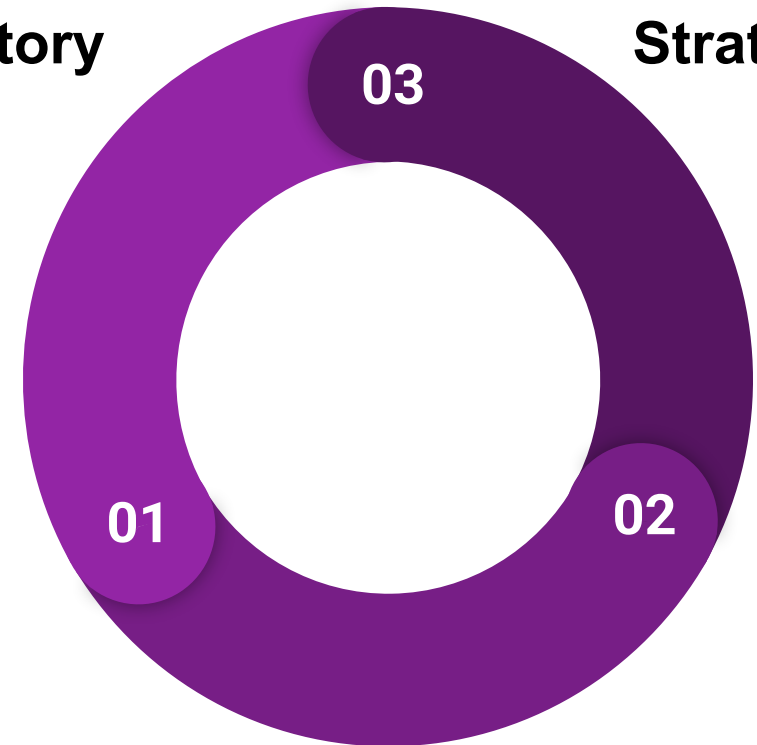
Example: “What does this mean for you?”
“What assumptions are we making?”

3. Strategic: Drive action and decision-making

Example: “What is your next step?”
“How will you put this into practice?”

Exploratory

Strategic



Reflective

The Practice of Intentional Questioning

- **Know Your Purpose:**

Be clear on what insight, feeling, or action you're aiming to draw out.

- **Match the Energy of the Group:**

Adjust tone, pacing, and question style to suit the group's mood and engagement level.

- **Frame Questions Positively:**

Encourage open thinking and possibility rather than defensiveness or blame.

- **Invite Reflection Before Response:**

Use silence or prompts like “Take a moment to think...” to give space for thoughtful answers.



Questions as GPS Systems

Good questions, like a GPS, they guide not control. They help groups:

- **Navigate complexity** without getting lost
- **Stay aligned** with the destination (purpose)
- **Reroute** when new information emerges
- **Make decisions** with clarity and confidence



“A GPS doesn’t drive the car, it offers direction. Questions should do the same.”

Types of Questions with Examples

Type	Example
Clarifying	“Can you explain a bit more?”
Probing	“What factors led you to that conclusion?”
Expanding	“What else might be possible?”
Reflective	“How does this connect to your experience?”

BREAKOUT ROOMS (15 minutes)

Case Study: "Leading Through Change"

Training Topic: Leadership Skills in Times of Change

Scenario:

You are facilitating a leadership development workshop. The company is undergoing a major reorganization. Some teams will merge, some roles will change, and some employees are worried about job security. Senior management has tasked team leaders to keep morale high and maintain productivity during the transition.

Question:

As the facilitator, what are some questions you can ask to spark insight, engagement, and transformation

Hint:

Exploratory Questions, Reflective Questions, Probing Questions, Strategic/Action-Oriented Questions.

Facilitator Questions to Spark Insight, Engagement, and Transformation



1. Exploratory Questions *(to open minds and surface ideas)*

- *What are some common emotions teams experience during times of change?*
- *What opportunities might change present for leaders and teams?*

2. Reflective Questions *(to deepen self-awareness and connection)*

- *Think of a time you experienced a major change, what leadership behaviors helped you cope?*
- *How do your personal reactions to change influence the way you lead others?*

3. Probing Questions *(to dig deeper into challenges and possibilities)*

- *What are the biggest fears you anticipate your team might have?*
- *What communication strategies could you use to build trust through uncertainty?*

4. Strategic/Action-Oriented Questions *(to move toward solutions)*

- *What is one concrete step you can take tomorrow to support your team during this transition?*
- *How will you measure whether your team is adjusting well to the changes?*

Techniques to Sharpen Questioning Skills

- Pause before you ask
- Frame questions with curiosity, not judgment
- Build questions based on what participants say
- Embrace silence: it's part of the process



Listening Deeply to Respond Wisely

- Active listening sharpens questioning
- Listen for values, emotions, assumptions
- Ask questions that mirror what you heard

Example:

"I hear that trust is a challenge for your team, what does building trust look like for you?"



The Funnel Approach to Questioning

- Start **broad** (“What are your thoughts on...?”)
- Move **narrower** (“What specific challenges do you foresee?”)
- End **action-oriented** (“What first step can you take?”)



Activity 2: Question Makeover



Objective: Transform weak questions into strong ones.

Instructions:

- Presenter shows 3 examples of poor questions (e.g., “Don’t you think that’s wrong?”)
- Audience types in the chat how they would reframe each into a powerful question.
- Discuss the improvements together.

Tools to Boost Your Questioning Game

- Use chat prompts
- Incorporate polling questions
- Try "silent reflection" questions
- Utilize digital whiteboards for visual inquiries (e.g., Jamboard, Miro)



Recap: Key Takeaways

- Great facilitation is rooted in great questioning
- Powerful questions unlock insight and ownership
- Sharpening questioning is a lifelong practice
- Reminder: The art of inquiry is the art of connection.

Reflection...

"What is one question you are now inspired to ask at your next session?"



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QUESTIONS COMMENTS FEEDBACK