



## Developmental Questioning

### What

If you are, or aspire to be, a leader or influencer then get good at asking questions, a skill which can transform you and others around you. Developmental questions are those which, by their design, improve the quality of thought around a task or a role.

### So What?

In many contexts leaders use questions badly. Dialogue reinforces power and questions are used to harvest information, gather explanations, justify actions and assert authority. Developmental Questioning benefits from an understanding of behavioural science. The questions are more invitational. They encourage reflection and independent thought and add value to an individual, team or organisation through open dialogue. This builds trust, motivates and improves long-term problem-solving capacity.

### Now What?

Here are seven types of developmental questions with which you can experiment .

1. **Information** – Ask questions which encourage sorting, sifting and sharing of information. *"What are the key things you think I need to know about this issue?"*
2. **Iterative** – Allow the dialogue to go backwards and forwards and adjust to what is being said. *"That's interesting – can you tell me more about that?"*
3. **Intent** – Invite the other party to share their thinking around outcomes. *"What was the thinking behind that final choice?"*
4. **Insight** – Use the discussion to encourage reflection and speculation, especially around patterns of thoughts, previous experiences and opportunities. *"How can we use this information to help us going forward?"*
5. **Innovation** – research on organisational decision-making suggests that many businesses opt for the first solution. Encourage alternatives. *"What were the other options you considered? Which did you reject? What was the reasoning behind your final decision?"*
6. **Invitation** – The IKEA effect is a form of confirmation bias which suggests that the 'owner' of a solution becomes protective of it. Turn this on its head by inviting solutions. *"If you were me, what would you do?"*
7. **Instinct** – Sometimes the 'gut feeling' may be the best route into an open discussion about motives and intentions. *"What is your instinct telling you about this?"*

In our ThreeWhats Playbook on Developmental Questioning we provide evidence-based summaries of what you need to know. We also cover questioning strategies in our Method Playbook.

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