

3 Spires Learning

3 Spires 'Light Learning'

"Team Leader Toolkit - Employee Engagement"



"Communicating With Our People – Asking Questions"

"Developing Tomorrows Leaders"

Communicating With Our People

“Asking Questions”

How To Use This Toolkit

Different team leaders are at different stages and this toolkit provides a basic guide from which team leaders can pick and choose topics they need support on.

Working successfully in teams does not necessarily come naturally to many of us; it is an acquired skill in need of guidance and support.

This toolkit provides practical hints and tips on areas such as team leadership, performance and communication.

It aims to aid managers when they are looking for practical ideas on how to address issues raised in everyday situations.

Each section covers the following areas:

1. Using this section
2. Practical hints and tips
3. Comments from top scoring managers
4. Questions for you

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Using This Section

Managing does not mean knowing all the answers, it means knowing you have to ask the right questions.

The best managers have developed the habit of asking for views regularly - they know they are really engaging their team when they bring up ideas unprompted.

Questions are used to draw out information from others.

Practical Hints And Tips

There are several types of questions.

Choose The Most Appropriate!

Open-ended Questions

Open questions promote discovery and stimulate thinking, They are useful to help the other person start talking about a topic, outline a situation, give a broad description of what happened and how he or she reacted.

There Are Three Broad Types Of Open Question:

1. Clarifying Questions

- *"What specifically does that mean to you?"*
- *"Can I make sure I understand that...?"*
- *"If I hear correctly, what you are saying is...?"*

2. Creative Questions

- *"How have you seen others handle similar situations?"*
- *"What do you think about..?"*
- *"Would you like to talk more about it?"*
- *"I'd be interested in hearing more"*
- *"What would be your approach if there were no constraints?"*

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3. Process Questions

- *"What would you like to get from this session?"*
- *"What do I need to communicate to ensure everyone understands your role?"*
- *"What authority do you think you need to complete this task?"*

Follow-up Or Probing Questions

Follow-up questions help you get more information, broaden decisions and understand reasons and motivations.

Do not over use 'why?'. It causes people to become defensive.

For example, try using...:

"In what way would this help achieve greater customer satisfaction?"

"What other aspects of this should be considered?"

"How would you involve others in accomplishing this plan?"

Follow-up questions are useful for probing - getting to the heart of a topic, checking information and filling in detail.

A particular type of follow-up question is the reflective question, useful for gaining a clearer understanding, revealing more information or uncovering feelings.

For example...:

"You say you were pleased..."

"Incompetent...?"

"You say he reacted to this. How did he react...?"

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Closed Questions

Closed questions are those that lead to either 'yes' or 'no'.

They are useful in checking facts quickly but can lead to a one-sided conversation.

Examples are:

'Have you received the recent communications on price rises?'

'Do you understand the new products that we offer?'

'Have you done this sort of work before?'

A closed question can be a useful lead into open questions once an area to explore has been identified.

Less Useful Questions

Certain types of questions are less useful.

Try Not To Use Them-these Include:

- Leading questions ("I assume you...")
- Multiple questions (asking several questions together)

"I try to use open ended questions to invite opinions, thoughts and feelings as well as to encourage participation"

"It seems obvious, but when trying to stimulate discussion or debate it's best to avoid closed yes/no style questions."

Questions For You

1. Do you think about the type of question you are asking before asking it?
2. Do you use questions to increase participation from quieter team members?

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