

The Importance of Asking Questions at Work



Asking questions can be the simplest and most effective ways of learning. Innovators, brilliant minds, and curious thinkers ask questions. If you are not asking questions, you could be missing out on opportunities.

As a business leader, information is imperative. You need to understand what your employees and clients need, as well as where your organization can improve.

Not convinced? Learn why asking questions can be imperative in the workplace:

Questions Encourage Creative Thinking

An innovative company is always coming up with new ideas. Brainstorming sessions are a productive method to inspiring new ideas. Questions can create the creative thinking that you need for a great brainstorming session. Open-ended questions are some of the most efficient, such as;

- I wonder if/why...
- What would happen if...
- In what ways can we...

Questions Create Reflection

There are periods where we all just focus on getting the job done. However, if those periods turn into years, we can lose the spark that makes us creative

leaders. Constantly ask yourself questions, such as;

- Why are you in business?
- What is your favorite part of your job?
- How did you create change this year?

Questions Start Change

It's easy to get stuck in a rut. During those periods, we know that we need to make changes but we can't find where to make it work. Your questions could open a new way of thinking that keeps your company innovative.

Now that you know why to ask questions, it's important to recognize how to ask. You don't want your important question to go unnoticed.

- Watch your tone by keeping it casual.
 - Use follow-up questions by focusing on listening.
 - If you are looking for information, start with the tough questions. If you want to build relationships, start with the easy questions.
 - Keep the questions open-ended.
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How-To Get Your Boss To Support Your Ideas



Business owners want their companies to grow and eager employees move the

company forward. If you want to advance your career, it is important that you promote new ideas for business development.

If you have a new idea for your employer – great! However, any great idea can be dismissed if it's not presented well. Do your homework. Your boss will take your idea more seriously if you are prepared.

Align the Values of the Company

The most imperative step is to ensure your idea aligns with the company's core values. For example, Patagonia clothing company is committed to using environmentally friendly methods to create their products. An accepted pitch probably aligns with sustainability. Before pursuing your project, make sure that it withholds the values of your company.

Examples of Core Values

- A commitment to sustainability and acting in an environmentally friendly way
- A commitment to innovation and excellence
- A commitment to helping people less fortunate
- A commitment to building a strong community
- A commitment to immediate customer service

Get the Support of Your Co-Workers

Enlist the support of your co-workers. This could be staff that would also work on the project and benefits from the results. To achieve your co-worker's support, try testing the concept on reliable team members.

Your boss could also be impressed with your ability to lead team members. Communication, management, and passion are necessary in leadership positions that could be a career goal.

Have an Idea of Why the Project Will Benefit the Company

Every project requires company resources. The project might cost the company money, employee hours, or new software. You should be able to answer why your project is worth company resources. If you cannot answer this question, then it is almost certain that your idea will be dismissed.

Pursuing an efficiency solution or new source of revenue, could send you on the fast track to advancing your career.

How the Project Will Benefit the Company

- Increase revenue
- Reduce expenses
- Improve efficiency
- Solution to problem that the manager has been trying to achieve
- Help your team become more successful

Be Flexible with Feedback

Your boss will have questions and feedback to your idea. That is a good thing! If they did not like your idea than it would have been dismissed. Be prepared to make modifications to the project and take shared ownership.

Risks Great Business Leaders Must Take in Order to Succeed



Good leaders are often reliable and hard workers. However, what makes a good leader become great is their ability to take risks.

Risks can be a scary word to many of us. When we take a risk, we could lose something valuable. Great leaders see opportunity in failure and potential from the learning experience. If you want to be a great business leader, you will have to take risks at some point.

Learn some of the most common risks every great business leader faces:

Risk Failing

We all risk failing when we try something new, but failing is not always a bad thing. Your efforts are the key to success. Successful business leaders can view failure as learning process.

Failure accomplishes two very important objectives:

1. We are willing to embrace risking failure by doing something risky. You can't be successful unless you try!
2. We discover the proper expectation mentally. Plan for the best but prepare for the worst. This allows the opportunity for recovery and another attempt.

Risk Admitting that You Don't Know

We are conditioned to have quick and confident answers. Unfortunately, if we are always providing an answer, we will never have the opportunity to learn from other perspectives.

For business leaders, the risk of saying “I don’t know” can be the opportunity to engage a team. Use the opportunity to gather new ideas with group discussions and brain storming sessions.

Risk Losing Everything

Whether you have been in business for forty years or one, every company makes financial risks to get ahead. Sometimes, the choice can be a plunge. However, a successful business leader continues to take smart risks from the knowledge of previous learning experiences.

Risk of Stepping into Unfamiliar Territory

Stepping into unfamiliar territory starts from day one of opening a business. You will continue to expand your boundaries as your business expands.

Stepping into unfamiliar territory could include providing a new product or service, opening a branch office, or hiring a team. We must make changes or our company will remain stagnant.

Risking Being Misunderstood

Thinking outside of the box can cause people to question your sanity! As a business leader, your character will be questioned at some point. After all, your decisions are possibly affecting the future of the company. Nevertheless, stick to what you think is right. You did not become a leader by being just like everyone else.

How-To Keep Employees Engaged

With Their Work



Every empowered team has one thing in common – they are engaged with their work. Achieving engaged employees may seem simple. Unfortunately, only 32 percent of workers are engaged in their jobs. As a business owner, this is a frightening statistic! We want employees that are passionate about their careers.

As a recruiter, I seek candidates that enjoy their career field. However, after I find the employee, it's up to the business leader to keep them happy. Learn six tricks to keeping your employees happy at work.

Be Transparent

Transparency should be core in a company's values. It develops trust and productivity within the organization.

To be transparent, make important information available. This does not mean that you should broadcast your company's finances. Instead, create charts on the progress of meeting company goals.

You can also trust employees to make decisions. This may seem scary at first. After all, you are loosening the reins when an employee starts making decisions. However, they will become more invested in company operations and will learn to take ownership of their projects.

Take Responsibility for Mistakes

Nobody wants to take blame for something that was not their fault. It will be very difficult for you to maintain the respect of others if you do not take responsibility

for your actions.

Apologize when you know that your decision was not best for the company. Your employees will appreciate your honesty and you will gain their respect.

Make Training Available

Employees who are enthusiastic to learn are some of the best additions to your team. Make sure training is available to help their skills develop. This could be webinars, online courses, mentoring, or job shadowing. These passionate employees can potentially be your managers and directors. By providing training and learning options you increase the chance they will want to stay on your team.

Allow Individuality in Dress Code

Suit and tie attire are a thing of the past for most jobs. Allow your employees individuality in their clothing -within reason. You can provide guidelines for what is appropriate such as no t-shirts, jeans or sandals. However, small changes that allow self-expression can make employees feel more engaged in their job position.

Thank Employees for Good Work

Everyone likes to know that they are appreciated. Acknowledge your employees hard work. For large projects, you may choose to reward an employee with a gift certificate, bonus, or extra vacation time.

See [20 Techniques for Acknowledging Your Employee's Good Work](#) for ideas on thanking employees for their good work.

Provide Flexibility on Hours

Different employees are more productive different hours of the day. If your office allows the flexibility, provide your employees with a two-hour window for coming to work. For example, your employees must start work between 7:00 AM – 9:00 AM. They can leave from 4:00 PM – 6:00 PM. This flexibility works for employees that workout in the morning or drop their kids off at school. It can also attract potential employees that have a long commute or have to deal with a lot of traffic

that might not otherwise consider your company for employment.

Take the time to build a company with engaged employees. You may find that you have a decreased turnover rate, increased productivity, and you have a team that is easier to manage. Not to mention, you will build a healthier, happier working environment.

6 Tips to Keep Your Clients Happy



We can focus so much on getting new clients that we forget to keep our current clients happy. This is the quickest way to lose internal and external clients, and get a bad reputation for yourself.

Additionally, Forrest Research claims getting a new client costs five times more than retaining current customers. Don't forget to keep your clients happy if you want to have a profitable business.

Not sure how to keep your customers happy? Start learning with these six tips:

Own Your Mistakes

We all make mistakes. Admit yours. Clients will be happier with a meaningful apology and honesty rather than trying to cover up your mistake. Usually your client is able to see your fault. They might not mention it but they could lose trust in your abilities if you try to just cover it up as an external influence or another person's decision.

Go Above and Beyond

Everyone wants to feel special – including your clients! Do more than what your client asked for to make them feel appreciated. Offer specific tips, suggestions, and ideas. You will be seen as what the company genuinely needs in order to succeed.

Return Calls Promptly

Time is money. Your unanswered questions could be preventing your clients from completing an urgent task. Return emails and calls within 24 hours or one hour if possible.

Do Not Overpromise

Overpromising and underdelivering can kill your business. Don't do it! Be realistic when you make contracts with customers. That way, you know you can meet their expectations with the opportunity to go above and beyond.

Add a Personal Touch

Allow your clients to get to know you. This does not mean that you have to invite them to your wedding or child's piano recital. Instead, send them a handwritten Christmas card to show that you care.

Create a Valuable Product

If you produce a poor product then eventually you will lose all of your clients. Invest in creating a reliable, high-quality product.

Retain your clients and you will not always have to be searching for new business! Eventually, your reputation will speak for itself.

How-To Build Strong Leadership Skills



Strong leadership is a learned skill. Depending on the type and size of business, there are always methods to improve. Whether you are a business owner, executive, or manager, it is important that you are always analyzing your team's response to your management.

The following methods could help you improve your leadership. Doing so can lead to happier and more productive employees.

Be a Positive Role Model

Do not expect your employees to work any harder than yourself. Employees often use management as criteria for their own work ethic. When you are working, think about how you would like your employees to act. If you are on Facebook every hour then you cannot get frustrated with employees who are constantly checking their social media notifications.

Find a Mentor

Nobody knows it all. Find a mentor who has also served as a business leader. You can seek tips and guidance from their experience.

Encourage Creativity

If employees are given the flexibility to use creative thinking, you may be surprised by the insight that they can bring to the table. Creative thinking can be intimidating for many employees. However, new ideas could be what makes your company unique among competition.

How to Influence Creative Thinking in the Workplace

- Use an “idea first, measurement second” mindset. Eventually your company must be data-driven but allow flexibility for new ideas.
- Use innovation teams to come up with new ideas.
- Reward employee with bonuses if their idea is used.
- Create a positive work environment so employees feel comfortable expressing their ideas without criticism.

Study Past Leaders

Most business leaders spend their time looking forward. Unfortunately, some of your most valuable lessons can be learned from the past. Study past leader's successes and failures. After all, history repeats itself.

Great Modern Entrepreneurs to Learn From

1. Elon Musk
2. Steve Jobs
3. Oprah Winfrey
4. Walt Disney
5. Bill Gates

Be Humble

Great leaders admit their mistakes and share credit for successes. If you play the blame game, eventually your employees will look for employment elsewhere.

People want to feel respected.

Communicate Effectively

As a leader, you probably get very busy. Nevertheless, you cannot build a great team without maintaining time to communicate with your team.

Occasionally, ask your employees how they are doing. Your employees should feel comfortable confronting you with questions and concerns.

Strong leaders can build great companies. If you are in a leadership position, focus on improving your skills to help lead your company to success.

Effective Leadership Techniques to Build a Great Working Team



The foundation of almost every productive team is a strong leader. As a business owner or manager, it is important to establish effective leadership techniques to operate your team well. Your employees will be looking up to you to create boundaries and unify the group.

If you are not acting as a strong leader then it is time that you start! Here are a few leadership techniques to build a great working team.

Stay Consistent

Consistency is key. A consistent leader is more trustworthy and creates clearer expectations for the team to make decisions. To be consistent, you must reward the same behaviors, discourage other behaviors, and treat every team member equally.

Use Thoughtful, Concise, and Accurate Communication

Communication can dictate the success of almost any type of relationship. Make sure that you are using thoughtful, concise, and accurate communication when you relay any type of message with your team. This includes emails, phone calls, and in-person discussions.

Publicly Reward Hard Work

Public acknowledgement reassures employees that their hard work is being noticed. Reward your employee with a bonus, PTO, or gift when they perform superior work. See our article on employee rewards for more ideas.

Be a Good Example

Live by example! I am sure that is a phrase you have heard before. If you want your team to arrive on-time then you must arrive on-time. As a leader or manager, the team is looking at you to set the expectations for the company.

Encourage All Opinions and Ideas

Do not discourage employees from expressing their ideas, concerns, or opinions. Different perspectives can create new ideas that benefit the company.

Establish the Goal of Working as a Team

Setting goals is imperative to evaluate the performance of your team. Your goals

should be according to your organization's needs, such as cut costs, drive skills, or increase revenue. Defining goals can help your team work together toward a common objective.

Use the SMART framework to create achievable goals:

- Specific
- Measurable
- Achievable
- Relevant
- Time-Bound

Create Ground Rules for the Team

When multiple people spend 40+ hours together, there needs to be ground rules. Your ground rules help create unison and clear expectations for your employees.

Examples of Ground Rules at the Office

- Be on time
- Every team member has the right to make a suggestion
- Dress code

Remain as Transparent as Possible

Your employees want a leader that they can trust. If you withhold information or lie you will jeopardize the relationship with your team.

Show You Care

To be viewed as someone who is a leader they want to follow and be loyal to you need to show that you care about them as well. Spend a little time to get to know the people on your team and what drives them. Once they know you care about them, they will care more about helping you achieve your goals as well.

Leadership habits can determine the success of their team. If you are a manager or business owner, evaluate whether you are practicing strong leadership techniques. A few changes may improve the cohesiveness of your team, therefore

helping you reach your company goals.