

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 Improve Your Schedule



Have you ever jumped on Facebook, only to still be scanning a half hour later? We

have all done it. At work, distractions can be a serious problem to our productivity.

A thorough schedule can be a lifesaver when we are struggling with distractions. You are able to break down your tasks into a manageable timeline that helps keep you on track. That's just one piece of the puzzle. Learn some of the best techniques to managing your schedule to save hours in your work week.

Break It Down

Almost every task can be broken down. Instead of "write a report", schedule 20 minutes for researching, 20 minutes for an outline, 40 minutes for a rough draft, etc. Breaking up projects makes your day more manageable.

Be Realistic

You can't do everything in a day. Be realistic with your work week. We may really want to complete a research project but with other deadlines, it's not always feasible. Instead, create a realistic schedule with push goals if you have extra time.

Prioritize Items

Start your day with your two most important items. For many of us, that could be checking emails and meetings. Finishing your priorities prevents stress for the rest of the day.

Time It

Create a timeline for each day. We often think optimistically that our report summary will only take an hour when in reality, it will take two. Be honest with yourself.

How much time will the project really take?

That way, you can comfortably fit the assignment into your schedule. Any extra time can be used for miscellaneous tasks or a head start on another project.

Schedule Time to Schedule

As your week passes, you might need to reschedule your days. Give yourself a half an hour on Friday to create the schedule for the following week. Schedule at least ten minutes at the end of Monday through Thursday to make changes. As meetings and projects arise you will need to be flexible.

Acknowledge What You Accomplished

Pat yourself on the back! You deserve it. Work can be stressful and managing your work schedule can be complicated. At the end of each day, reflect on what you accomplished. It can help boost morale and keep you motivated.

How-To Overcome Common Fears at Work



Everyone strives for a job that they love. However, even our dream careers develop workplace fears. If we become focused on our fears, we can lose creativity, productivity, and develop stress. It's important to address our concerns. Fear could start impacting your job performance.

The Fear of Being Fired

Whether you love or hate your job, we all have a fear of getting fired.

How will we support our family? Will we be able to find another job? Will our new job make pay enough to support our lifestyle?

As a Recruiter, I help find you jobs that fit your skills where you can feel secure. Nevertheless, if you are scared of being fired, here are a few tips for you to help you overcome your fears.

How-To Overcome Your Fear of Being Fired

Firstly, assess your work situation. Is there a legitimate reason that you should be afraid of being fired? Some signs could be your boss being critical of your work, you are no longer asked to attend important meeting or your workload subsides.

If you can't find any reason, ask your manager for feedback on your work. Explain to your boss that you want to perform at the best of your abilities. Your boss will probably be impressed by your initiative.

The Fear of Not Receiving the Promotion that You Deserve

Everyone starts at the bottom of the ladder in their career. With hard work, you can increase your position to manager, supervisor, or even CEO. Almost everyone who dreams of climbing the ladder, fears that the "other guy" will get the promotion.

As a recruiter, I help employees find companies that have potential for growth.

How-To Overcome the Fear of Not Receiving the Promotion that You Deserve

Make it difficult for the organization to replace you. Always go through trainings to improve your job skills. Participate in brainstorming sessions. Be innovative! Be willing to help out in other areas and possibly get cross trained in those areas. It makes you more valuable to the company and your boss.

The Fear of Inadequacy

We can easily feel inadequate when our tasks begin to pile. We feel overwhelmed and question whether we can handle our workload.

At some point, someone will discover that we are incompetent.

This chronic self-doubt causes stress which decreases our productivity.

How-To Overcome the Fear of Inadequacy

Inadequacy can often develop from lack of communication. If you do not know what your boss wants then you are more likely to feel that you cannot complete the job well. Start by attaining a clear vision.

Ask your boss, “what would success look like in this project?” You can work confidently now that you know the company’s vision.

The Fear of Not Fitting In

Everyone wants to be liked. Fitting in creates a more comfortable and fun workplace. However, if fitting in is an obsession, you might not value yourself.

How-To Overcome the Fear of Not Fitting In

Start by being friendly to everyone. You will probably receive a positive response which will boost your confidence. After you boost your confidence, participate in brainstorming sessions. Impacting the office can also increase the chance of a promotion or raise.

7 Tips to Calm Your Nerves When

Public Speaking



Just thinking about public speaking can make our palms sweat. Inevitably, leadership positions require speaking to large groups.

If this sparks anxiety for you then you are not alone!

3 out of 4 people suffer from public speaking phobia. More specifically, 75% of females and 73% of men.

It is important to take control of public speaking anxiety. Incorporate the following tips into your speech instead of turning down your next public speaking opportunity.

Visualize Your Success

We need to “see” our success to manifest our goals. Visualize yourself presenting your speech. You are standing in front of the crowd, calm and collected. You provide your audience with the information with they need, receive questions, and sit down. You must believe that you can be confident to be confident.

Know Your Audience

Many people that despise public speaking feel confident with one-on-one discussions. If this is you, make your presentation feel more like a conversation. You can do that by knowing your audience.

- What are their professions?
- Why are they at your presentation?

- What problems are they facing in their career?

The more you connect with your audience, the more comfortable you will feel.

Memorize Your Opening

The beginning of your speech often creates a rush of adrenaline. Learning the first few lines can decrease your adrenaline levels to speak confidently. You start strong despite your nervousness.

Practice, Practice, Practice!

When someone is learning an instrument or training for a marathon, they put in hours of practice. However, many people do not practice for speeches.

You will feel more confident, prepared, and knowledgeable if you practice for your speech. Memorize the opening and key points. Create an outline. Prepare a visualization but do not read from the material.

Adjust to Your Surroundings

Every venue is different. The lights could be brighter. The microphone might be on a stand versus headphones. Some venues seat hundreds of people.

Know your venue before you give your speech. That way you will be aware of distractions that could increase your nervousness during the presentation.

Practice Positive Affirmation

Stop being so hard on yourself! The audience won't notice if you say your opener differently or skip a point. Repeat positive affirmation throughout your speech (in your head) to appear positive and confident.

Positive Affirmation for Speeches

1. I enjoy presenting and sharing my ideas.
2. Today, I am making a difference by being brave.

3. I am confident and comfortable.
4. I am a powerful, inspiring speaker.
5. My words have a powerful effect on people.

Take Deep Breaths

We rarely thinking about our breath in daily conversations. However, when we stand in front of an audience, we can easily forget to breathe heightening nerves and causing us to gasp.

Speak slowly and take the time to breath. Deep breaths will be easier if you maintain correct posture. Speak as you are inhaling and exhaling. Pause at the bottom of your exhale and top of your inhale.

Practice this exercise before your presentation to ensure that you are comfortable with the technique.

Finding Work/Life Balance in the Summer



Memorial Day is this weekend! This means, it is a three-day weekend for many of us. As you launch into summer it is important to develop a great work/life balance. A healthy balance helps you to spend more time doing the activities that

you love.

The following tips can help you build a balance to enjoy your summer while working productively:

Schedule Your Day

We often fail to schedule our day or modify our schedules when we get distracted. To work efficiently, create a schedule (every day!) and stick to it. This could cut hours of work.

Tips to Schedule Your Day

1. Morning Ritual - Create a routine that makes you feel best throughout the day. Get up half an hour early to exercise or meditate. Eat a healthy breakfast.
2. Plan Your Daily Tasks- You can save time if you have a plan for the day. Know what tasks are a priority and create a Google Calendar to organize your day.
3. Plan Your Meetings in the Afternoon - Get the important tasks finished in the morning and save the afternoon for meetings and important phone calls.

Stay Healthy

Do you often miss your kid's summer baseball games or concerts in the park from working long hours? Maintaining a healthy body can help you cope with work's pressures to prevent working more than 40 hours per week.

Tips to Stay Physically Healthy

- Eat Healthy
- Avoid Stimulants
- Exercise Regularly
- Get Plenty of Sleep

Unplug After Work

Most of us are connected to our smartphones. We even use our phones as alarm clocks. However, when we are connected to our devices, it can prevent us from being present with our friends and family.

After you leave work, put your phone to the side. If you can't ditch your phone, turn off email notifications and put it on silent while you go on the mountain bike, golf game, or hike with your family.

Do not answer work calls after you leave the office. Your friends and family will appreciate your presence.

Delegate Your Tasks

We often take responsibility for tasks "just to get it done" or "because we can". Eventually, accepting too much responsibility leads to burnout. You will then get stressed, tired, and overwhelmed.

It's okay to delegate tasks. Hire a contractor to avoid the costs of a full-time employee or for temporary projects. You can hire contractors online from websites such as Fiverr and Upwork. And if you are in Regulatory Affairs or Quality in the San Francisco Bay Area, I can help you find contract help as well.

Take a Vacation

It's summer! Have some fun! Go on that much needed vacation. A vacation helps you feel refreshed.

Encourage your employees to take a vacation also. Your employees will be more well-rested and energized to enjoy their work. Happy employees generate a productive company.

5 Tricks to Ask for Time-Off from Work



Asking for time-off from work can be nerve-wracking.

Is our boss going to be upset?

How do we ask?

However, it's essential to take time-off from work to avoid burn out. When we have the vacation opportunity, it's important to know the best way to ask to make asking less nerve-wracking.

The first step is to know your company's vacation policy. For example, many companies have busy seasons that do not allow time off unless it is an emergency. You are probably limited on time. Ask your Human Resources person before your supervisor.

Don't Ask at the Busy Season

Many companies have busy seasons. It could be when you gain the most contracts, develop a strategic plan, or attend conferences.

Plan for a break before or after your busy season. Recovery from intense work can also help you avoid burnout.

Schedule Your Time in Advance

The more notice you can give your boss, the better. Doing so, allows your team to prepare for your absence. You can also complete important projects. Check your vacation policy for the mandated amount of time that you must provide.

Ask in Writing

Submit your request in writing to ensure that your boss receives the correct details. Include the dates of your vacation and availability during your trip.

Ask Rather than Tell

Requesting time off should be a discussion. The essential technique to creating a discussion is to ask rather than tell. It brings a sense of cooperation, understanding, and compromise.

Avoid phrases such as;

- “I am going...”
- “You need to...”

Instead, use phrases such as;

- “Can I...”
- “Would it be possible...”

Plan the Best Time to Speak with Your Boss

You don’t want to catch your boss at a bad time when you are asking for time off. Email your boss a meeting request. The meeting will be more relaxed when it is convenient for both of your schedules.

Share How You Will Prepare for Your Time Off

Your absence could mean that extra work for the team. Explain to the boss how you will prepare for your time off. Share the list of projects that need to be completed before the trip. Discuss your availability during the trip. Your boss might expect you to check emails and voicemails. Make sure you are on the same page.

How-To Eat Healthy at Work



Office jobs can be a major contributor to a growing waistline. We sit for hours, snack on sugary foods and break room treats, and often skip breakfast. We can easily consume hundreds more calories than we would normally.

According to a survey by Harris Poll, 2 in 5 Americans gained weight at work. 38% of employees thought it was due to stress eating and 24% thought it was from eating out regularly. A few simple changes can help us eat healthier.

If you change your diet, you could see your energy increase and waistline decrease. Start eating healthier at work to lose weight and increase your energy.

Eat Breakfast

Sure, you are cutting calories by skipping breakfast but breakfast controls your hunger and boosts your metabolism. If you do not consume breakfast, you often consume hundreds more calories for lunch and dinner.

The National Weight Loss Registry did a study on people that maintained weight loss for over a year. 78% of participants ate breakfast every day. 90% ate breakfast 5 days per week. Start incorporating healthy weight loss foods into your diet to help you lose weight. This means food that is low in sugar and carbs.

Reduce Coffee Intake

Our morning coffee is a habit for many office workers. However, most coffees are filled with sugar and fat from creamers and artificial flavors. Skip the morning coffee or drink it black. Doing so, can cut hundreds of empty calories from your diet.

Drink More Water

We can easily forget to drink water when we sit for hours. Unfortunately, your body cannot burn fat when it is dehydrated. Drink the recommended eight to ten glasses of water to help you stay hydrated. If you are having trouble fitting water into your lifestyle, try the following tips:

- Drink before you eat
- Replace calorie filled drinks with water
- Fit in a mid-day workout, even a walk
- Keep a water bottle with you
- Flavor your water with lemon

Prepare in Advance

Not only is eating out expensive but restaurant meals can have hidden calories that cause weight gain. Prepare your meals in advance so you know exactly what

is in your food.

Dr. Oz provides a meal plan that reduces daily calories. The plan includes a grocery list and recipes. Spend your lunch break eating a healthy meal that was prepared in advance. The technique helps you acquire time to also take a walk.

Bring Snacks to Work

Most of us get the mid-day munchies. At that point, we may turn to the cupcakes in the breakroom, candy at the receptionist desk, or bring healthy snacks that fuel our energy and avoid weight gain.

Healthy Snacks

- Vegetables and hummus
 - Yogurt
 - Dried fruit
 - Jerky
 - Healthy crackers
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How-To Avoid Burnout at Work



When emails pile up, project are late, and the phone is ringing, you will probably get burned out. We have all been there. It's tempting to continue pushing through your work. However, pausing to take care of yourself can allow you to refresh your body and work more productively.

Robert Epstein of the American Psychological Institute found that “25% of our happiness hinges on how we manage our stress.” If you are stressed from your work day, it’s important to discover techniques to prevent burnout. The following tips can help decrease stress from work load:

Schedule Free Time

43% of Americans don’t use their vacation days.

Who can use your vacation days when there is so much work to do?

This is an unhealthy mindset! The human mind is not conditioned to work 10 hour shifts productively. Eventually, you will get drained.

Make time for family, friends, working out, traveling, or pursuing a hobby. Scheduling free time creates balance so you can enjoy your life and appreciate your work.

Take Breaks

We can easily develop tunnel vision when our work load is heavy. However, we need to break out of our routine to prevent burn out. Take a break. Go on a walk, meditate, take a long lunch, or work a half day.

Exercise

You have probably heard of “runner’s high”. This phrase is not a marketing scheme to sell athletic gear. “Runner’s high” is the release of endorphins which is the body’s feel-good chemical. Physical activity can help you unwind a stressful day.

According to WebMD, regular exercise has been proven to:

- Reduce stress
- Ward off anxiety and feelings of depression
- Boost self-esteem
- Improve sleep

Plan Your Day

Planning allows you to fight stress before it starts. Schedule your daily tasks to plan your day effectively. Designate time for checking emails and highlight crucial tasks. Schedule a mid-day break. A plan can help you preserve momentum and cut hours from your work day.

Google Calendar is a helpful tool for scheduling. The tool is free and can be downloaded as an app on your phone.

Sleep

Sleep is an essential human function. According to the American Psychological Association, sleep deprivation can affect mood, judgement, and memory. Without sleeping seven to nine hours nightly, you might not have the focus that your job requires.

How-To Boost Your Creativity



Every creative brain experiences occasional lulls. Losing creativity can be discouraging and can make solving some of your work problems more difficult. Before you give up, try the following tips to boost your creativity:

Collaborate with Others

Two minds are better than one when you want to foster innovative thinking. This prevents you from circling through the same ideas.

Be open minded to another person's perspective. Teams often contribute valuable feedback.

Go for a Walk

A short walking break could save you hours of brainstorming and increase the quality of your work.

According to a study co-authored by Marily Oppezzo, a Stanford doctoral graduate in educational psychology, and Daniel Schwartz, a professor at Stanford Graduate School of Education, shows that creative thinking improves while a person is walking and shortly thereafter. Creative output increased by 60 percent.

Meditate

To get creative, we need to reach our subconscious. Meditation is a powerful tool to quiet the logical mind. You can then awaken your subconscious which helps you uncover new ideas.

Improve Your Mood

An optimistic mind is more open to new experiences and situations. When you are negative, your brain becomes more analytical and narrowly focused.

How-To Improve Mood

- Get some sun
- Force a smile
- Listen to music
- Write down the positive things in your life

Unplug

Your best ideas probably do not come when you are sitting in front of a computer. More likely, you are hiking, skiing, journaling, baking, or doing another activity that you love.

In fact, excessive screen time can damage your brain. According to Psychology Today, “excessive screen time is associated with structural and functional changes in brain regions involving emotional processing, executive attention, decision making, and cognitive control.”

Step away from the screen to get inspired and document it on the computer later.

What Not to Say in Emails



Email can be a lifesaver to communicate effectively in business. You are able to CC messages, attach important files, and keep record of communication.

However, it is important to know how to craft an appropriate email. Emails are best used to communicate facts, such as meeting times. Learn what to avoid in an email so your business can maintain effective communication.

Blame

Nobody likes to hear that they did something wrong. Email does not allow you to have an effective conversation about the situation. Discuss the issue in person.

You will be provided the opportunity to explain how to perform the task correctly.

Disagreements

Everyone makes mistakes but it's difficult to own up to them at work. We may not want to ruin our professional reputation, hurt our relationship with our boss, or feel like we failed. We should always take responsibility when we are at fault. However, if we are not to blame, we should not be held responsible for a colleague's mistake.

Do not alert your boss over email if this occurs. Schedule a meeting and explain the situation in person. You are more likely to be taken seriously.

Lengthy Explanations

Emails are not novels. They should be condensed to explain factual points, scheduling, and status updates. Wait to tell your long story until you are in person. Your co-workers are likely to get lost in a long email.

Emotional Reactions

Leave emotions out of emails – good and bad! An email diminishes the importance of emotional information. Emails are for facts.

“...if you've got great news that will get everyone stoked up, it will be more effective and create more positive energy if you deliver it in person. A group meeting to announce a big sales win, for example, is like an instant celebration. By contrast, an email announcing the same win seems a bit like an afterthought. Similarly, if you've got bad news or criticism, it will be better received, and more likely to be helpful, if it's delivered in person. If you use email, it will seem like you don't care or that you're cowardly.” -Geoffrey James, INC.

A Resignation

You should leave on a good note when you quit a job. If you don't, your behavior could affect future job opportunities. Quitting a job may feel awkward. However, it pays off to quit professionally.

Do not quit your job over email. Eventually, you will have to meet your employer to sign paperwork anyway.

Appropriate Method to Quit a Job

- Request a Meeting with Your Boss
- Explain Your Reasons for Leaving
- Provide a Letter of Resignation
- Allow Two Weeks Before Leaving the Position

Informalities

Professional emails should be polished and formal. Use correct grammar, punctuation, and avoid the emoji's! Your emails should not read like a text. You are writing to another professional- not a friend.

Professional Language Tips

- Start with a greeting: For example, **Dear Katie** or **Hi Katie** for more casual relationships.
- State your purpose: For example, **I am writing in reference to....**
- Add your closing remarks: Thank your reader. **Thank you for your patience and cooperation** or **Thank you for your consideration** and then follow up with, **If you have any questions or concerns, don't hesitate to let me know** and **I look forward to hearing from you.**
- End with a closing: Include an appropriate closing with your name. For example, **Best Regards** or **Thank you.**