



## Powerful Questions

*“A question is powerful if you are truly curious and uncertain about its answer. If you are using a question to lead people to an answer you already know, it is not a powerful question.” Steve Sphar*

**Powerful questions** are provocative inquiries that interrupt evasion and confusion. Asking powerful questions invites others to clarity, action, and discovery. These generally are open-ended questions that create greater possibility for learning and a new perspective. Powerful questions engineer epiphanies for others, helping them come up with their own answers and solutions.

### Qualities of a Powerful Question:

- More than finding answers, stirs creative thinking in others
- Shifts energy away from a problem-focus and to a possibility-focus
- Creates a climate of exploration
- Reveals underlying assumptions
- Invites reflection on a deeper issue

### Powerful Questioning Do's:

- Pay attention. Ask questions that reflect active listening.
- Express your question in as few words as possible.
- Listen to your intuition—pure, untaught knowledge that comes by inference.
- Ask open-ended questions that create greater clarity—“What would the ideal outcome look like?” “How do you want to start?”
- Start with “What, Who, or How” questions

### Examples:

What are your thoughts about it?  
What do you see is best?  
How do you hope this gets resolved?  
What is your core challenge?  
What do you want?

### Powerful Questioning Don'ts:

- Don't layer questions (follow a question with a second or third question before giving the person a chance to answer the first).
- Don't answer for the person or limit his response by giving options.
- Don't ask “why” questions unless the other person is analyzing a process. Ask questions that move the person forward toward what they desire, not questions that ask them to justify what they've already done.
- Don't take on a teaching tone that implies there is a right answer.
- Don't judge.

### Examples:

Why on earth did you do that?  
Don't you think you should just take the first step?  
Do you think you should ask your boss, his assistant or your co-worker?