

BOB TIEDE

“

GREAT
LEADERS
ASK
QUESTIONS:

A FORTUNE 100 LIST

”



Bob Tiede

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“Leadership is not as much about knowing the right answers, as it is about knowing the right questions.”

“Questions are the golden keys that unlock hearts and minds.”

INTRODUCTION

Are you familiar with T.A.? You are probably familiar with A.A. – Alcoholics Anonymous. Well, T.A. stands for “Tellers Anonymous!”

I have an addiction – I am addicted to telling! At T.A. meetings I stand up and introduce myself: “My name is Bob and I am a teller.”

Today, I am a recovering teller. However, the temptation to “lead by telling” has never left me.

You could say that this e-book – sharing my favorite questions with you – is part of my recovery program, as is my blog: LeadingWithQuestions.com. Leading with questions takes preparation, intentionality, discipline and practice. Good news! If I can move from telling to asking, so can you!

GOAL

Would you like to increase your leadership effectiveness x10?

That is exactly why I have put together this e-book of more than 100 of my favorite “Leading with Questions” questions!

MY FAVORITE QUESTION

“What do you think?”

If you were in a row boat with your team, how many of them would you want to have row? Might your answer be all of them? How happy would you be if you ended up being the only one rowing? Probably not so much.

Why then would you want to tackle the challenges, opportunities, problems, and changes needed in your

company by telling your staff what they should do? Why would you not want to get all their oars in the water by asking them, "What do you think?" This one simple step has the potential to notably increase your leadership effectiveness!

How do you feel when your boss, colleague, or friend asks you: "What do you think about this challenge or opportunity?"

Valued? Respected? Esteemed? Appreciated?

How might those you supervise, your colleagues, or your friends feel when you ask them: "What do you think about this challenge, opportunity, or issue?"

Maybe you are like many folks I meet, who share that they would love to learn to "lead with questions," but are not sure they have time to learn this new skill. I share with them that I can teach them how to do so in less than 30 seconds! All they have to do is memorize these 4 questions:

"What do you think?"
"What else?" "What else?" "What else?"

Can you now close your eyes and repeat back these 4 questions? Congratulations! You are on your way to leading with questions – and in less than 30 seconds!

You will find that sometimes the greatest thoughts will come from the third time you ask, “What else?” When others feel your appreciation for their responses, they begin to feel safe to share their very best thoughts. And you will be the beneficiary!

HAVE YOU HEARD THIS STORY?

Johnnie (age 7) comes running into the house, yelling to his mom, “*Where did I come from?*” Johnnie’s mom has not been expecting this question – well, at least not yet! But after taking a deep breath and collecting her thoughts just a bit, she invites Johnnie into the living room where she shares all about “the birds and the bees.”

Johnnie’s eyes are wide as saucers as he takes in every word. When Johnnie’s mom is finished

she says, *"Now Johnnie do you understand where you came from?"* Johnnie replies, *"No! Joey said that he came from California and he asked me where I came from!"*

Do you think Johnnie's mom had wished she had responded to Johnnie's question with:

"Can you please tell me more?"

“

Telling creates resistance.

**ASKING CREATES
RELATIONSHIPS.**

”

—Andrew Sobel

Client Relationships and author of *Power Questions*

Would you like to know the 4 questions one consultant uses to make a six figure income?

“What is going well?”

“What’s not?”

“Where are you stuck?”

“What needs to change?”

He shares that the order above is very important, and starting with “What is going well?” is absolutely essential. In fact, he will spend half of the time on question one, because the time he spends cheering their successes is what creates a safe environment for asking questions 2 through 4.

HOW DO YOU ADD VALUE?

Mark Miller, VP of Training and Development at Chick-fil-A, shares this interesting story:

Years ago, the president of our company stopped me in the hallway and asked a rather jarring question:

“How do you add value around here?”

I had no answer prepared. In the moment, I said the first thing that came to my mind: “I ask challenging questions.” He responded, “Keep it up,” and walked off. Ever since that moment, I’ve considered it part of my

job description as a leader – not just to ask challenging questions, but also to ask the right questions.

So what is your answer? **How do you add value?**

GET IDEAS FLOWING

Has your team ever gotten stuck in brainstorming what might be the best possible ways forward? Do you have a backup question that will instantly get them un-stuck? Here it is:

***“How can we do this
(whatever your team needs to do)
in a way that will guarantee its failure?”***

Your team will invariably not only begin to answer – but they will also enjoy this almost comic exercise.

After they have compiled a sure-fire list of how to guarantee failure, then ask item by item:

"What, then, do we need to do to guarantee success?"

For example, your staff lists "Do not make any follow-up calls" as one of the things that will guarantee failure. So you ask, "If not making any follow-up calls will guarantee failure, what will we need to do to guarantee success?"

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE QUESTION TO ASK SOMEONE YOU ARE CONNECTING WITH FOR THE FIRST TIME?

Here is mine:

"Would you please tell me your story?"

I used to ask about their family or their job. Those are not bad questions, unless they are in the middle of a difficult family situation or perhaps have just been laid off. Asking them to share their story gives them complete freedom to

answer in whatever way seems best to them. You may find they are also likely to share things you would have never dared to ask.

“

You can tell whether a man is clever by his answers.

**YOU CAN TELL WHETHER
A MAN IS WISE BY HIS
QUESTIONS.**

”

—Nguib Mahfouz (1911-2006),
Egyptian writer who won the 1988 *Nobel Prize* for
Literature International

ARE YOU COMFORTABLE WITH SILENCE?

It is one of the most effective questioning tools you can use. Ask your question and then give the person the gift of silence. Give the person time to think and formulate their response. You would be wise to not interrupt their thinking process with words. He or she is thinking; and because you might be uncomfortable with the silence, you are tempted to re-ask the question, state it in another way, or to ask

a related question. Please don't! Be still; focus your kind attention on them, relax, and wait. **Your silence is, in fact, a question.** The good news is they will answer, and often the **longer the silence, the more thoughtful the response will be.**

“

The greatest compliment that was ever paid me
was when one asked me what I thought,

**AND ATTENDED TO
MY ANSWER.**

”

—Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862),
American author, poet & philosopher

If you were interviewing for a job, would you like to have a game-changer question to ask that may separate you from all the others being interviewed?

Mark Goulston, in his bestselling book *Just Listen*, shares this story and question:

My daughter, preparing to interview with a senior manager at a Wall Street financial firm, asked me, “What question could I ask that

would help me stand out from the crowd?"

Later she beeped me in the middle of a meeting and excitedly said, "Dad, I asked him the question you suggested, and he reacted exactly like you said he would. He glanced up toward the ceiling for a moment and said, 'That's a great question and something I don't have an answer to, but should.' He really connected with me after that."

Here's what my daughter said to earn this interviewer's interest. When he asked her if she had a question, she responded with this:

"I'd like you to imagine it's a year from now, and you and your bosses are reviewing the people you've hired this year — and when it comes to this position they say, 'Get us ten more like that one. That person was one of the best hires we've had in a long time.' Can you tell

me what that person did for her and you to get such a rave review?"

*I knew the question would work. I also told my daughter how she'd know it worked: by watching the interviewer's eyes. Because at the moment he glanced up and away, she'd know she'd moved him from **transaction to transformation**.*

ONLY ONE QUESTION

There is one question that Chris Hodges, pastor of the Church of the Highlands in Birmingham, Alabama, uses to grow his church. What is it? His only question that he continually asks all of his leaders is:

"What are you doing to develop leaders?"

The truth is no church, organization, or company can grow any faster than its ability to grow leaders!

QUESTIONS THAT TAKE YOU PLACES NORMAL ICEBREAKERS WON'T

Would you like to have 3 questions that can instantly help you and your friends move your conversations beyond the weather and sports?

Here are 3 questions that two friends, who connect with each other about every 4-6 weeks, use to almost instantly connect at a deeper level:

"What's on your schedule?"

"Who's on your heart?"

"How can I pray for you?"

“

When you want to persuade,
you'll always get further by
ASKING A QUESTION
than by
MAKING A STATEMENT.

”

—Dorothy Leeds,
author of *The 7 Powers of Questions*

HOW CAN YOU HELP YOUR STAFF BE MORE EFFECTIVE?

Linda Hill and Kent Lineback state that the most important question a manager can ask is:

“What can I do to help you be more effective?”

Todd Garland suggests asking your staff:

"What can I do to make your life easier?"

Andy Stanley asks:

"How can I leverage my power for the sake of the other people in the room?"

Jenni Catron asks:

"Who needs to be encouraged?"

DO THINGS EVER GO WRONG WHERE YOU WORK?

When they do, are you tempted to ask: "Who's to blame?"

Would you like to have a better question? Here it is:

"What can we learn from this?"

ASK THE SECOND QUESTION

Dan Rockwell of “Leadership Freak” fame says: **“Any fool can ask the first question; wise leaders ask the second.”**

Asking the second question will double your effectiveness in leading with questions.

For example, you ask a friend: “What have you been up to?” Your friend says: “Just got back from a two week business trip to South Korea.” Your second question might be: “What did you learn about doing business in South Korea?” Or your friend says: “Just finished reading a great book on Executing Strategic Plans.” Your second question might be: “What are you going to immediately put into practice?”

During the past two months I have become very intentional about asking the second question and have been astonished at how effective this simple technique is.

And of course, whenever you are not quite sure exactly how to phrase the second question, you can always simply ask: “Can you please tell me more?”

Do you ever have staff come to you with complaints?

Don't we all? Here is a game-changer question from Barry Rush:

"I hear your complaint – what is your request?"

A FRESH TAKE

Molly Harvey, a leadership expert, speaker and author shares this story:

A British wife — with no previous business experience — took over a company after the passing of her husband. Every month she asked her department heads 3 questions that allowed the company to grow from £10 million to £25 million in two years. Here are the questions she would ask them:

***"What are you doing?"
"What is not working?"
"What is working?"***

“

An effective leader will...
ASK QUESTIONS
instead of giving direct orders.

”

—Dale Carnegie
author of *How to Win Friends and Influence People*

SMALL TALK

Are you uncomfortable with small talk? Do you hate social gatherings where you never know what to say or ask?

If so, you will enjoy adding this question from Judy Douglass to your collection:

“How has God surprised you lately?”

Heads up! Whenever you ask this question, be prepared for the likelihood that, after they have answered, they will turn around and ask you the same question!

ONE-WORD QUESTIONS

Another effective form of question is to simply listen for emotionally charged words and then repeat them with a questioning inflection in your voice. For example:

- She/He says: "What a frustrating day!"
You ask: "**Frustrating?**"
- She/He says: "I am so exasperated!"
You ask: "**Exasperated?**"
- She/He says: "I am just going to quit!"
You ask: "**Quit?**"

COMMANDER D. MICHAEL ABRASHOFF

Navy Commander D. Michael Abrashoff used 3 questions to turn around the operations of the USS Benfold, one of the U.S. Navy's most modern warships — from worst to first. What were they?

Commander Abrashoff's methods were not complex, yet the results were astounding.

Under his twenty-month command, the Benfold operated on 75 percent of its allocated budget, returning \$1.4 million to the Navy coffers.

During that time, the ship's combat readiness indicators were the highest ever in the history of the Pacific Fleet. The promotion rate of his people was two and a half times the Navy average.

The pre-deployment training cycle, which usually takes a total of fifty-two days, was completed by the Benfold crew in just nineteen days.

During a twelve-month period under the previous command, there were twenty-eight disciplinary actions for which twenty-three sailors were discharged. During Abrashoff's tenure, there were five disciplinary cases and no discharges.

On average, one third of all recruits don't

make it through their first term of enlistment, and only 54 percent of sailors stay in the Navy after their second duty tour. Commander Abrashoff had 100 percent of the Benfold's career sailors signing on for another tour. It is estimated that this retention alone saved the Navy \$1.6 million in 1998.

What did he do to stage such a turnaround in less than twenty months?

He continuously asked questions; he listened, and then he acted on what he heard. Almost immediately upon taking command, he had a fifteen minute personal interview with each of his staff of 300. He asked each person these three questions:

"What do you like best about this ship?"

"What do you like least?"

"What would you change if you could?"

Commander Abrashoff acted as quickly as he could to implement the ideas that came from these questions.

“
We run this company
ON QUESTIONS
not answers.

”
—Eric Schmidt
CEO of Google

FUNDRAISING

If you are in Development or Fundraising, have you ever experienced a potential donor’s hesitancy in response to your request for funds, and not know what to do next?

Jerold Panas is the world’s leading consultant in philanthropy and the CEO of Jerold Panas, Linzy & Partners, the largest consulting firm in the world for advising nonprofit organizations on fundraising. He asks these 4 questions to determine the reason for hesitancy:

***"Is it the institution?" "Is it the project?"
"Is it the amount I asked for?" "Is it the timing?"***

Instead of guessing – Jerold asks! And with that knowledge the next step is almost always obvious.

DO YOU KNOW THEM?

Cheryl Bachelder's book *Dare to Serve* asks,

***"How well do you know the people who
work for you?"
"Do you know the three or four events of their
lives that have shaped who they are today?"***

CLEARER

Do you know the question that Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau always asked each other whenever they met around Concord town or Walden Pond? It was:
"Since we last met, what is clearer to you now?"

TURN AROUND

Would you like to know the four questions that one turnaround specialist uses to turn around organizations that are in trouble?

This specialist will spend whatever time is necessary interacting with employees and management and listening for the answers to these four questions. As soon as she knows the answers, she is then ready to meet with the Board of Directors to make her recommendations for turning that company around.

“Who needs to be let go?”

“What position needs to be filled?”

“What product or service needs to be discontinued?”

“What new product or service needs to be launched?”

It is really that simple! In any struggling organization, there

is invariably someone who everyone knows should be shown the door, a position that everyone knows should be filled, a product or service that customers are no longer buying, and another product or service that would breathe new life into their lagging sales.

What do you think happens to company morale when management announces these four decisions? Employees move from hopeless to hopeful!

FACT OR OPINION?

Do your staff/peers/leaders ever make statements that you suspect may not actually be true? World War II General George S. Patton was known for his quip:

"How do you know that?"

This is a profoundly simple and effective method for sorting out opinion from fact.

“
We thought that we had the
answers, it was the
**QUESTIONS WE HAD
WRONG.**

”
—Bono,
Musician & Philanthropist

DO YOU NEED A COACH?

Would you like to have 80% of the benefit of having a highly trained personal coach without any of the cost?

Who is the hardest person in the world for you to coach?

The person in your mirror!

Instead of enlisting “the person in your mirror,” who else do you know that you could ask to meet with every Monday morning (maybe for breakfast), to ask you these three

questions and then listen carefully to your answers?

1. *"Last week you said that by today, you wanted to do A, B, & C. How has that gone?"*

2. *"Can we confirm our next meeting?"*

3. *"By then what further progress do you want to make?"* (Your answer this week forms the first question for next week.)

Would having a friend ask you these three questions be a game-changer for you?

LEADERS OPEN DOORS

Bill Treasurer, founder and Chief Encouragement Officer at Giant Leap Consulting, shares this fascinating story:

One sunny afternoon, my son Ian ran upstairs and exclaimed: "Guess what, Daddy? I got to be the Class Leader today!"

"Really? Class leader? That's a big deal, little buddy. What did you get to do as the

class leader?" Ian's next seven words would simplify twenty years of research and alter my understanding of leadership forever.

"I got to open doors for people!"

Ian's answer was simple, funny, and in its own way, profound. Leadership, at its core, is about opening doors for those you lead. It's about identifying, creating, and assigning opportunities that help people and organizations grow and develop. It's about moving people out of their comfort zone so they continue to strive toward a higher standard of performance.

So with this story as context, here are two more of my favorite questions:

"Who has opened doors for you?"
"What doors can you open for others?"

Personal note: After I first reflected on who had opened doors for me, I realized that in most cases I had never thanked them – so I picked up the phone and made some long overdue "thank you" calls!

THE POWER OF MIGHT

This one simple word is a game-changer. What is the difference between these two questions?

“What is the solution?”

“What **might** the solution be?”

Which of these two questions **might** you have some hesitancy in answering? Why?

Which of these two questions **might** feel safer to answer? Why?

So in the future, which of these two questions **might** you want to use when asking others for their input?

INCREASING MEETING SUCCESS

Would you like to dramatically increase the success of every meeting you are in? If so, at the beginning of every meeting ask:

“What outcome are we looking for?”

“

I never learn anything talking.
I only learn things
WHEN I ASK QUESTIONS.

”

—**Lou Holtz**,
former football coach, active sportscaster, author, and
speaker

THREE THINGS TO MAKE A 50% DIFFERENCE

Steve Douglass, President of Cru, asks:

“What are the three things you could do in the next ninety days that would make a 50% difference in where you’ll end the year?”

THE 20/80 RULE

"What are you doing in the 20% of your time and efforts that is producing 80% of your results?"

"What would happen if you could focus 50% of your time in that area?"

"How about 80% of your time?"

CONVERSATIONAL FUNDRAISING

If you are involved in fundraising, would you like meetings with potential donors to be more conversational and less presentational?

Here are six questions from my friend Kent Stroman, author of *Asking about Asking: Mastering the Art of Conversational Fundraising*:

"How did you learn to give?"

"What would you like your gifts to accomplish?"

"How do you decide which projects to support with your own time and money?"

"What are your top three charitable interests this year?"

"What gift did you make that has brought you the most joy?"

"Could you ever see yourself becoming involved with our mission?"

HAVE YOU SEEN CHARIOTS OF FIRE?

Chariots of Fire was the winner of the 1981 Oscar for Best Picture. In the movie, Erik Liddell says, *"I believe that God made me for a purpose, but he also made me fast and when I run I feel his pleasure."* With this as context here is one of my most favorite questions:

"What are you doing when you feel God's pleasure?"

“

No man really becomes a
fool until he
**STOPS ASKING
QUESTIONS.**

”

—Charles Steinmetz,

German-American mathematician & electrical engineer

WHY ASK WHY?

In a guest post on my blog, Mitch Ditkoff shared the benefits of asking “Why” five times:

Some years ago, there was a big problem at one of America’s most treasured monuments – the Jefferson Memorial in Washington, DC. Simply put, birds – in huge numbers – were pooping all over it, which made visiting the

place a very unpleasant experience.

Attempts to remedy the situation caused even bigger problems, since the harsh cleaning detergents being used were damaging the memorial.

Fortunately, some of the National Parks managers assigned to the case began asking WHY – as in, “Why was the Jefferson Memorial so much more of a target for birds than any of the other memorials?”

A little bit of investigation revealed the following:

The birds were attracted to the Jefferson Memorial because of the abundance of spiders – a gourmet treat for birds. The spiders were attracted to the Memorial because of the abundance of midges (insects) that were nesting there. And the midges were attracted to the Memorial because of the light.

Midges, it turns out, like to procreate in places where the light is just so – and because the lights were turned on at the Jefferson Memorial, one hour before dark, it created the kind of mood lighting that midges went crazy for.

So there you have it. The midges were attracted to the light. The spiders were attracted to the midges. The birds were attracted to the spiders. And the National Parks workers, though not necessarily attracted to the bird poop, were attracted to getting paid — so they spent a lot of their time (and taxpayer money) cleaning the Memorial.

How did the situation resolve? Very simply.

After reviewing the curious chain of events that led up to the problem, the decision was made to wait until dark before turning the lights on at the Jefferson Memorial. That one-hour delay was enough to ruin the mood lighting for the midges, who then decided to have midge sex somewhere else.

*No midges, no spiders. No spiders, no birds.
No birds, no poop. No poop, no need to clean
the Jefferson Memorial so often. Case closed.*

Here is how it works:

- *Name a problem you're having.*
- *Ask "WHY it's happening?"
Get an answer.*
- *Then ask "WHY?" about that.
Get an answer.*
- *Then ask "Why?" about that –
and so on, five times total.*

(IQ) INCORRECT QUESTION

Do you ever ask incorrect questions such as, "When are they going to tell me what is going on?"

You are not alone! We all ask lots of incorrect questions, also called "victim questions".

You can ask, “When are they going to tell me what is going on?” forever, without your question ever causing “them” to tell you. In John G. Miller’s book, *QBQ - The Question Behind the Question*, he provides three simple guidelines for creating a QBQ:

1. Begin with “What” or “How” (not “Why,” “When,” or “Who”).
2. Contain an “I” (not “they,” “we,” or “you”).
3. Focus on action.

“What can I do?” for example, follows the guidelines perfectly. It begins with “What,” contains an “I,” and focuses on action: “What can I do?”

Let’s put it to the test. If your incorrect question is, “When are they going to train me?” the QBQ might be, “What can I do to get trained?” If you ask the QBQ, you do not have to hope and wait that someday they will train you – instead you could immediately ask, “Is there a training program available?” or “Can I find a training program on line?” or “Is there a veteran employee that I could invite to lunch and ask her/him to train me?”

INCREASE YOUR EFFECTIVENESS

What are five simple questions you can ask your staff regarding how you could become a more effective leader? Simply ask:

"What do I need to start doing?"

"What do I need to stop doing?"

"What do I need to do more of?"

"What do I need to do less of?"

"What do I need to continue to do?"

There are also multiple uses for "Start – Stop – More – Less – Continue" questions:

- *Giving feedback to your team members*
- *Evaluating your team*
- *Evaluating any program*
- *Doing a quick "360" over lunch with your team (every team member writes a "one thing" answer for all five questions for everyone at the table – followed by a verbal sharing of everyone's thoughts for each person).*

“

Asking lots of questions opens
**NEW DOORS TO
NEW IDEAS,**
which ultimately contributes to
your competitive edge.

”

—Michael Dell,
Founder & CFO of Dell

WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM JESUS ABOUT ASKING QUESTIONS?

Jesus, the master communicator, went about sharing stories and asking questions. The four Gospels record 173 questions that Jesus asked. You can read all 173 questions [here](#).

Might we do well to follow his example? Why do you

suppose Jesus asked so many questions? I ask a lot of questions because I don't know the answers, but that certainly was not true for Jesus! Might it be that he understood that asking was a much better way to engage your audience than telling?

Do you remember how the story of the Good Samaritan ends? Jesus could have said: "So therefore the Samaritan was his neighbor." But instead he asked, "Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?"

Two of my favorite questions that Jesus asked are found in Mark, chapter 8:

Jesus and his disciples went on to the villages around Caesarea Philippi. On the way he asked them, *"Who do people say I am?"*

They replied, *"Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets."*

"But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"

Peter answered, *"You are the Messiah."*

I have the same two questions for you:

"Who do people today say that Jesus is?"
"But what about you? Who do you say Jesus is?"

If you are not sure or would like to know more about who Jesus is, I would be delighted to send you one of my favorite books, *More Than A Carpenter* by Josh McDowell, my former colleague of 24 years. Please email me at bob.tiede@cru.org with your mailing address and your book will soon be on its way – with my compliments (offer available U.S. only).

WHAT ARE YOU TOLERATING?

Pam Smith, VP of Student Advancement at Biblical Seminary, shares: *"All of us put up with things that we know, if we would just address them head-on, it would help reduce the feeling of stress and being overwhelmed."*

Tolerations are energy drainers and goal preventers.

- *They show up in work. Why are you tolerating that pile of papers?*
- *They show up in your home. Why are you tolerating that leaky faucet . . . that squeaky door?*
- *They show up in your habits. Why are you tolerating a work schedule that doesn't include self-care?*

So, let me ask you:

"What are you tolerating?"

"What would it look like if you were no longer tolerating it?"

"What is the one thing you know you need to do to remove this energy drain, and when will you do it?"

CLOSURE IS OVERRATED

In their book, *Help Them Grow or Watch Them Go*, my friends, Beverly Kaye and Julie Winkle Giulioni, suggest that closure is overrated.

Don't feel the pressure to wrap up every conversation with a bow. Try this instead:

***End your next meeting or conversation with
a question.***

Explain that there's no time for a discussion, but that you have one more question that you want to close with. Then, the next time you are with that person, ask if they remember the question. You'll be surprised that they not only remember the question, but they'll also have quite a few answers for you.

“

When you are an individual contributor,
you try to have all the answers.

When you are a leader, your job is to

**HAVE ALL THE
QUESTIONS.**

”

—Jack Welch,

Chairman and CEO of General Electric
from 1981 to 2001

“HERE” TO “THERE”?

On the next page are ten simple coaching questions that can help anyone move from HERE (where they are now) to THERE (where they want to go). In their responses, listen for “weasel words” like: “I am going to *try*” or “I *really hope* I can.” Remember the words of Yoda: “*Do. Or do not. There is no try!*”

"What do you want to work on?"

"Can you please tell me more?"

"Where do you want to go?"

What's your goal?

How will you know when you get there? What would success look like? What by when?

"Where are you at now?"

If you don't know where HERE is, or where THERE is, you cannot plot a course from HERE to THERE.

With crystal clear understanding of where HERE is and where THERE is,

"What is your plan to get from HERE to THERE?"

"What are 4 other options that could get you from HERE to THERE?"

Generally speaking, the first two options have already been tried and have not worked all that well – it is in working to come up with options 3-5 that breakthrough thinking takes place.

"Which option will you choose?"

"What roadblocks/hurdles should you anticipate?"

"Can we confirm our next meeting?"

"Between now and our next meeting what first steps will you take to get from HERE to THERE?"

DO YOU HAVE STAFF WHO ARE UNDERPERFORMING?

John Barrett shares two questions a leader must ask when a team member is not accomplishing the mission of the organization:

"Is it because they don't want to?"
"Is it because they don't know how?"

The first you cannot fix! But the second is your responsibility.

WHO IS THE WISEST PERSON YOU HAVE EVER MET?

For me, that man is Bobb Biehl.

I have been privileged to call Bobb my friend and my personal mentor since 1980. It was then, in 1980, that he first introduced me to his hobby of collecting questions. He began the hobby of collecting questions, just as some people collect stamps or antiques. Bobb believes, *"Questions are essential to gaining knowledge and understanding."*

Here are some of Bobb's favorite questions, which are now also some of my favorite questions:

"What's the most meaningful thing that has happened to you since we last met?"

Use this question when you meet a friend you haven't seen in a while (to get past the small talk). I have also been using this question on Facebook and LinkedIn. Whenever I wish anyone "Happy Birthday," I also ask, "What was the most meaningful thing that has happened to you during your past year?" I am so glad I have, because friends old and new are sharing incredible things that I would have never known, had I not asked!

"Compared to what?"

"What is your single word focus for this year (quarter/month/week/day)?"

"What's missing?"

In a recent phone call with Bobb, I asked if he had been asking any new questions lately. He said, "As a matter of fact, yes!" But before he shared the question with me, he said, "At first blush, you may think, is that all you've got?" He then went on to share that almost every time he asks this question of leaders they immediately have an answer and the conversation immediately goes deep. Here is the question.

"What questions are you asking yourself lately?"

After he asked me this question, I immediately had an answer and our conversation immediately went deep.

“
A fool finds no pleasure in
understanding, but
**DELIGHTS IN SHARING
HIS OWN OPINIONS.**

”
—King Solomon,
Proverbs 18:2

POWER QUESTIONS

Are you familiar with one of my all-time favorite books, *Power Questions* by Andrew Sobel and Jerold Panas?

Here are just a few of my favorite questions from their terrific book:

*“What in your life has given you
the greatest fulfillment?”*

“What has been the happiest day of your life?”

“What are your dreams?”

WHAT WILL IT TAKE TO KEEP YOU?

More of my favorite questions are found in the book *Love 'Em or Lose 'Em* by Beverly Kaye and Sharon Jordan-Evans. In their book, they share:

Why do we ask great questions in exit interviews but neglect asking early enough to make a difference?

Have you ever asked your employees what keeps them at your company or what might entice them away? If not, why not?

Ask – So You Don't Have to Guess

What if you don't ask? What if you just keep trying to guess what Tara or Mike or Marilyn really wants? You will guess right sometimes. The year-end bonus might please them all. Money can inspire loyalty and commitment for the near term. But if the key to retaining Tara is to give her a chance to learn something new, but Mike wants the

chance to telecommute, how could you ever guess that? Ask – so you don't have to guess.

Asking has positive side effects. The person you ask will feel cared about, valued and important. Many times that leads to stronger loyalty and commitment to you and the organization. In other words, just asking the question is a retention strategy.

How to Ask

How and when do you bring up this topic? How can you increase the odds of getting honest input from your employees? There is not a single way or time to ask. It could happen during a developmental or career discussion with your employees. Or you might schedule a meeting with your valued employees for the express purpose of finding out what will keep them.

Here are some questions you might ask:

"What will keep you here?"

*"What might entice you
away?"*

*"What is most energizing
about your work?"*

*"Are we fully utilizing your
talents?"*

*"What is inhibiting your
success?"*

*"What can I do differently
to best assist you?"*

WHEN SOMEONE ASKS YOU TO TELL THEM ABOUT YOURSELF, DO YOU EVER WONDER WHERE YOU OUGHT TO BEGIN?

Here's another great question from *Power Questions* that will help you focus your response in the exact area of their interest.

"What would you like to know about me?"

“
One who never asks
**EITHER KNOWS
EVERYTHING OR
NOTHING.**

”
—Malcolm Forbes,
1919-1990 was Publisher of Forbes Magazine

DO YOU HAVE A HARD TIME SAYING NO?

Do you frequently find yourself saying *yes* to requests that you immediately wish you had said *no* to?

Would you like a very simple statement and question you can use, which will allow you to make better decisions about saying *yes* or *no* to things? Here it is:

"Thank you so much for asking. Could you please allow me 24 hours to give this the careful consideration it needs?"

Many times we say yes because we don't know how to instantly say *no* graciously. Instead of your normal knee-jerk response of yes, your instant response can be the statement and question above. Having 24 hours will allow you time to make better decisions. You can still say yes to those requests you want to do. But having 24 hours will buy you time to craft a gracious *no* for those requests that your present commitments will not allow you to accept.

THE IMPOSSIBLE QUESTION!

I saved my most favorite questions for last!

Joel Barker in his book *Paradigms*:

“What do I believe is impossible to do in my field but if could be done would fundamentally change my business?”

Mark Goulston in his book *Just Listen*:

You: What’s something that would be impossible to do, but if you could do it, would dramatically increase your success?

Other Person: If I could just do _____ , but that is impossible.

You: Okay. What would make it possible?

Robert Hargrove in his book *Masterful Coaching*:

"What would be an impossible future or big game you are really passionate about?"

"How are you going to need to develop as a leader to get there?"

Although Joel, Mark, and Robert are in many ways asking the same impossible question – I like the two complimentary second questions that Mark and Robert ask:

***Mark: "What would make it possible?" or
"How can you plot a course to take you from
'Impossible' to 'Possible'?"***

***Robert: "How are you going to need to
develop as a leader to get there?"***

***"All of our real barriers are internal aren't
they?"***

***"When a leader changes what is possible
changes too, doesn't it?"***

So what is your "Impossible Future?" What would make it possible?

CONCLUSION

You did it! You made it all the way through my e-book! Before you go, I have a couple a more questions for you:

"If you do not know how to swim, can you become a swimmer by reading a book on swimming?"

"Can you become a swimmer by watching all the Gold Medal swimming finals from the last Olympics?"

While reading a book and/or video about swimming may be of some help, if you really want to become a swimmer, what do you have to do? You have to jump into the water!

Now a few more questions:

"Can you become a leader who leads with questions by reading my favorite questions?"

While reading this book is hopefully of some help, if you really want to become a leader who leads with questions, what do you have to do? You have to start asking questions!

When you start, questions may not spontaneously flow from your mouth any more than a beginning swimmer spontaneously glides across the lake. When you begin, you may need to think through your day and write out questions to ask each person you will be with or in meetings you will attend.

You will be amazed how quickly you see progress. And remember, you have already memorized my favorite question:

***"What do you think?" followed by
"What Else?" "What Else?" "What Else?"***

ABOUT BOB TIEDE

Bob Tiede grew up in South Dakota and graduated from the University of South Dakota in 1971. He has now been on the staff of Cru for 44 years serving with Cru Campus, Josh McDowell Ministry, Global Operations Leadership Development and U.S. Leadership Development.

Developing the next generation of leaders for Cru is Bob's focus. Bob says, "In 15-20 years almost all of our current Cru leaders will no longer be leading. In their places will be the leaders we are now developing. If we fail now - Cru does not fail today or tomorrow - but may fail 15-20 years from now! History is filled with the stories of companies and organizations which were once vital but no longer exist. A closer study reveals that in many cases there was no intentional effort to develop their next generation of leaders."

Bob's role on Cru's Leadership Development team is to recruit outstanding leaders from business, education, government & medicine, military and non-profits to coach Cru leaders every

other week via SKYPE video.

Bob started his blog LeadingWithQuestions.com, along with Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook and Google+ profiles, as a way to better connect with his target audience: Cru's emerging leaders who are 20 and 30-something. Today, his blog provides a continued source of new tools (new questions) for all of Cru's Coaches and Leaders and is viewed by leaders in more than 170 countries.

Bob and his wife, Sherry, are proud parents of 4 adult children and super proud grandparents of six incredible grandchildren - all of whom love to ask their Papa Bob questions!

PRAISE FOR LEADING WITH QUESTIONS

"Bob Tiede has created a site of immense value! Leading with Questions is one of the foundational skills EVERY leader must master to reach his or her full potential. Bob has helped me lead at a higher level and he can help you too. Subscribe to Leading with Questions TODAY!"

— **Mark Miller** | GreatLeadersServe.com

"I look forward to reading LeadingWithQuestions.com twice each week as every blog is filled with wonderful insights, stories and examples of powerful questions. It is undoubtedly the single best source for discovering great questions used by leaders from the corporate, academic, public and social arenas."

— **Dr. Michael Marquardt**, author of *Leading With Questions* and President of World Institute for Action Learning

"As a business owner, speaker and author, I encourage my clients and audiences to take their businesses to a higher level of excellence. With his blog, *Leading With Questions*, Bob Tiede provides us with practical tools and inspirational insights for achieving this."

— **Dr. K. Shelette Stewart**, author of *Revelations in Business*; Associate Director of Business Dev. SMU Cox School of Business

"LeadingWithQuestions.com consistently challenges me to bring my conversations back to what they are (or should be) all about: inquiry. Each post offers practical, in-the-trenches advice that I can put into immediate action."

— **Julie Winkle Giulioni**, author of *Help Them Grow or Watch Them Go*

"Bob Tiede's blog, *LeadingWithQuestions.com*, consistently helps me to ask better questions – not just to my audiences and to my staff, but also to my family and friends!"

— **Josh McDowell**, bestselling author of *More Than A Carpenter* and *New Evidence That Demands A Verdict*

"In over three decades in executive search, I can tell you that one of the differences between successful and unsuccessful people are good questions. Bob Tiede takes this principle and greatly expounds on it with LeadingWithQuestions.com. I encourage everyone to absorb the wisdom here, as I do often."

— **Bob Beaudine**, CEO, Eastman & Beaudine; Best-Selling Author, *The Power of WHO!*

"What I love about Bob and LeadingWithQuestions.com is that it comes with energy, relevance and preparation. I feel Bob's humble spirit and I see his great smile when he writes for all of us. Love "Leading With Questions" and look forward to every edition."

— **Eric Hood**, Willow Creek Association and Global Leadership Summit Team

"Bob Tiede is the real deal. He is one of the most generous and consistent initiators I know. Bob's blog, *Leading with Questions*, will stimulate fresh thinking whether you lead globally or locally."

— **Ken Cochrum**, VP, Global Digital Strategies, Cru; Author of *Close: Leading Well Across Distance and Culture*

“Bob Tiede challenges us in our coaching to use questions when our natural inclination is to come to the party with our answers. Starting with questions takes longer, but the result is far superior since the learner comes up with their own answers which makes them life-time learners rather than quick fix projects.”

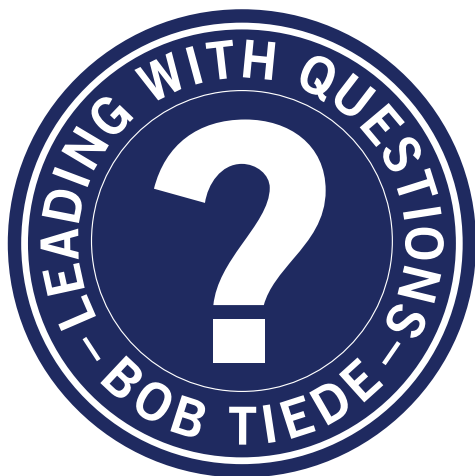
— **Brent Garrison**, Vice President of Education, CEO Forum

“My Dad, Zig Ziglar, always said: ‘Questions are the answer.’ If you are looking for answers to life’s most challenging questions there is no better place than Bob Tiede’s blog *Leading With Questions*.”

— **Tom Ziglar**, President at Ziglar Inc.

“Bob Tiede is always thinking about how to grow your leadership capability. His blog, *Leading With Questions*, will give you the benefit of his experience and enthusiasm for developing leaders. You won’t want to miss it!”

— **Cheryl Bachelder**, CEO, Popeyes Louisiana Kitchen



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