TOOL

Questions That Educate

By Linda Ackerman Anderson, Ed.D. and
Dean Anderson, Ed.D.

Questions That Educate

Instructions

Questions that educate increase a person's thinking and perspective on an issue. This helps them see what they are currently missing, without you having to always be in "tell mode," which might reduce their listening to you.

Use "questions that educate" to help leaders and others see what they are missing to make change initiatives more successful.

Formulating questions that educate in real time can be challenging. Below is a list of such questions for your review and practice. These are samples of how you can open deeper conversations about the critical change issues listed.

Once you feel comfortable with "questions that educate," make a list of topics in which you want to deepen conversations. Then for each topic, design your questions that educate.

Sample Questions That Educate

"I am sure you have thought of this, but…."

1. **About people, stakeholder engagement and communications**

   a. How will you respond if the solution the content consultants propose triggers negative reactions in the very stakeholders we need to adopt and sustain the changes?

   b. What should we do if communications about the change surface questions among management or stakeholders and we have no forum for those questions to be heard and addressed in constructive ways?

   c. How can we make sure that the communications about the change are crafted so they speak directly to the worries of the stakeholders?

2. **About pacing, timing and speed**

   a. As you know, most people think "Schedule is King" around here. How do we make sure we are planning enough time for the right solution to be designed and adopted? How can we influence how the timetable is determined so that it is realistic to what the change really requires?

b. I am curious about the factors that were used to determine the current timeline? When it was set, how did it account for the full scope and complexity of the change?

c. What will happen if we cannot meet the deadlines that have been set, either because there is not enough time to do the work required, not enough resources, or people need longer to learn how to be successful in the new state?

3. **About governance and decision-making**

a. We are already off and running on this project. I am seeing that the project manager, team members, and our consultants are confused about who has authority for what, who is responsible for what work, and how to influence each other so that we can get the right work done. How would you like to handle these issues and how can we get change governance and decision-making clear before too many delays?

4. **About the importance of solution design vs. getting it implemented**

a. We have placed much attention on getting the right solution designed so we get the best outcome. However, there seems to be very little attention being given to what happens after design deployment beyond a big communication. There is so much worry and impact from this change in our stakeholders that I think we need to engage them somehow before we ask them to turn their worlds upside down. What do you think they need to feel more positive about this change? From your perspective, how do we get them to see what is in it for them to want to make this a success?

b. The current project plan outlines a set of actions and a tight timeline to deploy the new solution out into the organization. However, it does not account for any stakeholder buy-in, management of reactions, learning, rewards, or teamwork. How might we integrate this work into the project plan so that we can minimize negative reactions?

5. **About capacity**

a. You have named the right people to the project team and informed them of the role you want them to play. However, since then, most are not showing up for project meetings or not doing what is necessary to plan the work. They say they don't have enough time to do their regular work as well as this project's work. How can we ensure that they can give the project the time it needs from them? Or should we get other people to be on the team who have the skills as well as the time?

b. We are aware of several projects being planned at the same time. I am concerned that they are all going to hit the same stakeholders at the same time, and we have not planned for managing stakeholder deployment or capacity to take on so many changes at once. This could seriously impact their operational jobs and success, maybe even customers. Can we discuss how to better manage the timing or capacity so we don't overwhelm them and risk the projects failing?

6. **About commitment and resistance**

a. We have identified the stakeholders that will be most impacted by the change. However, I think they are already mounting ways to resist making the change. Do you have thoughts about how we might engage them now so we minimize their resistance and get their commitment early on? Many think they have something important to say about the direction you are going, but nobody has asked them for their thoughts. Would you like us to figure out how you can give them a constructive way of giving you their best thinking.

7. **About sub-initiative integration**

a. There are so many change efforts happening independently in the organization. I fear they are going to compete for time and attention, let alone resources and capacity. Are you seeing the same thing? What do you think of us designing a way for the project leaders to get together and coordinate their work, and maybe sequence, pace and do work in parallel to optimize time and money? Would you support greater project integration?

8. **About their role as change leader**

a. I have some information about how you are currently being perceived out in the organization. Are you interested in hearing about it? People see you as the initiator of this major transformation. However, aside from recognizing that you have given your "okay", they are confused about what you really want to accomplish, who is running the show, and how committed you are to seeing this huge effort through. How would you like to proceed so that the teams, leaders, and stakeholders really get your commitment, leadership, and intention for making this a success?

9. **About the ability to course correct**

a. The project team has generated a project plan to develop and deploy a solution. However, there seems to be several indications that the timing, (or resourcing, or stakeholders, or level of commitment, or direction of the solution, or degree of impact, etc.) is not going to suffice for this effort to

meet your expectations. How open are you to pausing the frantic action and doing a reset so we can actually get on top of what is happening and make the best decisions for your outcome? How might we course correct without creating fear of failure?

10. **About the use of external consultants who are not aligned with the organization's needs**

   a. We have been working with "X Consultants" as you have requested. However, many on the team are concerned that the consultants are more interested in meeting their deadlines than ensuring the best solution (or engaging with stakeholders, or partnering with internal experts, or driving their own solution too hard, or accounting for people's capacity or reactions, etc.). I am concerned that you will not get what you want from this effort unless you review the consultants' current plans and the team issues. I want this to be successful and for the money you are spending on the consultants to be well-spent. How would you like to proceed?

Worksheet

Topics	Your Questions That Educate

About Being First, Inc.

Founded in the 1980s by Drs. Dean Anderson and Linda Ackerman Anderson, Being First is a breakthrough company, providing advanced expertise in personal and organizational transformation.

We guide visionary leaders to transform themselves and their organizations to *Achieve Breakthrough* in business results, culture, leadership, and executive team performance, while building world-class change leadership capability in clients.

For forty years, we have been pioneering a new field of study called *Conscious Change Leadership*:

➤ **Conscious** – We wake leaders up to greater self-awareness, mindfulness, and personal change, and enable them to develop "vertically" so they can solve their most complex transformational challenges.

➤ **Change** – We provide leaders a strategic change navigation system that ensures they make intelligent decisions about the design and implementation of their organization's transformation.

➤ **Leadership** – We teach leaders how to lead *co-creatively* with engaged stakeholders who commit and fully adopt and sustain the transformation so it delivers Breakthrough.

We are Strategic Advisors to the C-Suite, and provide executives an integrated *System of Transformation* that includes strategic advising and consulting, vertical leadership development, change leadership and consultant training, executive coaching, organizational change process methodology and tools, and change related assessments.

We partner with our clients, and customize everything to their exact needs to fit the scope and scale of their required transformation to *Achieve Breakthrough.*

Call us at 970.385.5100 for more information, or go to BeingFirst.com

Being First, Inc. l 1242 Oak Drive l DW2 l Durango l CO l USA l 81301