



Keyword: Open Questions

Open Questions: Your Key to Better Results

by Kevin Eikenberry

Open questions create a conversational tone and eliminate any chance of a sense of interrogation that might be associated with closed questions. Some other advantages of the open question include:

- Allowing people to think about their responses.
- Gaining more than just facts – you learn about attitudes, emotions, thoughts – all of which influence the person’s performance.
- Providing an opportunity to provide any information the other person feels is relevant (even if you were unaware of it or it’s connection to the question).

Open questions are underused for two major reasons:

- Ignorance of their value.
- Open questions require more effort to compose – either in advance or on-the-spot.

Taking the Closed and Opening it up!

A closed question is easily opened up by adding one or two keywords or with other small modifications. Some of the best words to add are, “What”, “How”, and “Could”. Here are some examples:

Closed: Do you use the decision analysis process?

Open: How do you use decision analysis?

Closed: Do you have any problems with the log?

Open: What has been your experience with those logs?

Closed: Which do you prefer?

Open: How would you compare the various options?

Closed: Why did you do that?

Open: What factors led you to doing it that way? or What could have been done differently?



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