

Powerful Questions

One of the most important skills a coach has is that of questioning. Questions can help move someone forward when they are stuck, create clarity, and uncover next steps to name just a few benefits. But not all questions are created equal; which is why Coaches use what are called powerful questions.

According to “Results Coaching: The New Essential for School Leaders,” Kee et al. (2010), powerful questions have the following characteristics:

1. Reflect active listening
 - a. Questions like “Can you tell me more about?” or “What did you mean by” show the staff person you are listening to what they are saying.
2. Presume positive intent
 - a. Questions like “what are you planning to? Or “How are you going to?” shows the staff that you believe in their commitment to the goals.
3. Evoke discovery, insight, commitment, or action on behalf of the receiver of the question.
 - a. Questions like “What would you do if?” or “What were you thinking when?” help give staff insight into their own patterns or can help discover the next action.
4. Create greater clarity, possibility of new learning
 - a. Questions like “What do you think it means?” or “Help me understand what you mean by?” can help the staff clarify new learning.

Examples of Powerful Questions

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the opportunity here? • What is the challenge? • How does this fit with your plans/way of life/values? • What are the possibilities? • If you had your choice, what would you do? • What are possible solutions? • What will happen if you do, and what will happen if you don't? • What options can you create? • Is this a time for action? • What action? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you mean? • What does it feel like? • What is the part that is not yet clear? Can you say more? What do you want? • What do you want? • What is your desired outcome? • If you got it, what would you have? • How will you know you have reached it? • What would it look like? What action will you take? • And after that? Where do you go from here? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can you tell me more? • What else? • What other ideas/thoughts/ feelings do you have about it? • What do you plan to do about it? • What is your game plan? • What kind of plan do you create? • How do you suppose you improve the situation? • Now what? • What will you do? • When? • When will you do that?
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