QUESTIONING TECHNIQUES

Closed Questions

These normally require (and obtain) a simple answer—yes, no, or a straightforward statement of facts. E.g., "Have you ever conducted an appraisal interview?" or "Who was your last employer?" Questions of this nature require another question to be asked immediately.

Presumptive Questions

These are usually closed questions that assume part of the answer. E.g., without any previous information, "What sort of car do you drive?" This assumes that the other person has a car.

Leading Questions

These tend to be negatively presumptive questions that strongly suggest that the questioner is expecting a certain answer. This may put other persons on the spot, depending on their relationship with the questioner. E.g., "I expect you will want to start your appraisal interview program without any further training or delay?"

Multiple Questions

This is, in fact ,a series of questions strung together. They can cause problems for the responder who may not remember all the parts of the question and consequently (or sometimes deliberately) answer one part only--usually the last part. E.g., "Do you have a driving license? Where did you take your test? Can you drive a range of vehicles?"

Rambling Questions

Similar to multiple questions but without the specifically identifiable parts of that type of question. The rambling question goes on and on until the listener is unsure what is being asked.

Conflict Questions

These are designed to produce a reaction from the other person and may (whether intended or not) produce a negative or emotional response. If an emotional response does not result, maybe emotions are present but are being suppressed. E.g., "I should have expected you to react like that, right?"

Hypothetical Questions

Usually intended to test a responder's problem-solving ability by posing a hypothetical situation. E.g., "If you were given an unlimited budget to set up a learning resource center, how would you go about it?" This type of question *can* test ability and knowledge, but being hypothetical may get only a hypothetical response.

Open Questions
These usually begin with **what, how, why**, and less openly, **who, where**, and **when**. They are used to open up a discussion since the response is less likely to be monosyllabic. E.g., "How would you describe an appraisal interview?"

They can also be an invitation to give extended information. E.g., "Tell me about some of the experiences you have had in the appraisal interviews you have conducted."

Probing Questions
These open questions seek further or clarified information on responses already given. E.g., "You said you had done so-and-so. Can you tell me more about that work?"

Testing Understanding
A variation on the probing question that sets out to ensure that the questioner has put over a point correctly, that the other person has understood what the questioner has asked or said, or that the questioner has understood what the responder has said. E.g., "If I have it right, you are suggesting that.... Is that right?"

Reflection
This does not appear as a question, but its basic intention is to encourage the responder to give more information without being asked directly. E.g., the other person has made a brief comment, such as "I'm having some problems with the new procedure," but appears unwilling to extend this information. A reflection might be, "It seems that the problem is mainly with the new procedure." Hopefully, the other person then says, "Yes, that's right. What I am being asked to do is..."

EFFECTIVE USE OF QUESTIONS

Questions can be used as effective instructional tools without embarrassing participants who don't have the 'right' answer, without students guessing what you want them to say, without the awkward pauses that occasionally set in when you say "Are there any questions?"

Try These:

Ask for more information by requiring the responder to be more explicit and perhaps more sure of his answer; "Can you give me an example?" Or "When you say xyz, what do you mean?"

Restate what you have heard: "So, are you saying that people should ... or did I misunderstand you?" By stating what your understanding is to this point (rather than "Would you say that again?")' you provide the other with a point from which to proceed. She may respond, "No that's not what I meant. What I am trying to say is that...."

Make critical observations to make learners look at their answer in a more probing and critical way: "Why do you think this is so?" Or: "How would you explain your answer to someone who feels quite the opposite?"

Try to intensify the learner's statement if the response is important, requires no instructor comment, and could be added to by others. You could say: "Very good, Colin. What implications would your statement have for...?" (turning to the whole group). Or: "How can we use Colin's solution to solve our dilemma?"

More Tricks to Stimulate Participation:

→ Ask a question, pause for five seconds and then ask for a response. Often students give non-verbal hints that they are ready to respond.

→ React to "false" answers with acceptance, even if you do not agree with them. Use probing questions to refocus on the discussion topic. ·

→ Encourage silent members to comment if you think they might have the answer but are reluctant to speak up: "This is probably something you know quite a bit about, David..." ·

→ Ask the same question of several students. Don't stop after the first response, which often comes from the same core group of participants. ·

→ Formulate questions that cause people to give long answers. Do this by (a) referring to areas of knowledge, rather than simple facts, and (b) making it difficult to answer with a simple YES or NO.

→ Piggy-back your new questions on top of the responses you got for your previous question: "OK, let's take that approach and take it one step further..." ·

→ Pick out certain aspects of the response and refocus the group's attention on them.

→ Try not to answer your own questions. After a while you will be performing a one-person show. ·

→ Avoid questions to which the answer is obvious: "Don't you agree that...?" Make a statement instead ("I believe that...") and invite reactions.

→ Taking that last suggestion one step further, if you ask a question, be prepared to hear the answer even if it does not coincide with your own. Be flexible.

When Did You Last Ask, "Are There Any questions?"

You can probably remember the silence that often follows this question. Some instructors use this line one minute before the class time is up (and after they have spoken for one solid hour). Would you bring up a point that you missed half way through the lecture if you were a student? Would you expect full consideration of your questions when you knew that any minute the group would get up and leave? If the instructor really wants to hear "any questions," then he must allow for time and create an atmosphere which makes it OK for people to ask. Here are some openers that can yield responses:

✓ "Before I go on, does this make any sense to you?"

✓ "How are we doing?"

✓ "Where did I lose you?"

✓ "Do my examples make sense to you?

✓ "What additional information do you want from me?"

You have probably seen the following technique used by someone experienced in political meetings:

"Are there any questions you want me to answer?" Five second pause, and then, addressing a person who either has, or ought to have, a question: "Perhaps you could start, Eileen?"

Also-watch **for non-verbal signals**, "You seem puzzled, Ron. Can I help?" Having the instructor accept responsibility for "helping you to understand me" makes it easier for participants to ask for clarification and additional information.

Buzz groups, Response Cards and Speedy Memo are additional ways to get around the "are there any questions? Silence".

QUESTIONS THAT CHALLENGE

Convergent

Brings together facts to form another fact or theory

Based on the behaviors you saw in the film, what principles of motivation can you develop?

Divergent

Evokes interpretation, explanation and translation

How would you explain donor's reluctance to support projects that promote sustainable interest rates?

Evaluative

Requires the making of judgments (via exploration and analysis) about the facts presented.

Given the results of the appraisal, how would you characterize the MFI's potential as a future donor project?