

Getting to Know Your New Hire Strategic Questions®

Following is a sample list of strategic questions designed to help you start and keep going, over a year of new staff orientation and onboarding, the right strategic conversations. They will help you gain information and insight, clarify situations, deal with performance challenges before they become issues. It is not an exhaustive list and not every question may work for you. However, effective strategic questioning and excellent listening will help strengthen your relationships with your new staff members, improve their experience and performance, and strengthen your effectiveness as a manager.

During and at the End of Week One

1. From your perspective, how are things going?
2. What haven't we explained or showed you that you feel you need to know sooner rather than later?
3. What else might I help you with?
4. What are your impressions so far?
5. What questions haven't we answered?
6. I want to give you enough time but not so much that I'm crowding you. Have we hit the right balance? Do you need more or less time with me?
7. Our office guiding principles are important to us. I know we shared these during the interview process but now that you're here, I'd like us to explore them together. Which one would like to begin with?
8. What are your plans for next week? What do you hope to achieve?
9. How can I help?

Understanding Motivation and Values (Month One and Two)

1. What non-salary things make you feel rewarded for a job well done?
2. How do you like to receive praise?
3. If, from my perspective, something has gone wrong, how would you like to hear about it?
4. I know we discussed this during your interview, but now that you've been here for a month, what are your aspirations while in this position? In what ways have they changed?
5. Remind me how did you chose development as a career.
6. Who in our business do you admire and why?
7. What do you like best about your responsibilities so far? What do you like least? Why?
8. To what degree is having a balanced life important to you? How do you define a "balanced life?" From what you can tell so far, what might prevent you from achieving that? What can we do together to mitigate those challenges?
9. What are your impressions of morale in the office? How does that affect your morale?
10. How do you feel about the way things are going?

Performance Questions (Month Three)

1. From your perspective, how are things going?
2. What about your work do you find the most energizing? How so? What slow you down?
3. What could we do at this point, that might enhance your chances of success?
4. I've tried to give you feedback along the way, to what degree has that been helpful? How should we change things?

5. Your three-month review is in two weeks, what had you planned to accomplish by now? (We had agreed you would...) How do you think you are doing?
6. How are you measuring success?
7. What are some of the obstacles you are facing?
8. Why do these problem exist?
9. What kinds of data, information, do you have/will you need to determine the best course of action?
10. What will be necessary to accomplish this goal?
11. What is your role?
12. Suppose questions – suppose we tried this? Suppose we had this? What difference would that make?
13. What outcomes do you anticipate?
14. Is there something different we could try? What will the impact be?
15. How are we doing against the goals we set? Why?
16. What steps are you taking to address that? Why?
17. How do you feel the team is doing?
18. What specific things do you recommend for improving (enhancing) (strengthening) your performance?
19. What haven't we discussed?
20. Let's go over the next three-months. What if anything do we need to change?
21. Over the course of these three months, I've tried to help you better understand my approach to things, my strengths, those areas that are not my strongest points and how you can best help me. To what degree do you feel you know enough about me as a manager? Let's talk about it.

Understanding You, so the New Hire Can Manage Up Effectively

1. What do you believe is going well between us?
2. What do we need to work on?
3. I'd like to share some things with you about my management (communication) (leadership) style, and hear more about yours. (This is the beginning of full and on-going conversation as needed)
4. I'd like to understand your communication style better; may I ask some questions about how you perceive things?
5. I read an article once about creating a CEO user manual and so I have put this one-pager together. It explains my work habits, character traits and communication preferences. I'm going to leave this with you to digest and then let's get together and discuss it. Would Monday at noon or Wednesday at 4:00 work best for you?
6. Accountability and transparency are important to me, how should we work together so that we are holding each other accountable for the things we've promised?
7. I don't like surprises; how can we avoid surprises without you feeling micro-managed?
8. Reports are important so that I know what is going on and can anticipate problems. How can we establish an effective reporting structure that works for both of us?
9. How do you feel about our communications?

Mentoring Questions

1. Can you walk me through the problem – how it started and how it got to this point?
2. Outline for me what you have done to deal with the problem so far. How has that worked?
3. Have you ever seen or dealt with a similar problem? What happened in that case?
4. Prioritize the main obstacles you feel you are facing.
5. What options have you considered? What are the advantages and disadvantages of each? What will the impact be for each?
6. Describe how your thoughts and feelings would change if you were on the opposite side in this problem. Does that suggest any steps you might consider?
7. Do you only want me to listen to you, or do you want me to share my opinion and give you advice?

Follow-up Questions (Probe, Learn More)

1. Please describe that a little more.
2. What are other possible explanations?
3. Why do you think it happened? Why do you think it happened in that way?
4. How so?
5. Can you clarify that?
6. Can you give me an example of what you mean?
7. Do you have any questions about what I just said?
8. What specific results are you looking for?
9. Can you say more about that?
10. Did I understand you correctly when you said...?
11. Did I answer your question?
12. How did that come about?
13. What did that mean to you?
14. How strongly do you feel about that?
15. What do you think about that?
16. What is most important to you?
17. So, we are agreed that you will... and I will... Is that correct?
18. Are we in agreement?
19. Are you ready to move forward?

If you would like to learn more about hiring and keeping a winning team, onboarding new staff, asking strategic questions, listening for intent, managing up, down, or out, or any other aspect of institutional advancement or fund development management, contact us at mail@theosbornegroup.com or 914 428-7777

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