

Strategic Management Questions®

Following is a sample list of strategic questions designed to gain information and insight, clarify situations, deal with performance issues, and avoid and resolve conflict. 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 staff members and supervisor and improve your effectiveness as a manager.

Understanding Motivation and Values

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. What are your aspirations while in this position?
5. What do you want to do next?
6. How did you choose development as a career?
7. Who in our business do you admire and why?
8. Do you have a personal vision for the future? Are you comfortable sharing it?
9. Why have you stayed with us all this time?
10. What do you like best about your responsibilities? What do you like least? Why?
11. How do you define a "balanced life?" Is that something you currently enjoy?
12. What are your impressions of morale in the office? How does that affect your morale?
13. How do you feel about the way things are going?

Understanding Conflict

1. From your perspective, what happened?
2. How do you feel about what happened?
3. Why do you believe you're right?
4. What do you believe you contributed to the situation? What did the other person (people) contribute?
5. From your perspective, what's involved in this dispute?
6. What is your sense of what's involved for the other person (people)?
7. Do I understand the issues correctly? (After summing them up.)
8. How do you suggest we resolve this?
9. What would make this okay for you?
10. What was your understanding of my expectations?
11. What was your understanding of the tasks? The deadline?
12. Can you give me a specific example?
13. Here are the issues as I see them, what are they from your perspective?
14. Where do you believe there are opportunities for cooperation? Resolution? Common ground?
15. Can I count on you following through on (what)?
16. So we're agreed that (what)?

Communication Clarification

1. Could you say more about that?
2. May I sum up the main points? Is my understanding the same as yours?
3. I feel (what) when you (say) (do) (the action)
4. It would help me to understand (remember) (do a better job) if you could (what)
5. What do you mean when you say (what)? Can you give me an example?
6. Do you have additional information that would be helpful for me to know?
7. What is your understanding?
8. So we're agreed that you will (what) by (when), is that correct?

Performance Questions

1. What is the purpose of (the activity)?
2. Why is this important? Urgent? For whom is it important or urgent?
3. What constitutes success for this effort?
4. How will you measure success?
5. Why does this problem exist?
6. What kinds of data do you have/will you need to determine the best course of action?
7. What will be necessary to accomplish this goal?
8. What is your role?
9. Suppose questions – suppose we tried this? Suppose we had this? What difference would that make?
10. What do you suggest for ground rules?
11. What is the agenda for this meeting?
12. What outcomes do you anticipate?
13. Who is responsible? Why is she the best person? What will the impact be?
14. Is there something different we could try? What will the impact be?
15. How have you accomplished this in the past? What parts worked well? Why? What didn't? Why?
16. How are we doing against goal? Why?
17. What steps are you taking to address that? Why?
18. How does this fit into your priorities?
19. How do you feel the team is doing?
20. What specific things do you recommend for improving your (the team's) performance?

Underperformance Questions

1. What was your understanding of the expectations for (situation or responsibility)?
2. As we discussed on (date), we agreed that you would (what) and that I would (what) is that your recollection?
3. From your perspective, what is getting in the way of you successfully (the agreed upon action) within the time we agreed?
4. Do I understand the issues from your perspective correctly? (After summing them up.)
5. Here are the issues as I see them (sum up). How do you see them?
6. What was your understanding of the tasks? The deadline?
7. Can you give me a specific example?
8. What steps do you believe we need to take in order to achieve our agreed upon (goals, actions, or behaviors)?
9. Why do you believe these will work this time? What will be different?
10. Here are my thoughts on the steps we need to take. What are your thoughts?

11. Can I count on you following through on (what) by (when)?
12. So we're agreed that (what)? (Follow-up with a memo and keep a copy for your records)

For Unsuccessful Outcomes

1. From your point of view, how could we have avoided this?
2. What choices should we have made differently?
3. What did we misinterpret? How did that come about?
4. What steps are you taking to address this?
5. What steps might we take together going forward?

For Successful Outcomes

1. What did we do right?
2. What *didn't* we do that helped us succeed?
3. How did our interpretation of events help?
4. What does this mean about how we should go forward?
5. Whom do we need to thank and recognize? How would they like to receive that praise?

Your Relationship and the "Stay"* Interview

**In Love 'Em or Lose 'Em: Getting Good People to Stay, the authors urge us to have "stay" interviews with those staff member we want to keep. These relationship questions will help you have a productive relationship with your team members. For your "stay" interview, authors, Beverly Kaye and Sharon Jordan-Evans, recommend the first six questions.*

1. *What will keep you here?*
2. *What might entice you away?*
3. *What is most energizing about your work?*
4. *To what degree are we fully utilizing your talents?*
5. *What is inhibiting your success? What would enhance your chances for success?*
6. *What can I do differently to help you be more effective? More satisfied?*
7. What do you believe is going well between us?
8. What do we need to work on?
9. I'd like to share some things with you about my management (communication) (leadership) style, when would be a good time?
10. I'd like to understand your communication style better; may I ask some questions about how you perceive things?
11. Values are very important to me. I'd like to share some of mine and learn about yours. Would you be comfortable with that?
12. I don't like surprises; how can we avoid surprises in the future without you feeling micro-managed?
13. 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?
14. How do you feel about our communications?
15. I felt (what) when you (what). How did you feel about it?
16. Do you want me only to listen, or do you want me to share my opinion and give advice?

Managing Change and Influencing Others

1. It is important to me that you have an opportunity to discuss what is going on and why it is important that we (the behavior you seek; the change required). How well informed do you feel? What (tools, information, or assistance) do you need in order to (the behavior you seek)?

2. What haven't I explained well enough?
3. Change brings many opportunities. What opportunities do you see coming out of (during) this time of change?
4. I'd like to understand how you are feeling about the changes we've put in place; may I ask some questions about how you perceive things?
5. During this time of change there are many things that are still uncertain, how can I help you feel more comfortable (remain productive) (become more productive) during this period?
6. From your perspective, what do we need to do to make this work?
7. I feel (what) when you (what). How do you feel about it?

These next six questions come from "Instant Influence," by Michael Pantaloni

1. Why might you change (Or to influence yourself, why might I change)?
2. How ready are you to change – on a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 means, "not ready at all" and 10 means "totally ready?"
3. Why didn't you pick a lower number? (Or if the influence picked 1, either ask the second question again, this time about a smaller step toward change, or ask, what would it take for that 1 to turn into a 2?)
4. Imagine you've changed. What would the positive outcomes be?
5. Why are those outcomes important to you?
6. What's the next step?

Walking Around Questions

1. What made you angry today? Why is that? What could we/you do about that?
2. What do you feel best about today? How do we/you replicate that?
3. Why do you think it took as long as it did? How could we/you shorten the time?
4. What caused complaints today? How did you handle it? How can we/you prevent that?
5. What was misunderstood today? Why is that? What could we/you do about that?
6. What cost too much? Why is that? What could we/you do about that?
7. What was wasted? Why is that? What could we/you do about that?
8. What was too complicated? What could we/you do about that?
9. How do you think we should/could do things better?
10. What was just plain silly? Why is that? If we eliminated that, what would be the impact?
11. What job involved too many people? Why is that? How could we/they/you do it differently in the future? What would be the impact of that?
12. What job involved too many actions? Why do you believe that? How would you streamline it? What would be the results? What might be the downside?
13. What makes it difficult for you to do your job?
14. What do you struggle with?
15. What takes more time than it should?
16. How many customers (clients, donors) did you speak with today? What were their concerns? What were they happy about? How did you handle it? How can we/you improve customer relations?

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 asking strategic questions, listening for intent, managing up, down, or out, or any other aspect of fund development management contact us at mail@theosbornegroup.com or 914 428-7777

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