

Powerful Questions for in Negotiations

One of the keys to successful influencing/negotiating is understanding what is important to the other party and to be able to frame/align your goals with theirs, or make them see your proposition in a way that somehow delivers something they need or are interested in. Therefore using questions to deepen your understanding of the other party's point of view is a powerful way to do this.

| QUESTION STYLE/CONSTRUCT | WHEN TO USE |
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| Tell me what's on your agenda at the moment? | To build rapport, empathy, understand the pressures and demands on the other party. |
| What are your views about the whole issue of.... | To find out the other party's view so that you can appreciate where their concerns might be coming from, and what you need to address. |
| What is it about xxx which is important to you? | To find out why someone is asking for or refusing to concede on something in a negotiation. |
| Help me understand your thinking behind that?.... | To find out why someone is asking for or refusing to concede on something in a negotiation. |
| What do you see as the evidence for that? | Uncover their thinking, additional information you may not have about the situation. To test the validity/soundness of their opinion/view. |
| What would need to be different for you to be able to support this plan/proposal? | To find out possible solutions/compromises/trade-offs that will enable you to reach agreement. |
| What would it take to change your mind/win your support on that? | To find out possible solutions/compromises/trade-offs that will enable you to reach agreement. |
| What could I do to help you make the implementation of this possible? | To find out possible solutions/compromises/trade-offs that will enable you to reach agreement. |

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| <p>You're raising an important issue that we/I don't really have time now to discuss- when could we schedule a time to discuss that properly?</p> | <p>To buy time and prepare. To demonstrate real respect for the other party and issues by making significant time available.</p> |
| <p>I can see we may not be able to reach full agreement right now.... so are there some initial steps/parts of the proposal that you feel you could support?</p> | <p>To establish a level of support which you can build on later, and increase the chances of getting their agreement to larger issues in the future.</p> |
| <p>I want to make sure I'm understanding you correctly, could you just explain that again?</p> | <p>To buy time to think, to challenge the other party to explain their point of view more clearly, reveal more of their underlying thinking.</p> |
| <p>What is it about this situation/proposal/concept that is making you cautious?</p> | <p>To surface underlying objections or issues.</p> |
| <p>How can we work together to resolve this/find a solution?</p> | <p>To make the issue 'shared', and enable the other party to take responsibility for working with you to find a solution. (i.e. to prevent it becoming only your problem).</p> |
| <p>That's interesting..., what makes you say/think that?</p> | <p>To encourage more information. To find out why someone is trying to dismiss your requests/needs.</p> |
| <p>I feel we are not making progress with this discussion... what do you think would help move us forward?</p> | <p>To break apparent 'deadlock' in a discussion or when you feel there is something blocking progress that the other party has not articulated.</p> |
| <p>What if we could?... ..</p> | <p>To open up other possibilities the other party has not yet considered. Test the appeal/acceptability of an idea/proposal? (could be one you really want to push or one that you don't want to and to play 'devil's advocate, test their conviction etc.).</p> |
| <p>If I were in your position... I'd be asking about/worried about/interested in.....- does that resonate with you?</p> | <p>To voice concerns you think the other party will not be prepared to volunteer or are too politically sensitive to express.</p> |