



8 questions, great leaders

Bernadette Baynie lists eight simple questions the best leaders always ask to inspire, innovate, interact and influence positively.

Many of us aspire in our legal roles to become great leaders of the organisations and people that we represent.

Great leaders know how to inspire, innovate, interact with integrity and most of all influence other people positively - in the best interests of their organisation and their people. They also know that the best way to influence is to connect with their people and make them feel valued. They understand that the most effective way to connect and relate to them is to ask them questions. As John Maxwell said in his book 'Good Leaders Ask Great Questions', "Successful leaders relentlessly ask questions and have an incurable desire to pick the brains of the people they meet."

So what questions do great leaders ask to influence and inspire those around them? Here are the top 8 simple questions that you can use in your legal practices to create the most positive leadership impact and effect:

1 WHAT DO YOU THINK?

This is a good question to ask those that you seek to lead and influence, as great leaders understand they do not have all of the answers. They are confident in their abilities but are not afraid to ask their people for their valuable thoughts, views

and perspectives on important matters. Your people will feel more valued and cared for when you genuinely asking this question of them. Your inclusive and encouraging approach will make them feel that their opinion matters.

2 WHAT CAN I DO BETTER?

The greatest leaders are humble, unassuming and unpretentious. They have a high degree of self-awareness and genuine willingness to grow so that they can become the best leaders possible. **So, this question is one of the most important and honest one of all and should be asked often.** It demonstrates your humility as a leader and your genuine readiness to improve yourself. At the same time, it gives you valuable insights and knowledge about your current style of leadership - in what places that it is working well and more importantly where it could be improved.

3 WHAT IS YOUR NUMBER ONE ISSUE AND HOW CAN I RESOLVE IT?

Taking the time to ascertain the top concerns of your people helps you to understand them better and the key issue that they and their department face. It's a great question to ask as it makes your people feel considered and appreciated.

It gives you the opportunity to review and evaluate the matter with them. It also enables you to ascertain whether the issue is impacting other business units and your organisation as a whole. It encourages you to work closely and in harmony with your team (potentially in collaboration with other teams) to find holistic ways of resolving the issue/s with the resources and speed required.

4 WHAT ARE THE KEY PROBLEMS FACING OUR ORGANISATION THAT NEED RESOLVING?

This is another great question to ask as it not only promotes a culture of openness and inclusiveness - it gives you a direct pulse check on the key matters that your people believe are impacting your organisation. Your team's input and perspectives are important, and they enable you to become more strategic in your approach to the resolution of such pivotal matters.

5 WHAT IS YOUR GREATEST RISK IMPACTING YOUR DEPARTMENT NOW?

A question of this nature gives you a helpful window into the thinking of your team members, how attuned they are to risk management within their roles and what key matters need to be ironed out before they become major issues. You give them the opportunity to develop some thought leadership on their key risks and share open discussion on how such risks can be addressed, mitigated and resolved in the best interest of their department and your organisation.

6 IF YOU COULD CHANGE OR ACHIEVE ONE IMPORTANT THING IN YOUR ROLE NOW WHAT WOULD IT BE?

This open question asked genuinely invites honest discussion on pivotal things that matter to your people. You can receive valuable information about their current aspirations and vision for themselves, and/or their role and department. It also gives you a window into the matters that inspire them and the things within them that they want to change or improve in the future – it might be a matter of self-improvement or an improving to a product, service, policy or process or marketing campaign. Everything counts in business so take the time to ask this question genuinely of your people and you may learn something important or even surprising about them.

7 WHAT ARE MY KEY LEARNINGS FROM TODAY?

Take time to self-reflect each day before you go to sleep. This pivotal question is an excellent way to develop your self-awareness and self-efficacy. Great leaders are unassuming and are always seeking to develop and improve their abilities and vision for the future.

8 WHAT WENT WELL TODAY AND WHAT DID I ACHIEVE?

This last question is the best one to ask yourself at the end of each day. By focusing specifically on what went well and what you achieved is highly important to maintaining a strong positive attitude as a leader. More importantly, by phrasing the question each night to yourself as to what you **contributed** to the well-being of your people and/or your organisation is a great way to lift your spirit and self-esteem to a new level. Reflecting on how you changed or improved the lives of those that you lead improves your belief in yourself and your abilities. It becomes a main driver of your growth as a human being and most importantly as a leader.

FINAL NOTE

All of the above questions are designed to focus you on the present and the future. They give you a health check and valuable compass on your leadership and the status of your organisation and your accountabilities. They give you valuable insights and motivation to project you forward and make meaningful decisions that impact and inspire your people.

After all great leaders only know the way, go the way and show the way...when they ask the right questions at the right time! 📖

This article is extracted from the author's upcoming book titled 'Leadership Excellence for Lawyers'.



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