



150

POWERFUL QUESTIONS
FOR DIFFERENT
LEADERSHIP SITUATIONS

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One-on-One Discussion

Great questions to ask in any individual review with direct reports. Always stay curious and try to understand more. However, refrain from offering solutions immediately.

1. What is going well for you this week?
2. What is something you have learned from that experience?
3. What is not going on well in your own day-to-day work at the moment?
4. What is a roadblock for you?
5. What would be the best outcome for you in that situation?
6. How can I help you with that?
7. What are things you have already tried to address this challenge?
8. What do you think is the top pain point we should address in the team?
9. What has worked for you in the past when confronted to a similar situation?
10. What is on your mind today?

Annual Performance Review

Great questions for annual performance reviews. Let the person tell you where she thinks she is. Offer feedback on things you have seen; ask for the person's opinion about these.

11. What do you see as your greatest success this year?
12. What has made this a success?
13. What are key skills you have used in order to achieve this result?
14. Where and how could you use these skills again in the future?
15. Where do you see your biggest development need?
16. If you improved on this, where could you make an impact in the future?
17. What are your aspirations around your own continued growth?
18. What course or certification would align with your personal goals?
19. What do you think you need to achieve to have a successful year?
20. How can I best support you in the coming year?

Having a Difficult Conversation

When you need to give negative feedback to a person, these questions serve the purpose. Stay open and curious; you may not know all the facts before the discussion starts.

21. How do you feel about what I have just said?
22. Do you give me permission to give you some feedback about xxx?
23. What can I do differently to best assist you?
24. Tell me in your own words what that situation was like for you?
25. What is something you may have done differently?

26. What is an obstacle for you?
27. If you were the leader on the team [or me, etc.], what would you have done?
28. What ideas do you have to turn this around?
29. Who else should we involve in that solution?
30. What are other perspectives that you could consider about that topic?

Managing a Conflict (between A and B)

To use these questions, have both A and B in a room with you (and HR) so that both persons can tell the story to you and agree together on a way forward.

31. Can you describe the issue from your own standpoint?
32. How do you feel about listening to what B said?
33. How does the situation make you feel? What emotions?
34. What do you need from B?
35. What is most important to you here?
36. What would it take for you to be able to move forward?
37. What is one small action you will take from today's conversation?
38. What do both of you agree on?
39. How do you want to be held accountable to your commitments?
40. Are you willing to resolve this without blame?

Goal Settings

Get to the core of why the goal matters to the person or the team. Questions will facilitate setting the goals (use the SMART methodology once a goal is set).

41. What will success look like for you?
42. If you had no constraint, what goal would you set up immediately?
43. What tasks are you enjoying the most at work?
44. What values are important to you in your day-to-day job?
45. What is the one goal that would have the greatest impact on your career?
46. What are you missing (training, etc.) to achieve that goal?
47. What is important for you in setting this goal?
48. How can I best support you in attaining this goal?
49. What will happen if you don't achieve that goal? (or how will you feel...?)
50. What is one thing you can start doing today that will get you closer to that goal?

Delegating a Project or Activity

Delegating is not about giving away your most boring tasks. These questions will help you understand who in your team can take a specific project or activity and learn from it.

51. What are activities that you would like to do to grow in your role?
52. How would you go about tackling this project or activity?
53. What support do you need from me to succeed?

54. What will be important for you to look at while working on this project/activity?
55. What are obstacles you're anticipating?
56. How will you make place in your agenda to work on this project/activity?
57. What will you need to say no to in order to take this project/activity?
58. What have you learned from completing this project/activity?
59. How will you use this project/activity to advance your career and grow?
60. What skill or knowledge will you need to complete that project/activity successfully?

Creating Change

These questions are good to ask to a group or team that needs to undergo a significant change, for instance being acquired by another company or a reorganization.

61. What are easy steps we could take now to work towards that change?
62. What will happen if you stick to the status quo and do nothing?
63. What will be the cost of doing nothing here?
64. What feelings do you have about the change that need to be expressed?
65. What are you avoiding?
66. What's the worst that could happen?
67. What's the best that could happen?
68. What makes this change relevant to you?
69. What are the things you control and the ones you don't control in that change?
70. How committed are you to make that change successful?

Creating Accountability

To lead a high-performing team, you need to have people accountable. These questions are great ones to use to create that accountability.

71. How will you make yourself accountable for this?
72. How will you know that you have succeeded here?
73. How will you let me know that you are making progress?
74. How will you let me know when you are stuck or need help from me?
75. Who else on the team or outside the team will hold you accountable for this?
76. What do you want to do when you don't make progress?
77. Who can be an accountability buddy/partner for you to keep you committed?
78. What will happen if you don't stay accountable for this?
79. Who do you need to be in order to stay accountable for this?
80. What do you expect from me to stay accountable for this?

Helping Someone Make a Decision

In order to best support your team, delegate efficiently and create engagement and accountability, you can't give them the solutions or make the decisions. Ask these questions instead so the people on the team make the decisions.

81. What are the different alternatives you are contemplating?
82. What do you need to say no to to say yes to that option?
83. If you had no constraint, what decision would you make?
84. What decision are you avoiding making? What is a reason for that?
85. Which decision do you need to make?
86. What decision is most closely aligned with your goals or those of the organization?
87. What are the pros and cons of each alternative?
88. What have you tried in the past? What has worked and what has not worked?
89. What advice would your role model give you here?
90. What step can you take this week that will serve that decision?

Following Up on Inaction

Get to the reasons why inaction is happening and support the people on your team working through obstacles and barriers that arise as they work on an activity.

91. What is stopping you from taking action?
92. What are obstacles you are facing now and that got you stuck?
93. What did you do to work around these obstacles?
94. How is your lack of action impacting other people on the team or in the organization?
95. What did you do instead of taking action?
96. How can you better prevent yourself from not taking action?
97. What self-limiting belief may you have that prevents you from taking action?
98. How will you prevent yourself from not taking action in the future?
99. What do you need from me to take action?
100. What other activity took priority here? How do you want to go about this?

Goal Settings Part II – Creating S.M.A.R.T. Goals

Having people on your team set their goals is a key activity. These questions will help you help them make these goals achievable by using the S.M.A.R.T. framework.

101. How would you describe your goal in one sentence?
102. How can you make your goal clearer?
103. How will you know that you have achieved your goal?
104. What will success look like when you have achieved your goal?
105. How realistic is your goal?
106. How can you break down your goal into smaller sub-goals?
107. What is your deadline for this goal?
108. What level of control do you have over this goal?
109. What milestones do you want to put in place to measure your progress?

110. How can you stretch your goal to make it an even better one?

Time Management

Virtually everyone will struggle at some point with managing their time efficiently. Use these questions to help the people on your team own their time.

- 111. What are obstacles in setting up time in your agenda?
- 112. Where do you need to give yourself permission to own your time?
- 113. What options do you have to protect your time?
- 114. What do you need to say no to in order to better protect your time?
- 115. What are activities/commitments in your calendar where you bring limited value?
- 116. What activities in your calendar could you delegate efficiently?
- 117. What are the important tasks and activities in your job?
- 118. How happy or unhappy are you with how your agenda looks like?
- 119. What would your ideal week look like from an agenda standpoint?
- 120. What is a step you can take today to start owning your time?

Self-Coaching

Stay self-aware with your leadership abilities by asking these questions to yourself and get feedback about yourself from your team.

- 121. What is one thing I do well and that I should continue doing?
- 122. What is one thing I should stop doing?
- 123. What is one thing I should start doing?
- 124. How have I helped you succeed this past year?
- 125. How do you feel I have helped you grow by providing challenging opportunities?
- 126. What am I doing that gets in your way?
- 127. How have I created trust for my team to bring their biggest challenges to my attention?
- 128. How have I coached my team vs. mentoring them when they were stuck or challenged?
- 129. How am I demonstrating my leadership philosophy to my team?
- 130. What do you need from me to make your job easier?

Creating Engagement

These questions allow you to check how engaged the people on your team are and they give you hints as to what you need to do to strengthen that engagement. These questions are the Gallup Q12 questions for engagement.

- 131. Do you know what is expected from you at work?
- 132. Do you have what you need (tools, resources, etc.) to do your work right?
- 133. At work, do you have the opportunity to do what you do best every day?
- 134. In the last seven days, have you received recognition or praise for good work?
- 135. Do I or someone at work seem to care about you as a person?
- 136. Is there someone at work who encourages your development?

- 137. At work, do your opinions seem to count/matter?
- 138. Does the mission/purpose of the company/team make you feel your work is important?
- 139. Are your co-workers committed to doing quality work?
- 140. Do you have a best friend at work?
- 141. In the last 6 months, have you talked to someone about your progress?
- 142. This last year, have you had opportunities at work to learn and grow?

Creating Rapport for Positive Relationships

Get to the core of what people value in their work and life. Knowing them at this level means you create positive relationships, which is key in creating trust and engagement.

- 143. What motivated you to be part of this company?
- 144. How do you hope to benefit personally and professionally from this project?
- 145. What matters to you in life?
- 146. How do you like to be recognized and rewarded when you do a great job?
- 147. What is important for you outside of your work environment?
- 148. What are events that have defined who you are?
- 149. Where would you like to be in 3, 5, 10 years from now?
- 150. What are your triggers at work and how can I support you when you're triggered?



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