

5 GREAT QUESTIONS TO ELEVATE YOUR MEETINGS

Meetings can be a real snooze. Some of the most innovative and successful companies are finding ways to eliminate meetings altogether or design creative methods to make them more productive. I've recently been designing several meeting agendas and I'm finding that using questions to frame the meetings gets everyone engaged and opens up innovative solutions that may not otherwise have emerged. The kinds of questions that work well for agendas are open-ended ones that leave room for creativity. Your questions should be specific enough to the issue at hand that they seem relevant, but they shouldn't suggest a foregone solution. Each meeting is different, and it's worthwhile to spend time designing the right question for your group, but to get you thinking here are 5 great questions to help make your meeting meaningful and productive.

1. What's one success you had in the last few weeks? Opening the meeting by giving everyone a chance to speak briefly about a success sets a positive tone for the whole discussion. Beginning every meeting like this works well, or you might try variations like: What's one thing our company did really well this month? Or, what colleague have you appreciated working with in the last few weeks?

2. What can we do together that none of us can do alone? If your group is facing a challenge it's good to get people thinking as a team and looking for creative ways to work together. This question also works well if you're going outside of your company for support.

3. What are the desired outcomes of this project? Sometimes a group can get so focused on the nitty-gritty aspects of a project that they forget what the goals are. Encourage your team to think qualitatively and quantitatively (i.e. the goal is to increase sales by 15% and inspire customer confidence in our services).

4. Imagine it is 2 years from now and our project has been hugely successful, what would things look like? It's hard to come up with creative ideas and new innovations when you're stuck in the realities and confines of the present. Give your team an invitation to dream big with a visioning question that puts them in the future. Pick a timeframe that makes sense for your project, something removed from the current situation but not too far off that people can't imagine what it would be like.

5. What's one thing you can do to move this project forward? Sometimes meetings end quickly and everyone rushes off and forgets about the things they committed to. Ending the meeting with everyone naming an action step helps keep the momentum going after the meeting is over. Other great ending questions include: What's one thing you're excited about this week? Or, what is something or someone that you're appreciative for at the moment?

Special thanks to Tristan Toleno, Beth Tener, and the New Directions Collaborative who developed several of these questions and inspired this post. More on strategic questions including some fabulous meeting design resources can be found at the New Directions Collaborative: <http://www.ndcollaborative.com/>.