

Create Change by Tapping the Power of Questions

Many people make the mistake of thinking that if they just clearly articulate a message for change, that message will be accepted and acted upon. Wrong! People will do things only when they see the value of change and when they are ready.

Questions Are More Powerful than Statements

There is a better way to create change. By engaging your audience in conversation and asking well thought-out questions, you have the potential to provoke insight and change. The questions may cause individuals to examine their aspirations, priorities, behavior, motivations and choices. Through the use of questions you can help people reach the right conclusions and make better decisions.

Prepare to engage in a change conversation by asking yourself a few self-steering questions such as: What is my intention in this conversation? What do I hope to accomplish? What do I already know about the situation? How accurate is the picture in my head?

Remember your goal

Your goal in this conversation is two-fold: To understand your communication partner's perspective, and to guide them to see yours.

Through the use of good open-ended questions (i.e. who, what, where, when, why and how) you may be able to determine *why* a person would want to change and what their goals are. If you ask meaningful questions your communication partner might tell what they are struggling with, answering in as many words as he or she chooses. This takes the guesswork out of the conversation, you will gain understanding of their perspective, and this new knowledge may even change what you were about to tell them. You know what happens when you assume.

Even more important, your open-ended questions signal that you are actually listening to their answers, and they become more open to trusting you. Trust is obviously important to their accepting any recommendation you might make.

After trust has been established and you know what the circumstances *really* are, you can help the person think things through. You have now earned the right to express yourself. When you make a recommendation, your communication partner is ready to listen and visualize how your recommendation will help them overcome a problem, solve a dilemma or address a concern.

Communication is about seeking to understand and presenting your ideas in the framework of how your partner sees things. This can only happen if you tap into the power of questions.

About Jason Kleid: Jason is a coach, educator and facilitator. His focus is on optimizing performance and getting results. Underscoring this philosophy is a belief that it is always the individuals in any organization, where the greatest potential for improvement and possibility of change resides. It is the mind or one's thinking where new ideas broaden understanding and cause things to happen. However, it is the heart, the inner person, where transformation occurs.