



In the Contracting Meeting

In the contracting conversation, we encourage people to focus on using clarifying questions, not discovery questions. Here's the difference...

Clarifying questions are those that ask the client to get clearer, be more specific, or give an example of a comment they've made. **Discovery questions** explore the comment seeking more data about it...who, what, when, where, how etc. in order to solve a problem, recommend an action, or perhaps rebut an argument.

1. Personal Acknowledgment...

- a. If you have not worked with this person before: What has been your experience working with my predecessor/our department/consultants?
 - i. What prompted you to call me/us?
 - ii. How did you decide on me/us?
- b. If you have worked with the person before: From the last time we worked together...
 - i. What do you think of working with me again?
 - ii. What do you think worked well?
 - iii. What would you change, from the last time we worked together?
 - iv. What can we improve upon?
- c. What are your reservations or concerns about working on this project?

2. Communicating an Understanding of the Situation...

- a. Getting a general overview of the problem...
 - What keeps you up at night about this situation?
 - What's happening? What are you working on?
 - Tell me about ...
 - Help me understand ...
 - What brought this to your attention? Why are you focusing on it now?
 - What's the biggest challenge facing you now?
 - What does your staff (or team) know about this situation?
- b. Understanding the problem...
 - What is the situation you're facing?
 - What do you mean by...?
 - Give me an example of...
 - How big is this problem? How long has it been an issue?
 - Why do you think the problem or situation is occurring?
 - What have you tried to do in the past to solve it?
 - What is the outcome you are looking for? What does success look like?
 - What will be different as a result of anything we do? What is the risk of doing nothing?
 - What's the best/worst/ideal thing that could happen?



- If this were already solved, what would it look like?
- What makes this important to you?
- What's driving your deadline?
- What happens if we DO/DON'T solve this problem?
- What drew you to this potential solution (if identified)?
- What kinds of information/data and other support can your organization provide?

c. Reflecting/Paraphrasing/Acknowledging statements...

- What you are saying is...
- What I heard you say was...
- If I understand you correctly...
- You see the issue as...
- You see the problem as...

3. **Getting at the Client's Wants...**

- a. What do you want/expect from me? How can I support you?
- b. What suggestions do you have about how I should approach this problem?
- c. What do you want to see people doing differently?
- d. What will be different as a result of?
- e. How do you see us working together?
- f. How would you like us to communicate with one another?
- g. How do you want to handle confidentiality?
- h. What do you want from your boss to make this successful?
- i. How do you want to work/interact/communicate with one another?

4. **While Closing the Meeting...**

- a. How do you feel about proceeding? What concerns do you have about proceeding?
- b. Do you have enough control over what we're trying to do?
- c. How much control do you want?
- d. What is your priority for this work? What is the budget?
- e. What could change the priority of this project?
- f. Is this something you want to do? What reservations do you have?
- g. What is the risk for you if this doesn't go well?
- h. What happens to you (and the unit) if this project fails or isn't successful?
- i. Who else will be impacted by this work? Who are the key stakeholders?

5. **Other statements and phrases...**

- a. Instead of "get your permission", try "get your agreement"
- b. Instead of "right and wrong"..."good or bad", try
 - "What's working/not working?"
 - "What would you do differently (or change)?"