

Leader As Coach | 8 Questions to Be Asking

Developing a coach approach to leading your team has the potential to create more self-sufficient and effective team members. *What is a "coach approach?"* Let's first start with what it's NOT.

I've seen many leaders over the years, jump in and want to solve their team members' so-called problem too quickly. New (and many experienced!) leaders might have the urge to offer their advice and solutions without really listening to the problem or the issue being presented. However, there's a better way.

A coach approach is one in which you:

- Believe your team wants to do their best
- Provide every-day moments for your team to grow and develop
- Create an environment where it's okay to be asking questions

I get it – solving problems and giving advice is where you, as a leader, believe you provide VALUE. I want to twist that on its side and invite you to take on a new look at this. Use the 8 questions below to let go of the belief (and need) to have to quickly offer up a solution. Write down your answers or give yourself a minute or two to reflect and think of answers before moving on to the next question.

What kind of leader brings out the best in you?
What's it like to work with that kind of leader?
Who, as a leader, do you want to be for your team?

What kind of team do you want to help create?
What values or attributes would this team have?
What beliefs would you have that allow your team to bring their best?
What beliefs are you holding onto that keep your team stuck?
What might "helping your team" really look like now?

Bonus (and truth-bomb) **Question:**

What if your value as a leader wasn't in your ability to quickly act and "save" your team members; **what would you do?**

Becoming more coach-like is about creating that environment where your team gets to show up, be resourceful and whole. Resist the urge to offer up a quick solution or idea and turn that urge into one that asks a thought-provoking question.

Thought-provoking questions are one's you don't know that answer to.

There is no "right" or "wrong" answers to thought-provoking questions. They aren't questions to lead your team to an end you already have in mind. They most certainly are not statements disguised as questions. You know what I mean. *"What if you did this first and then that – how might that make things easier?"* NO. That's you trying to give a solution.

Thought-provoking questions are full of possibilities.

The Coach Approach in 8 Questions*

1. What do you want? or What's going to be most helpful in how we use our meeting time today?
 - *This kind of questions sets the stage for your team member to identify a goal for your discussion.*
2. What's most important about that for you right now?
 - *This kind of question anchors in their WHY – without asking “why is that important.” Why questions tend to put folks on the defensive (see the Peter Block resource on the last page).*
3. What's the current situation look like?
 - *This kind of question has one look at the “today” of things.*
4. What are some of the obstacles that might pop up?
 - *This is getting one to start looking ahead, towards that future state.*
5. How might you go about taking on (a specific obstacle)?
 - *This invites an exploration on potential ideas and possible mini solutions.*
6. What else?
 - *This is powerful – as it triggers the brain to think even deeper. As a leader, if you can practice this question, it also sets the tone for not just stopping at the first idea (even if it seems like a winner!).*
7. What do you imagine you'd need to move forward?
 - *This starts to generate that forward momentum and action AND it's their solution. Buy-in is always easier when it's their idea to implement and not you telling them what to do. Be sure to use a version of the “what else?” question to generate multiple options.*
8. How might it feel like to accomplish this?
 - *Anchoring into a positive emotion creates a sense of resourcefulness that can lead to the confidence and comfort needed to take action.*

***Bonus Question:** What small action do you want to take because of our conversation today?

- *This is probably one of the more important questions to be asking – but you need to set it all up before diving into quick action. Additionally, it's in small, consistent action one can see results. Help folks break down big tasks into manageable chunks so that they experience that sense of accomplishment. This feeling is how one creates momentum and can stay the course.*

Thought-provoking questions are your superpower.

Want even more resources – go to my [Resource](#) page for FR*EE downloadable tools, eBook and even a webinar

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Even More Resources.

There are two books that have been pivotal to my coaching leaders to be more effective with their teams:

The Coaching Habit – *Michael Bungay Stainer's book is my go-to for learning about how to simplify questions as I coach leaders. It's the #1 book I recommend to my clients when they want to be a "better leader" or are struggling with how to engage their teams. [Link to book.](#)*

The Answer to Yes is How – *Peter Block's book has been on my shelf for years and really influenced my curiosity and desire to be asking better questions. Thought-provoking questions avoid starting with "Why." "How" is a great starting place because it invites the brain to dig deeper, to explore. You can see from a couple of my "How" questions above I usually follow that up with "might" – which I believe is an level-setting phrase that indicates there are many options to explore and I'm not looking for the one "right" answer (because it doesn't exist!). Sometime people just need a nudge, or permission, to say what they are thinking. [Link to book.](#)*