

# Impact!

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## ASKING QUESTIONS EFFECTIVELY

Since most people would rather talk than listen, aware communicators provide opportunities for their listeners to talk. Asking questions indicates to your listeners that you're interested in their opinions and helps you discover their needs, concerns, attitudes and business realities. Asking questions also allows your listeners to hear and clarify their own thoughts, and can help you better understand your clients' needs.

The object of a good question is a good answer. Think about what you don't know and need to know to accomplish your goal, so that when you ask questions, you know exactly *what* you need to know and *why*.

- Take your time when you ask questions. Be conversational and use silence to give the listener time to hear and absorb the question. Give them even more time to develop their answers.
- Make your question clear, precise, and short. That way you will be more assured of a quality answer.
- Ask one question at a time. Multi-part questions are hard for the listener to remember and harder to answer.
- Make the intention of your question a desire to understand rather than to "show how smart you are."
- As the listener responds, take time to listen and then think about what you've heard before asking follow-up questions.
- Determine if you need to paraphrase in order to better understand the response or acknowledge the emotion or meaning behind it.
- Ask closed-ended or open-ended questions by design, not by accident. Closed-ended questions start with verbs (can you, will you, do you, are you) and often produce yes or no answers. Open-ended questions start with what, how, why and result in more information. Both are worthwhile when used by design

**D** If you are not *absolutely sure* of your clients' needs, ask what they are.