



Managing Conflict Between Individuals Unconditionally Positive Questions

Asking unconditionally positive questions requires a positive response. This generates conversations about success, strengths, interest etc that we need to build on to become more successful and fulfilled in both our work and personal lives. The power of such questions is easy to uncover. Just ask them and see how much better the conversations you begin to have are. People like to talk about what makes them feel good.

However, it can sometimes feel uncomfortable and contrived at first. So here are some suggestions to help you get started.

1. What is the most interesting thing that you are working on right now?
2. We've had a really good safety (or quality) performance over the last (time period). What have we been doing well to achieve that?
3. You seem very motivated today. Why is that?
4. What did you like about that meeting / presentation / training
5. It's been a while since we have had a chance to talk. What's been going well for you since last time?

Don't forget you can always use these questions as a follow up to thanking someone for something. For example

6. Someone told me that they were happy you helped them yesterday. I want to thank you for being supportive. What could we do more of around here to make more people want to do that?
7. Thank you for your additional efforts on safety (could be any subject) this last month. What positive things can we do to get more people involved like you are?
8. I think what you did there was excellent. Please help me to understand why you were able to achieve that. How can we inspire that same behavior in others?

A simple 'thank you' has a very positive effect and having a good, positive conversation afterwards shows people that you really care about the subject and value their input on making improvements.

Once you know what motivates a person you can share information or ideas with them about that. This goes further than an unconditionally positive question. It generates an unconditionally positive relationship.

In Marcus Buckingham's book 'The One Thing...' he concludes that the one thing that makes a great manager is that they understand the strengths of and care about the people who work for them. What better way to develop that understanding than by the use of unconditionally positive questions.

Managing Conflict – Interview Guide

To be used prior to facilitating a situation between two individuals in conflict. You might consider using this inquiry guide with everyone in the department or team or a larger group. There are many ways to work with individuals, consider interviewing each of them separately using this interview guide or to have them separately complete this questionnaire. Once you have the positive topic (what they want more of) you may wish to slightly modify this guide.

Reflections in preparation for consultation

Please consider these questions and make notes on a separate sheet prior to arriving at our meeting on _____ at _____. I understand the goal of meeting is to act on your willingness to elicit agreements for a more harmonious working relationship. I salute you both!

1. Describe a time when you worked in a situation that was completely harmonious. What were the conditions and circumstances that created a feeling of harmony and collegiality? Where was it? Who was involved? Make a lengthy list.
2. From the list above, select three qualities that are important to you in any working relationship and define them thoroughly.
3. Describe ANYTHING that is working about your current work relationship. Try to make a list here too.
4. Describe what you would like MORE OF as you continue to work with this person and with this organization.

Thank you for taking time to reflect on these questions. I look forward to meeting together