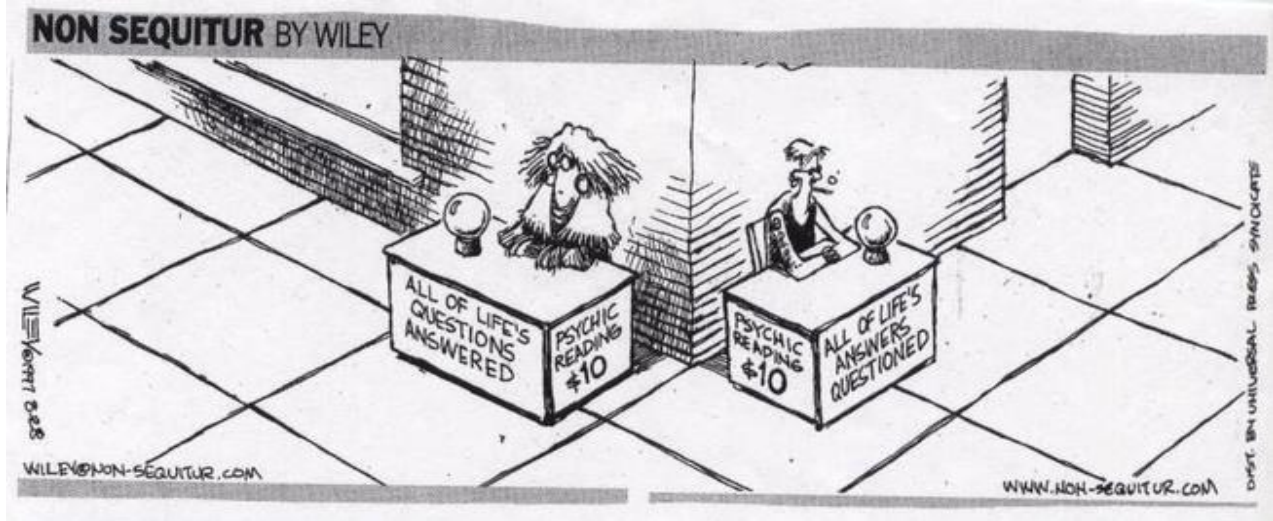


Coaching Tip: Powerful Questions



In our culture, we tend to value the “right answer” over the “right question.” We are taught this in school, and it is demanded of us in the workplace. The one exception to this is (and should be): **coaching**.

As coaches, we know (because of our investigation of appreciative inquiry) that questions are critical. We want the local Leagues that we are coaching to set their own goals, generate their own options, and to evaluate their progress. As Cooperrider and Whitney note in their book, “Appreciative Inquiry involves the art and practice of asking questions that strengthen a system’s capacity to heighten positive potential.”

How do we get to that place of positive potential? We have to ask powerful questions that open up the resources from within those being coached to surface new insights and answers. *The Art of Powerful Questions* reminds us that a “powerful” question:

- Generates curiosity in the listener
- Stimulates reflective conversation
- Is thought-provoking
- Surfaces underlying assumptions
- Invites creativity and new possibilities
- Generates energy and forward movement
- Channels attention and focuses inquiry
- Stays with participants
- Touches a deep meaning
- Evokes more questions

The publication also explains that a powerful question has the capacity to ‘travel well’ – to spread beyond the place where it began into larger networks of conversation. And, questions that “travel well” are often the key to change.

What does a powerful question look like? Here are some questions that can stimulate new knowledge and creative thinking in a wide variety of situations (including a coaching call):

- What question, if answered, could make the most difference to the future (of your specific situation)?
- What is important to you about (the specific situation) and why do you care?
- What is emerging here for you? What new connections are you making?
- What is missing from this picture so far? What is it we're not seeing? What do we need more clarity about?
- If there was one thing that hasn't yet been said in order to reach a deeper level of understanding, what would that be?
- What would it take to create change on this issue?
- How can we support each other in taking the next steps? What unique contribution can we each make?
- What conversation, if begun today, could ripple out in a way that would create new possibilities for the future?

RESOURCES/REFERENCES:

["Appreciative Inquiry and Powerful Questions"](#) (Good two-page resource compiled for a conference sponsored by the Minnesota Dept of Health. Much of the content here is extracted from this secondary resource.)

[The Art of Powerful Questions: Catalyzing Insight, Innovation, and Action](#) by Juanita Brown, David Isaacs, and Eric E. Vogt (Publication can be downloaded.)

Appreciative Inquiry: A Positive Revolution in Change by D.L. Cooperrider and Diana Whitney