



HEATHER KAY

FOUNDER OF READY, AIM → IMPACT



Just Asking... Why Questioning Increases Trust

I remember an exercise where there were 2 circles of people. The outside circle was facing in and the inside circle was facing out – so that the people in both circles could see each other. The goal of the exercise was simple – in 5 seconds, make a decision if you would trust this person...and then move on to the next person and replicate.

There were people with whom I felt an instant connection and immediately trusted and others who, I did not. There was no rhyme or reason – some were men and some were women. Some were tall and others short. Some were people of color and others were Caucasian. But the majority of people with whom I came in contact with, I trusted.

When I spoke to my friend, she felt the opposite, saying that how could she trust someone whom she didn't know. She needed to speak with them and have them earn her trust. Simply meeting someone wasn't the way that a relationship built on trust worked for her.

We all agree that trust is the foundation of a team. Without trust, you can't be yourself and therefore, may not feel comfortable sharing your opinions without fear of retribution. You may not feel that the team is open to hearing other opinions and that they are bobbleheading through conversations.

But one additional piece shines through for me when creating trust – **the ability to question.**

Picture yourself meeting with your team and someone is presenting on a topic you don't understand. The content doesn't make sense to you, and you aren't clear on the goal of the meeting. Everyone else seems to be “in the know.”

**“THE ABILITY TO ASK
QUESTIONS THE
LIKELINESS OF YOUR
INCREASES YOUR
SUCCESS”**

What do you do?

1. **Do nothing** – if you just keep your head down, everyone will think that you are aligned
2. **Lean over and ask a trusted colleague** – they may be able to briefly explain what's going on
3. **Wait until the meeting is over** and connect with a trusted colleague – those bathroom meetings are always the most influential
4. **Raise your hand** and ask the leader to explain the situation.

Most people will choose option 1, 2 or 3 out of fear and embarrassment. But ask yourself why? Is it because you don't trust that your leader or colleagues will treat you with respect? Or that a negative impression will be created?

Change the paradigm – what would it look like if you felt confident to ask clarifying questions? If you could challenge others, respectfully, to gain more understanding? If you could share how you truly felt about topics or presentations? More importantly, how would the outcomes differ?

The ability to ask questions makes people feel heard and valued, provides you with the content that you need to be effective in your role, helps clarify information for the team, and increases the likeliness of your success.

While creating trust takes time, effort and resilience, understanding that you may need to behave differently and push the envelope by asking the questions that are on your mind, and most likely others. This may change the outcomes for the better.

