



# The Art of Asking Questions

Presented by IMA Leadership Academy

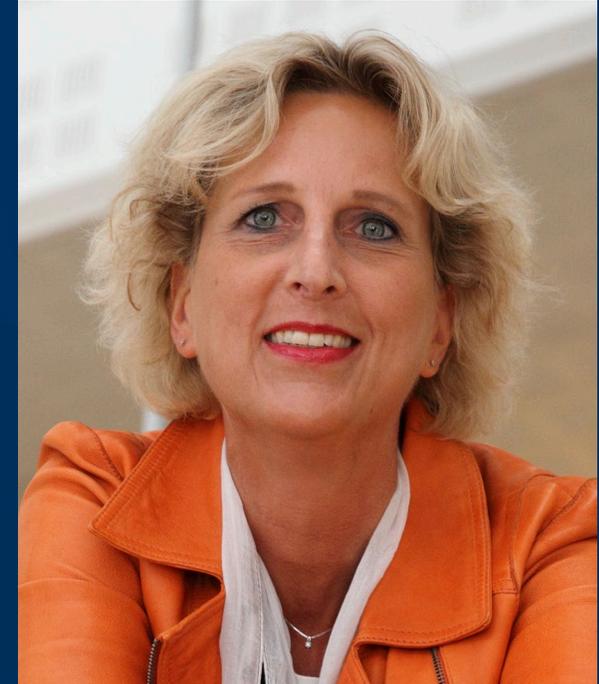
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The Association of  
Accountants and  
Financial Professionals  
in Business

# Moderator

**Femke Aarts, MBA CMA CFE**  
**(Non) Executive Board Member – CFO**  
**Executive Consultant**  
**The Hague**



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Accountants and  
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# Presenter

**Sunil Deshmukh, CMA,  
M.Com, LL.B, FCMA, FCS – India  
ACC – ICF USA**

**Certified Executive Coach**

**Member**

IMA® Global Board of Directors

**Past President**

IMA® Pune and IMA Mumbai Chapters

**Faculty Member**

IMA Leadership Academy



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# Course Goal and Agenda

Our goal in this course is to **examine how asking better questions** can help management accountants improve their skills and develop their leadership abilities.



- Introduction
- Good Questions
- Questioning Techniques
- Questioning Models
- Close

# Learning Objectives

AFTER THIS SESSION, ATTENDEES WILL BE ABLE TO:



**DEFINE** the characteristics of a good question.



**SUMMARIZE** the benefits of asking good questions.



**IDENTIFY** techniques for asking good questions.



**DESCRIBE**



# Reflection

1

In your experience, what makes a question a **good question**?

2

Why is the skill of **asking questions** important?



# Good Questions





# Characteristics of Good Questions

RELEVANT

CONCISE

Clear

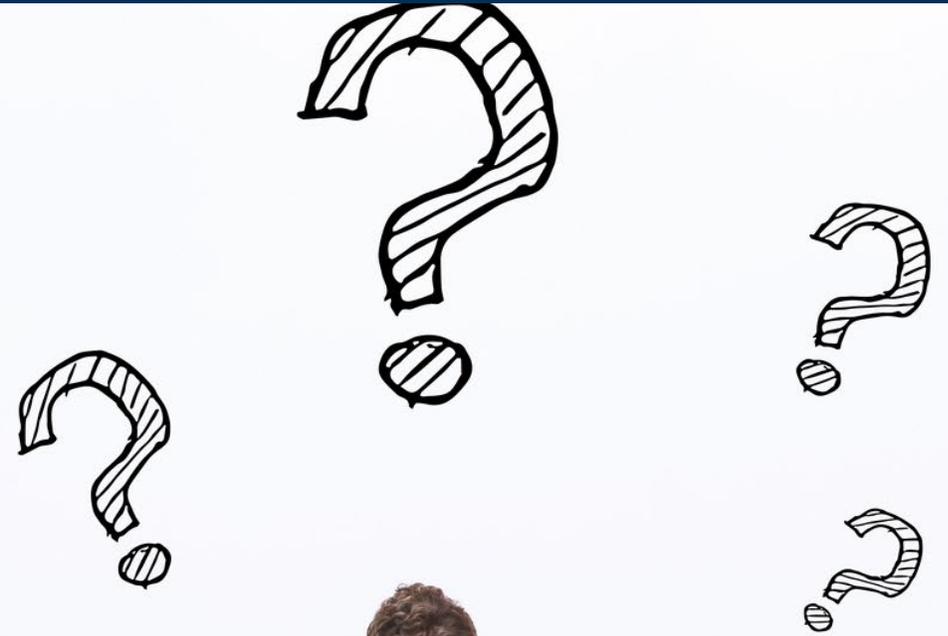
Purposeful

GUIDING, BUT NOT LEADING

STIMULATES THINKING

Single dimensional

ALLOW FOR IMAGINATION AND CREATIVITY



# Good Coaching Questions



## Open-ended

Speak to the other person's  
needs and values

Support the other person's exploration of themselves

Support the other person's growth



# Why We Ask Questions

- To **obtain** information
- To **focus** a conversation
- To **express** an interest in the other person
- To **clarify** facts
- To **explore** personality and/or cultural differences causing difficulty
- To **test** knowledge
- To **add** a further thought and fuel innovation
- To **include** all members of a group
- To **motivate** more discussion of a topic
- To **gather** attention

# Poll Question #1

What is the **most frequent reason** you ask questions?

- a. To **obtain** information
- b. To **focus** a conversation
- c. To **express** interest in the other person
- d. To **clarify** facts
- e. To **test** knowledge
- f. To **add** a further thought and fuel innovation
- g. To **motivate** more discussion
- h. Another reason



# Poll Question #1 Results



# Benefits of Asking Questions—for Organizations

- Increases alignment
- Builds a learning organization
- Encourages accountability
- Builds unity
- Encourages collaboration
- Improves decision-making and problem-solving
- Promotes clear, logical, and strategic thinking
- Promotes a more positive attitude toward change
- Encourages stronger teamwork
- Fuels innovation
- Can diffuse tense situations
- Helps employees feel valued
- Provides insights about an individual or team to improve management



# Benefits of Asking Questions—for Individuals

- Greater self-awareness
- Greater self-confidence, openness, and flexibility
- Better listening and communication
- Better conflict management
- Greater understanding and skills in organizational realities
- Stronger commitment to learn and develop
- Helps you connect with people
- Can increase happiness
- Cultivates humility
- Challenges mindsets and helps get you out of ruts
- Demonstrates respect
- Opens you to new possibilities
- Helps you shift your point of view
- Helps you express empathy
- Opens the conversation to more questions



“

“With the sounding board of social media, it seems we speak more in declarative or exclamatory statements and less in questions. ... Curiosity deficit fuels division and separation and prevents us from building trusting, healthy connections. Let’s use our mental muscles to bend our exclamation points into question marks.”

—*From the preface of Ask Powerful Questions,  
by Will Wise and Chad Littlefield*

”



# Creating an Environment that Values Questions

- Value each **team member**
- Value **questions** more than answers
- Value the **potential** of your team
- Value the **improvement** of a good idea

# Consider

What is something you can do to “**bend our exclamation points into question marks**” as authors Will Wise and Chad Littlefield said?

In other words, how can you **ask more and better questions?**



# Poll Question #2

What is the **greatest benefit** you have experienced from asking questions?

- a. **New ideas** and/or insights I wouldn't have had otherwise
- b. **Learning** more in general
- c. **Felt** respected by others
- d. **Better connected** to coworkers
- e. **Increased alignment** with coworkers and management
- f. **Better performance management** of the team
- g. **One of the other benefits**



# Poll Question #2 Results



# Questioning Techniques



# Close-Ended and Open-Ended Questions



	CLOSE-ENDED	OPEN-ENDED
BEGIN WITH		
ANSWERS		
FEELINGS		
STYLE		
USEFUL FOR		

# Four Types of Questions

View of the Problem

Wide

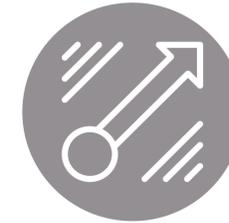


## ADJOINING

Explore related aspects of the problem

## ELEVATING

Raise broader issues and highlight big picture



Narrow



## CLARIFYING

Uncover the real intent of what is said.

## FUNNELING

Understand answers and challenge assumptions



Affirm what we know

Discover something new

Intent of the Question

# Poll Question #3

Of the four types of questions, which would you like to **use more often**?

- a. Clarifying
- b. Adjoining
- c. Funneling
- d. Elevating
- e. I don't know



# Poll Question #3 Results



# Goals in a Conversation

## Cooperative



- Build a relationship
- Accomplish a task
- Friendly colleagues

- Manager check-ins —supportive but also providing feedback and communicating expectations

## Competitive



- Seek to uncover sensitive information
- Allocate scarce resources
- Serve their own interests

# Tactics for Competitive Conversations



## CHALLENGE for the questioner:

The other person is reluctant to share information and may even lie.

## TACTICS:

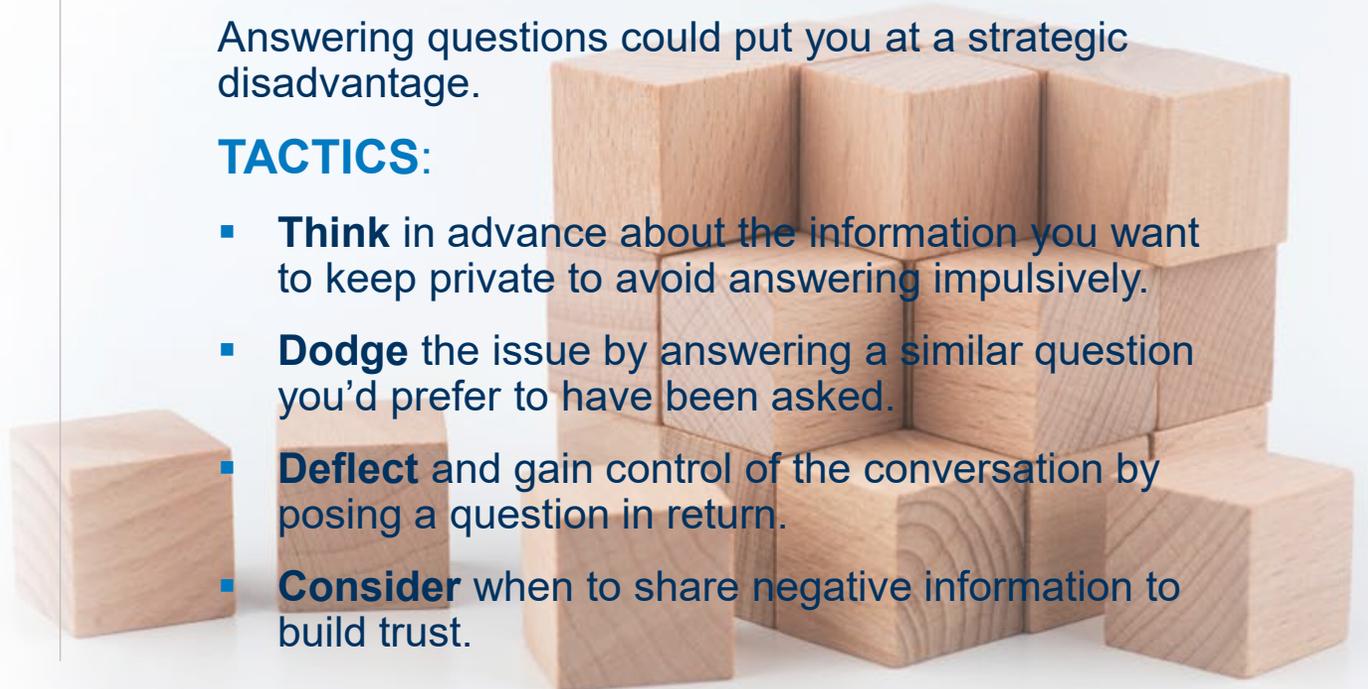
- **Ask** direct or close-ended questions to avoid evasive answers.
- **Ask** detailed follow-up questions (even if they're redundant) to pry out more information.
- **Frame** tough questions using pessimistic assumptions to reduce the likelihood that respondents will lie.
- **Ask** the most sensitive question first.

## CHALLENGE for the one being questioned:

Answering questions could put you at a strategic disadvantage.

## TACTICS:

- **Think** in advance about the information you want to keep private to avoid answering impulsively.
- **Dodge** the issue by answering a similar question you'd prefer to have been asked.
- **Deflect** and gain control of the conversation by posing a question in return.
- **Consider** when to share negative information to build trust.



# Tactics for Cooperative Conversations



## **CHALLENGE** for the questioner:

Friendly colleagues may shy away from conflict or hesitate to share bad news.

## **TACTICS:**

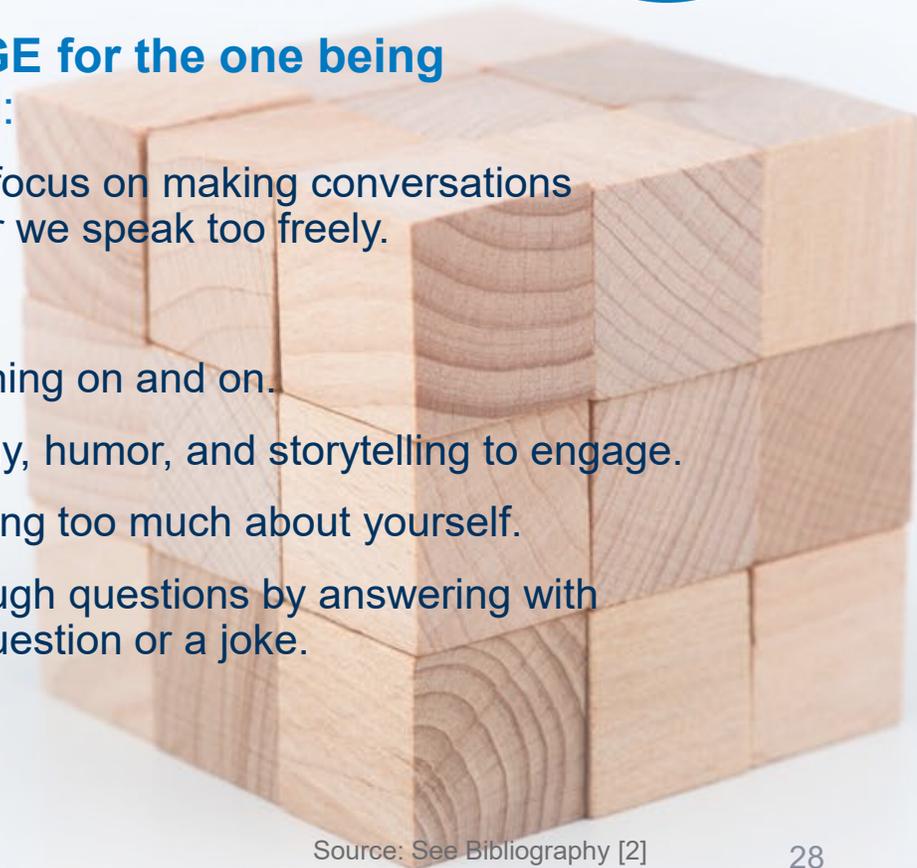
- Ask open-ended questions to draw out negative feedback.
- Begin with the least sensitive question.
- Frame tough questions using negative assumptions.

## **CHALLENGE** for the one being questioned:

We forget to focus on making conversations productive, or we speak too freely.

## **TACTICS:**

- Avoid droning on and on.
- Use energy, humor, and storytelling to engage.
- Avoid talking too much about yourself.
- Deflect tough questions by answering with another question or a joke.



# Additional Tactics

- **Prepare** by asking:
  - ❑ What is your purpose in asking questions?
  - ❑ What type of question should be asked?
  - ❑ Is the question appropriate to the person/group?
  - ❑ Is this the right time to ask questions?
  - ❑ How do I expect the other person to respond?
- **Know** when to keep questions open-ended
- **Get** the sequence right
- **Use** the right tone
- **Pay** attention to group dynamics
- **Use** silence
- **Favor** follow-up questions



# Consider

Think of **one questioning tactic** that you want to be sure to remember to use in the future.



# Poll Question #4

What kind of conversations do you find the **most challenging**?

- a. Competitive conversations where I am asking questions.
- b. Competitive conversations where I am answering questions.
- c. Cooperative conversations where I am asking questions.
- d. Cooperative conversations where I am answering questions.
- e. I'm not sure.



# Poll Question #4 Results



# Questioning Models

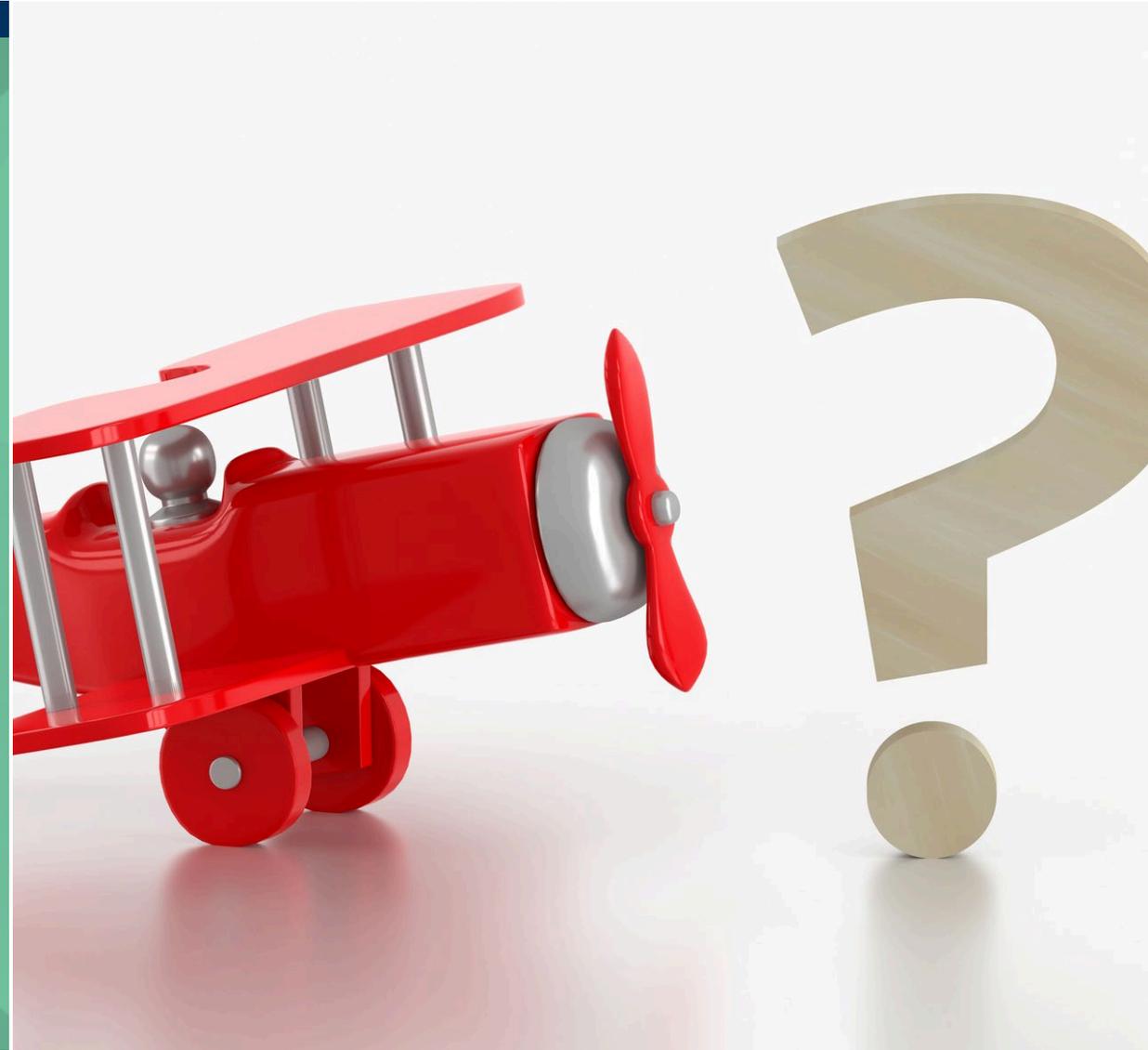


# Questioning Models

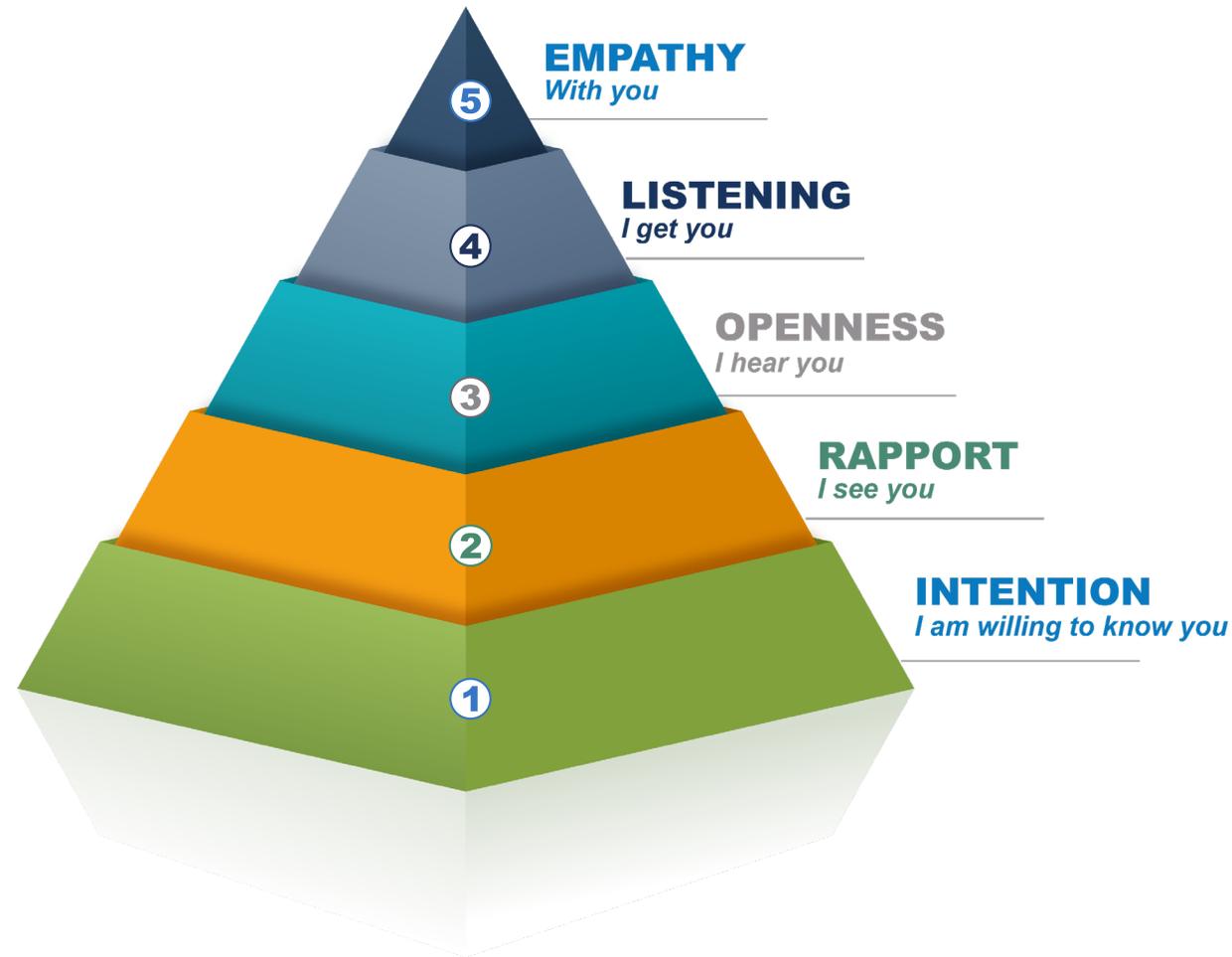
Question Pyramid

ORID Facilitation Framework

Five-Steps Model



# Asking Powerful Questions Pyramid



# ORID Facilitation Framework



## OBJECTIVE

Provide the context.  
Establish the facts and data sources behind the subject.



## REFLECTIVE

How people feel about the topic, likes and dislikes.



## INTERPRETIVE

Learn more about the topic.  
Identify what is important to them.



## DECISIONAL

What is our decision or response?

# Five-Steps Model (Steps 1-3)



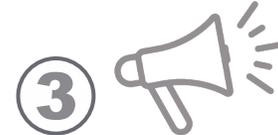
## FOCUS

- What specifically do I want to know?
- What information am I missing?
- Is this more than a simple YES or NO question?
- Am I going for deeper knowledge?



## PURPOSE

- Why am I asking this?
- Do I want to gather facts or opinions?
- Do I need simple clarification?
- Do I want to offer a different perspective?



## INTENT

- How do I want people to respond?
- Do I want the answer to be of help to others?
- Am I asking to start an argument or open a discussion?
- Is the question superficial?
- Am I asking out of frustration or curiosity?
- Do I really care about the answer?
- Am I willing to show respect to the person I'm asking?

# Five-Steps Model (steps 4-5)



## 4 FRAMING

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- Am I using easily understandable wording?
- Is my question neutral or does it contain bias or opinion?
- Is it too long or too short?
- Does it contain the focus of what I want to know?
- Does the question focus on only one thing?
- Is it muddled with other inquiries that don't belong?



## 5 FOLLOW-UP

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- Do I have any more specific questions to add?
- Will the person I'm asking be available for other questions if need be?
- If I still don't have the answer I need, what's my plan?
- What can I do if I still don't understand?

# Small Group Activity

Using the **eight questions** developed in the last small group activity, use the five steps and their exploratory points to see if you can **improve** the questions.



# Poll Question #5

Of the five steps (or characteristics), which do you think will be **most helpful** in creating better questions?

- a. Focus
- b. Purpose
- c. Intent
- d. Framing
- e. Follow-up



# Poll Question #5 Results



Close



# What Are Your Key Takeaways?

## GOOD QUESTIONS

Characteristics of good questions

Why we ask questions

Benefits for organizations and individuals

Social media impact

Creating an environment that values questions

## KEY TAKEAWAYS



## QUESTIONING TECHNIQUES

Close-ended and open-ended questions

Four types of questions

Tactics for competitive and cooperative conversations

Additional question tactics

## QUESTIONING MODELS

Asking Powerful Questions Pyramid

ORID Facilitation Framework

Five-Steps Model

# Learning Objectives, *revisited*

AFTER THIS SESSION, ATTENDEES WILL BE ABLE TO:



**DEFINE** the characteristics of a good question.



**SUMMARIZE** the benefits of asking good questions.



**IDENTIFY** techniques for asking good questions.



**DESCRIBE** various models for asking good questions.

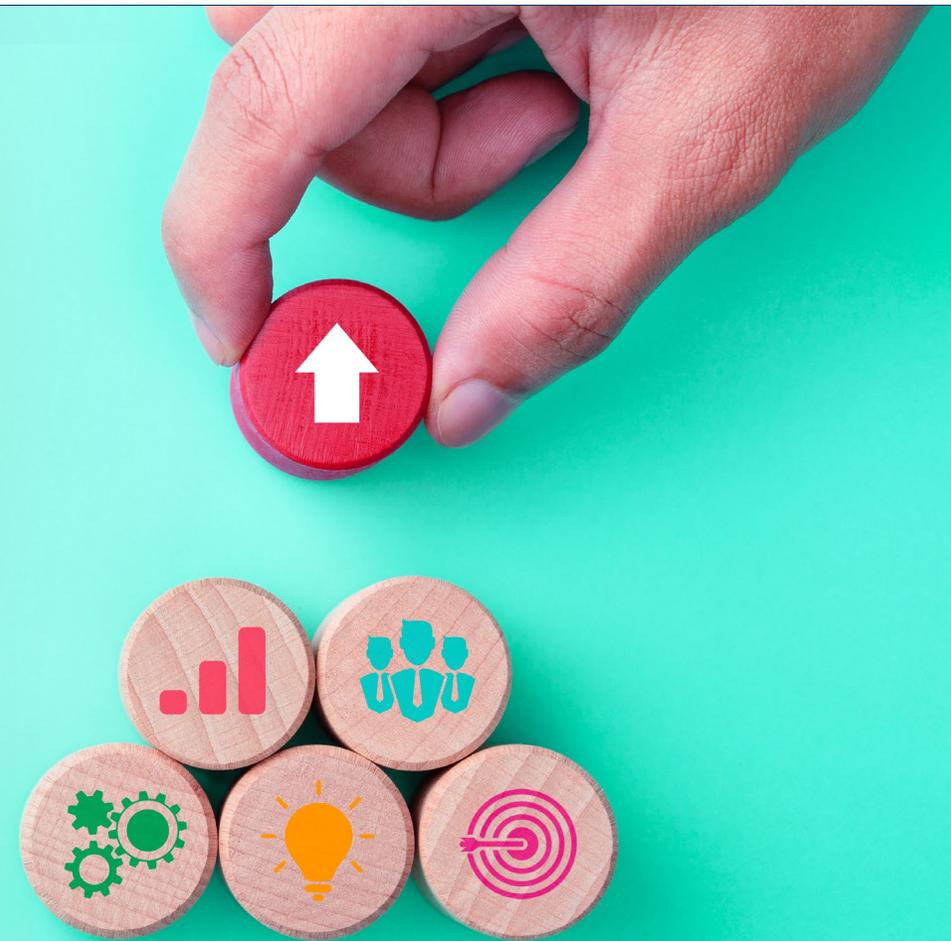


# 3-2-1 Action Plan

What are **3** things I learned or was reminded about in this workshop?

What are **2** things I can do with questions to be better at my job?

What is **1** thing I am going to do right away to ask better questions?



# Questions and Answers



**Sunil Deshmukh, CMA, M.Com, LL.B, FCMA,  
FCS – India, ACC – ICF USA**  
**Global Board Director**  
IMA® (Institute of Management Accountants)  
**Faculty Member**  
IMA Leadership Academy



**Femke Aarts, MBA CMA CFE**  
**(Non) Executive Board Member –**  
**CFO**  
**Executive Consultant**  
The Hague

# Thank You to Our Featured Presenter!

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M.Com, LL.B, FCMA, FCS – India  
ACC – ICF USA**

**Certified Executive Coach**

**Member**

IMA® Global Board of Directors

**Past President**

IMA® Pune and IMA Mumbai Chapters

**Faculty Member**

IMA Leadership Academy





10 Paragon Drive, Suite 1

Montvale, New Jersey

07645-1760

U.S.A.

(800) 638-4427

(201) 573-9000



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Accountants and  
Financial Professionals  
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