

Suggested Questions for Managers:

Get Better Results by Asking Better Questions

By David Lee

The following questions were developed by David Lee to stimulate conversations between managers and their direct reports. The questions are designed to elicit valuable feedback from individual team members to help supervisors and leaders improve how they manage and work with their direct reports.

To understand how to use these questions, read the full article in which these questions are explained. [Click here to access the article.](#)

1. When you think about managers you've had in the past, what have they done that has been the most helpful to you, both in terms of job satisfaction and in your ability to perform at your best?
2. When you think about managers you've had in the past, what did they do that was least helpful?
3. What did they do that was most frustrating?
4. Did they do things that killed your enthusiasm — or made you care a little less about going the extra mile — and if so, what did they do?
5. When you think about past employers, what did they do that was most helpful, both in terms of bringing out the best in you and in how happy you were working there?
6. When you think about past employers, what did they do that was least helpful, that bothered you the most?
7. When you left previous jobs, what made you think about looking elsewhere for work?
 - a. Follow-up question: Was there a “final straw” event, and if so, what happened and why was that the final straw?

- b. Follow-up question: What were some of the “little things” that happened that started to add up until you had enough?
8. What do I do that is most helpful to you, both in terms of job satisfaction and helping you be your best?
9. What do I do that is least helpful or most frustrating?
10. What could I do more of?
11. What’s something I haven’t been doing that would be helpful for me to start doing with you?
12. Can you give examples of how managers have given you feedback that wasn’t helpful?
(Note: for examples that aren’t self-evident, ask why it wasn’t helpful)
13. Can you give me examples of how managers — or other people — have given you feedback in a way that was helpful?
14. Each of us has our own preferences about how we like to receive appreciation; some approaches work for us and others don’t. Can you think of times you received appreciation when it was especially meaningful to you? What did the person do to make it meaningful?
 - a. Follow-up question: Can you think of times where someone expressed appreciation, but it didn’t feel meaningful or sincere, or maybe it felt awkward? Can you describe what made those situations not work for you?
 - b. Follow-up question: So, it sounds like *(summarize the themes you heard about what works and what doesn’t for this person)*, is that accurate? How would you modify what I said to make it 100% right on?
15. What about recognition? Each of us has our own preferences about how we like to receive recognition. What works for one person doesn’t necessarily work for another person. Can you describe situations where you received recognition where it was particularly meaningful and those where it wasn’t, or it was uncomfortable?
 - a. Follow-up question if they don’t describe why the situations had the effect they did: What about that approach made it meaningful? Or, what about that approach made it feel awkward?

- b. Follow-up question if they struggle coming up with examples: OK. How about in general terms, how do you like to receive recognition? What works for you and what doesn't?
16. Are there things our company does that interfere with you doing your job, or doing your job to the best of your ability?
 17. In the area of knowledge and skill development, are there particular areas you are most interested in cultivating?
 18. What do you see as your biggest strengths?
 19. Do you feel like you are getting enough opportunities to use your strengths, and if not, how might we work together to provide more?
 20. What about your job and working here is most meaningful to you, in the sense of "I'm making a difference in the world. What I do matters"?
 21. How connected do you feel to our mission and vision?
 22. Are there things that we could do to create a stronger connection?
 23. Do you feel like you are getting the training, coaching, technology, information, and other resources necessary to do your job well?
 - a. Follow-up question (for each area): Is there one thing we are doing that is most helpful?
 - b. Follow-up question (for each area): How can we do better in this area?
 24. What are your career goals — whether short or long term, or both?
 25. Are there ways we can play a more helpful role in helping you grow professionally and achieve those goals?
 26. If you were to hand someone a short "Owner's Manual to Bringing Out the Best in Me," what would be the top takeaways you would want them to remember, both the Dos and the Don'ts?