

## **WHY QUESTIONS? WHY WE HAVE THE GROUND RULE OF “STATEMENTS CAN BE MADE ONLY IN RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS”**

No form of communication is as powerful as a question. Great questions have changed our lives, and indeed, have changed the world!

In Action Learning, group members are required to use questions because questions have the unique power and ability to accomplish all 4 of the WIAL solution spheres.

### **1. Solve urgent complex problems**

Questions are necessary for individuals and groups to be creative and to find breakthrough solutions. All the great inventions in the history of the world were the result of a question asked by the inventor. Einstein attributed his success in solving the problems of the universe to his ability to ask questions. Questions cause the brain to operate in ways that are not possible with statements. The better the questions, the better will be the ideas and strategies that emerge. Questions which are asked of the entire group multiply the potential for wonderful creativity.



### **2. Build great teams**

Questions and responding to questions keeps everyone engaged and focused. We need to listen carefully so that we can answer a question as well as to generate new questions. Listening to someone's questions or asking that person a question builds an atmosphere of respect and support. It shows that we care about the other person and that we are interested in who she is, her experiences, her ideas, and her perspectives. We like, even love, people who ask us questions that give us an opportunity to “shine”, to add value and benefits to others. Friendships are built on questions that allow us to help and be helped.

### **3. Develop leadership skills**

Every leadership skill can be developed and demonstrated by the use of a great question. When you ask a pertinent, clear question, you show that you are listening, that you care, that you are supportive. Great questions can demonstrate that you are creative, a systems thinker or a critical thinker. Asking questions of the group help to build teams and show commitment to their/our success. Questions can show empathy and courage much more effectively than can statements. Of course, the greatest leadership skill is the ability to ask questions – and that skill can be practiced continuously in every action learning session.

#### 4. Transform the organization's culture and capability

While people are engaged in the action learning process, they are developing inquiring skills, knowledge, values, and mindsets that are brought back to the organization and consciously and unconsciously affect their every action and interaction. They ask more and better questions which, as occurred within the action learning group, now have a similar impact outside the group and in their organization. The final question asked by the action learning coach at every action session – “how can we apply what we have experienced here to our work in the organization?” – causes us to explore how we can use the questioning/action learning process as well as the newly-acquired skills and knowledge to empower the organization to greater success.

Written by Dr. Michael Marquardt, MALC and founder of WIAL  
/published2017