

Tip Sheet Series

Want to encourage innovation in your organisation? Become a question asker!

Once upon a time having all the right answers would have got you great results. But today in the innovation age it is much more important to ask the right questions.

Within any organisation good questions:

- encourage new ideas,
- challenge unproductive mindsets
- tap into people's vast store of unique wisdom and experiences.

It is a sure-fire way to kick-start creative problem-solving, generate innovation and harness a team's talent.



Human evolution has been driven by asking questions and then striving to answer them. Organisational evolution and sustainability depends on this as well.

Within any workplace people wear many hats and fulfil many roles. They are simultaneously – problem-solvers, communicators, researchers, facilitators, teachers, learners. So if there are challenges or issues that need to be resolved, then they themselves need to take responsibility for

- finding the relevant information
- sifting through it
- deciding what's important and helpful
- applying it
- liaising and collaborating with others
- enacting the solution
- evaluating it
- reflecting on its effectiveness
- improving on it
- then doing it all over again – ONLY BETTER.



Can you imagine the impact this would have on your organisation?



Creating a self-reflective and mindful workforce will generate the momentum for innovation. What's more, this approach gives people the important opportunity to develop and nurture their own capacities and moves the organisation towards becoming a *learning organisation*.

So why don't leaders within organisations lead with questions rather than answers? There are lots of reasons – here are a few.

- It is seen as a weakness
- It is often easier and quicker to provide an answer than to formulate a good question.
- There can be a real self-gratification buzz to solve someone else's problem by giving them an answer.

Unfortunately the long term result can be a stagnating staff.



Nurturing a 'question-asking mentality' among your people will make them and your organisation more

- Responsive to change
- Adaptable and independent
- Innovative.

We all know information doesn't stay current for long. Yesterday's solutions won't solve tomorrow's problems. Asking good questions helps people to keep their thinking fresh, their outcomes innovative and their careers moving forward.

There are some examples of the kinds of questions that prompt higher-order thinking and problem-solving that leads to innovation. (Notice 'Why are you behind schedule?' isn't on the list).

- **Can this be done in any other way?**
- **What resources have we *never* used?**
- **Who else has done this kind of thing and what can we learn from their experience?**
- **What does this situation/issue/challenge look like if we shift our perspective to a completely different point of view?**
- **What do we want to achieve when we've finished?**
- **To what extent does this approach/outcome meet our goals/ strategic plan?**
- **How does this impact on our clients/stakeholders/customers?**

Dr. Irena Yashin-Shaw's cutting edge keynote presentations and workshops offer unique perspectives on how to achieve a culture of creativity and innovation within your workplace or team. They are ideal for professional development days, strategic planning meetings, conferences and think-tanks. Contact Irena for more information.

Based on her highly acclaimed and internationally published doctoral research into creative problem-solving, she delivers meaty content and inspired insights packaged in a highly entertaining format.



Her *keynote* topics include:

- *From Creativity to Innovation*: Discover the secrets of how to generate, capture and implement your great ideas!
- *From Wow to Kapow*: How to turbo-charge your thinking and problem-solving by learning to use some simple but powerful cognitive tools.
- *Thinking Strategically in a World of Change*: Understand the global trends that require us to maintain a mindset of innovation and how we can meet that challenge on a day to day basis.
- *The Power of Perspective Shifting*: How to accelerate business success and live life to the fullest by seeing things from different points of view.
- *Leading for Creativity and Innovation*: Understand the Twenty-First century leadership skills that will create a responsive and adaptable organisation through an autonomous workforce, skilled at problem-solving and committed to life-long learning.

Her *workshop* topics include:

- *Innovation Skills for the Public Sector*: Shows public sector leaders how to innovate effectively in a risk-averse environment.
- *Thinking Beyond Boundaries*: Learn a proven method to unlock the enormous creative potential stored within all of us.
- *Thinking Leadership*: How to become a visionary leader who empowers and nurtures the talents, creativity and cognitive capacities of your people through question-asking, reflective thinking and effective problem-solving.

Feel free to pass on this tip sheet and print it out or use it in your own publications. Just include the following tag line "This article was written by Dr. Irena Yashin-Shaw PhD of *Innovation Edge* and *Speaking Edge*. Irena is an creativity and communication specialist who shows people how to think to innovate and speak to influence. Contact Irena on 0411330301 or irena@speakingedge.com.au