



Are you an 'Asker' or a 'Teller'?



BETTER QUESTIONS E-Book

Introduction

Thank you for completing our online quiz – Are you an Asker or a Teller? If you have been honest there is a good chance that you will have realised by completing this that you are more naturally a ‘teller’ than an ‘asker’, which appears to be a common trait of our human nature. The article below is written by our founder, Lindsay Tighe, and outlines the reasons for us being more natural ‘tellers’ as well as providing some initial thoughts about why you might wish to change this approach to a more empowering one.

Are you an Asker or Teller?

In this EBook I invite you to reflect further on the idea of you being a ‘teller’ or an ‘asker’. The starting point for our journey to being a Potentialiser® (our term for a person who asks Better Questions to release the potential in others) has to be some honest self reflection about what we are currently doing in our roles, particularly in relation to us being a more natural ‘teller’, as opposed to an ‘asker’. In our training programs we share the idea that as human being we typically do too much telling and it is always interesting to observe people’s reactions to this statement.

I find that some people smile and nod and readily agree with the idea, whilst some sit their contemplating unsure about what their reaction to it is. Occasionally I get people that outright reject the idea on the basis that they advise me that they don’t tell, they provide advice, help or suggestions. Whilst I do acknowledge that there are different ways to ‘tell’, some being more direct than others, in my opinion all of the above responses are a version of telling, albeit subtlety makes it appear less so.

Once I clarify what I mean by ‘telling’, it is rare for anyone to disagree with the idea that we do too much of it. You will have already completed our questionnaire that invited you to honestly answer some reflective questions that enabled you to consciously see and acknowledge where you are habitually falling into a more ‘telling’ role. I think it is important to acknowledge that we shouldn’t be too surprised by this awareness given that during our lifetimes we have probably had some significant ‘telling’ role models such as:

- Our own parents
- Teachers
- Managers or bosses

If telling is the natural response that is role modelled to us, then it is no wonder that we will more naturally practice doing this as our habitual response style when asked for help or advice. Most of us believe that we are helping people when we offer advice and guidance and whilst this may be true on some occasions, if we do it too often then we can actually disempower the person which in the long term can lead to adverse consequences.

So rather than resist the idea that we are natural 'tellers', I recommend that we embrace it in the knowledge that once we become aware of our natural telling style we can't help but start to catch ourselves in the act of doing it which then creates a platform for us to choose to change what we are doing. If we remain unconscious of our habits we are not in a position to change them, but once we are conscious we then have the ability to make a different choice.

One lady that did our training advised me that afterwards not only did she keep catching herself reverting to the natural 'teller' response with her kids and friends she also noticed how much other people were doing this in response to her, which she discovered she didn't like any more! Becoming conscious of your natural style, then has to be a great starting point on the journey to being a Potentialiser® because once you acknowledge your natural style you can make a conscious choice to change. Start reflecting on the responses you make to people when they ask you for help and see what you notice about yourself – are you an asker or a teller? Happy reflecting!

In this reflection I would also like to invite you to start to become more aware of what the adverse consequences will be if you do inadvertently have a habitual response of 'telling'. As I said previously most of us 'tell' in the belief that we are helping and, whilst this may be true sometimes, very often we are not respecting that the other person has ideas, wisdom and knowledge of their own.

The very fact that we offer up our own advice and ideas often restricts the other person being able to consider their own thoughts and ideas, which over the long term can lead to:

- A loss of confidence
- Dependency – reliance on you for advice and guidance
- An inability to make decisions
- Less creativity – fewer ideas are brought to the discussion
- No learning, development or growth

It can be quite shocking to realise that ‘telling’ can be so inhibiting and I know personally that once I became aware of the adverse consequences of my advice giving I was able to change my approach very quickly. One quote that really enables me to remember to ‘ask’ and not ‘tell’ comes from Plato – “We all have innate wisdom, we just need to asked the right question.”

What I have found since becoming a more natural ‘asker’ is that quote is indeed true – people are far more amazing and have so much more potential than they realise. It is the very fact that we treat the other person like they are an amazing human being and ask them Better Questions that is the key to unlocking and releasing this amazingness. I often dream and imagine what the world would be like if we all used the skill of asking Better Questions and went around with the intention of releasing the amazingness in each other – how wonderful!

Want to know more and learn to ask Better Questions?

Lindsay writes regular blogs and articles and her website www.betterquestions.com.au provides lots of tools and resources to help support you on your journey to being a Better Questioner. It includes books, Ebooks, online training programs and workshops. If you haven’t already done so please register on the site by [clicking here](#) and you will receive our weekly Question of the Week email as well as special offers and newsletters.