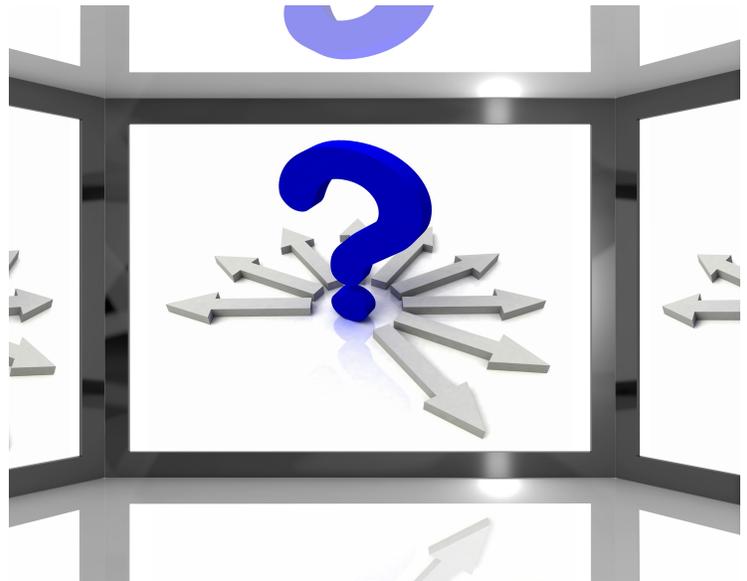




## How To Ask Savvy Questions

As we all know, one of the keys to building good relationships is to get to know someone; to find out about them – how they think, what’s important to them, etc. Most of us are good at asking the usual business-related questions such as “*What is this project about?*”, “*Who else is on the team?*”, “*What’s the goal?*”, etc.



What we need are questions that go beyond the shallow without getting overly personal or intrusive. Once you master this technique for Savvy Questions, you’ll find you are learning more and more about another person.

Here are examples of Savvy Questions that will help you get to know a person beyond business. As you can see, the key is to ask open questions. Note the words in bold italics— they are crucial.

For example you might be asking someone about their favorite hobby, such as golf:

“*What’s **important about** golf to you?*”

“*What you do off the course **that reveals** you’re a golfer?*”

“*Where do you **most like** to play? **\*What makes** it your favorite?*”

“*What does being a golfer **say about who you are?***”

“**Who else** do you like to do this with? \***What makes** them so enjoyable?”

“When **do you ever not** enjoy golf?”

“How does golf **impact how you live your life?**”

Clearly, these questions are a little different than the usual questions you might ask someone about golf such as “*What do you shoot*”, “*Who would be your favorite foursome?*”, “*Did you watch the Open on TV?*”, etc. The usual, familiar questions are quick, easy to answer. The Savvy Questions require a little more thought in order to respond; hence you’re learning more about the person. So the takeaway for this technique is to focus on questions that require more than the usual off-the-cuff response.

Also notice the words that start most of these questions: “*What*” and “*How*”. These two words usually signal open questions, questions that invite information and give you more understanding. They are magic because they invite more information. For example, instead of asking “*Did you watch the Open on TV?*”, you ask, “*What did you think about the Open?*”

The bold italicized words are key phrases you can use in many contexts. Once you get accustomed to using these phrases, this way of asking questions will start to flow naturally. It’s kind of like learning a new language – soon you’ll be fluent and readily create thoughtful questions in your personal style.

Very Savvy Questioners also use the little prompt questions, such as “*Say more*”, or “*How are you thinking about...?*”, “*What did you like about it?*”, or “*Say more/tell me more about your thinking*”. You may be amazed at how much people open up. So when someone comments about something

they like, don't let the opportunity pass you by. Respond with *"What did you like about it?"*

\*Here is typically where you'd use the word, *"Why?"* *"Why"* is pretty innocuous in this context, but for the most part, we recommend avoiding the word *"Why"*. *"Why"* elicits defensiveness in some people because it asks them to explain themselves, which can be perceived as discounting. If you've ever been victim to the sales technique of repeatedly asking you *"why"*, you will recall how defensive you felt—likely even irritated. Leave most of your *why's* to the 3-year olds.

[A reminder on the types of questions: Open questions elicit more information. Closed questions can be answered with a yes or no. Leading questions direct the response. Limiting questions limit the response options.]