

Sample Questions for Campaign Coaching

Asking the right question can move mountains on a coaching call. Crafting great coaching questions takes practice, but it's a skill any coach can learn. It's often helpful to prepare questions in advance of a coaching session, especially when you anticipate emotional challenges or hard decisions coming up.

Effective questions are open-ended (not a 'yes-no' answer), answerable (not too complex or theoretical), and generate options, ideas, or insights of the organizer. And they avoid being 'advice with a question mark attached,' i.e. "You should do this tactic next, don't you think?"

Here are some example questions to use for your next coaching call. It's best to remix them for your particular context, and not to ask them all at once. For more background on the strategy concepts below, check out the [Campaign Strategy Workbook](#).

SUPPORT QUESTIONS

Questions for Sharpening Assessments

- How do you know that? What kinds of evidence do you have?
- When have you seen that happen?
- What would have to happen to change that?
- If you say "Yes" to this opportunity, what will you have to say "No" to, to pull it off?

Questions for Getting "Under the Surface"

- You mentioned a challenge your group is dealing with. Let's slow down a bit. What *else* might be going on here? What aspect might be harder to talk about, but is also there?
- Sounds like [this person] has been challenging. If there were a challenge *underneath* this one dynamic, that might be a bigger pattern or question for us, what would it be?
- We've covered the urgent challenges rising to the surface this week. But I want to make sure to check-in about 'the bigger picture.' In the grand scheme of this campaign, what other things are important for us to spend time on?

Questions for Prioritizing

- Which of these things feels most urgent for us to figure out today?

- Which of these do we need to figure out before we can move on to the next step for our campaign?
- Which item do you feel most stressed about? Excited to dig in around?

STRATEGY QUESTIONS

Assessing Targets

- What does your target care about? What are their motivations? What do they rely on to sustain the status quo?
- What public statements have they made on our issue? What past behavior or actions have been consistent or inconsistent with these statements?
- How are similar campaigns approaching this issue elsewhere? Who are they targeting; what are they demanding, and how successful are they?
- What do their financial records tell you? E.g., donor rolls, tax information, annual reports, etc.
- What private statements or insider knowledge do you know or could you find out?
- How has your target 'felt the heat' from your organizing so far? How do you know? (If helpful, ask about what data they have, i.e. number of people at actions, number of emails/calls the target received about their demand, etc.)

Pillars of Support (Power Analysis)

- Which decision-makers could actually grant your demand(s)?
- Which people or institutions does your target count on to maintain the status quo? Who's support, participation, or endorsement is required? What key action (or inaction) is required by them?
- Who can directly influence them, and what evidence do you have of that?
- What else do they rely on or need, that you could put in jeopardy if you mobilize enough people power?

Spectrum of Support

- Which specific institutions, organizations with a constituency, or influential individuals do you need in order to win? Why are they important?
- Who is already sympathetic to your goals? How do you know? What actions could they take as a next step?
- Who is opposed to your goals? How do you know? What opposition could you 'expose,' to draw a contrast between your people/goals and theirs?

Tactic Escalation

- What are examples of public actions that have “broken through” with your targets or received the kind of attention you’re looking for?
- What else do we know about public actions that seem effective where you are?
- What actions have you seen in other places that might be ‘remixable’ for your context, to help pressure your target?
- What tactics have we seen that inspire you, that you would be excited to invite supporters to participate in?
- What are three tactics you can imagine sequencing together over 1-3 months, with the goal of demonstrating greater active support at each one over time to our targets, and greater willingness of supporters to take risks to participate?

Theory of Change

- What do you think it will take to win?
- Which specific constituencies, organizations, officials, individual “influencers” with followers do you think will have to publicly endorse your demands in order to win?
- How many people do you think you’ll need to recruit “off the fence” to participate in visible, active support roles for your targets to agree to your demands?
- When might your targets be most vulnerable to our public pressure?
- What might your active supporters have to be willing to do, in order to create enough pressure to move your target?

Critical Path Analysis

- If you think about your campaign as a series of dominoes lined up to fall in your direction, which dominoes would have to fall, in what order, before your targets agrees to your demand?
 - *These might be endorsements by key secondary targets, favorable coverage in the media, public polling data, a certain number of people recruited into active support roles, a certain number of people participating in an in-person mobilization, etc.*