

Socratic Inquiry*

Category	Improvement-Related Questions
Clarification	<p>What problem are you trying to solve? Why is that a problem? What is the target condition you aim to achieve? What behaviors are you attempting to change? What is this data telling you? Why do you say/think that?</p>
Simplification	<p>How could you concisely summarize all of that information without losing accuracy and meaning? How could you visually depict that data? How could you distill all that you've learned into one or two key conclusions? Which specific set of conditions will be most useful to analyze and improve initially?</p>
Assumptions	<p>Why do you think that countermeasure will address the problem? What do you expect will happen if/when you take that action? What do you think would happen if you tried X instead of Y? What else could explain this data? Why do you think they are resisting that idea? Why do you agree (or disagree) with that statement?</p>
Rationale, reasons & evidence	<p>What data supports that conclusion? How could you collect the data you need? What is the primary root cause for that problem? How will you know if the improvement has been successful?</p>
Viewpoints & perspectives	<p>What about the current condition is not ideal? Which countermeasures have you considered and rejected? Why? What might be another way to look at these results? Why is that necessary?</p>
Implications & consequences	<p>What are the pros and cons of that countermeasure? If you did that, what do you think would happen? How could this data be used to gain consensus around your idea?</p>

Procedure

What obstacles are preventing you from achieving the target condition?

What's your next step?

How could you counter their resistance?

How are you going to implement this improvement?

How is the new way of operating being documented?

Which key performance indicators have you selected and why?

Who's going to monitor this process on an ongoing basis?

Who owns this process?

Where else can your learning be applied in the organization? Are there similar problems elsewhere?

How will you know if the improvement has been successful?

Open-ended (Socratic) questions open the mind and help develop critical (expansive) thinking. Closed-ended questions can be answered with a simple yes, no, or maybe and tend to result in restrictive thinking.

Open-ended questions begin with:

- Why...?
- How...?
- Who...?
- What...?
- Where...?
- When...?
- Which...?

Closed-ended questions often begin with:

- Is...?
- Are...?
- Do...?
- Did...?
- Can...?
- Have...?
- Will...?
- Would...?
- Could...?
- Should...?
- Was...?
- Were...?