

Ask Yourself Empowering Questions

By [Harrison Barnes](#)

The power of the questions we ask ourselves determines the power we have in our lives. It's estimated that approximately 60,000 thoughts cross our minds daily. It's what we do with these thoughts that determines our level of happiness, success, and achievement in the world. When negative thoughts cross your mind, do not allow yourself to wallow in them. You need to turn those negative thoughts into positive ones. The best way to do this is by asking yourself empowering questions.

I want to tell you a story about one of the most remarkable placements I ever made as a recruiter. This placement only happened due to the power of questions. Several years ago, I had an attorney candidate from [Asia](#) who had managed to get only one [interview](#) in the United States. He desperately wanted to move to the United States, and the firm he had an interview with was the only firm in the country that did the sort of legal work in which he specialized. The man went into the firm on a Friday and interviewed for a full day. At the end of the day, I received a call from the hiring partner, who informed me the man had interviewed badly. He was almost 100 percent confident the candidate would not receive an offer.

When I heard this news, obviously I was very disappointed for my candidate. At the time, and for several months prior to this, I had successfully placed all of my candidates. I did this by always asking myself the following question:

"What has to happen for this person to [get a job](#)?"

When I hung up the phone with the hiring partner, I knew I had to act quickly to secure my candidate an offer. He was scheduled to fly back to Asia at 6 a.m. on Sunday morning. I can tell you how most recruiters and other people would have dealt with this news: they would have gotten depressed, feeling as if their candidate had failed. Essentially, they would have told the candidate to have a nice life and would have then forgotten about the person entirely.

So I asked myself that golden question: "What has to happen for this person to get a job?"

This man had shown up for his interview dressed in a nice suit, looking very sharp, and had conducted himself with the utmost professionalism in his series of interviews. The firm did not know much about him personally. He lived in a very small, 300-square-foot apartment with his pregnant wife. He took a train two hours each way to work. He desperately wanted to work and live in the United States. This [law firm](#) was his only shot. If he did not get this job, he would probably have an extremely difficult time ever working in the United States.

When I asked myself what needed to happen for him to get the job, I realized he needed to pull out all the stops. He needed to let the firm know about his character beyond his professional demeanor. He needed to let them know about his hopes and dreams. He needed to make the firm understand they were the only thing stopping him from living in the United States. He needed to let them know about how he lived, about his dedication to his work, and about everything he could do to help them. This candidate needed to make an emotional connection so strong the firm would feel like they needed to hire him at all costs.

I got up at 7 a.m. on Saturday, called the candidate, and told him he needed to immediately come over to my office. He had been out with his friends late the night before and was obviously groggy. He did not want to come to my office, but I told him how important it was.

When he got into the office, I did not tell him what I knew about his not getting the job. I did not want him to feel negative. I sat down with him for at least an hour and asked him questions like these:

"What are the best things about you the firm does not know?"

"How can you contribute to the firm in ways they do not yet know about?"

"What makes you special?"

"Why are you the best person for the job?"

"What are the best things your previous employers have said about you?"

We started working around 9 a.m., and he wrote a letter to each person with whom he'd interviewed. I reviewed the first letters he wrote, which were short and did not accomplish much. By 6 p.m. the letters started getting longer and more emotional. By midnight the letters were excellent. By 1 a.m. the letters were strong enough and touched so many emotional nerves they brought tears to my eyes.

Part of this candidate's "pitch" was that he had contacts with Japanese clients. I asked myself: "What can I do in this presentation to drive home this candidate's point that he has contacts with Japanese clients? What can I do beyond what is in the letters?"

We went down to a Japanese hotel in Los Angeles, the New Otani, in the middle of the night to fax the letters to the firm. I wanted the firm to think he was working there and meeting with Japanese clients. We spent more than \$200 sending these faxes. Then we took printed letters down to the firm's security desk to ensure they were delivered to the partners of the firm first thing Monday morning. My candidate barely made his flight back to Japan.

Monday morning, the partners received the letters. From what I later heard, the letters were so effective that a couple of the people who read them cried. They were so blown away, they made the candidate an offer. The firm spent tens of thousands of dollars moving him to the United States. The candidate is living here and is still [practicing law](#) today.

Without my asking the candidate the right questions, this never would have happened.

If you recently [lost your job](#), there are several things you can do. One thing you can do is feel bad about yourself and pout. This is what most people do. They think negative thoughts and dwell on this negative energy and stay depressed. Not much

ends up happening for some time.

The alternative is to ask yourself questions like these:

"What can I learn from the experience of losing my job?"

"How am I going to be a better person in the future, now that I have lost my job?"

"How can I find an even **better job** than the one I lost?"

You need to ask yourself questions that empower you and make you stronger. The answers to these questions will be some of the best career advice you will ever receive. Questions have a tremendous amount of power.

In order for you to get the job you want or the raise you want, and to reach the level of achievement you are seeking, you need to learn to make the best use of the thoughts that are crossing your mind.

When you are **interviewing for a job**, ask yourself questions like these:

"What sort of answers to this question would help me get this job?"

"What was I like the last time I was at my best?"

"How can I convey my enthusiasm for this job?"

A year or so ago, I started reading about **meditation**. I learned that the goal of meditation is to balance the right and left hemispheres of the brain. The world and the objects in it have traditionally been defined by opposites:

-Male and female

-Light and dark

-Off and on

-Left and right

-Hot and cold

Our brains work this way, too. When we look at objects, we traditionally look for commonalities, but also differences. It is the differences we see that most **psychologists** and others believe lead to our unhappiness and feelings of alienation from the world. We look for opposites.

The goal of meditation is to eliminate the distinctions we see as opposites in the mind and see how everything is connected as one. Over time, scientists who have studied those who meditate have discovered that the practice of meditation essentially balances the right and left hemispheres of the brain.

When you ask yourself questions, you need to ask them based on finding bonds between you and others. Do not ask questions about why things are separate. The more you get in the habit of finding bonds of similarities and not differences, the happier you will be.

I urge you to look at every situation as an opportunity to ask yourself an empowering question. Empowering questions push us to grow. I want you to grow, and I want you to have the kind of career and life you want and deserve.

THE LESSON

Your thought process is a powerful determinant of your success or failure. Find a connection or unifying bond among the millions of thoughts that cross your mind every day, and use them to the greatest possible effect. Rather than dwell on negative thoughts that could undermine you, strengthen your mindset by asking yourself empowering questions; you will find that the answers to these questions constitute excellent career advice.

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