

Positive Focus Becomes Contagious

What's the problem with problem-solving? For starters, it often creates an endless cycle of canceling out the negative, which typically perpetuates the status quo. This can keep people so busy and preoccupied that they fail to envision and pursue a significantly better alternative. And it can fill attention and conversation with so much negativity that positive experiences and aspirations never see the light of day.

Teams often study "the" problem and sift for root causes. Often teams so thoroughly focus on the negative that meetings may feel like a never-ending convention of the Pessimists Society.

How about **starting with a different approach-focus on the positive.** According to Tom Terez, when people answer questions like these, they're not just blowing sunshine around the meeting room. They're uncovering critically important information that just so happens to be positive. Well-placed questions will help you find them. Consider these prompts to open the way to a positive conversation:

- Think back to a time when you and your colleagues were enthusiastically working as a force of one. What factors came together to make it happen?
- Reflect on your involvement in the process you're working to improve. What do you do that makes a big difference?
- What are you doing when you are most effective?
- What part of the process or project holds positive lessons for the rest of the organization?

I believe the best kind of workplace improvement occurs when we focus first on what is working AND how to take that process, team, project from good to GREAT!

Contact Cynthia to join an EI leadership forum, facilitate a corporate retreat, integrate EI into your culture, leaders and teams, present a key note or conference participation.

At your next staff meeting or informal get-together with colleagues, pose a few of the following conversation-starters:

- Describe a particular workday or work situation during the past week that truly engaged your heart and mind. How did you feel? What or who made it possible?
- What is a talent you used during the past week that you feel especially good about the outcome?
- Which of your strengths are least known by colleagues? Share an example that shows how you've put these strengths to work.
- If you could share one story from the past week describing what went great, what would it be? Tell it in detail.
- Imagine that you can wave a magic wand and make an instant change for the good of your workplace, its employees, and your customers. What change do you bring about?

The first three sets of questions call on people to look back and retrieve some of their best experiences. By describing these high points, colleagues identify what has worked in the workplace -- and reveal what can bring out the best in people in the present and future.

The last question is all about the future. It lets people voice their hopes and aspirations.

There are many variations to these questions and countless other queries you can pose. Don't be surprised if people are initially slow to respond. Be persistent, and answer the first question yourself to get things going. If you have any "problem" at all, it will be the challenge of getting people to wrap up the conversation. Don't try to. Make this an ongoing dialogue, then stand back and watch as it takes on a mind of its own -- and people begin to take action based on the emerging discoveries.

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