

ASKING THE RIGHT QUESTIONS AS A LEADER

Taking your team down the path of visionary or innovative thinking can be daunting, particularly in public purpose work where the risks of failure can be high. As leaders, and indeed as public servants, we are driven day-to-day to achieve our best with hope sitting at the core of everything we do.

One of the ways in which leaders (and indeed any public service employee) can employ to transition from being too risk averse or adhering to 'problem focused' thinking is to mindfully pause and ask the right questions.

Next time you are faced with a pressing work issue, find a discussion partner and run through this great exercise. You will find that through asking the right questions, you will be more successful in finding a solution.

1. What is the problem?
2. What is the cause of the problem?
3. Who is to blame for the problem?
4. What has been tried so far that hasn't worked?
5. Why hasn't the problem been fixed yet?

Then, use the below questions with the same discussion partner:

1. What would we like to see happen?
2. When has this happened in another situation that we could perhaps draw inspiration from?
3. What are some steps we can take that will make a difference?
4. What have we learned?
5. Are there other people we should involve to support the solution?

The first set of questions takes a technical approach (problem focused) whereas the second set of questions take a more solutions-focused approach – leading to more engaged, animated and productive problem-solving behaviour.

About IPAA Queensland:

IPAA Queensland is the professional association for people engaged in public purpose work. Our mission is simple. We promote and enhance the professionalism, capability and integrity of public administration and pride in public service.

We do this through a program of thought leadership forums and events that enable our members to build their connections, challenge their thinking and keep informed about contemporary issues.

Becoming a member of IPAA Queensland demonstrates your personal commitment and contribution to public purpose work and offers you exclusive development and networking opportunities.