Champlain College

Week 5: Assignment: Twenty-Four Hours of Inquiry

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"Sometimes the most important thing to do is to help the people themselves shape the questions in the most powerful way, since they know their own situation the best of anyone." (Vogt, 2003, p. 4) As the quote says, this will sometimes be; in other cases, like the day I had, there were many questions floating around waiting to be answered. Some for insight, some for information. In this reflection, I noted and analyzed the daily questions that were asked of me. My current role doesn’t allow for more esoteric questions; it leans toward system understanding and troubleshooting.

While it could be said that the questions I receive are mechanical or superficial, we can still learn from the questions being asked of us, or rather, I can learn in the case of this paper. I gained limited insight into the questions being asked. Who is asking them and why they are asking are the most important. In my field, we often need to spot holes in others' knowledge and help them become a better version of themselves. Immediately or with instruction, manuals can assist individuals improve themselves.

Common questions that I receive will be directly related to our processes and technical skills. “It’s often helpful to examine a question for any unconscious beliefs it may introduce to the situation.” (Vogt, 2003, p. 6) Recently it has been a problem that there is one person that everyone goes to for help. The created manuals and assisting in trouble shooting can help this problem. Common questions could be: what should we reboot, or where should we start when the X system goes down? It is these times where it is important to know what your trainee knows and doesn’t know about the system.

The systems we work on can be extremely complicated, and at the beginning, it is important to expose them to the wide range of problems that can occur. The hope is their recall will kick in when they see it again and will build on the faint knowledge they already remember. Alternatively, these questions can lead you to change. It may be that a problem continually appears and can be fixed with a script or an update you complete, making their life easier.

I try my best not to assume much about the person or questions I am asked. It is interesting to see people grow with your help; the problem can happen when they rely on your help for everything. I believe you should exhaust your knowledge (baring a critical issue with the sim) in troubleshooting a problem. To grow, you need to force yourself to learn and remember. The more human side is that you are talking to people going through their own issues. On occasion, you need to take an interest in the people you are helping or training.

I don’t want to go into detail, but recently, after I asked a question, the reply I received was distinctly sad. Not outright, but screamed for help. “By understanding and consciously considering the three dimensions of powerful questions, we can increase the power of the questions we ask and, as a result, increase our ability to generate insights that help shape the future.” (Vogt, 2003, p. 6) A simple “How are you feeling today?” or “How was your weekend?” can let you understand more than you expected.

While I want to be the most knowledgeable, the fact is I am human also, and this project is too much for one person to understand. The questions for me this week were working on the assumption that I already knew or had solutions to their problems. For instance, we lost all power, and there were a number of issues during this recovery. The questions asked of me were needed, and to be honest, some of my answers were just guesses. I am happy that I am trusted but sometimes I felt like they were not relying on their own knowledge when I showed up. At the same time, I was also asking questions of them.

One panel went out, and we started troubleshooting. I have years of experience with electronics, but in these cases, it is best to trust the techs. During this troubleshooting, I put my full faith in their knowledge of the electronics side, and they trusted me with the software side. In the end, we came to a resolution. These types of situations are what make me feel good. Working with a group to solve a problem is great fun.

I still have an issue with framing questions, and on occasion, I get frustrated, and my mouth runs away. Reframing questions to help with understanding and communication is a weak area that I will be working on for a while. “The art of reframing questions in this way has important implications for not only shifting our assumptions but also creating new possibilities for constructive action.” (Vogt, 2003, p. 6) I want to foster a collaborative decision-making process. When they ask, “Is the problem here?” I should be asking, let's look at the prints and figure out where we are at and where the possible breaks are.

While taking notes and typing this out now makes me realize how I can improve myself and the interactions that shape my team's outcomes. Questions with meaning and purpose, questions with the power to help that are described in the OD practices we have learned about so far, can foster an environment of trust and learning. Using the questions I have received I can use them as a springboard to effectively respond, help, and manage my team (technically, I don’t have a team I am just the senior engineer).

We should all look to improve ourselves. In the twenty-four hours of questions, I was able to gain insight into what I was doing and what I should do. When to be direct, when to help, and when to teach. Looking at the assumptions behind the questions, I can not only improve myself but help others become better versions of themselves. As someone who is not naturally talkative, these classes and the OD practices have caused me to look internally for myself and people to grow.

References

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