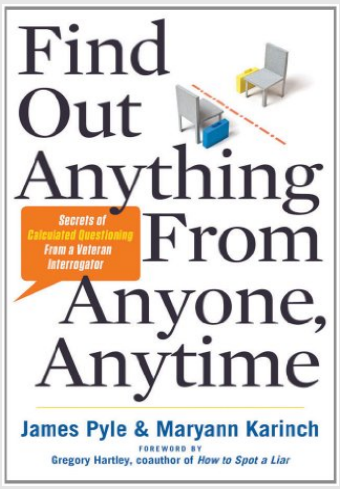

Find Out Anything From Anyone, Anytime

Secrets of Calculated Questioning From a Veteran Interrogator

James Pyle and Maryann Karinch
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280 pages

Rating

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Take-Aways

- Asking the right questions elicits the answers you want, earns rapport and improves your thinking.
- Craft questions that require narrative responses rather than just a "yes" or "no."
- The six most-effective types of questions are: "direct, control, repeat, persistent, summary and non-pertinent."
- Keep your questions short. Eliminate qualifiers and extraneous information.
- Ask about the four "discovery areas: people, places, things and events in time."
- Avoid four types of ineffective questions: "leading, negative, vague and compound."
- Taking notes helps you listen and keeps your questions on point.
- Watch for four types of body language cues: "illustrators, barriers, adaptors and regulators."
- When you analyze answers, be aware of "vocal cues," such as shifts in tone of voice, that can add information to your understanding of the information you've elicited.
- When asking questions, you are likely to encounter four types of people: the "integrator, dictator, commentator and evader."

Relevance

What You Will Learn
In this summary, you will learn: 1) How to structure good questions, 2) How asking the right questions can help you build rapport, and 3) What methods you can use to analyze answers and ask sound follow-up questions.

Review
In this comprehensive exploration, seasoned professional interrogator James Pyle and co-author Maryann Karinch highlight the psychological nuances of asking questions and analyzing answers. Heeding their advice will strengthen the questions you ask in your professional, social and family sphere. The authors' occasional repetitiveness and reliance on multiple categorical lists are perhaps excusable – given the key fundamentals they establish as they break down the information your questions elicit into granular categories for analysis. They even explore the subtle word choices you make when crafting questions. Their advice is useful any time – on dates, during job interviews, at parties, or whenever you need to ask questions and create or deepen rapport. *getAbstract* recommends their clear program to anyone seeking to develop good communication skills and to elicit more information from others.

Summary

"Questions in our personal life shouldn't be tools of interrogation, but rather tools of connection."

"Good questioning potentially helps human beings hone thought processes as well as learn practical skills and facts."

Asking Questions the Right Way
Asking questions the right way can change your mind-set. People shy away from answering questions that seem invasive, but if you set your mind on discovery rather than interrogation, you can frame your questions to be respectful and to build rapport.

The ancient Greek philosopher Socrates, for example, established his reputation by asking people direct questions. This technique elicited knowledge from them that they didn't realize they had.

A sound question yields both a factual response and psychological insight into the mind of the respondent. Ask questions that call for a narrative response rather than for a "yes" or "no." Question starters, or "openers" – such as "Do you" and "Would you" – typically prompt a "yes" or "no," so you should avoid them.

Using the correct interrogatives will help produce the answers you seek. The best interrogatives are the basics: "who, what, where, when and why." Deviating from these classics may incline the person you're asking to withhold information you want. Asking correctly phrased questions shows that you are unbiased and curious.

Usually, you should ask only one question at a time. Journalists often embed additional questions within a question to demonstrate their knowledge of the subject. However, complicated questions seldom harvest straightforward answers.

The right questions usually require little setup. In some scenarios, though, you can make a question more effective if you supply additional information. Such "framing" sets the appropriate tone and provides the person you're questioning with information that he or she needs to feel comfortable answering you. Frame carefully, however; framing should never push a person toward a particular answer.

"If you have a good question, you don't have to do a lot of setup."

"Find out one thing at a time. The alternative is finding out a lot of information that you have to sort through in order to get the facts you really need."

"You can't be getting ready to ask your next question while someone is answering the current one."

"Some people hesitate to ask questions because they see it as probing or prying...Questioning should be the opposite. It is a way to show other people you are interested in them."

Types of Questions

Good questions break into six categories:

1. **"Direct"** – Try "a simple question" containing an interrogative, verb and pronoun.
2. **"Control"** – Ask a question you can already answer to test your respondent's trustworthiness and attention. Control questions help you learn a person's normal verbal conduct.
3. **"Repeat"** – Pose two different questions seeking the same information. These questions "cross-check" someone's initial and later responses, but they can't prove truthfulness.
4. **"Persistent"** – Ask a question more than one way to explore the answer more fully. "What else?" is a particularly valuable question. It's a handy default if you've gotten an answer to a previous question, but you think additional information remains unsaid.
5. **"Summary"** – This question encourages the respondent to re-examine an earlier answer and helps you "read between the lines." Summary questions establish you as genuinely interested in the information the question probes.
6. **"Non-pertinent"** – Various goals, such as making the other person more comfortable, may impel you to ask a question that is unrelated to the topic at hand.

When questioners want to prove they know something about a topic, they'll drop names, or refer to related but extraneous information. Usually, this shows that they don't really know very much. Try to say less, and ask shorter questions. Eliminate unnecessary qualifiers and extra words. Many questioners fail because they don't wait for answers. "Silence" is a good questioning strategy. Don't answer a question for the other person; wait for the response.

"Bad Questions"

Depending on the context, even bad questions can prove valuable in eliciting information you want. These questions break down into four groups:

- **"Leading"** – These queries suggest a particular answer and may inhibit the correct one. Leading questions include: 1) those with "embedded assumptions"; 2) those that advance "associated ideas" or link your question to pieces of information you've mentioned earlier; 3) those that evoke "cause and effect," implying that a previous answer has repercussions; 4) those explicitly asking the respondent to agree with the questioner; 5) those with "danglers" – phrases like "don't you?" or "isn't it?" – that disguise an assertion as a question; and 6) "bullying" questions, often used by higher-ups in a hierarchy.
- **"Negative"** – These questions end with some variant of the phrase "Is this not true?" Complicated or double negative language confuses people.
- **"Vague"** – When you ask vague questions, your respondent can't tell what you want.
- **"Compound"** – A compound question makes two or more simultaneous inquiries, which may be impossible to answer at the same time. Respondents may forget the second question by the time they finish answering the first.

"Non-discovery questions" are neither bad nor good. They often ask for a "yes" or "no" – or even for no answer at all. Non-discovery questions include: requests; "pre-questions," which ease you into the topic and lay the groundwork for more formal interrogatives; "polite questions," such as "How are you?"; "rhetorical questions"; and "corrective questions," which parents and teachers use when giving children instructions about their behavior.

Discovery Areas

Answers fall into four general areas: "people, places, things and events." The kinds of questions you ask matter and so do the types of people you encounter. People-centered

questions can be "personal" ("What's your name?"); "professional" (asking about work experience); or "interpersonal" (asking about a person's relationship to someone else).

"An offshoot of all the benefits of cultivating questioning skills is a deeper understanding of why people are willing to answer your questions."

The people you question may fit into four behavioral categories: the "integrator," who carefully considers any answer and may clarify it based on your response; the "dictator," who produces definitive answers, but may deliver opinion as fact; the "commentator," who gives comprehensive, sometimes too-elaborate answers; and the "evader," who avoids questions. Idealists are often evaders, because they want everyone to be happy and so they avoid the truth.

When you ask questions about a place, you may find that respondents lack a good sense of direction or visual memory. To help them, mention points of reference, like landmarks and streets. If they use terms like "left" and "right" or mention particular types of physical reference points, frame your questions in their terms.

"Asking yourself good questions about yourself can lead to some wonderful revelations about your motivations, priorities, goals, and so on."

Asking about things is easier than asking about people. As you explore the background of an object or item – be it "mechanical, electronic, expendable, a structure, a process" or "a concept" – delve into its name, purpose and internal mechanisms.

Finding out "events in time" yields valuable intelligence, since events are linked to their past and future incarnations. When asking about events, consider using the "forward and backward pass" technique by Gregory Hartley, author of *How to Spot a Liar*. To use this method, ask questions that vary the chronology of events. Questions asked "out of order" toggle people's memories.

Listening, Writing and Watching

As you craft your questions, sharpen your listening skills. Don't launch a follow-up question until you have processed the first answer so you can phrase an appropriate, useful inquiry.

"The nature of your questions on a date speaks volumes about what you're genuinely looking for in a companion, as well as what you have to offer."

To facilitate active listening, take notes. Organize your notes by setting up four sheets of paper, one for each of the four discovery areas: people, places, things and events. Information you uncover about events goes on the events sheet, and so on. This helps direct your questions and sort the information you gather. The mind naturally recognizes patterns – and may identify a pattern where one does not exist. Taking organized notes keeps you grounded and helps you avoid jumping to false conclusions.

Classify answers as "sellin' or tellin'." If a person responds honestly, that's telling. If the person labors to persuade you that he or she is being truthful, that's selling. Your ability to distinguish between the two depends on how obvious the selling is and how intuitive you are.

"Some people might assert that they just don't have any intuition, but I would disagree. It's not that we all don't have it; it's that we often ignore it."

To assess the information you receive, Peter Earnest, a former CIA officer and the author of *Business Confidential*, suggests a three-part rubric: "requirements," "reliability," and a "mixture of logic and intuition." Do the answers satisfy your requirements? Is the information trustworthy or reliable? A respondent who doesn't want to answer may attempt to deceive you with "blatant lies, evasions and inconsistencies" over the course of multiple answers.

"Sorting Style"

Assess a respondent's reliability by paying attention to his or her sorting style – that is, whether he or she is "time-oriented, sequence-oriented or event-oriented." A time-oriented

person thinks in terms of the time of day when something happened. A sequence-oriented person best remembers the order of activities, but not their precise time. An event-oriented person recalls specific activities in detail, but not necessarily their time or relationship to other activities.

"If a person has a distinct sorting style, it would raise suspicions if he deviates from his pattern."

When you recognize a person's sorting style, you can spot instances when he or she deviates from it. Often, people who are evading the truth waver from their usual sorting style.

You also can analyze people's answers by using your logic and intuition. People's tonal shifts, body language, overall demeanor and, in some circumstances, your additional knowledge about them, can tip you off about their veracity.

"Vocal" and "Body Language Cues"

Vocal cues help you think through the way someone addresses a question. Look for deviations from the respondent's vocal norms. For example, "enunciation of key words may change the third time the person is providing the information, as if the lie is getting too hard to repeat." Someone's speech tempo may accelerate or decelerate. Stress-induced "tightness" and the use of "filler words" such as "um" or "well" also hint at possible deception.

"Idealists, who combine intuition and feeling, tend to make good liars. They just want everybody to get along, and sometimes, evading the truth is the best way to help make that happen."

Four types of nonverbal body language cues can inform your analysis of someone answering your questions. "Illustrators" make physical motions to emphasize a point. Such tics become suspicious when a person who doesn't usually gesture uses them. "Barriers" are motions that mute a point, including turning away or holding an object that blocks the flow of conversation between you. Be aware of "nervous defaults," such as when respondents tap their feet or fidget with their hands, and of "regulators," who try to control, and possibly redirect, your conversation. To fill any gaps in previous answers, ask linear follow-up questions that request information.

Personal and Professional Questioning

Education, medicine, law, business and customer service each has its own set of ideal interrogative approaches. In some of these fields, your strategy may vary by subfield.

"If you can't listen well, there's no point in asking a question. So questioning and listening carry the same weight."

In your personal life, asking the right questions connects you substantively with other people, enhances your children's verbal abilities, facilitates your social and dating lives, and expresses appropriate sympathy. Children repeatedly ask their parents or teachers the same questions in order to sharpen their understanding of certain words, test their memories, and revel in the comfort of repetition. "The fundamental skill is to maintain subject focus while developing leads to gain additional, relevant details."

Vet your sources. Make sure you're questioning a source who's close to and knowledgeable about your subject. Ask questions as though you are skeptical of your source's reliability; attune yourself to potential flaws and inconsistencies. The professional field of intelligence emphasizes sustaining your focus on your subject to acquire new and relevant data.

About the Authors

James Pyle worked for the Pentagon and the US Army as an intelligence-training instructor. **Maryann Karinch** has written or co-written many books on questions and lie detection.