

The WHATQuestions

**A Strategic Thinking Framework to
drive alignment, ownership and
accountability**

What does success look like?

Great Curious Questions

These open questions help peel the onion to get to the underlying root cause of what you really want.

- What do you want? What does success look like?
- Visualise your successful outcome. Describe it.
- What is the reality? What are all the “symptoms” around this topic?
- What are any assumptions you might be making?
- What are the barriers to success? What are the opportunities?
- What is the reality for all the stakeholders involved? Map them and their needs. What does success look like for the other person (s)?
- Now walking in the other person’s shoes, what would they think, feel or do in response to your ambition?
- What more would it take for you to be comfortable with this decision?
- What’s the benefit of doing this? What is the impact of doing nothing?
- If you knew you could not fail, what would you do?
- What does your intuition tell you?
- What will be different in the future when you have achieved /done this?
- What motivates you to do / want this?
- Say what you feel out loud . . . if someone else said this, what advice would you give them?
- What would the person you most admire think of this?
- What words would you use to explain this to a 10-year-old?

WHAT^{QUESTIONS} is a strategic thinking framework

What do you want? It is a hard question for us to answer.

Trust the process. 60+% of your time in the WHAT.



What do I / we want?

How will I / we achieve it?

Accountability for Action?

Timeframe?

In full, in order, write it down

Peeling the onion

- Don't try to solve the symptoms. Describe them all first, peeling back the onion with curiosity to get to the underlying root issue.
- Work on the thing that will move the needle, achieve the outcome you want
- 60% of your time will be on peeling the onion and shaping what success looks like.



WHAT^{QUESTIONS} your thinking framework. Always in order and always in full!



What do I/we want? What does success look like?

How will I/we achieve it?

Accountability for action? Who?

Timeframe when will I/we do it? Milestones and deadlines?

Thinking Partnerships

Step 1.

Ask for help to think something through ... help someone else to think.
Know if you are the thinking partner, it's not your answer they need.
It's great questions to unlock their solution which they will own.

Step 2.

Bring an open curious mindset & questions. Listen to understand NOT respond.

Ban the Low Why? Low Why looks backwards & provokes defensiveness.



Why did you do that? Why didn't you ask sooner?

Use the High Why?

High Why inspires clarity, purpose & conviction

Why is this important to you ? To our collective success?

Why does this trigger you? What conflicts with your values?

Step 3.

Always use the W.H.A.T. Qs or you risk
it being just a nice chat.
And write it down to refine the thinking.

What do I / we want?

How will I / we achieve it?

Accountability for Action?

Timeframe?

WHAT QUESTIONS improves...

- Ability to focus on what will impact the outcome you want, not addressing the symptom. Too often we put a plaster on a broken arm.
- Ability to influence others with clarity & understanding of topic
- Speed of taking decisions together, less stuck debating HOW
- Ownership and stickiness from more rigorous decisions
- action and impact on outcome with Accountability & Timeframe

Every time you want to **own a topic**, prepare it with the **WHAT**^{QUESTIONS}

- **Before** a meeting, use it to prepare what you want to bring to influence and drive a decision.
- Use it as a pre read, and manage expectations of what you need from them: to inform, to co-create, to take a decision
- **During** the meeting, use it as a discussion structure – start with feedback on do we agree this is what success looks like for this topic? Align on the outcome before you get into how we will achieve it.
- If the discussion gets **stuck on the how**, be brave, call it out and go back to what does success look like? Has it changed? Which HOW best serves the outcome we want?
- **After** the meeting, use it as a post meeting debrief and documentation of the topic.
- Use it to hold yourself and others accountable to action.