

## MODULE 19

### CREATE NEW THINKING

Segment	Content
Introduction	<p>A hallmark of a great leader is great communication. You can learn tips for motivating your team, strategies for creating positive focus, and methodology for utilizing brain research, but if you cannot effectively communicate with your team, as a group and as individuals, you will only be a mediocre leader. Today’s module deals not only with the ability to communicate well, but specifically, on how to help your team begin to think in new, creative ways.</p>
Learning and development objective	<p>By the end of Module 19, you will be able to discuss a new leadership technique of creative questioning, to enhance your conversation with individual team members. In addition, you will be able to state specific questions you can ask, to help team members, create forward momentum on any project.</p>
Main text	<p>As a leader, before you can begin to create new ways of thinking, you must clarify your understanding of what institutes good conversation. While these new ways of thinking are applicable for the whole group, focus your thoughts on how these apply to you, as the leader, talking one to one with a team member. Imagine a member of your team, with whom you recently had a discussion. Review the characteristics of a good conversation and reflect on how many of the following characteristics were evident.</p> <p><b>Key Elements of a Good Conversation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ <b>Know the roles in the dialogue.</b> When encouraging new ways of creative thinking, your role as the leader, is to ask the questions which will generate new thoughts and take your team member to new depths of understanding and clarification.</li> <li>▶ <b>Know the time table for the conversation.</b> Is this conversation going to be five minutes, or will you talk for the next hour? By establishing the time table at the beginning, you can utilize many of the techniques you learned in the SCARF model thereby eliminating stress.</li> <li>▶ <b>Know the purpose for the conversation.</b> You both know the topic for the conversation and the desired outcome. ‘Why’ are you having a conversation? You establish goals so that you know when the conversation is over, and you can evaluate whether the conversation has been successful.</li> <li>▶ <b>Determine whether this conversation ties in to other issues and relates to other goals.</b> As the leader you do not want to lose focus on the ‘big picture vision of the team project.</li> </ul>

- ▶ **State your position clearly.** The team member will feel threatened if you send mixed messages or appear to be unfocused. Know where you stand, and tailor your words and questions from that perspective.
- ▶ **Set the tone and the leadership style best suited for the conversation.** For example, light and fun loving, isn't the tone to set, if you are firing someone. While an Affiliate leadership style, might be an appropriate leadership style to invoke when brainstorming with a team member to develop ideas.
- ▶ **Clarify, restate, or reframe the main points of the conversation.** If you regularly re-state what the team leader is saying, they will know that you are paying attention, and they will readily correct you, if you have miss-stated their comments. For example, you may say, "If I heard you correctly, you are saying..." This approach also helps both of you remain focused on the core issues. You have at least two roles as the leader in a conversation: keep the conversation focused on the topic at hand, and clarify the topics, conclusions, strategies, and action steps discussed. Think of yourself as the secretary of the meeting, 'reading' back a summary of the important points in the conversation.

**Speak Intentionally**

Effective leaders begin conversations with team members with an agenda. They know what they want to achieve through the conversation. Even if the conversation takes place at the water cooler, an effective leader is fact finding about how the team is doing, what's going on in their personal life, outside the office, which may affect their work, and their feelings about their work. Are tasks moving forward or is the team member stuck on a particular level of focus. Good leaders get clear indications of the team members, who need help brainstorming solutions, or clarifying next steps. As the leader, it is not your job to 'do' any of these tasks for the team member. It is your role, however, to empower the team to be successful in completing the task. Many times, an intentional, short conversation will propel a team member forward. Think of your role as helping your team to create new ways of thinking. There are five important steps for empowering creative thinking.

- ▶ Think clearly about the situation.
- ▶ Define the issues.
- ▶ Clarify the situation.
- ▶ Specifically define the goals or desired outcome.
- ▶ Think about alternatives.
- ▶ Brainstorm potential solutions to the situation and choose the one solution which seems to be the most promising.
- ▶ Identify a first step toward solving or resolving the situation.
- ▶ Break down the situation into multiple steps, making the first step an easy one so that success comes quickly. Future steps can be more difficult.

- ▶ **Motivate.** Inspire the team member to take the first step toward tackling the situation. One positive method is to visualize the completed task and ask the team member to respond with how they will feel when the situation is resolved, and the task completed.

**Create New Thinking**

Challenge your team to look at their problems or tasks in new and unique ways. One of the most effective ways to do this, is by asking the team member questions which are designed to make them think. The questions should encourage them to analyse, create, or evaluate. Great questions will require higher order thinking. Below are some specific questions you can ask your team members which will help them to think about their task in new and creative ways.

- ▶ **Questions which create new thinking:**
  - How long have you been thinking about this? In days? Weeks? Months? Or years?
  - How often do you think about it?
  - How important is this issue to you? On a scale of one to ten?
  - Is this in your top three, five, ten priorities, right now?
  - How committed are you to changing this issue, on a scale of one to ten?
  - What are your main insights about this issue up to now?
  - How confident are you, on a scale of one to ten, that you have all the information you need to act?
  - What insights are brewing at the back of your mind?
- ▶ **Questions which help explore alternatives:**
  - What are some possible paths we could take from here?
  - Do you want to explore a few different ideas about how to move this forward?
  - How could I best help you from here?
  - How do you think we might move this insight forward?
  - What are some different ways we could tackle this?
  - Can you see some different angles; we could look at this from?
- ▶ **Questions which tap energy:**
  - Shall we focus on 'x' and get more detailed on that?
  - How can I best help you think through how to make this work?
  - Do you want to think through how to make this happen?
  - What specifically would you do in this situation?

- When do you think you might do this by?
- How can I best support you to turn this insight into a habit?
- Do you want to take some kind of specific action around this?

As you ask these questions, there are several key points to remember.

1. **Questions in nonthreatening ways.** A leader’s body language and choice of words create an atmosphere which can be positive and accepting, or negative and threatening.
2. **Provide as much positive information and affirmations for your team member as the situation allows.** Make the conversation a positive, not a negative experience.
3. **Ask and wait.** This is not a conversation where you supply all the answers. Your silence gives your team members the opportunity to think, and process in their own timing. Empower your team member by waiting and letting them know you have confidence in their opinion and proposed solutions.
4. **Make it a goal, not to end the conversation, if time permits, until you have achieved forward momentum.** All the creative thinking in the world is ineffective until you can apply it and begin to move forward. This is why you are the leader. Your ability to clarify the conversation and stay focused, while empowering your team member to think and move forward toward completion of the team’s task is the sign of an effective leader.

**Conclusions**

As a quick review, reread the concepts we learned about the brain.

- ▶ ‘Threat’ state is the default state of the brain
- ▶ Six insights about the brain:
  - We think in maps
  - Up close, no two brains are alike
  - We hardwire everything we can
  - Perception is created from hardwiring
  - It is difficult to change old wiring
  - It is easier to create new wiring
- ▶ Speak intentionally
- ▶ Stretch is positive
- ▶ Accentuate the positive

The conclusion is leaders can CREATE new thinking with their team members.

	<p>This module is full of new ideas and ways to interact with your team members. The important thing is, we're thinking about today and tomorrow, we're not thinking about the past. The more positive we are, the more future-orientated, the more we're up in vision and planning, the more open the brain is, and the more we're creating new wiring. The more positive we are, the more committed and motivated we become.</p>
<b>Key point</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ A leader empowers the team to be creative thinkers by asking the right questions.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Questions which create new ways of thinking</li> <li>○ Questions which help explore new alternatives</li> <li>○ Questions which tap energy</li> <li>○ Questions which motivate team members to be successful</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Task for the day</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Intentionally ask at least one of the questions in this module, which is designed to create a new way of thinking in your work setting today.</li> </ul>
<b>Questions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ What effect did the question you asked achieve?</li> <li>▶ What new questions will you ask tomorrow?</li> <li>▶ How might your role as a leader be more effective if these questions are a part of your leadership tool bag?</li> <li>▶ What effect will asking some of these questions have on a current project which your team is working on?</li> </ul>