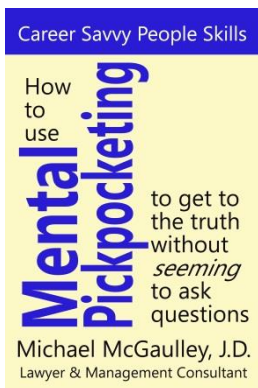


Here is your sampler of the second of the books in the **Career Savvy People SkillsSeries**:

How to use MENTAL PICKPOCKETING to get to the truth without seeming to ask questions



When you ask a question, *most* of the time, *most* people will do their best to tell the truth.

But not always. Sometimes simply to ask a question is to give the game away because it alerts the other person to what you're really after, and hence raises a flag on what they may want to fudge, avoid, or distort.

(Or even tell a fib!)

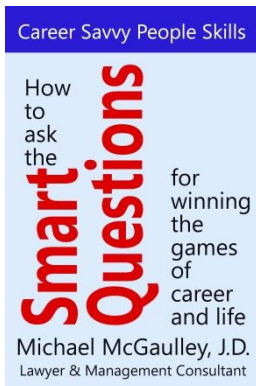
Mental Pickpocketing introduces you to an array of methods of getting to the truth without seeming to ask questions.

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How to use MENTAL PICKPOCKETING to get to the truth without seeming to ask questions. This sample © 2016 Michael McGaulley

Book 1 in the series (not included in this sampler) is:

**How to ask the SMART QUESTIONS
for winning the games of career
and life**



“You’ve got to be aware of the games that are being played. You don’t have to play the games yourself, but you do need to recognize when they are being played against you.”

Like it or not, the reality is that games, probes, and subtle competitions—and not to forget office politics! —are facts of life

in most organizations. *Smart Questions* provides the tools for looking through to what’s really going on in situations, on spotting the “real rules”, on focusing on what really matters and staying out of unnecessary confrontations, and on selecting the best option under the circumstances—and defending it if challenged.

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Good reading!

Michael McGaulley

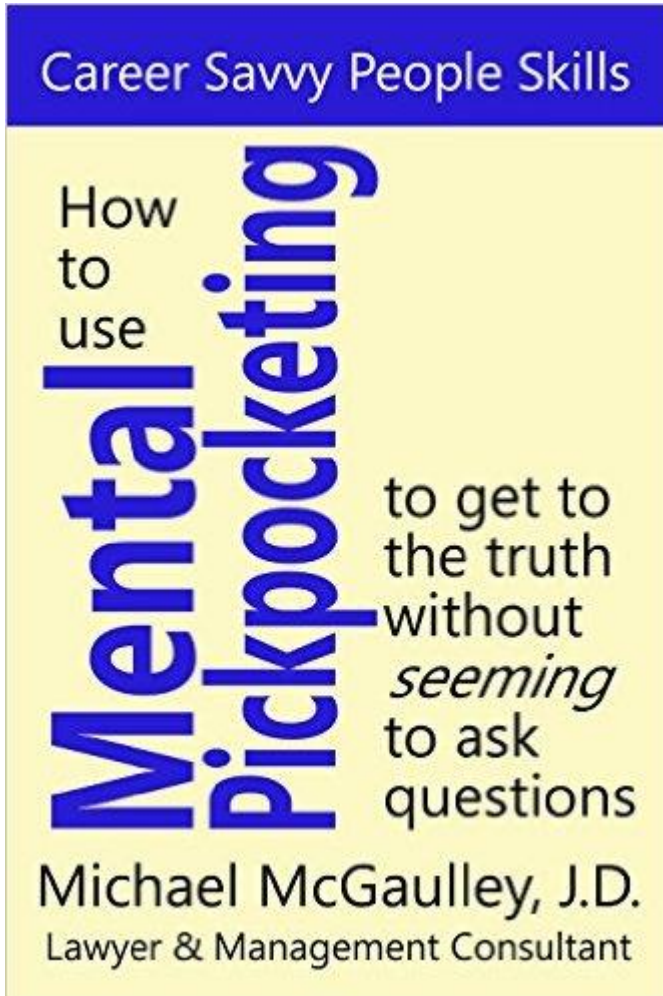
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P.S. These and my other books are available via various merchants in various formats. A You can find an overview—of both fiction and career how-to—at my page on [Amazon](#)

Apologies for any technical glitches that may have crept in in “translating” these pages from book form to this sampler edition.

SAMPLER:



CONTENTS: *MENTAL PICKPOCKETING*

INTRODUCTION.....

ONE WHY ASK QUESTIONS?.....

TWO TIPS ON INFORMATION SCAVENGING

THREE TYPES OF QUESTIONS.....

FOUR SEQUENCING YOUR PROBES

FIVE REFLECTOR TECHNIQUES

SIX MENTAL PICKPOCKETING: NICE WAYS

SEVEN MENTAL PICKPOCKETING: TRICKY WAYS.....

EIGHT MENTAL PICKPOCKETING: EVEN TRICKIER WAYS.....

NINE OTHER STUFF AND LEFTOVERS

TEN LISTENING WITH YOUR EYES

ELEVEN HOW TO *NOT* ANSWER QUESTIONS.....

REVIEW CHECKLIST
ABOUT THE AUTHOR / OTHER BOOKS.....
LEGAL AND COPYRIGHT NOTICES

One

WHY ASK QUESTIONS?

We use questions primarily as tools for getting information or for probing the ideas and opinions of other people. But information-gathering is by no means the only productive way of using questions. Here are some.

1. To get information

We tend to think of questions primarily as tools for getting information from other people:

- “How do you feel?”
- “When did you ___?”
- “What did you see?”

How to use MENTAL PICKPOCKETING to get to the truth without seeming to ask questions. This sample © 2016
Michael McGaulley

- “Are you aware that ____?”
- “Were you at the scene when it occurred?”

But questions are not only for getting information. Sometimes a question is a useful way of giving information, or of changing the course of a discussion, or of making the other person aware of an unrecognized need.

Getting information is the main focus of this book, but before going on let’s look at a few of those “other” uses of questions.

2. To give information

Though we normally think of question as tools for getting information, questions can be equally useful in *giving* information, or suggesting alternatives.

- “Did you know that ____?”
- “Would it change your mind if I told you that ____?”
- “Did you read the article in *Scientific American* about ____?”

3. To confirm information

You might get a bit of information from Al, and other bits from Bonnie and Carlos. Then you put these bits together into what you feel is a plausible sequence and confirm it with Deb: “I’ve heard that

_____. What's your take on it Do you think it's true??"

4. To confirm understanding.

- “Are we in accord on that?”
- “If I understand you correctly, we will _____?”
- “Was your take on the meeting the same as mine, that ____?”

5. To probe another person's knowledge or attitudes

At the start of your meeting with a new co-worker, you may want to test just how technically proficient they are. A few short questions can accomplish this without it coming across as an interrogation.

- “Are you familiar with the Moxan Process for _____? Have you had a chance to apply it yet?”
- “Have you been following the news about the Lahey incident? Personally, I'm not so sure that the facts really pointed that way? Any thoughts?”
- ”What are your feelings on the new _____ policy?”

6. To direct the course of a discussion.

If you're seeking information in a meeting with several attendees, it may be most effective if you can control—or at least nudge—via your questions.

7. To gain feedback on how your message or approach is being understood and received.

When you're *giving* information, it's important to be attuned to the other person in order to find how your message is coming across. Much of this feedback will come without your needing to ask, as you pick up bits of knowledge from their questions and comments, as well as by their nonverbal responses including facial expressions and gestures. Your questions can supplement this feedback.

- “Is this clear so far?”
- “How do you feel about what I just told you?”
- “So I can get an idea of how well I'm coming across, will someone volunteer to briefly summarize in their own words what you understand me to have said?”
- “How do you think this applies to your job?”

Or, you may provide feedback to the other person sharing your perceptions. That feedback can have the effect of reopening the discussion:

- “You seem very guarded in your responses. Is there something you think we should talk through first so you can be more open?”
- Or, “You seemed to have a puzzled expression on your face just now. What did I ask (or say) that bothered you?”
- Or, “How do you feel my questions apply to the problems you face in this organization or in your job?”

8. To test the other person’s understanding or agreement.

If you’re getting mixed signals from someone in a meeting, you could engage them with a direct, “How do you feel about the questions I’ve asked so far?”

In most cases, you’ll get better cooperation if the other person has a clear sense of why you’re there, and of what you’re looking for. Typically, you’ll convey this as you set context at the start. But they may not fully absorb it at that time—perhaps because of distractions, including the work they need to be doing now . . . or because they don’t trust you yet.

Generally you’ll get a good deal of feedback just by being attentive to their non-verbals, including facial expression, eye contact, how they sit, as well as by how complete their responses are. Do they choose their words with extreme care, saying as little as possible, or do they tell you everything you need, without being probed further?

If you find you are getting *too much* information, especially irrelevant input, see Part Four of this book, which covers topics including “Discouraging the speaker.”

9. To shape the thinking of the other person (or group); or to expand their thinking into a different direction, to try to widen their perspective, or to subtly introduce new ideas.

In some situations, the very fact that you are asking certain questions will subtly nudge the other person to adjust their thinking. For example, the awareness that you are here asking on behalf of senior managers may help this person understand the importance of the issue, and why it is in their best interest to come up with some fresh solutions. Or it may help them believe that senior managers care about their input.

In this context, you could also alert them to areas in which senior management is concerned.

By the skillful use of questions, we can often shape or redirect the thinking of others. The tone of the questions is often as important as the content, both in setting the tone as well as in gathering useful answers.

- “Do you really think that_____?”
- “But suppose that doesn’t work: what then?”
- “Have you always found John completely trustworthy?”
- “How confident are you that this supplier can be counted on for this order?”
- “Have you found that supplier totally reliable?”

10. To develop or enhance the other person’s awareness of a need.

You can *tell* the other person what they need. But it’s usually far more effective to ask questions that lead them to put those needs into their own words. If done skillfully, that gets them thinking about the practical implications of those unmet needs. It’s one thing to hear someone tell you what you need as compared to responding to a good question that challenges you to rethink and express in your own context.

It may also nudge them to recognize a need which has not been in their scope to this point. They may even “adopt” it as their own idea!

Persuading by asking

It’s important that another person recognize they face a problem or has unrecognized needs before you can be effective in trying to convince them to accept your solution to those needs. One of the best ways of developing awareness of needs is asking the right questions

Skilled salespeople are particularly adept at this. For example, if you've ever met with a life insurance salesperson, no doubt he spent much of the first part of the call asking questions about what would happen to your family if you are killed or disabled. A good salesperson may use a series of questions to lead you into expressing your own words reasons that you need what he or she is selling. Among the questions they might ask are these:

- “What would happen if your income were to stop tomorrow?”
- “What would happen to your children if _____ happened?”
- “Well, if the house still has a mortgage, where will your family get the money to make the payments?”
- “It sounds as though they'd have to give up the house. Where would they go to live then?”
- “What about the children's education? Do you have enough savings to pay for college for all?”
- “If they can't afford college, what then?”

Obviously the salesperson could save time by simply *telling* you what insurance you need. But that would usually be far less effective than asking questions that lead you to express these needs in your own words. If done well, the questions set you thinking about the implications. Because *you* say it, it *must* be true.

11. To (perhaps subtly) suggest alternatives.

Just as the other person is more likely to be open to needs if they have themselves expressed the need, they will also be most open to other alternative solutions if they seem to have come up with that alternative themselves.

Once the need has been recognized, you may be able to suggest other ways of filling that need simply by expressing your ideas: “I think you should do _____.” Or, “It seems to me that what you need is a _____”.

But sometimes directly suggesting an alternative is not likely to be an effective strategy, particularly if the other person is hostile, close-minded, or defensive.

In those cases, you can use questions as a subtle way of bringing these factors to the attention of the other person . . . without triggering the negative reaction that might result if you are more blunt. Your questions may even cause the other person to believe the idea was her or his own.

- What would happen if you _____”
- “Do you remember when the Northstar Division had a problem like this? How did they deal with it? I seem to recall that _____?”

12. To mediate differences

The right questions, asked in the right tone, can get both sides talking. If there is a genuine desire to work this out, then the more each side knows of the other's goals, the better a compromise—or at least a tolerance—can be arrived at.

13. To convey scepticism.

“Do you really believe that?”

Or, even more strongly, “You don't really support that approach, do you?”

Or, “I sense that _____. Am I correct?”

14. To raise doubts.

You can use questions as tools for breaking through complacency and settled thinking feelings, and assumptions. As they think about how to respond to the question, they may also think about their assumptions, and even the facts, with fresh perspective.

15. To draw others out so they provide more detail.

“Help me understand: Why do you support that plan over the other alternatives?”

Or, “I’m still not clear on your ultimate reason for going with Plan A.”

16. To defend, perhaps by subtly drawing out the other person’s lack of awareness of the facts, or the possibilities that may flow from adopting a different approach.

“Suppose I told you that this methodology is already in use across Europe? Would that change your thinking?”

17. To make waves. Or, to bait, antagonize, ruffle feathers.

Not nice, but sometimes necessary. There are times when it is advantageous to ask questions that draw conflicts to the surface so that any subtle undercurrents or covert games can be addressed in a direct way.

Sometime the only way to get to the core issues is to get people speaking frankly. In order to do that you may need to rile them up a bit. A couple of examples:

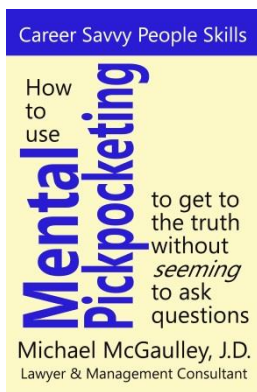
- “George, tell me this: You haven’t been on board for any of the planning meetings leading up to this point, so why are you now so determined to change the direction?”
- Or, “I see this as a group effort, one in which we’re all largely in accord. But now I’m sensing that you and some other members of the committee are not willing to discuss it. Why is that?”

18. To get things rolling.

“Are we in accord on the process? Any objections to moving forward>”

End of this sample. Find it helpful? Here's how to buy this and other books in the Career Savvy People Skills Series:

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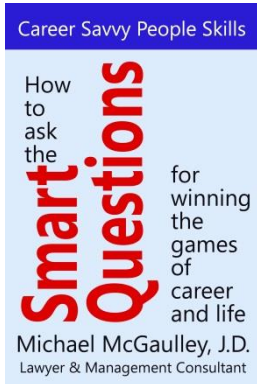
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