

Hello, this is Wayne Rivers at FBI and *We Build Better Contractors*.

This week I want to talk about seven tips for asking great questions. So, what about this is important to you? Why are we talking about asking questions? It sounds so elementary. That's something you learn to do as a two-year-old, "Mommy, why this," or "Why that," but it's really one of the key ingredients or factors to being in great leader is being able to ask great penetrating, clarifying questions. And especially if you can get to the heart of the matter quickly, then that's going to make you a better executive, a better teammate, more trustworthy, and it's going to have a host of other benefits. So, let's talk about the seven tips.

The first thing is. Have a genuine interest in the person or the subject that you're talking about. There's an old saying, "Once you can fake sincerity, you've got it made." But I would say that's probably... It might be comical, but it's really poor advice. If you're not interested in something, don't fake it, just move on. I think people in my experience seem to appreciate, I won't say brutal honesty, but bluntness and I think they can tell when we're faking, they can tell when we're just putting on and so have a genuine interest in the subject matter. And certainly, if it has to do with your business or your people, you are going to be interested.

The second thing. Have some go-to questions that you can always fall back on, have a little script for yourself. I've got six questions and we've developed them over a number of years. I mean, these aren't six, what do you think of the weather today kind of questions. These are six amazing penetrating questions. With these six questions I can find out everything I need to know about a business within 30 minutes time. I mean, it's amazing. So, I've got a script. Develop a script. It could be two questions that you have maybe for icebreakers or maybe for some other more deep and revealing reason.

The third thing. When people use jargon or unfamiliar terms or words you don't understand ask. I can't remember the book. I don't recommend it to you, but I read it, so you don't have to, but the whole book was about the value of asking clarifying questions and creating genuineness in rapport with people. People respect when you ask questions about... in construction, we use acronyms all the time and at a peer group meeting this week, they were using acronyms that I didn't know. So, I don't pretend to be the smartest man in the room because I'm not. So, I was asking questions and I don't know if this book is right. I don't know if that increased their perception of my genuineness, but I just don't want to be ignorant. So, I ask the questions.

The fourth thing. Set up your question with a confession. For example, "At my firm, we tend to struggle with business development. What makes you so successful within the area of BD?" And so, if kind of set it up you so they can see where you're going with it. And that makes for a better question and a better answer.

The fifth thing. Ask follow-up questions. And here's a great, great follow-up question for really digging to the heart of the matter. In fact, you should use this follow-up question in various forms two or three times, if you really, really, really want to see where somebody is going and it's very simple. It's "What about blank is important to you?" You're interviewing a prospect and they say, "I want work-life balance." And you say, "Okay, what about work-life balance is important to you?" And they say something, "I want to have a happy marriage." "I understand that completely. Tell me more, what constitutes a happy marriage? What about blank is important to you?" Again, there was a whole book on this one question 30 years ago that I read. It really is something and if you ask the question in two or three different layers, you'll peel that onion and you'll really see what people are driving at.

The sixth thing. When you hear BS and we all have at this stage in our lives and careers, a pretty reasonable BS detector, ask. And here's another question. Another go-to question that I heard from a guy 30 plus years ago that stuck with me. "Help me understand. Help me understand why this, why you said that, how we got to this point, help me understand when you really hear BS." In today's world, there's so much discussion of current events and all that stuff. And golly moses, it's a great question for digging deeper.

And then finally the seventh and final tip. Be fearless. I guess there are dumb questions sometimes, but 99% of questions are not dumb. And they do serve to help you understand a subject in more depth or in a new or perhaps a different way. And so be fearless. I'm always shocked at contractors, especially on the BD side, because I kind of grew up a BD guy. Ask for stuff. I mean, I've asked for proposals from our competition and gotten them. Now 8 times out of 10, people are going to say, "No, I don't feel good about sharing that with you," but by gosh, sometimes they will. And that helps you position your proposal in such a way that you increase your odds of getting the work. Be fearless with your questions. The worst thing that could happen is somebody says, "No. I don't want to give that to you, Wayne." "Okay. That's cool. I understand. No worries." How am I harmed by that? Be fearless and be ready to ask questions that people may not expect. It's not going to hurt you and it can only help you really.

So, I'd like to know what are your secrets? What are your go-to great back-pocket questions? What are your secrets for asking great questions and eliciting terrific information from people? And don't forget about Boot Camp January 27<sup>th</sup>, 2022. It's already a third full. Don't wait, sign them up now and contact Charlotte for more information. This is Wayne Rivers at FBI and We Build Better Contractors. Thank you.