

# Foundations—a Pedestal Group Publication

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FOUNDATIONS

## The Pedestal Group

### Asking The Right Questions

#### Special points of interest:

- *Successful Meetings*
- *Targeted Titles and SEO*
- *Networking*
- *Email Management*
- *AND MORE!*

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To get good information, it is vital to ask the right questions. And there is no more powerful tool when you need to:

Learn something  
Build a Relationship  
Coach Someone  
Avoid Misunderstandings  
Diffuse a Touchy Situation  
Persuade People

Of course we all ask questions all day long—everything from “how do I do this new task” to “what’s for dinner?”. But typically we don’t spend much time thinking about what kind of question will get us the answers we need.

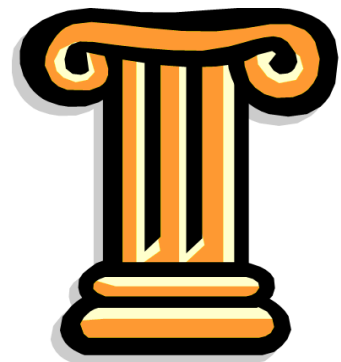
Open-ended questions allow the person answering to answer with anything they want in whatever format they choose. These are great in situations where you want to know what the person is thinking, what happened, or just generally need information. Where they aren’t helpful is when you need something specific. For example, in the store recently a sales clerk asked another customer what kind of phone the woman had. This was a very open-ended question and was confusing because it isn’t

something the woman knew. After fumbling for a couple seconds the sales clerk rephrased the question and described the three possible choices so the woman could choose the right answer. In this case, the open-ended question didn’t reveal enough information to facilitate the sales process.

A close-ended question is one where there are a finite set of acceptable answers, typically “yes” and “no”. Close-ended questions are great for confirming information or comprehension but are terrible for continuing a conversation. If you want to keep talking, be sure to follow up with an open-ended question.

Fact-based questions are intended to determine understanding of the facts or the facts themselves. “Where are you from?” is a great fact-based question that can then lead to many open-ended, conversation-building questions.

When you really want to get at some information, you use probing questions. A probing question is designed to get more detail and more infor-



I keep six honest serving men  
(They taught me all I knew);  
Their names are What and Why and  
When And How and Where and  
Who. **Rudyard Kipling**

mation but can be seen as more intrusive so probing questions should be mixed in with other types.

Hypothetical questions are terrific tools to remove the details of a situation and give a person an opportunity to discuss something without having to reveal too many details. But, hypothetical questions have been overused to lead people into answers so be sure there isn’t an implied judgment if you are going to use a hypothetical question.

Leading questions can help steer a conversation the direction you want it to go. You don’t want to lead a conversa-

## Asking The Right Questions (con't)

tion too much as that isn't much of a conversation but more a lecture. A good leading question will set a direction and then can be followed up with other types of questions used to encourage discussion. A leading question is also helpful when trying to help a group of people feel confident in



answering for example, in a training class.

Reflecting questions are used to reflect back on something

the person said earlier to confirm understanding or allow for a deeper discussion on a topic. Generally the person answering the question gains as much from the answering as the questioner!

The key to any successful question is to really want the answer. It doesn't matter what your technique is if you are just waiting for your turn to talk. Be sure to stop thinking about other issues and really focus on the other person. When you ask a question, listen to the answer so that you can

ask another question building on the answer. This, more than anything, shows the other person you are interested and engaged.

Questions are key in building relationships and understanding. The right types of questions can make all the difference in getting the information you need. Use open, closed, fact-based, probing, hypothetical, leading and reflecting questions to move conversations forward. Nothing can get you more information than asking good questions!

## Successful Meetings

### THE AGENDA NEEDS TO INCLUDE GOALS AND TASKS TO ASSIGN AT THE TOP

We have all complained about the meeting called just so we can have a meeting or the one that took an hour and nothing was accomplished. But how do you

prevent this from happening when you call a meeting? Have an agenda.

The act of putting together the agenda will tell you if you need a phone call to just one or two people, a conference call with a group or an in-person meeting. But, it won't help make that determination unless you do the agenda BEFORE you call the meeting! So if you think you need a meeting, write the agenda immediately.

At the top of the agenda, be sure to list the purpose of the meeting. If there are specific decisions that need to be made or tasks to assign, list those right at the top of the agenda. This lets everyone know why the meeting was called and at the end it is

easy to determine if the goals were achieved.

Some meetings need to be face-to-face but are about one topic. These are great to call in a location where everyone remains standing. Knowing a meeting will be short helps keep everyone focused and standing reminds them this is a short meeting. One sales VP liked to call those meetings in hallways so people were very motivated to finish the discussion quickly.

Other meetings do require a full 30-60 minutes. When you create the agenda for these meetings, add a time estimate on the facilitator's copy. Also make sure there is an easy way to see the time in the room or at the table—a clock on the back wall large enough to see from the facilitator's chair is wonderful as it isn't distracting to the other participants but helps the facilitator keep on schedule. By assigning timeframes ahead of time, if things start to get off-topic it is easier to know when to bring them back.

Be sure everyone knows why they are attending the meeting. There are times we invite people to learn about

new things, represent a group or want them to see how a meeting goes, but forget to tell that participant. Letting everyone know their role will help them appropriately participate in the discussion and get out of the meeting what is expected.

Always start a meeting when you said you would start. Unless the person who is late is the primary speaker, get started and then catch them up when they arrive. People in the meetings should be able to count on start and end times to be accurate. The danger in not doing this is people will learn you don't start meetings on time and not feel any pressure to arrive on time.

At the conclusion of a meeting, summarize the goals and if they were met, review the assigned tasks and adjourn on time. Follow up with an email or document summarizing the meeting including the goals and assignments. Sometimes it is easy to walk out of a meeting and forget what you need to do as the day moves forward so a summary helps reinforce those tasks.

Meetings are often necessary but can be very effective. Make sure yours are!

## Targeted Titles Build SEO

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is certainly a hot topic and a great way to increase your visibility while not spending extra money. One way to build SEO value (or “Google Juice” as Jeffrey Gitomer calls it) is to use titles on web pages. When you title a page, often people use words like Home or About rather than something more specific. If you use your keywords in your page titles, they can help search engines recognize that page and move you up in the rankings. Sites like <https://adwords.google.com/select/KeywordToolExternal> and [www.wordstream.com/keywords/](http://www.wordstream.com/keywords/) help you identify effective keywords for you. Once you have identified those words and phrases, include them in your page titles so instead of Home, it could say, “Great Selection of XYZ Products” or “Simply the best XYZ Service”.

Once you establish your page titles, anywhere you refer to them should be with those keywords. If you need to link from one page to another, use the keywords as the item

to click to get to the other page rather than a phrase like “click here”. This will also boost SEO value.

Finally, be sure to always use the keywords exactly the same way. If you use the word “supplies”, it always has to be “supplies”, not “supply”. Consistency will help get you noticed on Google, Bing and any other search engine customers may be using!



## Networking The Right Way

Last July we touched on some keys to networking but there are always more things to discuss in this all-important topic. Networking can be difficult for people so here are some ways to make it easier.

**Set Goals**—Before any networking event, think about what you want to accomplish. Is there someone specific you want to meet? Are there people you need to get a specific message? Are there specific numbers of connections you want to make? Having goals gives you something to work toward and helps keep you focused on why you are there. Also once you have reached your goal(s) you can be proud that you accomplished something and not just wonder what the benefits of the meeting were.

**When possible, get involved**—Nothing gets you connected to people faster than getting involved. If you find networking events difficult, working the sign in table can be a big help as you get to greet everyone without having to work at it. Also having a role at a networking event gives you

status that others don’t have so people will seek you out. Finally, there is nothing better than having people send someone over to talk to you because you are the (fill in the blank). The people will come to you!

**Be There**—and not just physically, but mentally. If you attend an event and are thinking about projects to be done, work waiting or issues at home, you won’t make good connections. You have to be able to focus on the people talking to you and really listen to what they say.

**Take Notes**—When you are talking to someone, it seems unlikely you will forget what they are saying. But once you are in the car or back at the office, it is very difficult to remember who said what and who needed what information. People start blending together! Jotting down a quick note on the back of the person’s business card can make all the difference. (This is where we recommend carrying a sharpie marker as they can write on any surface. No more smudging!)

**Follow up**—Finally, when you get back to your office, follow up. If it can be the same day, that is ideal but be sure it is within 24 hours of the event. Choose some people to ask to coffee to get to know them better while others can just receive a “nice to have met you” email. But make sure they go out. There are so many people who do not follow up, it will be noticed.

Always remember networking is a process—it is generally not going to yield results in the first contact. With that in mind, set your sites on meeting people and finding out as much about them as possible. Really paying attention, looking for ways you can help them and ways to connect should be part of your networking goals. This can lead to great connections and help you know how they can help you.

**SET GOALS  
GET INVOLVED  
BE THERE  
TAKE NOTES  
FOLLOW UP  
IT WORKS!**

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Putting our clients where they belong.

The Pedestal Group was founded to answer a need we saw in small businesses to have a source for help. That could be how to find and integrate the right technology, how to better hire and manage people, how to set goals and create a strategic plan, or really attack and own your marketplace.

Our team has worked in a variety of industries including staffing, recruiting and executive search, retail, technology, healthcare software / IT, higher education and franchising and the consistent theme we have found it is very hard to see the forest for the trees. In small business, that is compounded by the number of resources available.

Our approach is unique in that we don't just say it is all about the customer, it really is. The Pedestal Group puts our customers on a pedestal – right where they belong. That isn't to say the customer is always right because that is an adversarial relationship – in our case, we always come to agreement. We are always in a partnership with our clients but also remember who's the most important – YOU.

The Pedestal Group - Putting our clients where they belong.

## Help To Manage Those Emails From Friends

We all have that great friend (or friends) who work hard to keep things fun and light. You know the one—the one that fills your inbox with cute pictures of animals, jokes, stories, etc.



**Rules route emails to help manage better**

Many of the emails you would like to read and some of the stuff they send is actually stuff you need now. So how do you control all the email? Set up a specific rule. Here's how.

First, create a folder in your

Inbox to store this information. I call mine “Read Later” but it could be anything. Next, make sure that friend is in your address book. Finally, go to Tools and choose Rules and Alerts. Create a new rule and select the following options:

From people or distribution list, with specific words in the subject, and move to folder. At the bottom of the window you will select the conditions for each by clicking on the blue words that are underlined. Set the From to the person, the words in the subject to FW:, and the folder to your new

folder. The FW: indicates the message is a forward so it is a good bet it is something the person found they thought you would like. Be sure to go through that folder periodically but on a day to day basis, these emails will no longer take up valuable time when you are trying to accomplish a task. Everyone wins with rules!

### Step 2: Edit the rule description (click an underlined value)

Apply this rule after the message arrives  
from Wonderful Friend (email@thepedestalgroup.com)  
and with FW: in the subject  
and on this machine only  
move it to the Read Later folder