

sLi class 8/5/16

Communication QBQ style (This document is not in your text book and was last discussed 9/4/15)

Communication often is listed as the number one reason for unhappiness in the workplace and many times in ministry sites. Most of us know how to communicate but we do not know how to deal in an atmosphere where communication is not happening. Today we are going to look at that back side of the issue and deal with what can we do if we wish there was more communication in the work place around us.

Among the books I would like to see in your ministry library are two from John Miller, [QBQ! The Question Behind the Question: Practicing Personal Accountability at Work and in Life](#) by John G. Miller and [Flipping the Switch, Unleash the Power of Personal Accountability Using the QBQ](#)

Miller offers another dimension to the lesson we had several weeks ago on asking effective questions. Instead of looking for others to solve the problem, rather than pointing the finger of blame, we should turn the finger back toward ourselves and ask the question behind the question, because according to John Miller, personal accountability is about asking the right questions.

I Can Only Change Me

In John G. Miller's book *QBQ The Question Behind the Question* he speaks about what to really ask yourself to eliminate blame, complaining, and procrastination. He discusses how people tend to blame others for personal and professional troubles. Miller believes in personal accountability – taking responsibility for one's actions, problems, and feelings instead of blaming others.

Miller believes in changing the questions we ask ourselves from negative (Why do we have to go through all this change? Or, Who dropped the ball?) to more solution-based "I" questions (What can I do to contribute? Or, How can I help solve the problem?)

One of the chapters in *QBQ!* is called "I Can Only Change Me" and in this chapter Miller reminds us that when dealing with any circumstance the only person that can change is – one's self.

Perhaps you're a supervisor who's dealing with a difficult employee. You do your best to change the employee's attitude and nothing is working. The attitude you should be changing is your own. A supervisor's role is to coach and counsel – not to change another person. Change is something that occurs internally – a result of decisions made by the individual. The same applies for the reverse – an employee who works for a difficult supervisor. The employee cannot change the supervisor – the only aspect the employee can change is him or herself and how he or she deals with the difficult supervisor.

Each of us may be aware that the only person each of us can change is our self; however, there's a big difference between understanding this concept and actually living it.

Miller raises the question: Why does it seem the only thing people know how to do anymore is point the finger elsewhere? Blame is everywhere. Here are some examples, as shared by Miller:

- I wanted to buy coffee at a gas station convenience store, but the pot was empty. I told the person behind the counter the coffee pot was empty. He then pointed at a co-worker and said “coffee is her department!”

- On a cross-country flight, the flight attendant got on the intercom and said, “Sorry everyone, but the movie we promised you will not be shown today. Catering put the wrong one on board.”

- While picking up take-out pizza, the pizza place lost our order. Suddenly out of the blue, the man behind the counter says “Hey, don’t blame me, my shift just started!”

Miller says that he’ll ask groups, “What’s the one thing you would change to improve the effectiveness of your organization?” Miller typically receives this list: products, policies, procedures, promotions, people – no one ever says “me!” Our minds, says Miller, simply don’t go there – our thoughts almost always focus externally first.

We say, “I can only change me.” But, Miller says, when asked “Who have you been thinking needs to learn the Question Behind the Question (QBQ) strategies?” We say “they do!”

We often hear things like “It’s not my fault” or “It’s not my job” or “It’s not my problem.” Instead, we should be asking ourselves “How can I do my job better?” or “What can I do to improve this situation?” or “How can I support others?”

QBQ! encourages us to move away from victim-like questions such as “Why don’t others work harder?” or “Why don’t I get more direction from upper management?” or “Why is this happening to me?” to questions that begin with “what” or “how” and contain “I” to bring the focus back to one’s self.

You’ll make better choices in the moment when you start asking yourself better questions. One of the best is:

What can I do to make a difference?

Often we hear the phrase, “There’s plenty of blame to go around!” Really? Is that true? Must we blame? Do I have to ask questions like, “Who caused the delay?” “When will others care more?” “Why is everything taking so long?” “When will people do their jobs right?” and “Why is this happening to me?” The only places where those questions take me is blame, finger pointing, and victim thinking.

“What would you say if I told you that when I am bored and have little to do, I go to a secret room in my home where I keep old garbage in drawers, plastic containers, and boxes. I then spread it on the floor and roll in it—for hours. I imagine you’d say that purposely collecting, hoarding, and wallowing in garbage is a ridiculous—even insane—thing to do. And I’d agree. Yet we all do it—maybe not literally,

but in our minds. Garbage thinking—it'll kill us.” -Excerpt from Flipping the Switch ... Unleashing the Power of Personal Accountability

Personal accountability is not about changing others or controlling what I cannot, it's about changing myself and recognizing the power of one. And that "one" is me, asking "How can I contribute?" Accountable thinking makes a difference in all we do. By embracing QBQ! and making its use a habit, each of us can reach new goals, build trust-filled relationships and create greater happiness in our daily living.

Incorrect Questions (IQ's) that create division, erode performance and damage morale	The correct Question (QBQ)
When is someone going to solve the problem?	What can I do?
Who dropped the ball?	How can I make a difference?
Why do we have to go through all this change?	How can I contribute to the solution?
Why doesn't that department do it's job?	What could I have done to prevent this problem?
When are my clients/staff going to get motivated?	
Why did this happen to me?	What can I do in my current job to excel?
When will they understand?	How can I better understand them?

Thought patterns that will destroy you	Thought patterns that will bring you joy
The Blame Game	What can I do today to add value to my clients' lives?
That's not my job	What action will I take today to demonstrate ownership?
It's not my fault	How can I eliminate defensive thinking?

“Using the QBQ helps me to put my initial thought on hold, like touching the pause button on a remote control. When my natural inclination in the heat of the moment is to focus on someone or something outside of my control, I can pause my thinking and ask a different kind of question. I can ask the QBQ.”

Making Personal Accountability Personal

1. What is one problem I have found frustrating lately at work?
2. What impact has that problem had on my daily effectiveness?
3. Until now, who have I been thinking is responsible for this situation?
4. If I were to practice Personal Accountability regarding this problem, what would I now do differently?

Comments from staff who have studied QBQ:

- I must stop expecting from others what I was not practicing myself
- QBQ has made a difference in my life in my love and respect for fellow workers
- I see evidence that my practicing QBQ has made a difference in their respect for me.
- Removes a lot of stress
- Frustration level is reduced
- Action and accomplishment is improved
- QBQ removes the barrier to moving ahead on what I used to call “an issue” – seeing stuck points as opportunities defeats inertia in problem solving.
- QBQ takes off blinders to see potential options not previously considered.
- QBQ makes it not only “OK” to serve others but creates the perspective of serving as a way of life