

Building the Precision Q+A Habit

Precision Q+A is a powerful tool for making your business conversations more efficient and for getting information that fuels better decisions. But, Precision Q+A becomes ever more powerful the more it becomes a habit—a way of interacting with colleagues that is crisp, concise, and so ingrained that you don't even have to think about it.

The way people build habits is deceptively simple to describe: Pick an activity and repeat it! We all know, however, that building habits is easier said than done. It is wise to start with a small activity that you can easily repeat in your everyday life, and then once that becomes familiar, add another small activity and add it to your repertoire. The same goes for Precision Q+A - pick an aspect of questioning or answering and focus on it repeatedly until it comes naturally, and then pick another, and so on.

To sharpen your skill in Precision Q+A this month, try building up your PQ+A habits. Here are 5 activities to get you started. Pick one, repeat it as often as possible, and don't add another one until you find that you don't even have to think about it anymore. If you build up all five, you'll be well on your way to mastering Precision Q+A.

- ***Precision Answering in email.*** Before you hit the "send" key on every email, carefully reread the questions that were asked, and then review your answers. Did you put the core first? Did you keep it short?
- ***When you find yourself about to speculate or guess,*** use "I don't know" instead. But make sure to add some additional information each time. "I'll have an answer by Friday." "It will take about two weeks and cost about \$10,000 to get an answer."
- ***Follow up on all your questions.*** Too often we hesitate before asking a follow-up question, and then the discussion changes direction and it is too late. Each time you ask a question, have at least one follow-up question in mind, and ask it.
- ***Debrief your phone and conference calls.*** After a phone call or conference call, you may discover that you are saying to yourself "I asked the wrong questions." For the next month, set aside 10 minutes after every phone call to debrief on your questioning and writing down the questions that would have been most precise and most helpful to the discussion.
- ***Build your questioning vocabulary.*** Look at the PQ+A Toolkit from the workshop. Are there any categories of questions that you are completely overlooking? For the next month, ask a question from that category at least once per day. Make yourself a chart on your calendar and keep track of your progress!