

Coaching Self to Gain Clarity Through Questions (and Inquiries) Nov. 13, 2017

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Jennifer Navarrete: Welcome to the show that shares insights into how you can **Build Your Business Once** with hosts Sherry Lowry, and Jennifer Navarrete.

Thanks so much for joining us today, my name is Jennifer Navarrete, and I am joined here today by Sherry Lowry who is sharing her 20-plus years of experience on what it takes to **Build Your Business Once**. This week we have been focusing in on **Clarity** and expanding that knowledge.

Yesterday we talked about documenting and naming elements. We actually had a document that was built into four quadrants. You had a **YES** quadrant-set, and a **NO** quadrant-set.

Purpose: support you in deciding what you want to do and whether **Y.O.U.** REALLY want to do it – or someone else possibly wanted you to do it. (This is often the case with those who are Servant-Leader types.) Also, there is the key question whether you should be doing it, and/or if it should be something you should push away.

So, on today's show we will focus and expand on **Clarity**. What we are looking at is going into questions and asking questions and making (mostly) self-inquiries. So Sherry, talk to me a bit about **Questions** and **Inquiries**.

Are these **Questions** that we ask ourselves?

Or, are these **Questions** that folks ask us?

Sherry Lowry: They are going to work both ways; they work in our favor both ways. These are **Questions** we need to be able to have answers to. **Inquiries**, then, will be elements *to reflect upon* we need to decide one way or the other about if we have covered the issues they bring up, and if they are even necessary in the case of individual business owners. So, **Inquiries** as what we take to reflection can serve us as a prevention approach as well as a safety net approach, and in establishing an advantage. They provide us an advance opportunity to think through our options – and to see what may calibrate well with what it is we really want, need or should consider either to leverage a benefit or prevent what would not be in our favor.

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Because this is easier to SHOW vs describe, I want to provide a little more context about this **Strategic Planning Goals Grid**. And yes, yesterday we talked about documenting and naming elements. We actually have a document in the handout resources that is built into four quadrants. You will have a **YES** quadrant, and a **NO** quadrant. In the two sections of the **YES** Quadrant reside what you want to Achieve more of/or differently; and within the **NO** Quadrant-set resides what you want to **Avoid** what you don't already have & don't want, plus continue to **Avoid**; and an **Eliminate** Quadrant which contains what you DO have and don't want (so this will need a plan to manage an exit for it) and your commitment toward **Elimination**. (This all will clarify when you actually SEE the template.)

JN: That is interesting, you often hear people ask if you don't know what direction to take your business, you should consider doing an active campaign. That almost sounds a little like what you are talking about or a piece of it.

SL: Yes, it could be a piece of it. This could support an "asking" campaign. It could serve as an advance test. One of the things we are working on is building our **Strategic Planning Goals Grid** so the goals actually have some substance under them. Some purposefulness rather than "pie in the sky" of big stretches you are going for to make that stretch and take that risk, then we want you to have some ammunition, so to speak. We want you going in prepared to do that.

I am going to divide these into a couple of areas and they are often significant as things unfold. So, first, let's talk about the purpose, the whole reason for what are called **Powerful Questions**, and what are **Powerful Questions** that we either ask ourselves, or are asked along the way? It also can apply not just at the time you are building your business or running your business, but any time with a prospective or potential, new candidate for a Client in your business shows up. *Keep these things in mind because this is how you will test the waters for the fit between you.*

Whether it is a company or an individual owner, the first reason for a **Powerful Question** and to be thoughtful about your **Questions** is because most of the time to be best used, these are what you genuinely don't know the answer to in advance. They **are not** what are called *leading questions*, where you are asking the question for somebody to fall into a conversation with you that you already

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know you want to have. This is to open opportunities for questions that both you and the candidate or existing Client, and they can possibly be most useful when you may want to explore taking a different direction with the two of you together.

So, one of the main purpose is to encourage going deeper in your own exploration of what it is you are either offering as a service potential person, or entity to be in the service to explore. This can also open a way, a safe way, to know when a question has made real impact, both for you and for the other.

So there are actually four types of responses that you actually can track to take the temperature of how your questions are serving you, and more importantly, serving the other.

- One is **Silence**, and that is not dead silence, it is **loaded silence**, and actually can be representing real thought about what a response may be prior to making it or saying out loud that the other want to think about a bit. It also could be either because you or they have never thought about that yet, but the idea of it sounds really interesting or intriguing.

You also know right away if there is defensiveness around that question with what their response is also a possibility, whether it is avoiding, or confusion. **If they ask you to say it again**, or ask it again, that does not mean it is not on-target, it may genuinely mean that it is the first time they have heard that question in relation to the topic, and they may need to hear it again.

So, Silence is one of the first responses you might anticipate or be watchful for.

- There is also, and I listen for this a lot because I do a lot of phone work as you do, Jennifer, and so when you are live and in person with someone you can see as well as hear they are thinking and considering; but when you are on the phone you really can ONLY hear this and or can also experience this with whatever visuals like video you may have with Skype.
- So: **A cue is surprising intake of breath, a deeper breath than usual**, it is like it takes the breath away just for a second or infuses a whole new sense of energy into wanting and needing a deeper intake of breath. It is interesting once you start listening for that and how often you hear that

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before something is going to happen that could be good for either the business involvement or the personal relationship.

- Another thing that happens often in my work is a **Gentle Laugh**, sort of a chuckle, and usually that is at them. Like one of my long time Clients is in higher-end real estate in the NYC, New Jersey area. He gets a lot of challenges because New Yorker's and New Jersey people are often fierce negotiators. So one day he told me he had this big work-around plan for some kind of problematic situation that he anticipated was coming up for him with a particular real estate Client.

Philosophically, it was the exact reverse of what he had been telling me for two full months. He thought he wanted to be using a plan as a strategy in a difficult family negotiation in the sale of a building. So, I heard him out and I genuinely asked, "Say that again," and he did.

I said, "Wait. You are going to do what?"

Suddenly there was dead silence, and a whoosh of air and he said, "Oh, I'm not going to do that, am I?"

I had to laugh, and he started laughing also. Then he said, "That is what I would do in my traditional role as a high-end, highly trained realtor, but IF I am actually going to serve as a business partner for this Client then I have him think about this again and come up with a new strategy. Is that what you had in mind?"

I said, "It is not what **I** have in mind; it is what **YOU** have in mind that matters. I am just noting the last few months that you have been talking about the plan, it did not include what you came up with today." There is a big sound of release of relief at his end because he is a very high-integrity business man, and this is one of the calling cards of his business: you really can **trust him** in good times and bad to do what you will wake up the next day and look in the mirror and be happy you decided about.

What he is NOT promoting: Anything that would add extra profit for him (as realtor) but then regretted as it triggered future "buyer's remorse" meaning the future business relationship likely being soured. And...while getting through a difficult Client set of exchanges, breaking trust in the relationship.

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Even though he may come out on top say by \$10,00, he'd damage future trust – that's not his style. His brand is more valuable, by far, than that.

•Then occasionally, the fourth kind of response to a powerful question may be **Tearing Up** or **Obvious Sadness**. That is when someone is beginning to tell the truth to themselves that they had been avoiding and often this is about a business collaboration that is not going as they thought or wanted it to or it may occasionally be about **Betrayal** put up with and not resolved.

It sometimes can be the end of a partnership or the loss of a Client, or the truth telling to yourself and the Client that it would take you out of integrity to do what it is they are asking for next in terms of the business service.

So, there are a variety of categories of these significant **Questions**. I will stop right there, Jennifer, to ask for your input is this a useful direction to take both in prevention, and to discover greater opportunity for a business owner when it is their business they are trying to set up one time and re-invent over and over?

JN: I am glad that before you asked that question that you also said you are going to dive into what some of those key questions are, because we don't know what we don't know. Maybe we don't know the questions we should be asking because we are missing that piece of knowledge.

I am guessing next you will share what some questions should be.

SL: That is what we are going to do for the rest of the time and I am going to share the list I am working from. Where it came from is tons of research and many different publications and sources that I have. Some of these I have created, and some emerged out of the partnerships and business alliances I have had that we came up with over 12 years of training Coaches in what is appropriate **Questioning**, and what is inappropriate. What is useful to the Client, and what is just curiosity on the part of the Coach, which can be wasting the time of the Client. (This is a point I want to more fully develop at another time, btw.)

Let's go over the top of the categories and I will come back and give some specifics.

To start with I will talk about multiples of categories and give examples of some.

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For instance, there is an Anticipation Category, a Clarification Category, and an Evaluation one. Then there are Categories also of: Exploration, History, Implementation, Integration, Learning, Options, Outcomes, Perspective, Planning, Predictions, Resources, Starting an Exchange, Completing an Exchange, Substance, Summary, and Taking Action. (Whew! Who knew !!?)

I want to go into a bit more depth on just these first few to give an idea of where we are heading.

For instance on the type of **Questions**, I could ask you (**For Instance**) if you could do it all over again with Brewing Media for example, what would you do differently? In reality, you actually may have the opportunity any time you are changing or adding a service.

JN: Oh no! She has me in the hot seat! She is really asking me – AND I would have more focus. I think a lot of what I have done is fly by the seat as an entrepreneur who is going to that 12-step meeting to be less fly by the seat and more intentional, I would have been more focused. For me, everything I have done has been things that have interested me, but lots of things interest me. I shared yesterday I have narrowed it down to three specific pieces of my business. I wish I had gotten to those three sooner.

But at the same time I think I had to muck about to figure that out in the way I did.

A catch-22 on that one.

SL: You have already addressed the next one, if it were that you could do this, what would you have done and you already told me that. Focus more – or with a different quality or level of intention. When someone asks you what you would do, the first thing you want to know is what is in his or her service to do, so you have heard this before. If you could do anything you want, if budget were no issue, if time is no issue, what would you really do – pie in the sky next?

For you, it may be more of the same, or up-leveling your equipment, or it may be expanding your territory.

Those are **For Instance** *kind of questions*, so they fit in that Category.

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The next category, **Anticipation**, and I will not put you on the spot for this: what is your backup plan in case one of the offerings you are making now begins not to work out quite the way you plan?

Do you have a backup plan first, and you want people to have a backup plan not because they need to use it but so they have more confidence going into the first set of endeavors. So they know they have something they can fall to just in the event, and it helps the shock and disappointment if you lose a Client or a have a situation that terminates early, or their agenda changes or something like that. There is not quite the anticipation if you pre-anticipate the ***if***.

It still does not put a damper on the circumstance.

On **Clarification Questions**, one of the things I want to know is there anything about this that confuses you as you have it planned out before you are going into it?

A lot of times we make these things up as we go, and we get a new opportunity because there is a future trend that is showing up. But we haven't actually tried this stuff out. Whatever seems to confuse you – I would send you out to do research first. This could fit right in with a "Question Campaign."

Like you already do, you talk to people who either have also done this, or are doing something similar to it, or offer a service that runs tandem or bridges it in some way. A **Clarification Question** is how else would you like this to turn out?

This is real common and very helpful, almost always all of us have some past experience in what things have felt like to us before. When something happens that surprises you, or when we are talking about opportunities, one of the **Clarification Questions** I may ask would be, is there something else that has felt a bit like this before, and if so, how did that work out?

Then if there is more than one way to interpret that, to ask directly what is another way that you can see this, or is there another person out there you can pull in on contract who can help with this if you need to do this? Or, in worst case, outcome what kind of pivot do you have in mind?

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Most of the time we don't have one in mind, but if we get one in mind it opens up possibilities before we need them.

Those are ways to clarify a bit, then in **Evaluation Questions**, asking, "Wait, this is what you are going to do, is this what you ultimately would like most to do or is this a compromise for you?" I don't genuinely know the answer to that question, and we are surprised when we find out people are not really loaded for bear because they didn't want to stretch it that far. They didn't want to take that chance, whereas taking the slightly larger change or risk may be the 10% between being really being successful for them, and really not.

When asking **Clarification Questions** you also can find out what kind of support people feel they could use to do a better job than the job they are intending for.

Thus, for example, in my case when I know for sure I have someone really good to make a referral to, I am willing and able to push and explore more than I usually could with someone who is contacting me about my services to find out if what I offer really and truly is what they most need and can use right now or is there another step between that where a different referral I might make to them.

It is a different service than they are asking for, but I am in a position to make it for them as a referral some times and some time they can use other services than mine, right then they may be back to me later, or helps me to become more of a future go-to person for them they feel they can trust to tell them with more context what it is I am offering.

I like being in that position, I have talked about being a connective resource before and how that is a natural part of my business platform.

Then, one of my favorite things on a scale of 1-5 meaning 1 = which is unlikely – to 5 which is high, what do you think are the chances of success of this resource as you are now, positioned as you are, life stage and all, that you are in now? That is kind of an invitation for a truth-telling conversation and often, and I will listen, that can become a **Powerful Question** though also a very simple one.

If I am going to ask that question, I am going to be very quiet, and I am going to give them a chance to answer that and respond to it, or I am going to take some

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extra reflection time myself to tell the truth about what the likelihood, again on a 1 to 5 scale, is of my success at something.

That is when the **Silence** and the **Gentle Laugh or a Chuckle**, or a surprising kind of “Halt! Stop!” Response in place, or Intake of Breath, or occasionally **Sadness** may turn up when I have those truth-talks with myself.

Those are the kind of talks I often have with others, sometimes with a group most often individuals. That is the beginning of the **Clarification** of those types of **Questions**.

(Note: one of our extreme values as a Coach is simply being one willing to HAVE such talks with Clients. Not very many people like dealing with what can be really uncomfortable to go through with such a Client. Willingness counts a lot.)

Other questions because I don't want us to run out of time here are: **Exploration or Exploratory Category** questions. There is some history like that goes back seems to familiar, I know the circumstance, what is the underlying dynamic. Have you been in a situation like this before?

Those are **History Questions**, and we can go on and they will see on the handout **Implementation Categories of Questions, Integration Category, Learning Category**, parts that are brand new to you. Or, are there **Lessons Learned** you have forgotten you want to pay attention to.

Options, category, **Outcome Category**, let me stop there as I don't want to run out of time.

JN: You asked about the **History** piece, has this ever happened before. Most of the time, not all the time, but when it has, we can go back and describe the situation and you can ask, “Well, if you could go back, what would have been the action steps you would have taken instead?”

That is your basic form template for what you will do in this situation so you do not have that hindsight 20/20 regret experience, which can be a *powerful peeve*.

Sometimes there are things you learn the hard way, but if you learn them well the first time which we talked a bit, that may well become what we want more of as

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right for us. You can be moved by a Feather, or can be via hit over the head by a Brick.

SL: By the end of this we want people to be fans of Feather Training. ;)

JN: I was going to say, I can't believe on tomorrow's show we are going to be wrapping up another week of content.

SL: I can go into more depth on that as we covered some of them here, and recap a bit more into **Inquiry**, or we can also carry that over into the upcoming week as well.

JN: It has been fun, you don't want to miss tomorrow's show! It is going to recap the week where we dive deeper, a lot of these pieces were action tasking, actual work, things you needed to ask yourself and look around to **Build Your Business Once**. We will talk to you tomorrow.

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