



Tool

Reflective questions

PURPOSE: Various studies have shown the power of reflection at work – recent research cited in the Harvard Business Review¹ suggests that reflecting on performance for as little as the equivalent of 60 mins per week improves results by over 20%.

How can you afford not to make time for an activity that helps you improve so significantly? This short exercise, which is in effect a set of ‘coaching’ questions coaches often use to support a coachee to review their learning, can offer you and quick and effective way to build regular reflection into your working week – individually or with your team.

SOURCE: Adapted from an RD1st coaching exercise.

HOW TO DO THE EXERCISE (overleaf):

1. Simply work your way slowly through these questions – in the order below. Ask yourself the question and jot down your thoughts in response.
2. Take care to stick to these exact questions and notice:
 - a. the focus is on what you did rather than what happened. That’s because we can only control our actions.
 - b. there’s a focus on the positive – many of us tend to focus on what went wrong; don’t overlook what you did that worked well so you can repeat it!

¹ See, Carmen Nobel, *Reflecting on Work Improves Job Performance*, May 2014, Accessed at <https://hbswk.hbs.edu/item/7509.html>

- I. What did you notice about your performance?
- II. What did you like about what you did?
- III. What else did you like? [*repeat this one until you run out of things you liked*]
- IV. What was it that pleased you most?
- V. If you could do it again, what would you do differently?
- VI. What will you do about that in the future?
- VII. What do you want to make sure you will 'take with you'?
- VIII. Is there anything you wish to leave behind?

OPTIONS:

- These questions work really well either to look at a specific period of time (last week, last quarter), or specific projects and events.
- The questions work just as well for teams or groups – I often use them with teams to review the past few months' performance together. Make time to hear from one another and share your thinking about each question in turn as your collective insights will often inform your responses to the later questions. You might like to invite people to think about the questions individually first then come together to share their thinking and generate a team response to each question.
- I use these questions to generate a 'learning log'; a monthly record of my reflections and actions I plan to take as a result. It's a simple two column table in which I log 'insights' in the left-hand column and 'actions' in the right. I've been keeping my log for over a decade!
- Top tip – these questions can work really well when something has not gone as you would have liked and it's bothering you. Working through them helps you acknowledge the learning and that can help 'process' and move forwards.