

Voltage Control's

The Facilitator's Guide to Questions

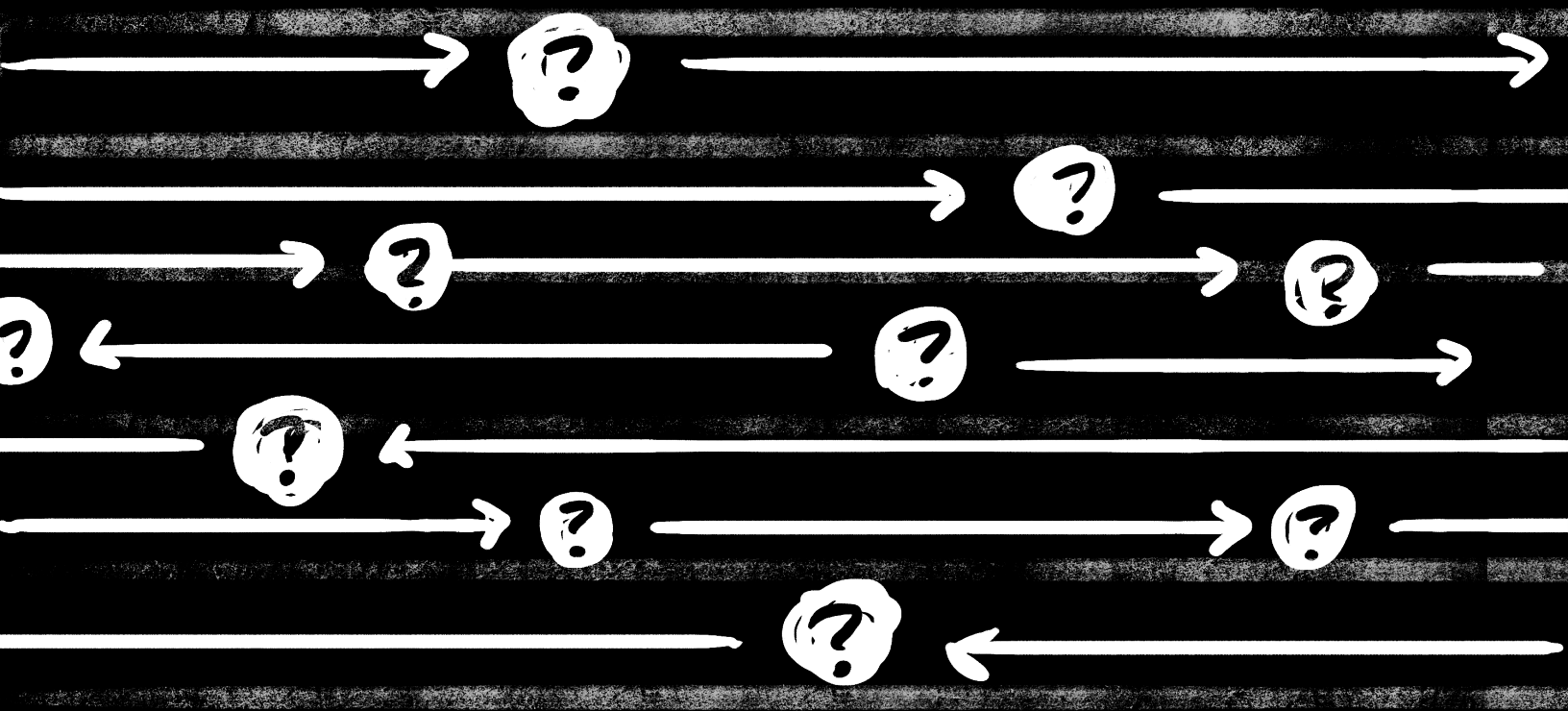
A pocket reference for facilitators to always know
what questions to ask to keep your meetings magical.



Introduction

Judo is all about using an opponent's energy against them. There is no punching, kicking, or striking - just the shifting of weight and balance. The Voltage Control team likes to think of facilitation as a sort of Verbal Judo. We believe facilitation should be the direction and focus of a team's energy, not an aggressive act of forceful instruction. We're pleased to share with you some of our favorite questions for redirecting the energy of participants.

By the end of this reference guide, you will be equipped to masterfully direct the flow of energy within your meeting or workshop space. We will outline potential situations in which you may need to direct or redirect participants and prescribe an arsenal of specific, effective questions to keep your meetings magical.



Facilitating Beginnings

For yourself and/or the client, before the meeting...

"What do we want to have produced? How will we know we've been successful?"

"What concerns are likely to arise? What are the challenges that might get in our way?"

For setting participants' expectations at the beginning of the meeting...

"Why are we here today?"

"How will we know if we are successful?"

For feeling out the room at the beginning of the meeting...

"How are we feeling this morning/afternoon?"

"What almost kept you from coming today?"



Facilitating Engagement

For keeping the momentum going or encouraging participation:

"Who haven't we heard from?"

"What are the strengths and weaknesses of ____?"

For checking to see if participants are connected with the content

"It appears you may be a little confused about the directions. Is there anything I can clarify?"

"I'm seeing that piqued the group's interest. What is it that we're excited about with this?"

For getting a speaker to elaborate on points of importance

"Can you be more specific?"

"Can you expand on that point?"

For helping people express sensitive information

"Some people can find this module isn't substantive enough/can be offended by this topic. Can you relate to that concern?"

"Some people find that concerns and opinions aren't valued by management. Have you had that experience as well?"

For showing participants how their actions are being perceived

"Is anybody else noticing that we've only heard from this group for most of the discussion?"

"It looks to me like everyone might be ready for a break. Are we ready for a break?"

"It seems as though we're feeling a little unfocused. How can we get back on track?"



Facilitating Understanding

For when you don't understand what someone is saying or think they may be incorrect:

"Can you give me an example?"

"Could you say that again? It was unclear to me."

For when you understand a participant, but you don't think others do:

"Can you help the group understand the reasoning you used to get to your conclusion?"

"I'm hearing you say _____. What does the group think about this?"

For when you want to emphasize or build on something being said:

"A connection I am making with what's being said is... Can anyone else see this?"

"Can you elaborate on what you just said because...?"

For when a participant is hesitant to or having trouble expressing themselves:

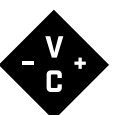
"I can see you're having a hard time putting this into words, that's okay. Keep trying. You're doing great."

"Take your time."

For understanding potential opportunities

"What's the best experience you've had in the time you've been with the organization?"

"What's the least efficient part of the process as it is now?"



Facilitating Alignment

For when participants are disagreeing:

"What is your understanding of what ____ is saying?"

"What evidence and reasons are there for....?"

For when participants are getting off-topic or unfocused:

"Is this getting us closer to or further from our goal?"

"That's a good point. For now, can we put that on the issues list so we don't forget it and get back to ____?"

For Unlocking subjective information (thoughts, values, beliefs, etc.)

"How do you feel about the effectiveness of the new equipment?"

"How did that feedback make you feel about your work up to this point?"

For exploring people's true desires

"If you had unlimited time and unlimited resources, what sort of employee training program would you implement?"

"In a perfect world where resources were not an obstacle, what would the final version of this project look like to you?"



Facilitating Positivity

For the critic...

"Thank you for pointing this out. How would you suggest that I correct this?"

"I hear your frustration. In the essence of time – can we move on for now and circle back?"

For the naysayer...

"Is there some way we can solve this problem? What is your view of how we ought to go about this?"

"It seems as though you may have had a reaction to that. Can you help me understand why?"

For the one that doesn't want to be there...

"Part of my job is to ensure we don't waste your time. So help me understand, why you think this isn't worthwhile?"

"We do need your full participation if we can get it. Are we addressing issues that are important to you?"

For the frustrated...

"Is that the real issue or are you upset about something else?"

"I'm sensing that you are frustrated that _____. Is that how you are feeling or am I wrong?"

For the talker...

"We are starting to run up on time, can you quickly summarize your thoughts?"

"I'd like to invite the group to share their thoughts on that."



Facilitating Closing & Feedback

For closing off discussions

"Is everyone happy to proceed to the next topic?"

"Does this solution work for everyone?"

For checking in on the room when the energy feels off...

"Given what just happened, what are we experiencing right this second?"

"Would a break be helpful right now?"

For debriefing after a discussion or activity...

"What is a question that is emerging for you?"

"What are the take-away lessons from this activity?"

For getting feedback at the end of the day/end of a workshop...

"What were the strengths and weaknesses of today's session/this workshop?"

"What is something bold that you might do after leaving this room?"



We hope this reference guide will help facilitators always know what questions to ask to result in the outcome they desire to reach. While frameworks and philosophies are invaluable study materials, sometimes what one really needs is a pocket guide for those moments that demand a quick answer. We look forward to seeing what wonderful things can be created when facilitators adopt a Judo mindset, mastering the redirection of a room's energy.

Want to learn more about virtual facilitation?

Voltage Control offers [virtual services](#) including Virtual Facilitation and Virtual Meeting Design. **Please reach out at info@voltagecontrol.com for a consultation.**

