

4 simple questions all successful people have answered

Spear Communications

✈ Understand. Be understood.

There's not much value in your correct answers when you've got the questions wrong

"High achievers ask the right questions," says *New York Times* bestseller, and founder of Best Year Ever, Michael Hyatt.

I was so inspired by Michael that I went out looking, not for answers, but questions.

You see, I already had all kinds of answers.

I read books, I interviewed successful people, I followed the top blogs.

Nowadays, answers are cheap and plentiful.

But there's not much value in your correct answer when you've got the question wrong.

The wrong question can send you down a dead-end street.

I know this from personal experience, having made the costly mistake of asking the wrong questions in my business. And in my life.

"Okay," you are saying. "So what are the right questions to ask before I start my business, launch my brand, start that community project, or write the first blog post?"

What follows is the result of my personal quest for the right questions.

What is the truth about me?

Sounds pretty philosophical, doesn't it? Even a bit airy-fairy.

Not the kind of question I'd normally ask myself when I sit down to write a business plan.

And that was my problem.

There I was, asking "What products do I want to sell?" and "What is my Unique Selling Proposition?"

Then I came across Bernadette Jiwa and her "Difference Map." She calls this the "one-page method for reimagining your business and reinventing your marketing."

And that's exactly what it is.

I bought a blank journal and filled 10 pages with my answer to the question What is the truth about me?

Brutal honesty. No rock left unturned. The good, the bad, and the ugly.

Not an easy exercise, but when I was done I had a clarity of purpose my former questions could never have achieved.

I had a better understanding of my motivations, fears, and goals.

I realized that what motivated me in my business, and life, was the need to make a difference and to do work that mattered.

My fears? To drift along, never having realized my potential.

Goal? To create, and to be part of a community of interesting, successful and creative people.

Bernadette's Difference Map is a mighty machine of questions, drilling to the core of your strategic goals.

That one simple question of hers yielded the foundation of my business plan.

What is my Why?

You've found your personal truth, and that's good.

Now it's time to find your why.

"People lose their way when they lose their why," says Gail Hyatt.

We can set all the goals we'd like—make a million dollars, lose 15 pounds, build a better widget.

But it's hard to keep motivated when you lose sight of your why.

Again, we're talking about the deep-down stuff, not the obvious answers:

"To have financial security, to fit into my pants, to capture a bigger market share."

These are all good answers, but are they truly answering the question?

Are they, in other words, tapping into your Truth?

Or is there a deeper, more powerful reason for wanting to lose that weight, like the emotional discomfort you are feeling? Or the joy you'll experience when you reach your goal?

Our Why connects us with our primal emotions—pleasure, joy, fear, and love—and nothing is a more powerful motivator.

Who am I serving?

"What must our business be in the minds of others for them to choose us?" asks Michael E. Gerber, in *The E-Myth Revisited: why most businesses don't work and what to do about it*.

Lucky for you, the answers to questions 1 and 2 have provided a strong business foundation.

You're now ready to turn outward, to understand others the way you understand yourself.

But how on Earth do we do this?

As Gerber's book suggests, finding the truth and the why of your audience, market,

customers, colleagues—or whatever term you use—begins in self-understanding.

This idea is so powerful for me that the tagline I created for my communications consulting business is "**Understand. Be Understood.**"

First, understand what it is that you offer—your value proposition.

Second, communicate it effectively.

Every business, and every organization, fulfills basic human needs by addressing universal human emotions.

Your product may be a better widget, but as Gerber notes, that's not what your customers and clients are looking for.

They want peace of mind, beauty, self-empowerment, pleasure, security, belonging, self-esteem, or happiness.

Forge powerful connections by building your work around the truth and why that your customers desire and you deliver.

Why should anyone care—about my product, services, work, or blog?

Sure, you can skip questions 1 and 2, and go right to 3.

That's called marketing, and we all know that marketing is essential.

It's up to you whether to explore, or to not explore, questions 1 and 2.

I avoided doing this for a long time, and I now regret it.

Because if you have done this work, the answers to 4 will be obvious.

If you haven't, then question 4 is going to be a mystery.

And, really, wouldn't you say that it's the most important question of all?

Because if no one cares about your work, then good luck getting people to support it.

Good luck selling your services.

Good luck finding readers for your blog, or your novel.

Good luck making a difference in this world.

Getting people to care is your single toughest challenge.

And you know this, because you've experienced that dreadful moment when you just finished delivering what you thought was a great pitch.

And what happened?

No. One. Cared.

Take the time to find out what you truly care about, what motivates you, and how your product or service or job can help others, and you'll discover the true value of your work.

You will be much happier, and much more successful.

♥ Wayne K. Spear is the Founder and President of Spear Communications. This article is part of his ongoing series called "Thought Bombs."

