

Q Moving Questions

How to let questions work for you

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Colophon

Moving Questions—How to let questions work for you

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Introduction

Introduction

Once in a while, you decide that a change is needed. So, you make a plan. A plan that will get you from A to B and prepare you to deal with whatever you may encounter along the way.

Sometimes what you need isn't change, but mobilisation. So, you start to explore – either within or externally. You look for the sticking point. If you're lucky, this exploration will trigger whatever was causing the blockage to start moving again. Moving Questions invite this kind of movement.

Moving Questions start by distinguishing between change and movement. What they're certainly not is a step-by-step plan or a set of rules. Following a set of steps and getting from A to B is a change. But nobody knows exactly what they will get when they ask a Moving Question. Question A will not always get Answer B. The answer to Moving Question A may well be green. Or 19. Or both yes and no at the same time.

Even to anticipate where Moving Questions will take you is often difficult. Because your focus is not on a problem, nor a solution. You take the problem as a symptom of something else. You don't have to actually solve the problem itself. After all, the problem is just a consequence of something else. Once you discover the actual cause, the problem becomes defunct. In many cases, it solves itself automatically or what needs to be done becomes apparent. This is what we call a movement.

At the heart of many of the assignments I take on as an organisational consultant is effecting a change. Perhaps a different strategy is needed, or employee behaviour or skills need changing or upgrading. The list goes on.

In short, how it is now has to change. And it's the management that's responsible for achieving these goals, although employees



are included, and affected, in all kinds of ways. Which means that communication is crucial, often with a specific role being created purely for that purpose. If what has to be changed is actually a symptom of something else (which is almost always the case), then everything will revert back to the old situation once the pressure's off. So, if the management switches its focus elsewhere once the desired change seems to have taken hold, then a team, process or product falls back into the old situation. And the reports of success will probably magnify this difference considerably. But in essence, everything is back to how it was.

Change	Movement
<p>How it is now has to be different</p>	<p>Freeing what's stuck</p>
<p>The outcome is the objective</p> <p>The outcome is, in the best-case scenario, what you wanted</p> <p>Is initiated and guided by the management</p> <p>System easily reverts back to (approximately) the old situation</p> <p>Requires focus and perseverance.</p>	<p>The outcome is the consequence</p> <p>The outcome is better/more valuable than expected.</p> <p>No fixed place from where the movement originates.</p> <p>The system has transformed into something new.</p> <p>Happens quickly and effortlessly, provided the appropriate intervention takes place</p>

With Moving Questions, it's about how you organise yourself, and the questions you create. The better you organise yourself, the more the question can move. I hope this book challenges you. Challenges you, through the questions you ask, to intervene in a way that moves you further. To ask questions you don't necessarily know the destination of. Questions that don't simply reinforce your view of the world but open up a sea of other possibilities.



In the Warming-Up section you'll learn more about the basic concepts that underpin Moving Questions. Concepts offering better answers than traditional thought-frameworks to the problems that we – society, organisations, people – have to deal with. The second chapter describes how you can do this, organise yourself. And the effects of doing this. This is an integral part of Moving Questions. If you can't organise yourself, then your Moving Question will be no more than a Basic Good Question. And there's nothing wrong with this, but it's probably not the reason you're reading this book.

In chapter 3 you'll encounter a number of ready-made Moving Questions. All of these questions can be used in both your professional and private life. In chapter 4, you'll learn how to create your own Moving Questions, and read about the syntax of Moving Questions: how a Moving Question is constructed, and the elements that constitute it.

In order to direct your questions effectively, it's important to know where your questions come from. Why you're specifically asking this particular question. Chapter 5 will explain this. The bonus chapter tells you more about the systemic laws.

Once you've mastered working with Moving Questions, continue to use everything you know and can. Don't throw anything away. If what you read contradicts what you already know, don't allow these two sorts of knowledge to fight each other, but instead invite yourself to connect the two. Create your own dark chocolate with chilli – an unexpectedly delicious combination. A combination that brings something brand new, something that didn't previously exist.



**If you offer no
resistance, it will flow
naturally. You don't
have to work hard.**



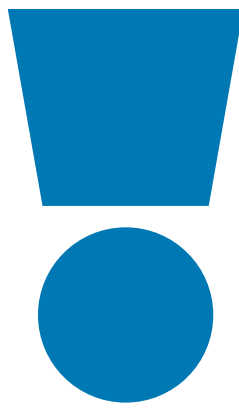


Neither do you have to work hard when reading this book. You don't have to remember anything. Or report back. Simply relax, read and let the content in. If something's valuable, it won't just disappear. Chances are, you'll discover quite different things if you read this book again in a few months. And this will all be down to the movement you'll have made in that period.

Don't read too quickly. Take a break after each chapter. Experiment with what you've just read. To do this, you can use the exercises at the end of each paragraph. Feel free to check whether what I've written is true!

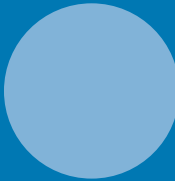
Finally, you can't get this wrong! All you're doing, is asking a question. Out loud to someone else, or in silence to yourself. That's it. A question as invitation. Invitation to explore the world. The world of the question, the world of the answer or, perhaps, some other world entirely.

Siets Bakker



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Chapter 1



Warming-up

1 Warming-up

What happens when a question is really moving? If it really hits the mark, allowing mobilisation? What makes a question “moving”? Answers to a Moving Question go way beyond the question itself. This chapter describes the concepts behind Moving Questions. Concepts to help you direct your questions effectively. Like stretching before exercising, you’re warming-up for Moving Questions!

Movement

Moving Questions get something moving. Loosen something that was jammed. Even when you don’t know what’s jammed. Or that there’s even anything stuck in the first place. Something that can be so familiar, it doesn’t even occur to you that it might be blocked. Or that it can be unstuck. But movement, that something flows, is the natural way of being.

The biggest thing we know is constantly in motion. And the smallest too.

This biggest thing is the universe. Planets and solar systems rotate, implode, explode... you name it. Not only do planets and solar systems move, they respond to each other too. Our tides are caused by the pull of the moon (and a slight tug from the sun) on the earth. A connection that causes movement of the earth’s water mass. Depending on the nature of the connection, we experience ebb or flood.

We don’t know exactly how it works, but what we do know is called astronomy in the world of science.



The smallest thing we know is also constantly in motion. An atom consists of protons, neutrons and electrons. The electrons rotate in solid patterns, in shells around the protons and neutrons. The electrons are constantly switching with other atoms. Again, we don't quite know how this all works, and discoveries are constantly being made. About even smaller things. That move much faster. We don't yet know if these are particles, or waves, both or even neither. What we do know though, belongs to the science of physics.

If the largest and the smallest are constantly in motion, and have all kinds of connections, it's logical that everything in between is also moving continually and that the interconnections all have a role to play. And, again, we're not sure how this all works exactly. But there is something we do know, and we call it systemic knowledge. Systemic knowledge is not a science like astronomy or physics. It hasn't been developed based on research, but on phenomenology. Phenomenology means observing things exactly as they manifest. And based on these observations, the knowledge has been developed. This also serves as the source of Moving Questions. The syntax of Moving Questions, covered in chapter 4, is described based on experiences with questions that were effective in releasing something that was stuck.

The kind of movement we're talking about here is never forced. There's no pressure. And because nothing's being forced, there's no need for rest. The movement costs no energy. It's the way things work naturally.

There's also another kind of movement. That of not-stopping. Of keeping going. This movement has a very different source and a very different character. It exhausts you. And is actually the same as apathy. Whether you're lounging on the sofa zapping or gaming, or running around like a mad thing from one thing to another, the effect is the same; you feel empty. The way you fill this emptiness though, is different. This movement is not sustainable. It exhausts you. Sooner or later the energy has run out and the movement grinds to a halt.



Movement from a natural state is a movement that's sustainable. Moving Questions work with these natural movements. You'll notice that things will cost you less energy as you become more adept in working with Moving Questions. Because you'll get better and better at using the natural movement.

Just as the movements in the universe and those of an atom are not random but follow laws, so do people, families and organisations. A grandmother who behaves as if she's the mother of her grandchild causes problems. Because this goes against the laws of ordering. When a manager doesn't allow a team to discuss a mistake, this causes problems because it challenges the law of inclusion. If someone does something for you and then ignores your thanks, this causes unease. Because he or she puts the law of exchange out of balance. In the bonus chapter you can read more about these laws. As a bonus. Because you don't have to know the ins and outs of these laws to work with Moving Questions.

What you do have to know is that movement will be limited if the laws are hampered with. The natural flow is obstructed. Part of the energy that normally keeps things moving, gets hijacked into blocking something. Standing still, being stuck, costs a lot of energy. Because the natural state is movement. The biggest and the smallest things we know are in motion. So everything in between too.



**If movement is
natural, then standing
still costs energy**





A frequently-used fitness exercise is planking. It's really easy: you lie on the ground on your stomach. Push yourself up and remain in this position. Without moving. And hold it for 60 seconds. Feel how much energy keeping still costs!

If movement is more natural than standing still, all you have to do is discover where things aren't moving in order to solve a problem. Where is something not flowing naturally? It's like touching a soap bubble. It will burst when touched. Just as when you're planking at the gym – a small nudge is all that's needed to interrupt the "inertia". Moving Questions are these nudges. Bursting the problem.

Another format to provide these nudges are constellations. Systemic constellations. This is the most widely-known systemic method and has supplied us with most of our systemic knowledge. A constellation creates movement by organising the connections differently. Moving Questions use the same sources of knowledge as constellations.

In order to give a nudge with Moving Questions, you don't need to know exactly which of the systemic laws is causing the obstruction in the flow. No need for analysis or research. Because with Moving Questions, all you have to do is ask a question.

Connections

Not only are the largest and the smallest things constantly in motion, they're also connected to each other. Solar systems, planets and moons react to each other. And reactions demand a connection, to each other, in any form. Electrons in atoms are also in connection: they're attracted by protons. They interact with other atoms and exchange electrons.

You too are made up of connections. On a physical level. All of your organs are connected. There's no part of your body that's not connected to another part. Without these connections it cannot exist, has no function.

The human brain has around 100 billion nerve cells. These nerve



cells, or neurons, are connected to each other via long tubes, or axons. Together, the neurons form a system. The neurons communicate via their axons, sending and receiving information from one part of the brain to another. Without these axons, neurons cannot exchange information. In cases of dementia, large numbers of axons break down. Exchange can no longer take place. The information is longer accessible and appears to no longer exist.

A YouTube channel without subscribers. A Facebook account without followers. A LinkedIn profile without connections. All equally useless.



**Everything is
connected. What's
not connected,
doesn't exist**



Physical connections between people are also a precondition for existence. Babies that are touched a lot, have lots of connection, are healthier, emotionally more balanced, and more relaxed. Skin contains highly-sensitive sensation cells. When the skin is touched, an impulse travels through a pathway of different nerves, via the spinal cord to the brain, producing endorphins. Endorphins activate healing processes, stimulating the immune system, digestion and metabolism. Without these physical connections a person would become progressively weaker.

And there are more kinds of connections too. The connection with where you come from is an important one. Both biologically, psychologically and emotionally. Adoptees often speak of feeling 'cut off' from their biological family. Psychological and emotional



connections are linked to where and how you grew up. However positive or negative it was, you will always recognise it deep inside as home.

Twins often have a very special connection. Every twin has experienced being in a different place from the other twin yet having the same feelings. Or that they coincidentally bought the same clothes, even wearing them on the same day. This connection transcends the physical connection.

When working with Moving Questions, you use connections in two ways. Firstly, you make sure that you carefully organise what you are connecting to at that moment. To have a qualitatively strong presence. You'll read more about this in chapter 2. Secondly, your Moving Question often explores what connections are currently active when it comes to the other person. If you know what someone is connected to in a certain situation, then you too can connect with that. More about this in chapter 5.

The visible and *beyond the visible*

Most kinds of questions are designed to get more information about what is visible. To resolve things. A Moving Question is different because it's directed at what's not visible. At what you don't know or can't observe. At movement and connection. Things that are there, that you can feel but cannot see.

Just because something is not visible, it doesn't mean that it doesn't exist, only that you cannot see it. How often have you had a gut feeling about something? Without a reason, without facts, you already felt that something was wrong. Or the opposite: that everything would be okay, despite logic and expectations.

Moving Questions focus on what lies beyond the visible. Also sometimes known as the undercurrent. On the surface you observe facts and events, the undercurrent is the source of your gut feeling. Everything that manifests on the surface, everything you see, has its origins in the undercurrent.



Lots of information is invisible. But this does not mean that it does not exist



When you log in to a wireless network with the correct password, from your smartphone or tablet, you have access to an infinite amount of information. This too is movement and connection. The movement is the invisible radio-waves being sent, the password provides the opportunity to connect.

A wireless network is similar to beyond the visible. You can't see it or touch it, but it exists. And you can use it. A Moving Question is like a password to that wireless network.

Direct

Moving Questions are often very direct. They lead you beyond the visible. Which can sometimes be painful. Is it painful for the other person to become aware of something at that level? Or is it painful because the other person believes that you are aware of everything?

As the person asking these kinds of questions, you must dare to take the risk that the other person may no longer like you when they hear your question. Or that he thinks you're too direct. You need to accept whatever discomfort the other person projects onto you. It may be a story he's familiar with from his own systems. All you have to do in this case, is remain yourself. No need to defend or explain yourself. Which is why it's so important that you organise



yourself well. Be sure of the intentions behind the question you are asking. This ensures that you are able to ask the question in a way that has the potential to unjam what has become stuck. Which can sometimes be painful.

When to use Moving Questions

You don't always, or exclusively, have to ask Moving Questions. In many situations, Basic Good Questions are more than sufficient. Continue to use everything you know and can. Moving Questions are an upgrade of this: everything you know and can becomes more valuable if you add Moving Questions.




Use Moving Questions when:

- the problem is actually a solution for something else.
- there's repetition
- your instinct tells you to do so

We'll look at these three situations more closely below.

The problem is actually a solution for something else

A problem is often a symptom of something else. What's really going on is hidden underneath the problem. It works like this: systems (a team, a family, a company) communicate via symptoms. The symptoms are part of the visible. They're measurable. You have examples. Symptoms tell us about the health of a system. When things are going well there's flow, everything seems to succeed. When it's not going well, everything's too much effort. The focus is weakened, you're floundering.



**Floundering is a sign
you're doing
something wrong**


A team couldn't ever manage to process their files on time. Their backlog was shockingly high. A substantial investment was made in extra capacity to eliminate the backlog, but actually made little difference. Work processes were re-designed and the entire team was retrained. But the backlog just kept on growing. The team's reputation hit rock-bottom within the organisation. Team members became tired and discouraged

If there's no possibility of movement somewhere, of flow, then this goes against nature. Something is wrong at systemic-law level. The lack of flow causes things to stand still, to be blocked. The symptoms are the consequences of the obstruction. In the visible realm you experience the symptom itself as the problem. You want to resolve the problem, get rid of it. But it's not about the symptom at all. Because the symptom is actually a solution. The system's attempt to get it flowing again beyond the visible.

Then, during a team day, the truth came out. A few years ago, two experienced colleagues had been fired in succession, due to a serious mistake they'd made. Unconsciously, none of the remaining team dared to still accept responsibility for any decision relating to the files they processed.

One of the most used Moving Questions is: What is this problem actually a solution for?



Use Moving Questions if you feel that it's not really about the visible problem but something beyond this, that something else could be at play.

There's repetition

Sometimes, you've solved a problem, only for a new one to emerge shortly afterwards. The new problem is not exactly the same, it's always slightly different, but it is of the same order. In this case, the problem is a symptom. It's not about the problem itself.

If you solve a problem that's actually a symptom, then the system can do nothing else but create another problem. Or rather, another symptom. Because beyond what's visible, one or more of the laws are not being adhered to. Only when the laws are respected and the natural flow returns, are the symptoms no longer needed.


The repetition tells you that it's a symptom and not simply a straightforward problem. The problem occurs in several places or keeps returning, in a slightly different form.

The project team made a great start. Everyone was committed to the task; the team was put together carefully with the right professionals. Everything was present to make the project a success.

Unfortunately, things started to go downhill very quickly. The fortnightly meetings didn't go well. People showed up too late, were badly prepared or didn't keep to agreements made.


At one of the regular team days, concrete agreements were made that should have helped make the meetings more effective. The frequency of meetings was increased, and a project assistant was appointed to manage the agenda, documents and agreements made. Which for two weeks went well. Until the meetings became too chaotic. Different people attending every time. *"It's too much of a commitment"*, was the most commonly heard excuse.

The project team decided to work using the Scrum methodology. Its tight structure would help maintain discipline. The




first sprint went well, the second reasonably, but from the third sprint it all went wrong again.

How often do we see this happening? Not keeping to agreements is a common symptom. Rationally, they're good agreements, but for some reason or another they're not adhered to. Another common symptom is staff turnover. Turnover for a certain position or within a team. Cheating and petty theft are also in the top five of common symptoms we find within organisations. Taking printing paper home, for example, non-declaration of time off, or working at home with plenty of home and not so much work. A good way to test whether something is part of a recurring problem is to ask yourself whether it's stand-alone, or part of a bigger whole.



**If a problem actually
belongs elsewhere,
then it will repeat
itself**



You too create your own symptoms. If you always prepare your work accurately and carefully, but fail to do so with a particular assignment, then this is a symptom of something. Perhaps you're not the right person for that assignment, maybe you don't believe in the objective of the assignment. You can't understand what exactly is going on based simply on a symptom. You know that if you don't recognise yourself in a certain attitude or behaviour, chances are that it's not about you, but about a larger whole of which you are part. Moreover, it's not always true that when you observe repetition, it's automatically a symptom of something else. Always remain open to coincidence, so that your observing remains pure and less guided by your assumptions.



Your instincts tell you

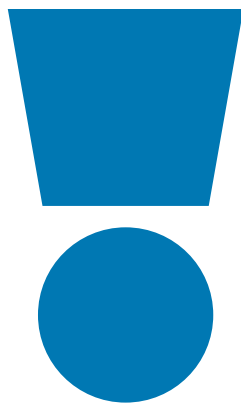
You have an inborn antenna to register when something's not right. That something doesn't actually make sense. A gut feeling. There's something in the air. You feel suffocated. All of this is information from beyond the visible, captured by your antenna through the wireless connection. You'll read more about this antenna in the following chapter. Everyone has such an antenna. It's how us humans are made. It has nothing to do with wanting it to be there, it doesn't have to be trained or developed. It's just there. You might hear someone say that his antenna doesn't work. Or is switched off. When actually, his antenna can no longer function because of experiences he's had in his life, or because at some point he's made the decision that it's not okay to use this information.



**Your instincts will tell
you something is
going on. If you give
them permission to
do so**



Using your instincts to get information from beyond the visible doesn't come without conditions. You have to agree to see everything. Inwardly accept that everything that's possible, is okay. Including what you don't want, could prove difficult or even seems to contradict what you want to achieve. If you don't do this, you isolate your antenna as it were, and at the very best, pick up static. How this works exactly is explained in the first general law of the bonus chapter.



If movement
is natural,
then
standing still
costs energy

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