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The Real Question

Why smart leaders get stuck
and how to get clear on what actually matters

YOUR STRATEGIC EDGE SERIES

The First Shift

You've gathered the information, you've thought it through, and you're still going in circles. The decision still feels heavier than it should. And the problem probably isn't what you think it is.

The most common reason smart leaders get stuck isn't a lack of information, experience, or courage. It's that they're **trying to answer the wrong question**.

And until you find the right question, more analysis doesn't help. It just adds noise. You end up running the same scenarios on repeat, because no amount of thinking about the wrong question gets you to the right answer.

Clarity isn't created by gathering more information. It's created by knowing what question you're actually trying to answer.

WHAT THIS LOOKS LIKE IN PRACTICE

Sarah, a director I worked with, came to a session stuck on one question: "Should I restructure my team?" She'd been turning it over for three weeks. When we slowed down, we found she was actually trying to answer five questions at once, including what her boss would think, whether she was being too harsh, and how her high performers would react. No wonder she was stuck.



We set those aside and asked: "*What outcome would tell you this team is working again?*"

That's when clarity hit. The real problem wasn't structure. It was performance. Restructuring would have rearranged the same issue without solving it.

Twenty minutes to find the real question. Once she had it, the next step was obvious.

Find The Real Question

STEP 1: Name the decision

In one sentence, what decision are you trying to make?

STEP 2: Find what's underneath the decision

Most leaders feel stuck because they're trying to answer more than one question at the same time.

Check what's true, then ask what it all points to.

- What outcome would tell me this is actually resolved?
- Am I solving the real problem, or a symptom of it?
- How many different questions am I trying to answer at once?
- If I set aside what others might think, what's the real decision here?

What's actually underneath the decision in Step 1?

Find The Real Question

STEP 3: Name the real question

Complete this sentence.

The real question I need to answer is...

If it feels more specific and more answerable than what you wrote in Step 1, you've found it.

Notice what just happened:

You didn't find new information. You **just stopped answering the wrong question**. This is the first shift. It's the one most leaders never make.

From Here

*Leadership doesn't suddenly get lighter.
But it can become clearer.*

This is the first of four shifts in the EASE framework: the way of thinking I use with every leader I work with in transition.

Most leaders work through all four shifts in as little as six weeks.

Once you can find the real question, the next step is learning to make a grounded decision from it, even under pressure, even when the stakes are high.

Some find that just finding the real question, which is what you did today, changes how they approach every decision that follows.



Build Your Strategic Edge

If this shifted how you're thinking, this is where the real work begins.

Over the course of our work together, you develop:

- Deeper trust in your judgment.
- Leadership that lands more clearly.
- A repeatable way of thinking in uncertainty.

In this role. And every one that follows.

You don't have to figure this out alone.

[Book Your Free Clarity Call](#)

Let's talk about the decision you're navigating, what's underneath it, and whether this work is a fit.

Let's build Your Strategic Edge, together.

~ Naomi Jones



