

# ASKING THE RIGHT QUESTIONS IN THE RIGHT ORDER WILL HELP IN ALL ASPECTS OF LIFE



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As DeWers, we all live very busy lives. I love what Anne has put together in an effort for all of us to learn from one another and lift each other up. Like many of you, I have several roles in my life. I am a wife, mother, business owner and client coach. There's one thing I've realized I use in all of these areas – my mindset and communication style. More specifically, how to ask the right question to solve problems that arise.

As a wife, there were several months that my husband was unemployed due to no fault of his own. The company he worked for restructured, and we found ourselves on a new adventure. We were given the opportunity to reflect on what he wanted to do and make some re-evaluations on what was important. I believe it's through the challenging times that we grow. Viewing these tough times as opportunities is where my mindset had to be. Giving up is never an option that I ever consider. To make decisions, we either knowingly or unknowingly ask ourselves questions in an order to answer them and find our path. In this case we asked, "Do you want to stay in the same industry? Are we willing to relocate the family? How can we shift some things around financially?" You get the point. To get to a conclusion, you need to ask the right question. Asking the right question will lead to the necessary critical thinking about the correct answer, and then action can be taken.

As a reader of *DeW* magazine, you may know I have two children, Megan and Nicholas. You may also have read about basketball being a shared passion between Megan and myself. Several years ago, Megan dislocated her shoulder in a basketball game. The funny thing is, she

did it before halftime and played the second half like nothing was wrong. I only found out about her shoulder after the game. We didn't know the extent of her injury until we saw the doctor the next day. I knew she had a high pain tolerance, but this shocked both of us. The injury occurred in the middle of the season and before Christmas break. We weren't sure how quickly her shoulder would respond to physical therapy and if she would be able to play anymore before the season ended. Megan had always been a leader of her basketball team, and her injury deflated her teammates. They needed her back as soon as she was cleared to play. As a mom, I thought her shoulders would need to be strong for the rest of her life since her dream was to be a pediatric trauma nurse. So, given this opportunity, Megan and I sat down with a calendar and started asking some tough questions. I asked when the tournament was, who on the schedule would be a tougher team to beat and how many hours a day could she commit to PT with her class load. That's just to name a few. By asking the right questions, Megan showed me how dedicated she was to work her hardest so she could get back to her team and her full strength. She even had to endure 5 a.m. workouts before school to achieve her goal. Throughout this opportunity, Megan learned she could achieve more than she even thought possible. Not only did she come back to help her team win the championship, she learned how to organize her time more efficiently and was a positive role model to others at school and the physical therapy office.

As business owners, we face challenges all the time. They can be focused around market conditions, team/employee issues, gaining new business, marketing. All

kinds of things. In my situation, I was faced with one that we all struggle with at various times –how to get more business. I had to ask the right questions. “Why is this happening? Do I need to adjust my yearly plan? Do I need to focus on another area. Do I have clarity on what I want to do?” I am a planner by nature, and I look at my business financials on a weekly basis. I knew there was a potential for a problem before a budgetary crisis occurred. By asking the right questions, I went back to my written plan for the year and saw that I wasn't spending enough time cultivating business. While thinking about the rest of these questions, I was able to address some items that I hadn't previously made firm decisions on. Taking the time to ask the right questions and finding the answers cleared my path to take the right action.

The same process applies to the dental office and the dentist, as well. I often try to put myself in their shoes and what they have gone through. Imagine the drive and ambition needed to achieve high academic results to get into dental school. Then what it takes to learn new clinical skills to be able to practice dentistry after graduation. There's a lot of competition going on. As a basketball coach, I thrive off competition, and I help guide my clients through that maze to get results. As business owners, dentists have distinct types of competition they face each day – internal and external.

Internal competition is the drive that pushes one to succeed and not give up. Another way of saying it would be a perfectionist streak. Their skills needed to be perfect in dental school, and it would be unrealistic to think that internal drive would stop once you own your own practice. Understanding that is key to asking the right questions, so not only do they listen to me as their coach, but also are motivated to act.

External competition is the one most people think about. How many other dentists are in the same area, performing the same service for their patients. With this type of competition, I must ask the right question, so we enable the practice to succeed. Such as, what type of experience do you want your patients to have in your office? That question gets everyone on the team thinking about how their individual actions affect the experience for their patients.

I love what I do for a living and am honored to do so. I get the opportunity to help dentists and their teams solve problems, enjoy their life and grow their practice. When I start talking with a potential client, I need to be able to meet them where they are. By that, I mean my communication style. It takes a lot for some people to admit they need help. Depending on their personality, that can be a big deal. I honor that with every phone call. Sometimes a dentist needs to be encouraged they are not alone, and

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I can help them with their situation. Guiding that first call correctly is one determining factor if we will work together. I always actively listen first. Most dentists have so much on their mind, it's like a floodgate has opened and they want to firehose me with information. I can appreciate that feeling, and that's why asking the right questions, in the correct order, will help both of us the most. When many things are happening at the same time, it can be difficult to sort through which ones are affecting the practice the most from the standpoint of the dentist. Only after finding out the most important things can you structure a plan to address issues in order of importance for the practice. Taking the time to discover those items and then creating a plan to solve those in order of importance is a direct result of asking the right questions in the right order.