

A Tool for Asking Strategic Questions

To elicit comments from participants, effective facilitators constantly use open ended questions. An open ended question is one which cannot be answered with a simple “yes” or a “no”. The formula for creating an open ended question is to begin the question with any of what is known as the “Five W’s”. These are:

- What
- Where
- When
- Why
- Who
- How

However, there is one key strategic question which determines the type of answer a facilitator is seeking. The facilitator should first ask themselves “Do I want answers of analysis and motivation, or, answers of facts and detail?”

To elicit answers of analysis and motivation, the most effective of the “Five W’s” to use are:

- Why
- How

To elicit answers of facts and detail, the most effective of the “Five W’s” to use are:

- Where
- When
- What
- Who
- How

The diagram below depicts the strategic hierarchy of open ended questions.

Analysis and Motivation

Why?

How?

Where? When? What? Who? How?

Facts and Detail

