



# How to Handle That Dreaded Question & Answer Period

by

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Many presentations today are followed up with a question and answer period. To some people this can be the most exciting part of the presentation. To others it can be their worst nightmare. In fact, there are some presenters who purposely avoid the question and answer period all together. Below I have provided a 5 step approach to handling questions along with some additional tips to make your next question and answer session go smoother.

## 1. Listen to the entire question

Listen to the entire question BEFORE you begin to answer any questions. Too many people start responding to a question before the entire question is even asked. Not waiting to hear the entire questions can result in you providing a response which had nothing to do with the question. Force yourself to LISTEN to the entire question and make sure you understand the question.

## 2. Pause and allow yourself time to value the question and listener.

REPEAT the question out loud so the entire audience can hear it. It is important that everyone "hear" the question or the answer you provide may not make sense to some of the people. By repeating the question, this will allow you some additional time to evaluate the question and formulate a response.

## 3. Credit The Person for asking the question. You may say something like, "That was a great question" or, "Glad you asked that question" or even, "I get asked that question by many people". One word of caution. If you credit one person with asking a question, be sure to credit EVERYONE

for asking a question. You don't want people to feel their question was not as important.

4. **Respond to the Question** honestly and the best you can. If you do NOT know an answer to a question, do not try to fake it. Be honest, and tell them you do not know but DO promise to research the answer for them and DO get back to them.
5. **Bridge** to the next question by asking them a question. "Does that answer your question?", "Is that the kind of information you were looking for?". This is critical.. Once they respond to you, "YES" you now have permission to go on to the next person. This also gives them one more opportunity to say, "No" and allow them to clarify their question more by asking it again.

### **Additional Tips on Handling Questions**

A. Ask people to stand up when they ask a question. This does two things: (1) It shows you more readily who is asking the question, and (2) It make it easier for the audience to also hear the question.

B. Have small sheets of paper available for people to write down their questions during your presentation. They may forget what they were going to ask earlier.

C. Allow people to pass the questions to you if they feel uncomfortable standing up and asking the question out loud. This gives the person who truly wants to ask a question an option.

D. Always repeat the question - this does three things: (1) it makes sure you understood the question, (2) it gives you a chance to value the question and think of an answer, and (3) it assures the other people in the audience can hear the question since you are facing them.

E. Always take time to think "before" you answer all questions. This allows you time to think, especially for those difficult questions. Do the same for those questions you readily know the answer for. Responding too quickly to those questions you are most comfortable with will only bring attention to those questions you do not.

F. Have a pencil and paper available for you to write down questions you can't answer. You select someone to record the questions on paper. This way, you can properly follow up with the person who asked the question you couldn't answer. Be sure to get their name & phone number or address. Promise to get back to them and DO get back to them.

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