



Questions are the Answer

*A Breakthrough Approach to Your
Most Vexing Problems at Work and in Life*

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Senior Lecturer, MIT Sloan School

@halgregersen

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Leadership Center

In the word *question*,
there is a beautiful word—*quest*.

I love that word.

Elie Wiesel










Why do questions matter –
more than answers?



A portrait of Warren Buffett, an elderly man with white hair and glasses, wearing a dark suit, white shirt, and a red patterned tie. He is smiling slightly and looking towards the camera. The background is dark and out of focus, showing some bokeh light effects. The text is overlaid on the bottom left of the image.

Cybersecurity is the number one problem.

Warren Buffett

founder, chairman, and CEO Berkshire Hathaway

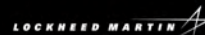
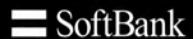
HUNT DETECT PROTECT_

AN END-TO-END CYBERSECURITY SOLUTION
BUILT TO EMPOWER DEFENDERS

NGAV | EDR | THREAT HUNTING

24x7 THREAT MONITORING & IR SERVICES

WHY CYBEREASON?

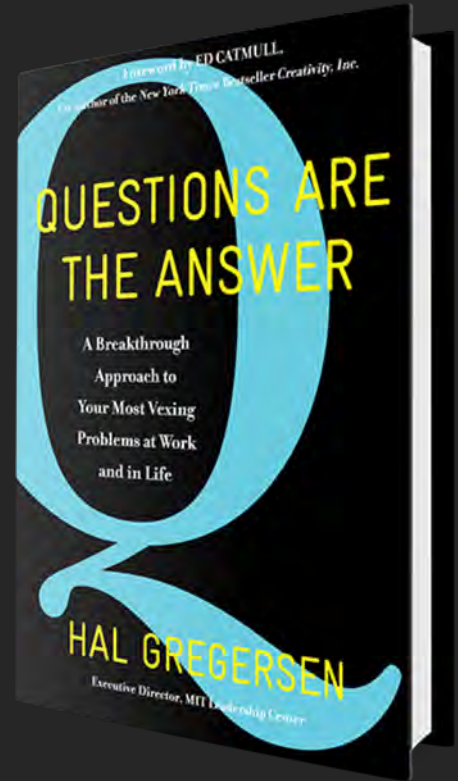




Lior Div
founder and CEO

200+

Catalytic Questioners





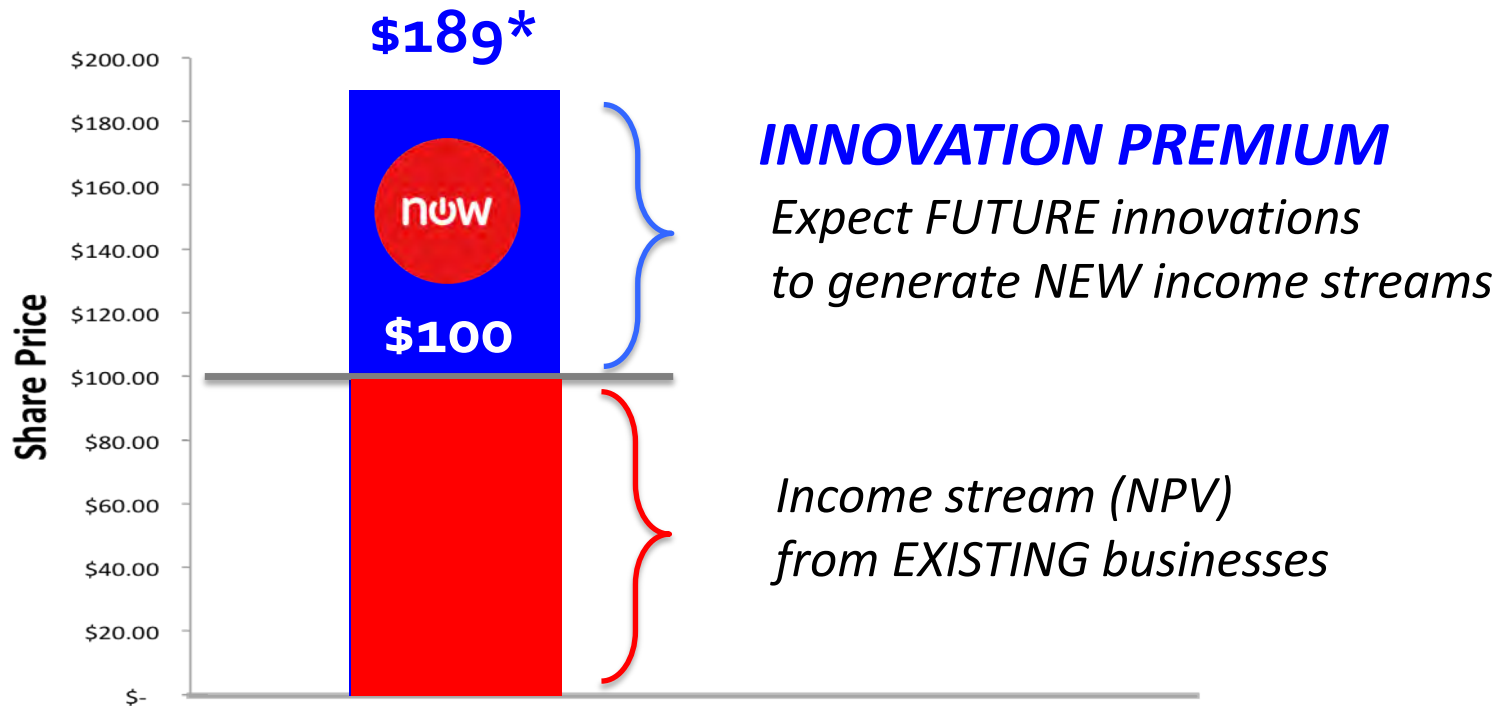
CIRQUE DU SOLEIL



Sam Abell • Welby Altidor • Hal Barron • **Nick Beighton** • **Marc Benioff** •
Walt Bettinger • **Jeff Bezos** • Ahmet Bozer • Stewart Brand • David
Breashears • Jared Bush • John Chambers • **Clayton Christensen** •
Jonathan Craig • Lior Div • Rod Drury • Nick Ebling • **Fadi Ghandour** •
Helena Gottschling • **Chip and Joana Gaines** • Diane Greene • Michael
Hawley • Andreas Heinecke • Zabeen Hirji • Byron Howard • **Tony Hsieh** •
Joi Ito • Brian Joffe • **Abby Johnson** • Jeremy Jurgens • **Daniel Lamarre** •
Lindsay Levin • Joseph Madiath • Roger Martin • **Stan McChrystal** • Bill
McDermott • Lionel Mohri • **Simon Mulcahy** • **Elon Musk** • Narayana Murthy
• David Neeleman • **Dava Newman** • Nandan Nilekani • **Deval Patrick** •
Tony Piazza • Reese Fernandez Ruiz • **Soraya Salti** • Dan Scanlon • Carrie
Schaal • **Tiffany Shlain** • Michael Sippey • Brad Smith • **Debbie Stirling** •
Brenda Van Camp • Tony Wagner • **Mark Weinberger** • Guy Wollaert •
Loretta Hidalgo Whitesides • Jeff Wilke • Adrian Woolridge

INVESTORS PAY PREMIUMS

for exceptional innovation performance



** Source: Innovator's DNA LLC & Credit Suisse, based on Innovation Premium data from 2010-2017*



#1 ServiceNow

United States 39.02% 89.22%



#2 Workday

United States 36.07% 82.84%



#3 Salesforce.com

United States 24.88% 82.27%



#4 Tesla

United States 67.98% 78.27%



#5 Amazon.com

United States 30.8% 77.4%



#6 Netflix

United States 32.41% 71.23%



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#8 Hindustan Unilever

India 11.49% 67.2%



#9 Naver

South Korea 19.36% 64.62%



#10 Facebook

United States 47.09% 64.42%



#11 Monster Beverage

United States 10.67% 64.26%



#12 Unilever Indonesia

Indonesia 2.25% 63.91%



#13 Adobe Systems

United States 24.56% 62.38%





 **KEYENCE**



OBJECTIVE CONSCIOUSNESS

RELENTLESSLY QUESTION THE STATUS QUO

“EVERY DAY WE ASK – WHY ARE WE EVEN DOING THIS?”



Why don't we
ask more questions?





Walt Bettinger
CEO



ISOLATION

the enemy of
collaboration • innovation



Travis Kalanick

co-founder UBER
former CEO



KNOW you KNOW

YES

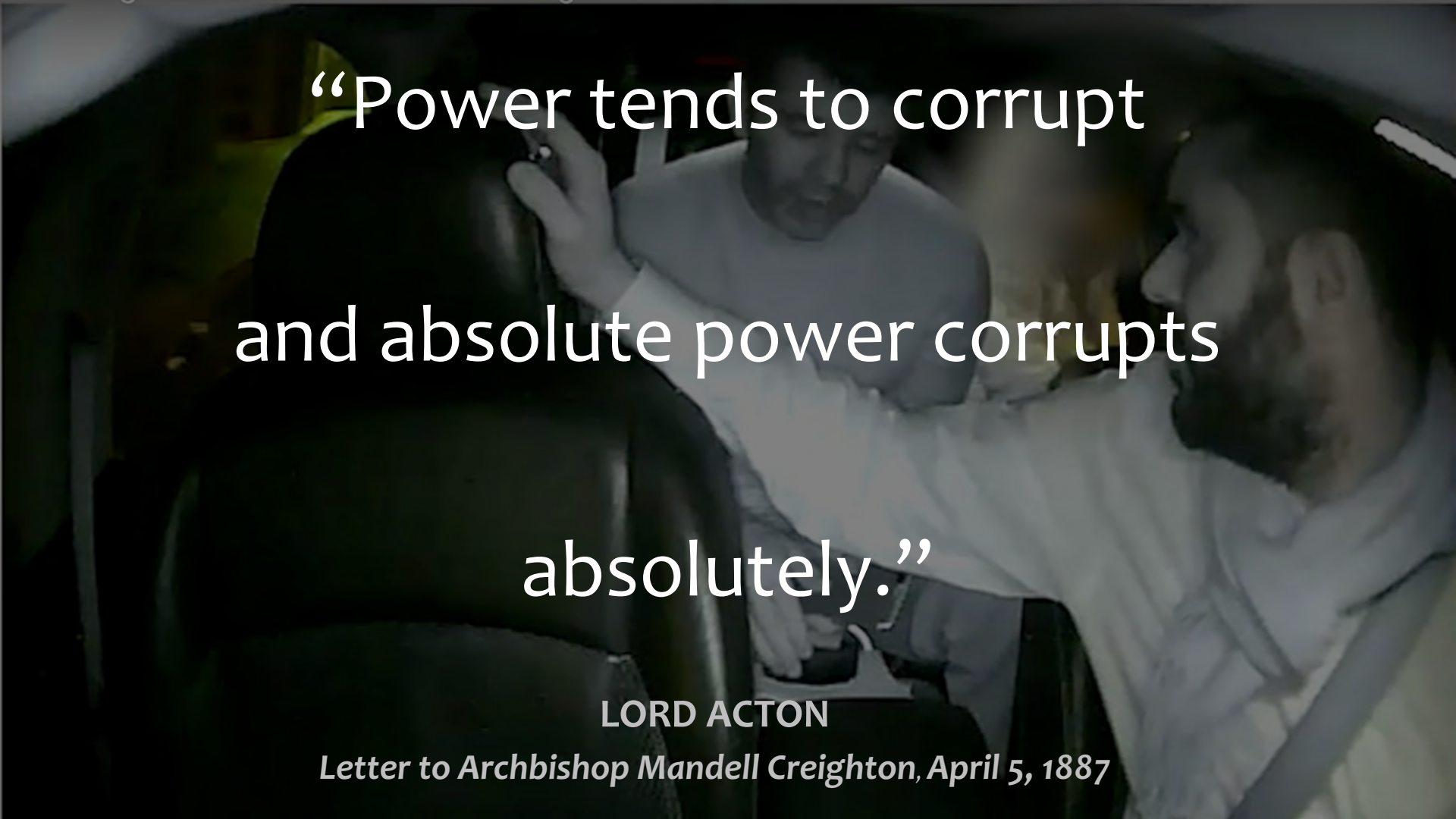
NO

YES

KNOW

NO





“Power tends to corrupt
and absolute power corrupts
absolutely.”

LORD ACTON

Letter to Archbishop Mandell Creighton, April 5, 1887

KNOW you KNOW

YES

NO

YES

KNOW

NO





A man with grey hair, wearing a dark suit, white shirt, and blue patterned tie, is smiling and looking towards the camera. He is seated in an office environment with glass partitions and a plant visible in the background. The image has a dark, semi-transparent overlay.

CHECK MULTIPLE VANTAGE POINTS

If you were in my job,
what would you be focusing on?

A middle-aged man with grey hair, smiling, wearing a dark suit, white shirt, and a blue patterned tie. He is sitting in an office environment with a blurred background showing office furniture and windows.

RECRUIT OTHERS IN YOUR QUEST

**My biggest personal challenge
is isolation, can you help me?**

A man with grey hair, wearing a dark suit, white shirt, and blue patterned tie, is smiling and looking towards the camera. He is seated in an office environment with large windows in the background. The image has a dark, semi-transparent overlay.

REQUIRE BRUTAL HONESTY

Brutally Honest Reports

Five areas – including “What’s broken?”



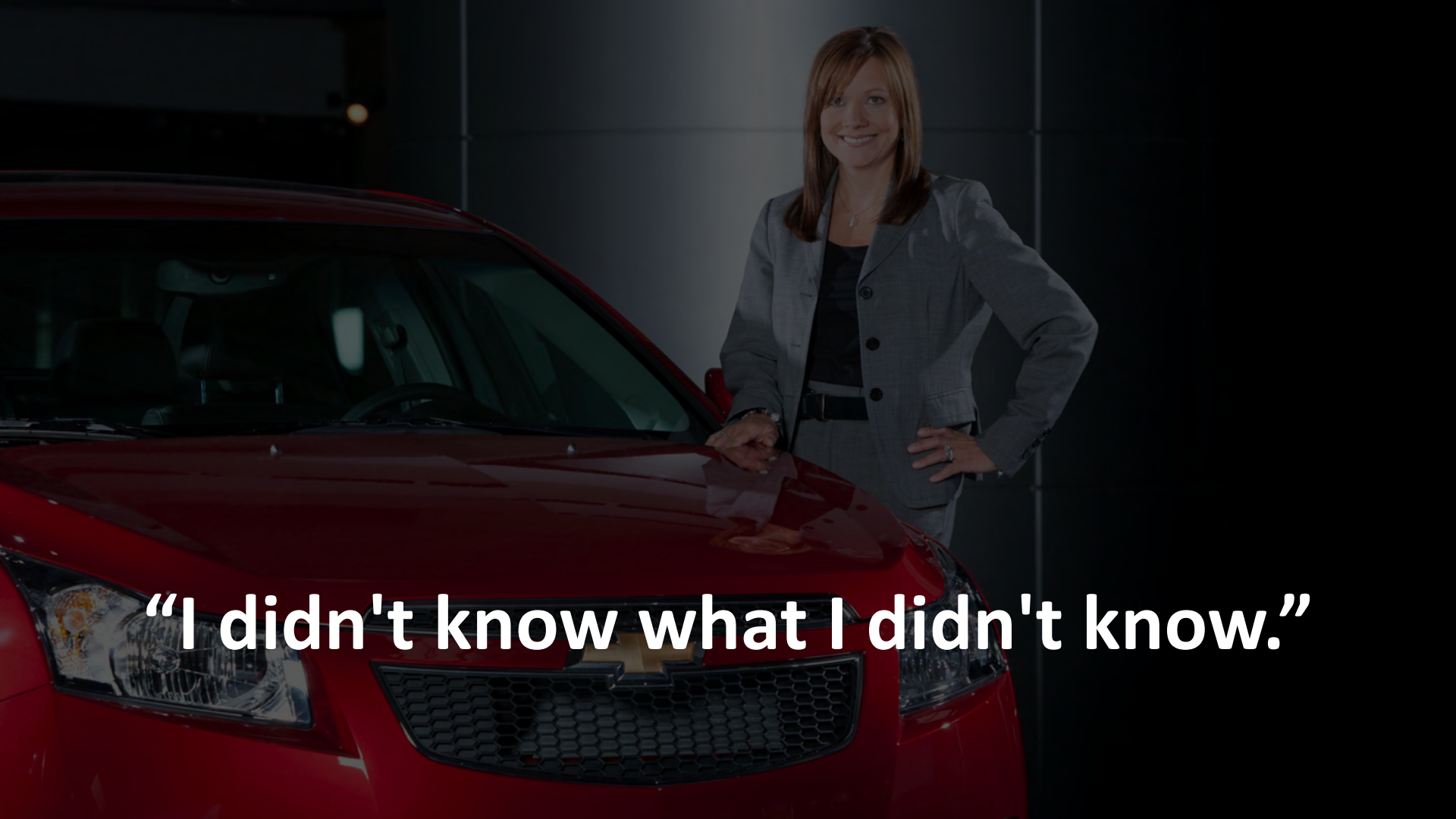
the catalyst for
collaboration • innovation
INQUIRY





Mary Barra
CEO





“I didn't know what I didn't know.”

mobility



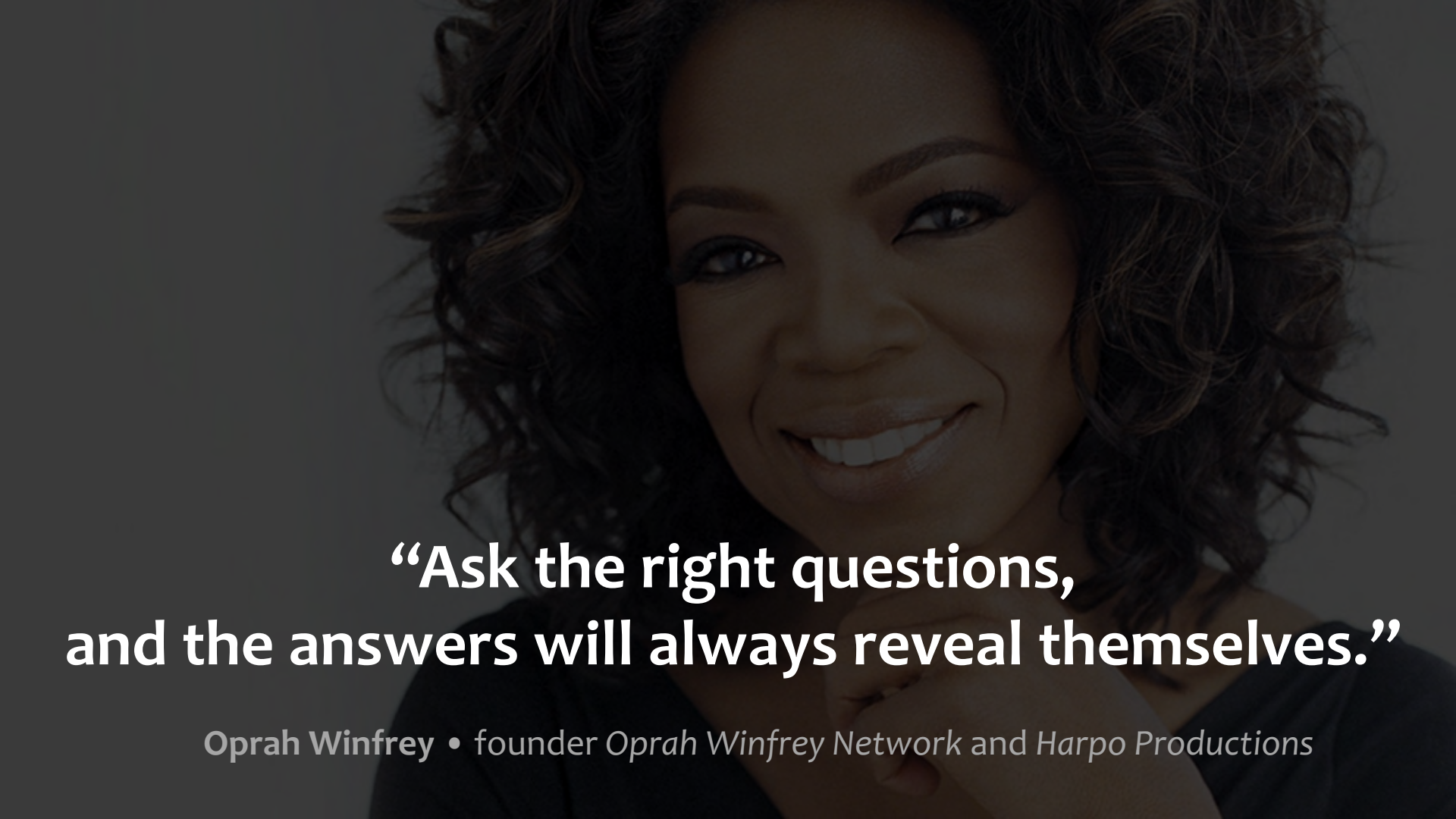
mobility



**“The important and difficult job
is never to find the right answer,
it is to find the right question.”**

Peter Drucker

The Practice of Management, 1954



**“Ask the right questions,
and the answers will always reveal themselves.”**

Oprah Winfrey • founder *Oprah Winfrey Network* and *Harpo Productions*

HOW?



Compose and Wait



















What are the key conditions for
composing catalytic questions?





aramex
delivery unlimited



GHANDOUR

Fadi Ghandour
founder Aramex

COMPOSE Conditions

unexpectedly **WRONG**

UNCOMFORTABLE unusually

reflectively **QUIET**



COMPOSE Conditions

unexpectedly WRONG

UNCOMFORTABLE unusually

reflectively QUIET

and **WAIT** for **CATALYTIC QUESTIONS**



relentless.com



amazon

The Amazon logo, featuring the word "amazon" in a white, lowercase, sans-serif font. Below the text is a curved orange arrow that starts under the 'a' and points towards the 'n', resembling a smile.



**“Getting the right question is key
to getting the right answer.”**

Jeff Bezos





IF YOU STRIPPED AWAY ALL THE
RULES OF OUR RACING INDUSTRY
CONTEST WHICH WAS SIMPLY TO GET
A HUMAN BEING AROUND A TRACK
200 TIMES AS FAST AS POSSIBLE
WHAT STRATEGY WOULD YOU LET
JOY THE RACER HAS TO FIGURE
OUT HERE



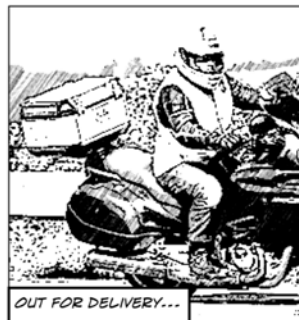
amazon

Working Backwards Process

1. Press release (one page)
2. FAQ list (six pages)
3. A portrayal of the customer experience

Working Backwards Process

This morning Amazon customers in New York City were greeted with an amazon homepage announcing ‘Amazon Magic’ – a new standalone mobile app that gives customers free and fast scheduled same-day delivery on a huge selection of products. For \$X.99, you can also select ‘Presto!’ an ultra-fast 1-hour delivery services . . . if you’re one of the few people who have not signed up for Prime yet, you should try this out now. – TECH CRUNCH, 2014



Storyboards

Quickly visualize possible end-to-end experiences





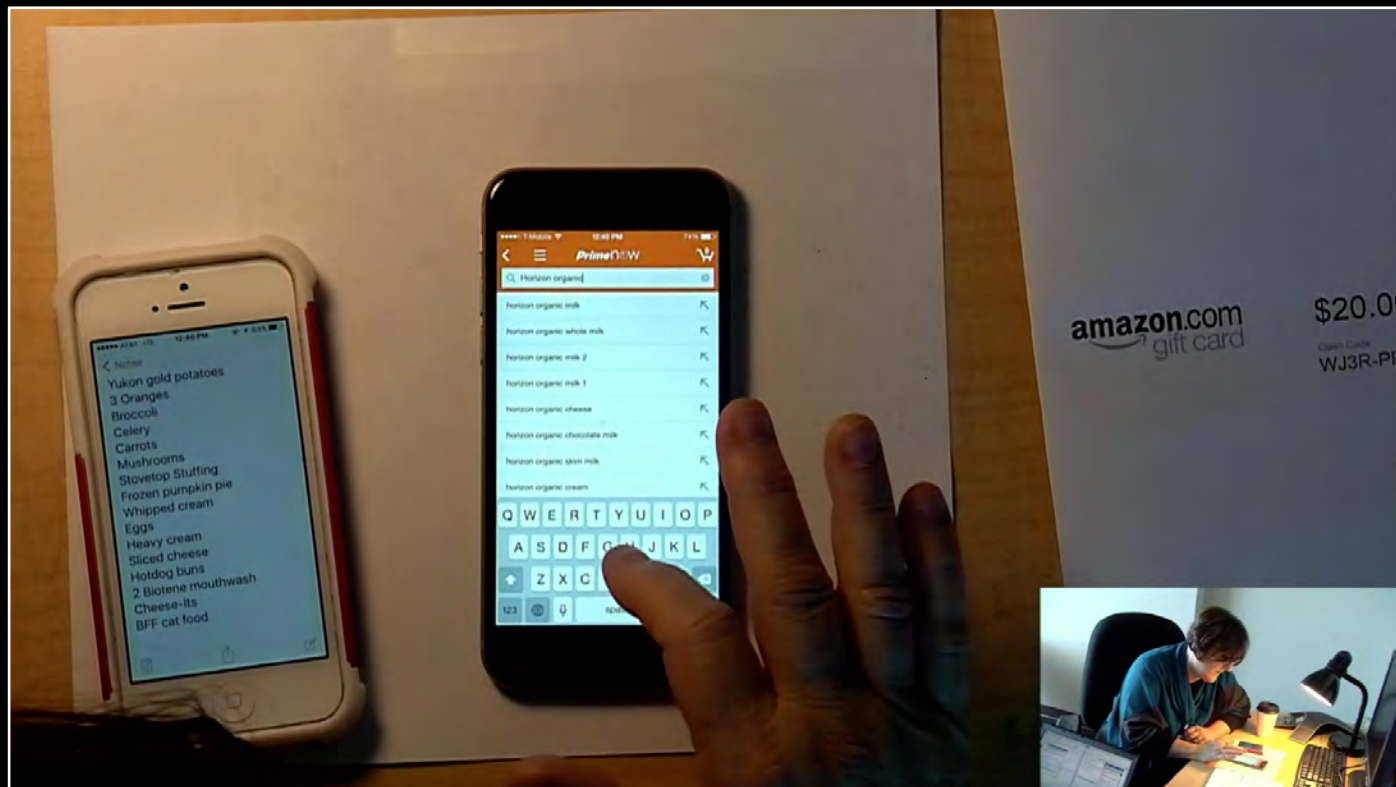
Low Fidelity Prototypes

Building fast to think – Getting feedback



Low Fidelity Prototypes

Building fast to think – Rapidly evaluating lots of ideas



Usability Testing

Working Backwards Process

111 DAYS

Working Backwards Process

100+

Working Backwards Process

amazonsmile
You shop. Amazon gives.

prime now

aws

amazon

ELECTRIC ADVENTURE VEHICLES

R1





COMPOSE Conditions

unexpectedly **WRONG**

UNCOMFORTABLE unusually

reflectively **QUIET**

and **WAIT** for **CATALYTIC QUESTIONS**





Disney · PIXAR











PIXAR

Disney





Brain Trust
PIXAR

Disney
Story Trust



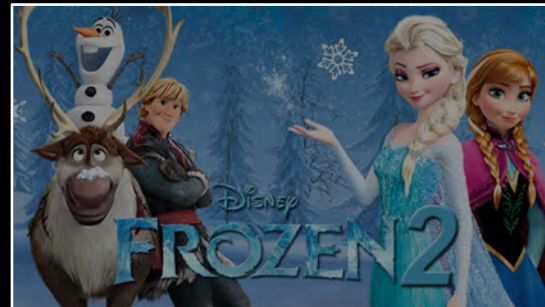


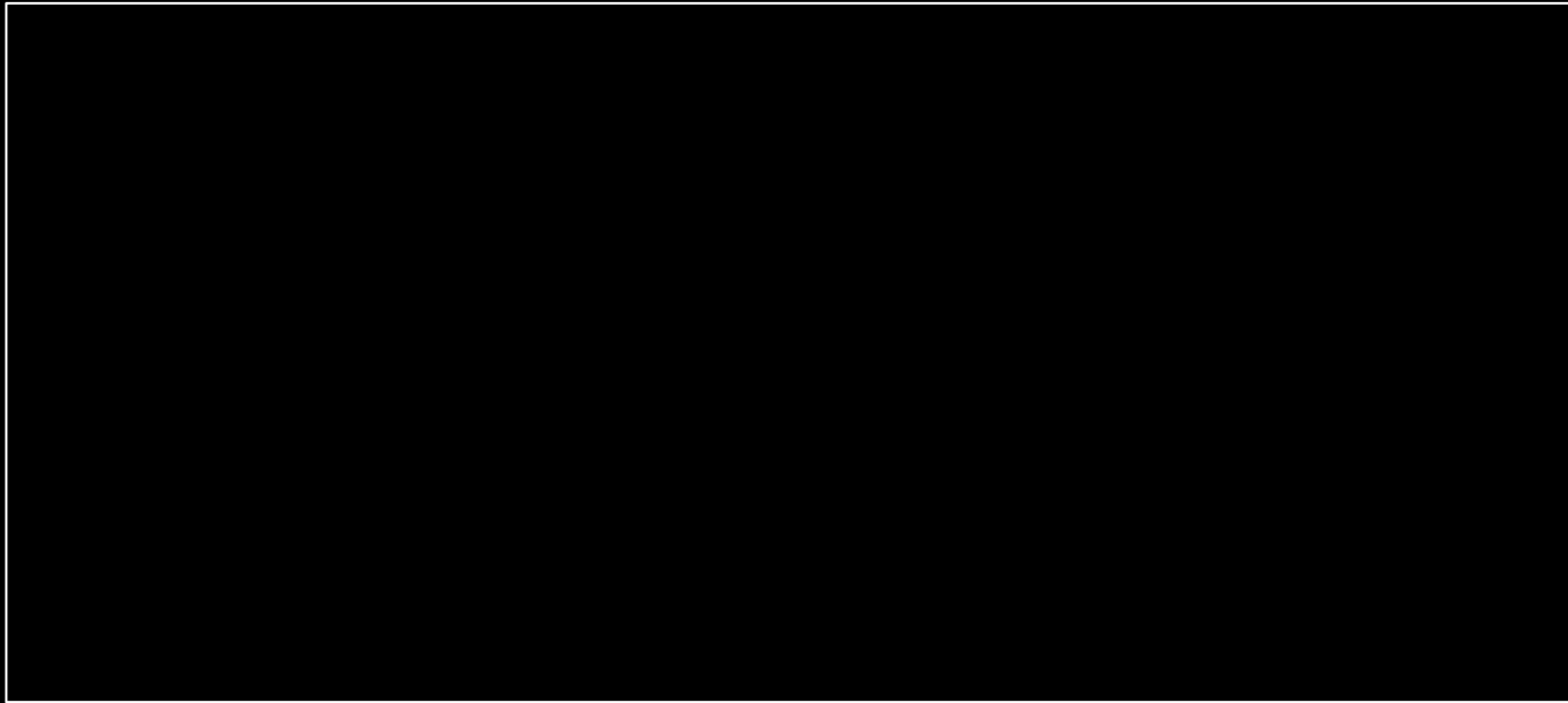
Jennifer Lee

Director, Chief Creative Officer
Disney Animation Studios

Chris Buck

Director
Disney Animation Studios



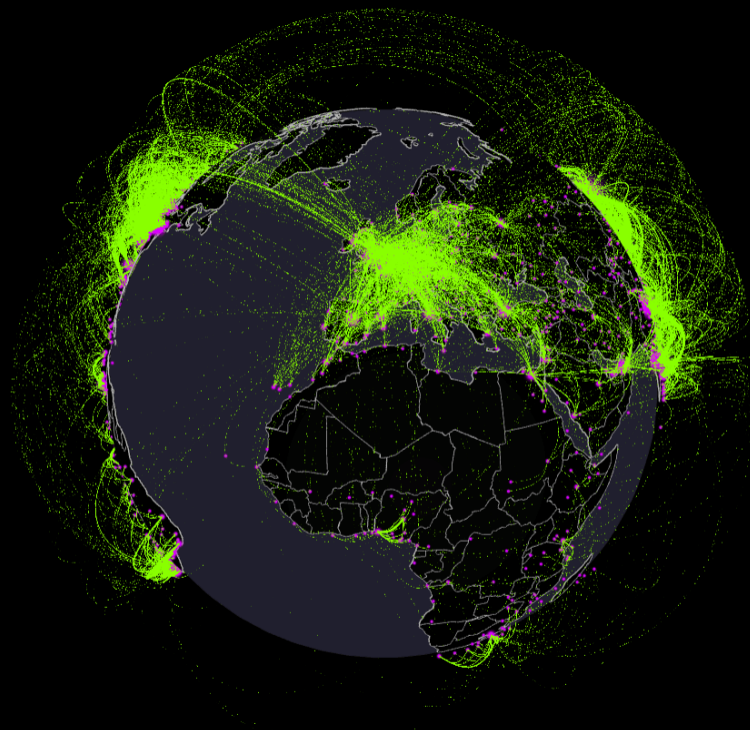


How might we create and fuel
the habit of asking questions?



#1 audit your question patterns





One Year of Air Traffic / One Million Particles

#2 jumpstart with starter questions



The 7 Powerful Questions

Michael Bungay Stanier, The Coaching Habit

1. What's on your mind?
2. And what else?
3. What's the real challenge here for you?
4. What do you want?
5. How can I help?
6. If you're saying yes to this, what are you saying no to?
7. What was most useful for you?



#3 brainstorm for questions



CREATIVITY

Better Brainstorming

by Hal Gregersen



Question Burst

- Brainstorm questions **ONLY**



Question Burst

- Brainstorm questions **ONLY**
 - No answers



Question Burst

- Brainstorm questions **ONLY**
 - No answers
 - No preambles or explanations



Question Burst

- Brainstorm questions **ONLY**
 - No answers
 - No preambles or explanations
 - Write down questions word for word



Question Burst

What is your challenge?

Question Burst

**Write down one or two words
that best capture
how you feel emotionally
about your challenge right now.**



Question Burst

pairs



QUESTION BURST (2 person pair)

- **1 min: Person #1 – Share Your Challenge**
- **4 min: Person #1 – Both ask questions!**

Person #1 writes them down



QUESTION BURST (2 person pair)

- 1 min: Person #1 – Share Your Challenge
- 4 min: Person #1 – Both ask questions!

Person #1 writes them down

- 1 min: Person #2 – Share Your Challenge
- 4 min: Person #2 – Both ask questions!

Person #2 writes them down



ask **short** questions



ask **tough** questions



ask **compelling** questions



Question Burst

- Brainstorm questions **ONLY**
 - No answers
 - No preambles or explanations
 - Write down questions word for word



QUESTION BURST (2 person pair)

- **1 min: Person #1 – Share Your Challenge**
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Person #1 writes them down



QUESTION BURST (2 person pair)

- 1 min: Person #1 – Share Your Challenge
- 4 min: Person #1 – Both ask questions!

Person #1 writes them down

- 1 min: Person #2 – Share Your Challenge
- 4 min: Person #2 – Both ask questions!

Person #2 writes them down



Question Burst

**Write down one or two words that
best capture how you “now”
feel emotionally
about your challenge.**



Question Burst

After doing the Question Burst,
have you reframed your
innovation challenge, seeing it
differently now?

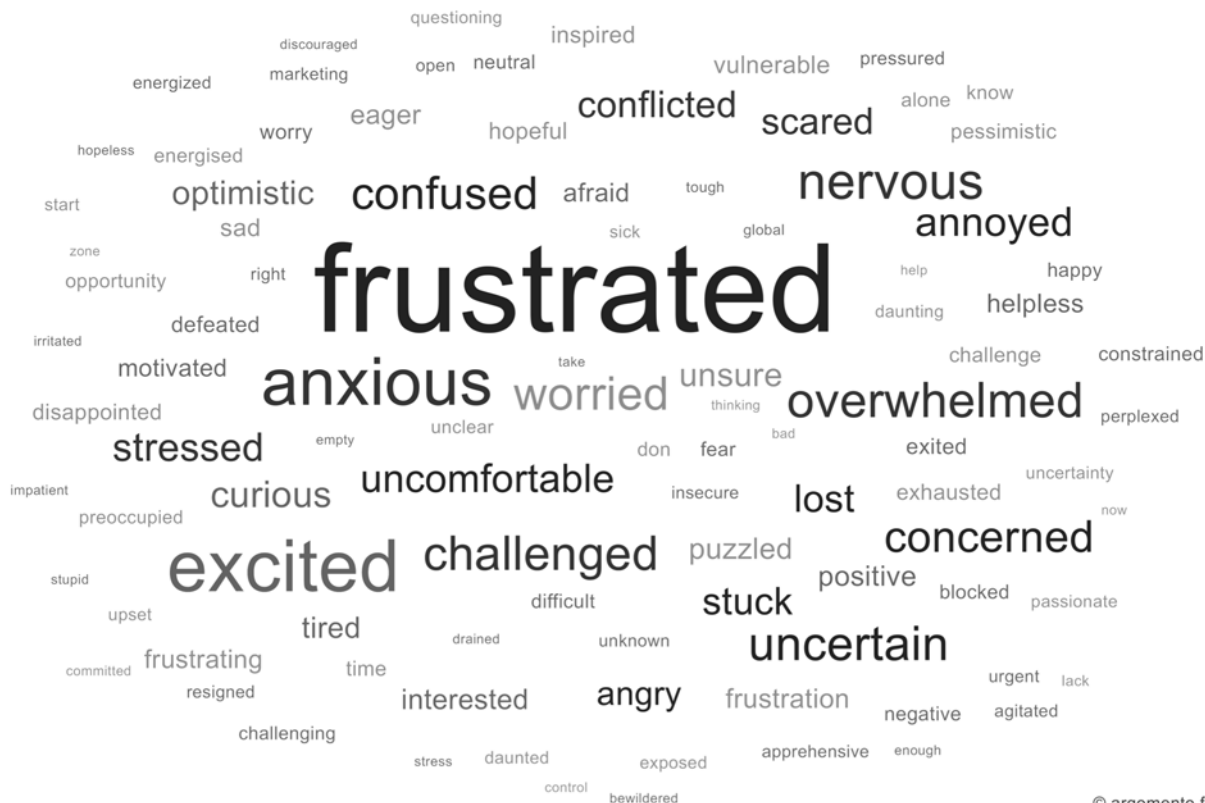


Question Burst

**After doing the Question Burst,
did you discover
at least one new idea
to help you solve your challenge?**



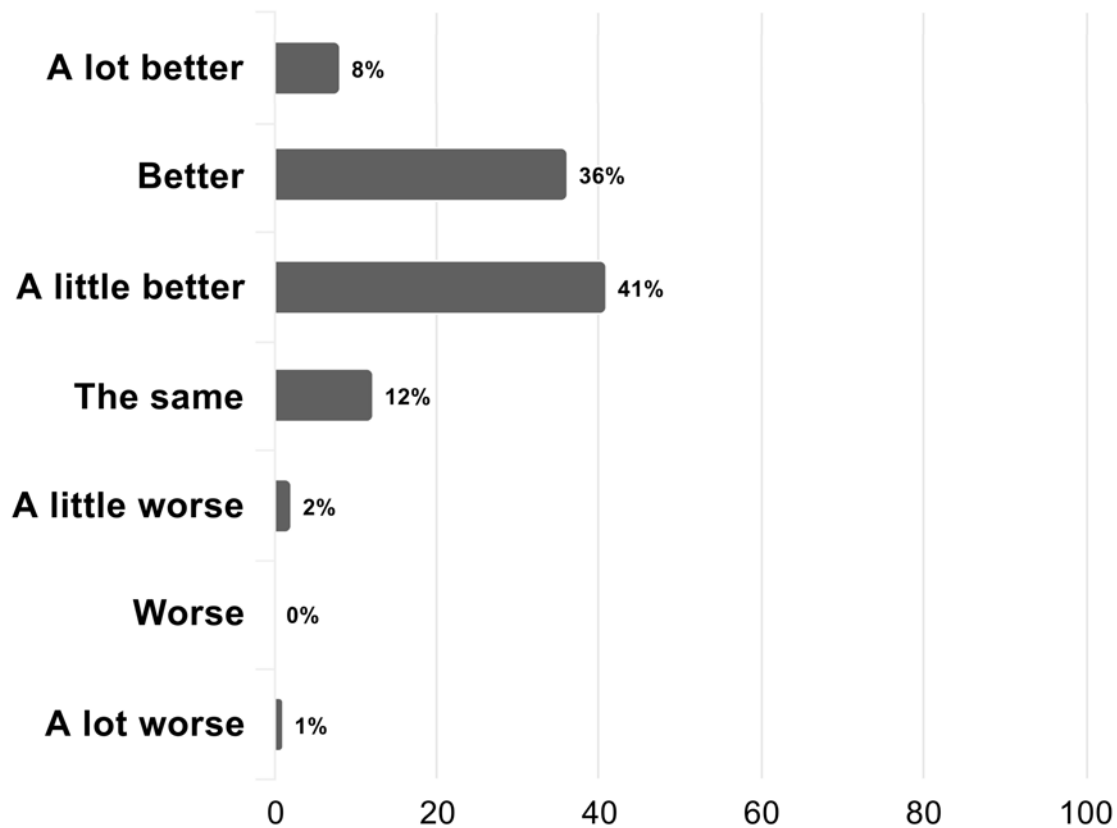
© argomento.fr



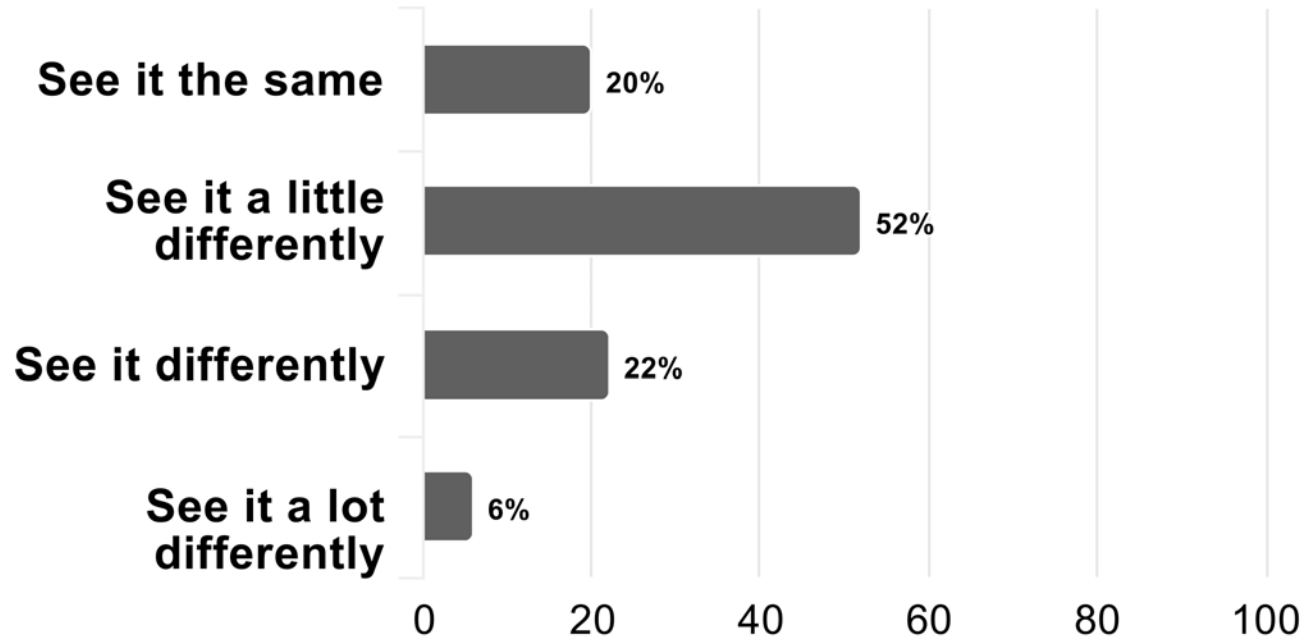
After doing the QuestionBurst...



After doing the QuestionBurst, how do you “now” feel about your challenge?



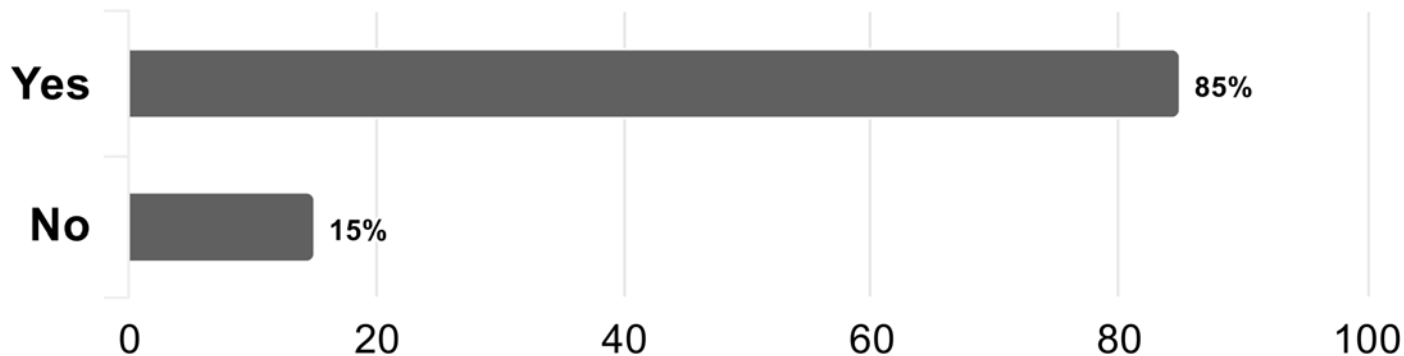
**After doing the QuestionBurst,
have you reframed your innovation challenge, seeing it differently now?**



© argomento.fr



**After doing the QuestionBurst,
did you discover at least one new idea to help you solve your challenge?**



© argomento.fr

Question Burst

3x





Loretta Hidalgo Whitesides
Founder Astronaut, Virgin Galactic



Question Burst



Question Burst



Kevin Brown
Chief Supply Chain Officer





Tony Hsieh
CEO





Zappos.com



Zappos.com!



Zappos! .com



Kristen Anderson

Admin Guru at Zappos Insights





Miguel Hernandez
Creative at Zappos



Zappos.com!



Miguel Hernandez
Creative at Zappos



Zappos.com



Zappos.com

How do we create and channel
the energy of inquiry
into impact for organizations?



Show

Twitter

LinkedIn

Reddit

Facebook

YouTube



#1 ServiceNow

United States 39.02% 89.22%



#2 Workday

United States 36.07% 82.84%



#3 Salesforce.com

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#12 Unilever Indonesia

Indonesia 2.25% 63.91%



#13 Adobe Systems

United States 24.56% 62.38%

salesforce

#3





Marc Benioff
founder and co-CEO *Salesforce*

**“Why isn’t all
enterprise software
as easy to buy as a
book on Amazon?”**

Marc Benioff
founder and co-CEO *Salesforce*

The Salesforce logo, which consists of a blue cloud shape with the word "salesforce" written in white lowercase letters inside it.

salesforce



**“Why isn’t all
enterprise software
like a Facebook app?”**

Marc Benioff

founder and co-CEO *Salesforce*



**“How can we make
enterprise level software
more intelligent – and
apply it in new ways?”**

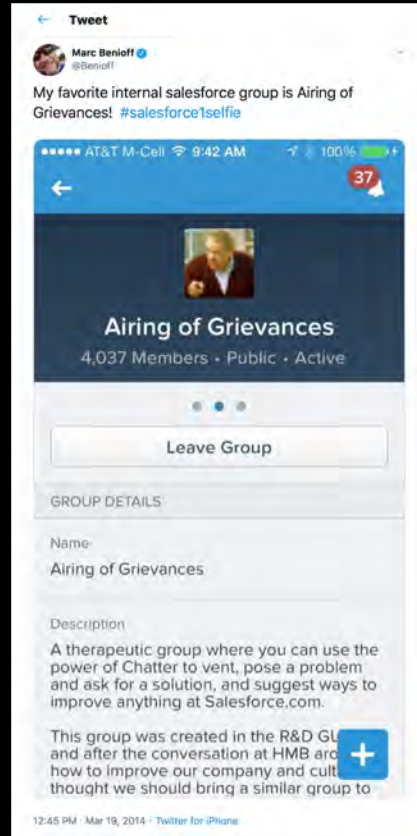
Marc Benioff

founder and co-CEO *Salesforce*



listen





make it psychologically safe
for people to speak up
and ask fearless questions



V2MOM

VISION. VALUES. METHODS. OBSTACLES. MEASURES.



VISION What is it that we really want?

VALUES What's really important to us?

METHODS How are we going to get it?

OBSTACLES What is preventing us from having it?

MEASURES How will we know that we have it?



- *become an instrument of inquiry* •



To do is to be.

Jean-Paul Sartre



To be is to do.

Socrates



do be do be do

Frank Sinatra



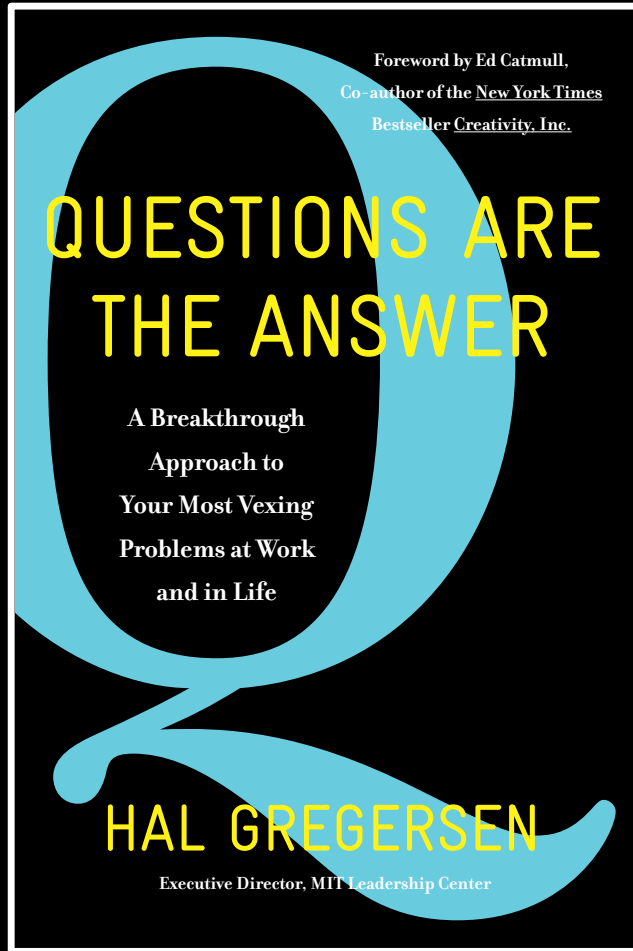


• *make a difference* •









Thank you!

Engage
@HalGregersen

Explore
www.halgregersen.com