

## **The Power & Simplicity of Leadership via Effective Questions**

By Ed Oakley

I had a powerful experience today with someone using “our own” leadership tools to help me gain a new level of clarity about our business. I have been wrestling with “what is the brand I would want Enlightened Leadership Solutions known for, at least the part related to leadership and management development? What distinguishes us from everyone else out there?”

I had an extraordinary and seemingly “accidental” opportunity to be... ..interviewed by Ben Mack, a marketing phenomenon (<http://www.authorsbusinessplan.com/>) with some huge marketing wins in very large companies to his credit, who took me through his process of developing a Legend Platform. Brand Essence is a key aspect of that platform. His process is essentially a series of Effective Questions. Guess what! The “answers are in the room!” Just like any other real-world situations, he has a general set of questions to ask (like our Framework for Leadership™ but “next level” questions are dependent upon his deep listening to the answers and going to more specific questions for the eventual solution.

The process was highly energizing as he asked questions like:

- What should customers and prospects think of you that would be most valuable for your company to be known for?
- What’s the real benefit to your customer of working with you?
- What’s the big reason companies hire you?
- What do your products and services really do for them? What are the benefits they receive?
- What is the greatest benefit you can authentically provide?
- What does it really take to experience your brand essence? What do they have to do, learn, experience, go through?
- Numerous others of powerful Effective Questions. I’m doing this from memory!

What thought-provoking Effective Questions he asked! Midway through the process, we came to the conclusion that the Brand Essence, that thing that was our greatest benefit for our clients, was “Solving Your Greatest Management Challenges.” That seemed pretty darn good! I would be delighted for us to be branded, to be known, to be distinguished as the organization that helped companies solve their greatest management challenges. But it wasn’t over yet!

After we got pretty clear about our Brand Essence, Ben took us further into his model to determine our Primary Principles and General Precepts. We were almost finished – or so I thought. That is when Ben asked an incredible Effective Question. “Your Brand Essence as you have stated it so far is ‘Solving Your Greatest Management Challenges.’ What if that were really a Primary Principal – one level removed from the heart of your value, the Brand Essence? If that were the case, what would be your deeper benefit?”

What would be the real reason companies and people buy your services? What do you really provide them that makes the greatest difference?"

Several thoughts went through my mind. "Maybe it is 'making your work life more fun and effective.' But that is more focused on just individuals than organizations, I realized. so, maybe 'sustainable business growth.'" While that seemed true enough, it certainly didn't inspire me. Then it hit me, just like it often does with Effective Questions – out of the blue. "Leadership Made Simple' is our Brand Essence, or perhaps we say it in the more active way, 'Making Leadership Simple.' I launched off into an inspired, passionate presentation about how that was our Brand Essence and how important it was to organizations and their people.

What we do better than anyone on the planet is to demystify leadership and take away the belief that leadership has to be some complex, mysterious talent. We make leadership simple for virtually everyone, and they get to use it to make a difference to others in their environment, no matter how large or small that environment is.

I've never been more clear about the essence of the work of Enlightened Leadership Solutions. And I have never been more clear and inspired about the power of Effective Questions as a leadership tool to get to the real solution.

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