

# Bridgeway to Success™

November 2005

---

**AFTER A  
MISTAKE, ASK,  
“WHAT DID YOU  
LEARN?”**

---

## Management by Questioning

Few things trigger fresh thinking or cut to the heart of a truth like an incisive question. Here are a few of my favorites:

- 1) A well-intentioned employee makes a major mistake. You could rake the employee over the coals. Or you could calmly ask two questions: *What did you learn? What would you do differently next time?*
- 2) Your company is about to kick-off a major initiative. The track record of such efforts has been less-than-inspiring. Bring everyone together, tell them what you want to accomplish and ask: *Why will this fail?* After allowing them to elaborate on the likely causes, ask: *What are the three most important things we should do to prevent failure?*
- 3) You're dealing with an employee who is long on excuses but short on results. There always seems to be a good reason for why things can't get done. The next time you're fielding excuses ask this question: *What would you do if your life depended on it?*
- 4) A client wants to undertake a major project and they need your help. You know you can help but you question the client's commitment. Play a little hard-ball with this question: *If this doesn't get accomplished, who loses their job?*

In a world where we are reinforced for having the right answers, don't forget the power of asking the right questions. *Got it?*

Michael Canic