



DeYoung Consulting Services

Helping People Learn up to Their Potential

Sometimes drafting a written document requires research, either formal or informal, for a fully complete piece. And research requires asking questions.

Before you start working on your next report, proposal or training manual take the time to ask—and answer—some questions. By thinking through key questions early in the process you can save yourself time, money and mistakes, and provide your reader with the most appropriate information.

Here are some questions to ask yourself before you start your next writing project.

WHAT What do you want your reader to learn from your piece? What is the primary message? What is most important to communicate? What is least important? What trends do you predict? What do you want to avoid telling your reader?

WHO Who needs to receive your communiqué? With whom do you need to talk? Who are the key players in the situation—a person, an organization or a group of people? Who is influential or makes decisions? Who will be affected by your proposal or report?

WHEN What timelines are important? What historical elements are critical? When do you anticipate particular events? When do you need to complete your writing project? How long will it take you to complete your writing?

HOW How can people learn more? How do you explain trends in income, sales or other business cycles? How will you be accomplishing the goal or project you're discussing? How can you improve, fix or avoid a problem?

WHY Why is your topic important? Why should people read what you're writing? Why are you the writer of the report or proposal?

WHERE Where is your company or industry headed? What geographic locations, facilities or buildings are important and why?

Remember that you might have to ask many questions before you get the answer you need. And don't assume you know the answers or that any question is too simple.

If you find you have questions about any of your employees' performance or your training materials, give me a call. I'm happy to provide the answers.

Karen DeYoung is principal of DeYoung Consulting Services, which provides quality learning experiences for individuals and groups. We develop training materials and activities that advance individual, team, and organizational learning. Our work is done with integrity, reliability, and accountability.

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