

## ANSWERING A QUESTION WITH A QUESTION

Think about this fact: the control of the direction of the call belongs to the individual asking the questions. Now, imagine this scenario. You call an organization, and the gatekeeper asks you a series of questions. You answer politely, waiting patiently for her to ask you the next question and put you through. If the one asking the questions is the one driving the conversation, and the one answering the questions is on the defensive, is it any wonder that you get held up at the front door?

Asking questions puts you on an equal basis with the individual on the other end of the phone. Questions demand answers; if you ask, others will answer. Questions get people away from their typical frame of thinking and into the frame that you direct. Questions give you information, and information is always a source of power. Questions can give you the control you need in any situation.

This is a challenging area to master; if you would like an exercise in which to practice this skill, try this in your next group meeting. Group into pairs, and have one individual begin by asking a question. The second individual must answer that question, and then redirect with another question. As an example:

Recruiter 1: *"What are you discussing in your recap meeting with ABC Client today?"*

Recruiter 2: *"We are going to address the results of the recent salary survey we performed on their behalf. What new searches have you secured in the past week?"*

Recruiter 1: *"I just secured a new retainer yesterday and am finishing the search strategy this morning with the client. They are going to be putting together a video email to assist in sharing their story in the market; what creative marketing tools have you found to be the most effective?"*

Although this exercise may seem silly, it will help perfect the skill and habit of answering a question with a question. As it relates to gatekeepers, it will help spotlight the issue that many recruiters have of answering a question and then waiting for the subsequent question to be asked. By asking the right questions, you can steer the dialogue with the gatekeeper exactly in the direction you want it to go.

### **Example:**

Gatekeeper: *"Whom may I say is calling?"*

Recruiter: *"It's Karen."*

Gatekeeper: *"Karen who?"*

Recruiter: *"Oh, sorry, Karen Schmidt. Is Jim not in?"*

### **Example:**

Gatekeeper: *"She is not in at the moment. May I take a message?"*

Recruiter: *"I will leave a voicemail, but I'll also try her on her cell. Has that number changed?"*



**Example:**

Gatekeeper: *"Hello, ABC Company, Katie speaking."*

Recruiter: *"Hi Katie; it's Karen Schmidt calling for Rob. Is he still in a meeting?"*

**Example:**

Gatekeeper: *"Is he expecting your call?"*

Recruiter: *"He should know what this is regarding. Is he in the office presently?"*

**Example:**

Gatekeeper: *"Could I tell her what this is regarding?"*

Recruiter: *"Actually, you could maybe even save me a conversation! Do you know if she will be at the (industry conference) in (city) next month?"*

Gatekeeper: *"I don't – I'm sorry!"*

Recruiter: *"No problem. Go ahead and put me through; she has a direct voicemail if he doesn't answer, correct?"*

**Example:**

Gatekeeper: *"What company are you with?"*

Recruiter: *"Next Level. I had his direct dial, but must have stored it incorrectly in my cell. Could you put me through and I promise that I'll not interrupt you in the future?"*

**Example:**

Gatekeeper: *"ABC Company"*

Recruiter: *"Karen Schmidt calling back for Rob Mosley – do you know if he's at his desk?"*

**Example:**

Gatekeeper: *"Could I tell him what this is regarding?"*

Recruiter: *"He and I have talked before. Before you put me through, he hasn't been promoted from (title) recently, has he?"*

**Example:**

Gatekeeper: *"ABC Company"*

Recruiter: *"Hi Katie – I'm calling from my mobile and need your address real quick. Could you give that to me?"*

Gatekeeper: *"Sure, it's (address). Can I ask what you are sending?"*

Recruiter: *"Thanks so much. I'm mailing something to Rob's – actually, I have a quick question for him – is he in right now?"*