



*C's the Day: Ideas to Invite Inclusive
Conversations in Your Company*

Handouts – Questions,
Connections, Conversations

**Tips and tools to Spark Curious
Conversations**



C's the Day: Ideas to Invite Inclusive Conversations in Your Company

TOOL #1

5 Skills of Curiosity

How to Ask Better Questions,
Build Stronger Connections,
and Expand Perspective

1. Openness: Willing to explore without judgment.

Curiosity begins with an open mind — a readiness to entertain new information, perspectives, or interpretations.

Indicators you're practicing openness:

- You slow down before reacting.
- You allow space for ideas that challenge your assumptions.
- You notice your instinct to defend, fix, or judge — and choose curiosity instead.

Prompts that support openness:

- “I’m curious what led you to that perspective.”
- “Say more about how you see this.”
- “What might I be missing here?”



The 5 Skills of Curiosity, continued

2. Observation: Noticing what others overlook

Curious people observe with intention — tone, body language, energy, patterns, and unspoken emotions.

Observation strengthens when you:

- Listen for what is said and not said.
- Look for emotional cues behind statements.
- Notice contradictions or repeated themes.

Prompts:

- “What am I noticing that might matter?”
- “What’s emerging here?”
- “What’s the real issue beneath the stated issue?”

3. Inquiry: Asking powerful, perspective-shifting questions

Great questions expand, clarify, and build connection.

Curious questions are:

- Open-ended
- Nonjudgmental
- Designed to reveal deeper meaning

Examples:

- “What’s underneath that?”
- “What part of this matters most to you?”
- “If nothing were off the table, what would you imagine?”



The 5 Skills of Curiosity, continued

4. Perspective-Shifting: Seeing a situation through more than one lens

Curiosity grows when you intentionally explore viewpoints beyond your own.

Ways to practice:

- Try stakeholder lenses (donor, volunteer, skeptic).
- Ask: “What else could be true?” (reframing question).
- Identify whose voice is missing (“the missing chair”).

Prompts:

- “How might a first-time donor view this?”
- “What would a younger family think?”
- “What if the opposite were true?”

5. Reflection: Turning insight into momentum

Reflection converts curiosity into action.

Prompts:

- “What did I learn?”
- “How has my perspective changed?”
- “What will I do differently going forward?”
- “What’s the smallest next step I can take?”



TOOL #2

100 Curiosity & Perspective- Shifting Questions

The next 6 pages include various types of questions by category:

Door Opening	Below the Iceberg
Momentum Gaining	Donor Centered
Perspective Flipping	Innovation & Creativity
Team & Collaboration	Campaign Strategy
Leadership Reflection	What-if/Imagination

Door-Opening Questions

- What brought you to this cause?
- What matters most to you right now?
- What do you hope will be different because of this work?
- What's the story behind your passion for this mission?
- When did this become personal for you?
- What's something you wish more people understood about you or your work?
- What's top-of-mind for you these days?
- What possibilities excite you?
- What's been keeping you energized lately?
- What are you curious about right now?



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Cont.

Below-the-Iceberg Questions

- What is the real challenge underneath this challenge?
- What's the 'why under the why'?
- What beliefs or experiences shaped your view on this?
- What feels emotionally important here?
- What's not being said yet that matters?
- What's the part of this story most people overlook?
- What's the hidden barrier we haven't named?
- What are we afraid of losing if we change?
- What's the deeper motivation behind this request?
- What does success feel like for you?

Momentum Questions

- What would progress look like in the next 30 days?
- What's one small step we could take today?
- What could make this easier or lighter?
- What's the best-case scenario if this goes right?
- What's one assumption we can test quickly?
- What's one idea worth prototyping?
- What would happen if we removed one barrier?
- What's the one-degree shift that might change everything?
- What does momentum look like from your perspective?
- Who else needs to be part of the conversation?



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Donor-Centered Questions

- What impact do you hope your giving creates?
- What inspires you about this cause?
- What experiences shaped your philanthropy?
- How do you choose what to support?
- What's an example of a nonprofit experience that impressed you?
- What legacy do you want to leave?
- What would a meaningful partnership look like to you?
- What concerns or questions do you have about investing here?
- What would make this relationship feel truly valued?
- What does generosity mean to you?

Perspective-Flip Questions

- How would a donor see this?
- How would a first-time volunteer see this?
- How would a skeptic interpret this message?
- How would a designer approach this differently?
- What would the board see that we're not seeing?
- How would a younger generation respond?
- How would someone outside our sector describe this?
- What would this look like if we simplified it by 50%?
- What would this look like if we made it twice as bold?
- What would this look like if we weren't afraid?



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Innovation & Creativity Questions

- What's the wildest idea that might actually work?
- What are we doing just because we've always done it?
- What rules could we break that would create value?
- If we could start from scratch, what would we build?
- What ideas from other industries could inspire us?
- What's outdated that needs to evolve?
- What's something small that would feel like a big improvement?
- What assumptions need to be challenged?
- What would delight people unexpectedly?
- What's the idea we haven't considered yet?

Team & Collaboration Questions

- What's one thing each of us cares deeply about in this project?
- What strengths are we underutilizing?
- What perspectives are missing from this table?
- What are we each hearing that others may not be?
- Where are we fully aligned?
- Where do we have healthy tension?
- What's the story behind your point of view?
- How can we support each other better?
- What would make working together feel smoother?
- What's one boundary we should honor to elevate trust?



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Campaign Strategy Questions

- What's the emotional heart of this campaign?
- What story are we truly trying to tell?
- What's the desired behavior change?
- What would a wow experience be for donors?
- What proof points do we need?
- What is the single most important message?
- What objections should we prepare for?
- Where is the friction for donors or partners?
- What would success look like at human, organizational, and systemic levels?
- Who benefits most if this succeeds?

Leadership Reflection Questions

- What am I assuming that might not be true?
- Where is my ego getting in the way?
- What am I resisting—and why?
- What can I let go of?
- What would I do if I felt completely confident?
- What perspective am I missing?
- What's mine to do?
- What's my purpose in this conversation?
- What's the invitation from this moment?
- What am I being prompted toward?



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The What-If Imagination Questions

- What if we doubled our boldness?
- What if we slowed down before speeding up?
- What if this challenge is actually an opportunity?
- What if the opposite were true?
- What if donors designed this—what would change?
- What if this were easier than we think?
- What if we aimed for impact, not perfection?
- What if we invited more voices to shape this?
- What if we treated curiosity as a discipline?
- What if this conversation is the turning point?



5C's: Momentum Gaining Communication

C's the Day: Tips for Tough Conversations

Correspond Candidly

- Communication is **two-way**, an exchange of information or ideas.
- A process of **mutual understanding**, respect, and shared meaning.
- **Empathy is key**; how would I want to hear this?

Lead with Inquiry

- What outcome am I hoping for from this conversation?
- What small shift would help improve this dynamic?

Check for Understanding

- **Feedback**: Confirm that the message was received as intended.
- **Summarize & Reflect**: "Let me make sure I heard what you said..."
- **Nonverbals communicate a lot (60-70% of interactions)**: Look for puzzled expressions, hesitation, or nodding without engagement.

- Did you hear the message as I intended?
- What does "X" look like or mean to you?

Consider Corrections

- **Adjust, amend, or rectify** any misinformation; "What I intended to say is..."
- Listen and **assume positive intent**.
- **Promote continued dialogue** until each person feels heard.

- What do we need to do to make sure we feel heard?
- Is misinformation getting in the way of progress?

Create Common Ground

- Focus on what **we have in common**; unite for good.
- Promote collaboration, **acknowledge differences and similarities**.
- Lead with interest and **let go of judgment**.

- Is there one thing that we do agree on?
- How can we work together for good?

Connect in Meaningful Ways

- Find a **deeper connection** that is mindful of each other's needs.
- Healthy open dialogue is working together to **align for change**.
- **Focus on the solutions** and impact.

- Can we stay focused on the impact vs the activity?
- How do we complement one another to move forward?



C's the Day: Lead with Curiosity

Questions to Start a Conversation

- **With a colleague over lunch:**

- What has been your most successful project at work?
- What are three of your favorite things to do when you are not at work?
- If could change one thing about managing work and life outside of work, what would it be?
- Who has been most influential in your career life?
- If you were not doing this job right now, what would you be doing with your time?

- **With a co-worker after a meeting:**

- What do you think was the most salient point about that meeting?
- When you or (X) said (Y), how did you interpret that?
- I realize that you and I see (X) differently, how could we work better to find a solution?
- I noticed you did not say much at the meeting, is everything OK? I would like to see it through your lens.
- What would success look like for you on this project?

- **With a senior leader (mentoring):**

- What was the biggest success moment you experienced in your career?
- Was there a piece of advice you got early in your career that has stuck with you?
- What is one decision you wish you didn't make?
- What are the most important attributes of successful leaders today?
- What's the most important risk you took and why?



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Bonus Tools

Inclusive Conversations



C's the Day:

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1/3

- **Change the narrative** about diversity an inclusion in the office.
 - It is one of the most underutilized competitive advantages in an increasingly complex marketplace.
 - The business case is strong (see the data on the following pages)
 - From a C-suite leader: When we framed diverse leadership as a competitive advantage rather than a compliance issue, the conversation completely changed. We saw it as a strategic imperative, not a box to check.
 - “Quotas” or tracking hiring practices as in diverse hiring slates are lead measures toward an outcome of more diverse inputs -- not the end goal.
- **Acknowledge the elephant in the room:** You may face resistance.
 - “We hire based on merit, not gender or race...”
 - “We can't find qualified diverse candidates.”
 - “This will slow down our decision processes.”
 - “We don't want to lower our standards,”
 - Focus on business outcomes, rather than moral arguments.
 - Probe for more, the unspoken, and why the resistance exists.
 - **Slow Down and Stay Curious**
 - “That’s an important point. Can you share more about what concerns you most?”
 - “What do you mean by ‘merit’? How do we currently define and measure it?”
 - “What experiences have shaped your view on this?”

Ask yourself...

- Do you know what demographics represent your opportunity areas? If not, AI can be a good resource.
- Do you know your own workforce demographics? Work with your human resource team to understand the diverse traits that exist in your company.
- Do you have employee resources groups? If not, how can you leverage your most valuable assets - your people - for growth today?



Lead Visibly with Personal Commitment

- **Participate directly:** C-suite executives who personally attend diversity events and discussions (not just open them) increase employee participation by 65% (McKinsey, 2023).
- **Consider reverse mentoring:** C-suite executives who participate in reverse mentoring with diverse employees report 57% better understanding of inclusion barriers (Mercer, 2023).
- **Practice "listen first" leadership:** Executives who begin diversity sessions by listening without defending increase psychological safety scores by 41% (Edelman Trust Barometer, 2023).
- **Hold skip-level inclusion meetings:** C-suite members who meet quarterly with employees 2-3 levels down increase psychological safety scores by 53% (Gallup, 2023).
- **Implement allyship programs:** Companies with formalized allyship initiatives for executives see 51% higher engagement from underrepresented groups (Deloitte, 2023).
- **Create diverse innovation teams:** Executive-sponsored innovation teams with diverse membership generate 2.3x more revenue from new products (BCG, 2023).

- **Be Intentional** about sitting down with people who are different than you.
 - Invitation is not enough; set clear expectations at the top that you expect and value diverse inputs.
 - From a C-Suite Leader: “We had diversity in the room, but not in the conversation. People who felt like outsiders weren't speaking up, and when they did, their insights weren't being taken seriously. We had to actively create conditions where different voices were not just heard but valued.”
 - Normalize inclusive conversations and deliberate inclusion efforts.
 - Consider making it a developmental goal for leaders to have bi-monthly skip-level meetings.
 - Ask your senior leaders to sponsor and/or participate in employee affinity group events.
 - Add it to your calendar to have-bi-weekly/monthly or quarterly meetings with people who are different than you in some way – remember diversity goes beyond gender and race to include experience, education, thinking styles and more.
 - Rotate meeting facilitators.
- **Implement Meeting Techniques:** That foster inclusive conversations.
 - Implement the "2-Before-Me" rule in meetings (hearing two others before speaking again).
 - Establish pre-meeting input channels for those less comfortable with spontaneous contribution.
 - Create clear escalation pathways for when contributions are consistently overlooked.
 - Create anonymous feedback channels for sensitive topics.
 - Amplify voices in the room that are not typically heard, i.e. “Thanks Tracey for that idea. “



Audit Your Decision Ecosystem

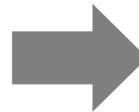
- Map your critical decision processes, especially those related to market opportunity assessments.
- Identify who influences decisions at each stage.
- Look for diverse representation on innovation teams (all dimensions of diversity).
- Measure demographic representation in these roles to be intentional and to support storytelling.
- Find ways to be intentional about getting input from those you don't normally hear from, or are underrepresented, especially regarding innovation and consumer-related inputs.

Elevate and Reward Behaviors you want to see

- Recognize and reward those who bring different perspectives as well as inclusive leadership behaviors.
- Create diverse customer insight panels.
- Elevate storytelling that connects diverse inputs and business outcomes.
- Create systems that ensure diverse inputs, regardless of who's in charge.

Paint a Clear Picture of What you Want for Your Organization and Create a Map to Get There.

- Change can be hard and takes time, especially when there could be a lot of unspoken concerns.
- Leverage change management theory and identify a FROM-TO chart; create next steps to help you move in the "TO" direction.
- Track progress; What gets measured gets done.
- See example illustration to the right, from the book *Men-In-The-Middle: Conversations to Gain Momentum with Gender Equity's Silent Majority*.
- Gender is a niche of diversity.



Gender Equity Mindset Shift

From	→	To
But		Yes, AND
Gender: A Women's Issue		Gender: A Leadership Issue
Zero-Sum Game (Win-Lose)		All-tides rise
Uncertainty = Silence		Uncertainty= Inquiry
Me		We
Judgment		Perspective-Taking
Toxic Masculinity		Positive Masculinity
Feminism = against men		Feminism=equity among sexes
Apathy		Urgency
Men-in-the-Middle		Men-on-the-Move
Status Quo		Disruption
Bummock		'The Light'
Highlight Negativity		Reinforce the Good



The Data: The Case for Diverse Inputs 1 of 2

Financial Performance & Profitability

- **McKinsey (2020):** Companies in the top quartile for gender diversity were 25% more likely to achieve above-average profitability compared to peers; companies in the top quartile for ethnic diversity outperformed by 36%.
- **BCG (2019):** Companies with above-average diversity on management teams reported 19% higher innovation revenue (45% of total revenue vs. 26%).
- **Peterson Institute for International Economics (2022):** Companies with 30%+ female executives earned 6% higher profit margins than those with no women in leadership.

Innovation & Problem-Solving

- **Harvard Business Review (2021):** Diverse teams solved problems faster than cognitively similar teams, and decisions made by diverse teams delivered 87% better outcomes.
- **BCG & Technical University of Munich (2020):** Companies with above-average diversity scores reported 45% of revenue from innovation versus 26% for companies with below-average diversity.
- **North Carolina State University (2023):** Teams with racial and gender diversity were 58% more likely to price stocks correctly due to more careful evaluation of facts.

Risk Mitigation & Governance

- **Journal of Business Ethics (2021):** Gender-diverse corporate boards demonstrated stronger internal controls, risk oversight, and regulatory compliance.
- **World Economic Forum (2023):** Companies with diverse boards had 43% fewer governance-related legal issues.
- **Wall Street Journal (2022):** Companies in the top quartile for racial and ethnic diversity were 35% less likely to have financial reporting mistakes.

Organizational Effectiveness

- **Catalyst (2022):** Gender-diverse teams made better business decisions 73% of the time compared to less diverse teams.
- **Boston Consulting Group (2023):** Organizations with diverse management teams reported 19% higher revenues due to innovation.
- **Mercer (2022):** Organizations with inclusive cultures were 3x more likely to be high-performing, 6x more likely to be innovative, and 8x more likely to achieve better business outcomes.



The Data: The Case for Diverse Inputs 2 of 2

Talent Acquisition & Retention

- **Deloitte (2022):** 80% of employees consider inclusion important when choosing an employer; 39% would leave their organization for a more inclusive one.
- **Gartner (2022):** Organizations with sustainable D&I initiatives demonstrated a 20% increase in organizational inclusion, which corresponded with a 6.2% increase in on-the-job effort.
- **Conference Board (2023):** Companies with robust D&I programs saw 5.4% higher employee retention.

Market Share & Consumer Response

- **Harvard Business Review (2023):** Teams with at least one member sharing a client's ethnicity were 152% more likely to understand that client's needs.
- **Center for Talent Innovation (2020):** Companies with diverse leadership were 70% more likely to capture new markets.
- **Deloitte (2023):** 83% of millennials reported higher engagement when they believed their organization fostered an inclusive culture.

Office Products DATA – Generated from AI Prompt

Demographic Shifts Influencing Purchasing

- Women influence 70-80% of office supply purchasing decisions (NPD Group, 2022).
- Ethnic diversity in procurement roles has increased 24% since 2019.
- Organizations with diverse procurement teams are 33% more likely to select diverse suppliers.

Gender and Age in Purchasing Roles

- At enterprise level, women hold 47% of procurement leadership roles, up from 31% in 2015.
- Male purchasers tend to focus more on technological specifications, while female purchasers emphasize comprehensive solution fit.
- Millennials (27-42) now comprise the largest segment (43%) of office product decision-makers.
- Gen Z (18-26) holds 15% of positions with growing influence.
- Younger purchasers are 62% more likely to research office products online before purchasing.

Role-Based Preferences

- Organizations with disability representation in procurement roles are 26% more likely to consider accessibility features.
- Neurodivergent procurement professionals report higher attention to detail in product specification evaluations.
- Millennials and Gen Z purchasers allocate 31% higher budgets toward ergonomic and wellness-focused products.



Gender Equity Manifesto

Men and women are different by design, and when working together,
a dynamic duo for change.

Whether athletics or aesthetics, technical expertise or creative expression, problem
solver or people optimizer...our strengths are not gender specific,
and neither is our leadership!

Progress is inevitable when we stop disparaging and start celebrating the unique genius
we possess as individuals. We move from rigid gender expectations through open
communication to vivid conversations that create meaningful change, inclusive of all.

Believe in success over bias, outcomes over activities, and win-win over win-lose.

The world's challenges are too big to let gender-limiting beliefs get in the way of
innovating for limitless possibilities to better ourselves, our families, and our
communities.

Men and women are both stakeholders in gender equity.
Men and women are heroes separately and superheroes together.