



Achieving radical and sustainable improvement in top line performance

*Introducing...*



**June, 2015**

Remember the \$64,000 Question? It was a famous American game show in the late 50's which became embroiled in the quiz show scandals. Contestants were asked questions, each one slightly more difficult than the preceding one. The value doubled for each successive question up to the final question worth \$64,000. The \$64,000 question has become a common catchphrase for the most important question you can ask.

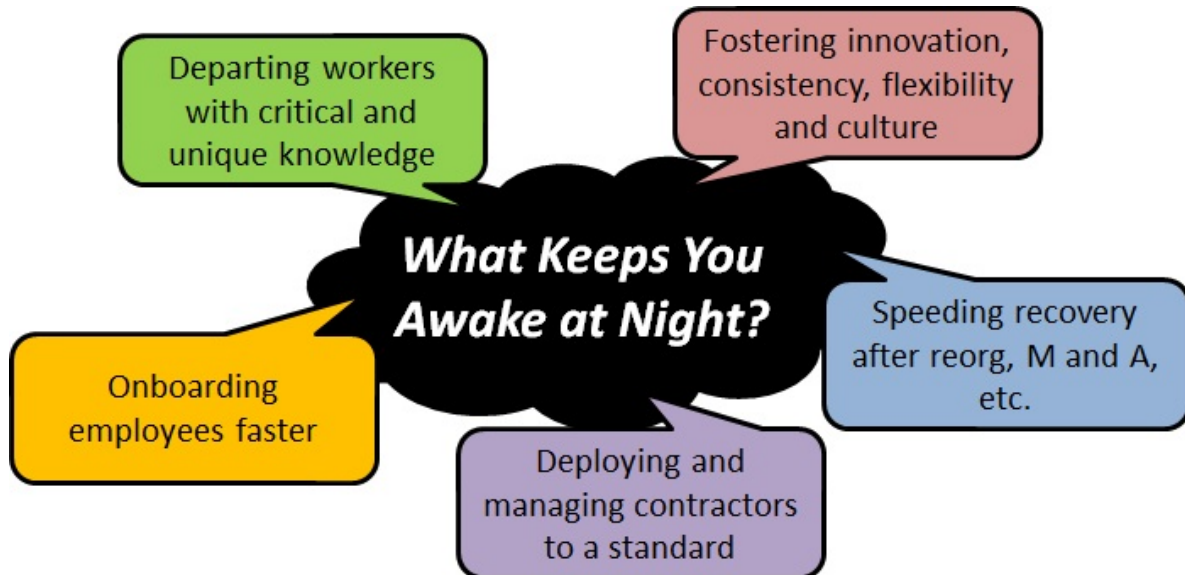


## A \$20 Question

The other day I found myself walking through a local summertime street fair. Curiously I was counting how many vendors were selling similar merchandise and how they attempted to differentiate themselves in their booths. Bright colors, music, fragrances, free giveaways, jackpot spinning wheels and loud voices trying to attract your attention. With my defense mechanisms turned "on," I continued to browse, not really needing anything, including a fried cheese steak sandwich. And then it happened. I stopped at a booth looking at this vendors sun glasses (like women's pocketbooks, you can never own enough pairs), when the vendor quietly asked me if I drive? Knowing fair well that the only way I could possibly answer was "yes," I knew I was going for a sales ride. The next thing he does is look at the shape of my face (mass customization), and selected a pair of light weight wrap around polarized amber glasses to try on. And of course he asked me to look at his hand held polarizer driving simulator, with and without the glasses. An amazing difference without glare. Of course I put on the glasses I was wearing, and it failed the polarizing test! I am scam proof - ha! So for 20 bucks, I bought the pair and wore them home. The vendor's question cost me \$20. Why I am sharing this story?

One of the biggest challenges selling anything (whether you sell professionally with a Capital S, or just sell ideas with a small s), is to always begin by asking good questions, typically not those that can be answered with a simple yes or no (as in my example above), ask a yes or no and you have a 50% chance of hearing the 'no' word. Instead, use broad open ended questions. They provide an arena in which to better understand the needs and pain points of the prospect. For example;

- Please describe the status of the Framis Project?
- What has been the feedback from the Board?
- What changes have occurred within the market, especially among your competitors?
- What is the time frame for reaching a decision and who are the key decision makers?



### **The new \$64,000 Question**

While there are an endless number of good "safe" questions to ask, my go-to \$64,000 question that consistently works is: "What keeps you awake at night?" Of course, implied in the answer are business/work items and not those of a personal nature.

I have found this to be especially effective when you have a very limited amount of time to probe. It is interesting how people open up and share what is really on their mind. This important question gets right to the heart of the pain within an organization, to help you begin to frame a solution response that is compelling.

The next time you are in a critical sales call, give it a try. You will be surprised at the pay-off this non-threatening question can yield. And the result may far exceed \$64,000 in benefits.

We would welcome an e-mail if you are in need of some help with this. You can reach us at [kappainfo@kappaeast.com](mailto:kappainfo@kappaeast.com).

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