CATALYST QUESTIONS™ — REPRODUCIBLE CARDS 1–6

OBSERVE **WHAT ARE WE ACTUALLY SEEING?** What are we actually seeing—not what do we think it means? USE WHEN Interpretation and observation have become mixed together. WATCH FOR Don't prohibit interpretation. Separate it from observation long enough to see more clearly.	**OBSERVE** **WHAT DOESN'T FIT?** What are we seeing that doesn't fit our current explanation? USE WHEN The group has settled quickly around a plausible explanation. WATCH FOR The exception may be noise. Don't assume every anomaly is meaningful.
OBSERVE **WHERE IS IT ALREADY HAPPENING?** Where is the capability or behavior we want already happening? USE WHEN The conversation is focused primarily on deficiencies. WATCH FOR Don't assume the successful example can simply be copied. Find out what makes it possible.	**OBSERVE** **WHAT IS CHANGING?** What are we seeing now that we weren't seeing six months ago? USE WHEN The group needs to notice movement rather than take a snapshot of current conditions. WATCH FOR Change does not automatically mean trend.
UNDERSTAND **WHAT ELSE COULD EXPLAIN THIS?** If our current explanation is wrong—or incomplete—what else might explain what we're seeing? USE WHEN One diagnosis has become dominant too early. WATCH FOR The purpose is not to manufacture alternatives. Generate only explanations that are reasonably plausible.	**UNDERSTAND** **WHAT IS THE SYSTEM PRODUCING?** If people are behaving rationally within the system we've created, what is the system encouraging them to do? USE WHEN People are being blamed for behavior that may be shaped by conditions around them. WATCH FOR Systems influence behavior. They don't eliminate individual responsibility.

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CATALYST QUESTIONS™ — REPRODUCIBLE CARDS 7–12

UNDERSTAND **WHERE IS THE FRICTION?** What makes the desired behavior harder than it needs to be? USE WHEN People know what to do but aren't consistently doing it. WATCH FOR Don't assume friction is the only explanation. Knowledge, motivation, consequences, and capability may still matter.	**UNDERSTAND** **WHAT ARE WE REALLY TRYING TO BUILD?** What capability are we actually trying to create? USE WHEN The conversation has become dominated by programs, activities, platforms, or deliverables. WATCH FOR Avoid replacing one vague word with another. Describe what people or the organization should actually become capable of doing.
CHALLENGE **WHAT ARE WE ASSUMING?** What are we treating as true without having examined it? USE WHEN The group's reasoning appears to rest on assumptions nobody has made explicit. WATCH FOR Every decision contains assumptions. The objective is not to eliminate them but to make important ones visible.	**CHALLENGE** **WHAT IF THE OPPOSITE WERE TRUE?** What might we see differently if we temporarily assumed the opposite? USE WHEN The group is deeply anchored in one way of seeing the issue. WATCH FOR This is a thinking device, not an argument that the opposite actually is true.
CHALLENGE **ARE WE SOLVING THE RIGHT PROBLEM?** If we solved this problem exactly as we've defined it, would we get the result we actually want? USE WHEN People are moving efficiently toward a solution but the original frame deserves examination. WATCH FOR Do not reframe simply to sound clever. Sometimes the frame you already have is the best one.	**CHALLENGE** **WHAT WOULD WE DO IF WE HADN'T INHERITED THIS?** If this didn't already exist, would we create it this way today? USE WHEN History and existing practice may be constraining the range of possibilities. WATCH FOR There may be good reasons the current practice evolved. Understand them before discarding it.

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CATALYST QUESTIONS™ — REPRODUCIBLE CARDS 13–18

CONNECT **WHO SEES THIS DIFFERENTLY?** Who would look at this situation and see something completely different? USE WHEN The people involved share similar experience, expertise, or assumptions. WATCH FOR Seek useful difference, not disagreement for its own sake.	**CONNECT** **WHO ALREADY KNOWS SOMETHING WE NEED?** Where in the organization might someone already know something that could help us? USE WHEN The group is preparing to create knowledge or solutions from scratch. WATCH FOR Knowledge developed elsewhere may need translation rather than simple transfer.
CONNECT **WHAT ELSE DOES THIS CONNECT TO?** Where else in the organization might this same pattern be showing up? USE WHEN A problem is being treated as isolated. WATCH FOR Similarity does not prove common cause.	**CONNECT** **WHO IS MISSING?** Whose experience or perspective do we need but don't have? USE WHEN The conversation feels complete suspiciously early—or important perspectives on the work are absent. WATCH FOR Don't turn every conversation into a representative committee. Add perspective when it can improve the thinking.
IMAGINE **WHAT BECOMES POSSIBLE NOW?** What is possible now that wasn't possible before? USE WHEN Technology, knowledge, circumstances, or constraints have changed but thinking remains anchored in the old environment. WATCH FOR Possible does not mean desirable.	**IMAGINE** **WHAT WOULD WE DESIGN TODAY?** If we were starting with the capability we need rather than the solution we already have, what might we design? USE WHEN People are improving an existing solution rather than reconsidering what is needed. WATCH FOR Don't discard useful existing infrastructure merely because something new sounds more interesting.

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CATALYST QUESTIONS™ — REPRODUCIBLE CARDS 19–24

IMAGINE **WHAT IS THE SMALLEST USEFUL EXPERIMENT?** What is the smallest thing we could try that would teach us something important? USE WHEN Uncertainty is preventing action or the group is attempting to design a complete solution before learning from use. WATCH FOR Small experiments should produce useful learning, not merely small activity.	**IMAGINE** **WHAT WOULD HAVE TO BE TRUE?** What would have to be true for this possibility to work? USE WHEN An idea is intriguing but the group is either accepting or rejecting it too quickly. WATCH FOR Use the question to expose conditions and assumptions, not to build an artificial case for a favored idea.
ACTIVATE **WHAT SHOULD WE TRY?** Given what we know—and what we still don't know—what is worth trying next? USE WHEN The group has enough understanding to move but not enough certainty to justify a finished solution. WATCH FOR An experiment is not an excuse for careless action. Match the size of the experiment to the consequences of being wrong.	**ACTIVATE** **WHAT LEARNING CAN WE RELEASE?** What have we learned that someone else could use right now? USE WHEN Useful knowledge or insight has emerged but is likely to remain with the people who discovered it. WATCH FOR Don't wait to package everything perfectly before allowing useful learning to travel. But make sure what you share is ready enough to be useful rather than misleading.
ACTIVATE **WHAT DO WE STILL NEED TO ANSWER?** What question do we still need to answer before we can move? USE WHEN The conversation has generated considerable thinking but the group remains uncertain about what to do next. WATCH FOR Don't allow the search for one more answer to become an excuse for avoiding action. Ask whether the unanswered question would actually change what you do.	**ACTIVATE** **WHAT CHANGES BECAUSE OF THIS?** What should we do differently because of what we now know? USE WHEN The group has reached an insight or conclusion but has not translated it into changed behavior, practice, or decision. WATCH FOR Not every insight requires immediate action. Sometimes the appropriate action is to keep watching, gather more evidence, or deliberately do nothing yet.

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CATALYST QUESTIONS™ — CREATE YOUR OWN

CREATE YOUR OWN **THE THINKING I WANT TO HELP PRODUCE** _____ MY QUESTION _____ _____ _____ USE WHEN _____ WATCH FOR _____ A useful Catalyst Question opens a more productive path to understanding or action. It does not need to sound clever.	**CREATE YOUR OWN** **THE THINKING I WANT TO HELP PRODUCE** _____ MY QUESTION _____ _____ _____ USE WHEN _____ WATCH FOR _____ A useful Catalyst Question opens a more productive path to understanding or action. It does not need to sound clever.
CREATE YOUR OWN **THE THINKING I WANT TO HELP PRODUCE** _____ MY QUESTION _____ _____ _____ USE WHEN _____ WATCH FOR _____ A useful Catalyst Question opens a more productive path to understanding or action. It does not need to sound clever.	**CREATE YOUR OWN** **THE THINKING I WANT TO HELP PRODUCE** _____ MY QUESTION _____ _____ _____ USE WHEN _____ WATCH FOR _____ A useful Catalyst Question opens a more productive path to understanding or action. It does not need to sound clever.
THE CARDS ARE PROMPTS **Use the shared language of your organization. Ask the question in a way that will be readily understood.**	**THE DECK IS NOT THE CAPABILITY** **The goal is to notice when different thinking is needed—and know how to help make it happen.**

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