

# Rules for asking Non-Threatening questions

The following are general rules for effectively asking non-threatening questions to gain participation.

## Rule 1

Initially ask each question of the entire team.

*Example:* What are the possible reasons for increased scrap levels during the last ten days of the quarter? (Rather than, 'Jane, what are the possible reasons for the increase in scrap levels during the last ten days of the quarter')

## Rule 2

Pause and allow the team members time to consider the question. Some facilitators become anxious if a question does not elicit an immediate response. If this happens to you, relax, your team members are thinking.

## Rule 3

If a team member responds, acknowledge the remark and explore the response further if possible or necessary. For example:

*Team member:* 'One of the reasons we have more scrap relates to working overtime to meet production quotas.'

*Facilitator:* 'Overtime huh? Why would overtime create more scrap?'

*Team member:* 'Well, overtime work causes fatigue and carelessness, resulting in more scrap.'

## Rule 4

If no one responds in a reasonable amount of time, look for non-verbal signs from a team member who is wanting to be involved - i.e., eye contact, a forward lean, an uplifted eyebrow. Then you can go to that person by name.

*Example:* 'Carol, you look as if you have something to offer here. Can you help us out? In your opinion why does our scrap count go up during the last days of each quarter?'

### **Rule 5**

If no one responds to a question, consider rewording the question or asking if the question needs clarification.

*Example:* 'Have I explained this clearly?' (Rather than, 'Do you understand?')

### **Rule 6**

Avoid biased questions.

*Example:* 'What may be causing the problem?' (Rather than, 'Is the problem caused by untrained workers or by inferior materials?' (The problem may be caused by one or more other factors!))

### **Rule 7**

Avoid too many 'yes/no' questions, which limit discussion.

*Example:* 'Is the increased scrap level due to worker fatigue?'  
Will probably get a 'yes or no' answer, but little discussion.

### **Rule 8**

Avoid questions that may put team members on the defensive.

*Example:* 'What are scrap levels in the factory increasing?' (Rather than, 'Bob, why does your departments scrap level seem to continuously increase?')

Hint:

Be careful of praising the questions or responses of participants with words such as 'That's a good question' or 'What a great idea'. Other members not receiving such praise may interpret their idea, response or question as being less valuable.