



# Questions

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Brooklyn NY, May 29, 2024

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# **Work Satisfaction**

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# Is everything working fine as it is?

## *Audience:*

All Staff level

## *Questions:*

Is it as good as it can be?

Is there any room for improvement?

- If yes, do you know where improvements can be done?

- If no, are you willing to look deeper?

Are there things that don't work the way they should. What is it?

Are there things that you would better not fix. Which ones? Why?

## *Discussion:*

It depends on what yes means. If you answer yes because you are naturally inclined to be a positive person, then think deeper. Are you answering yes, because you genuinely think that things are as good as they can be, or is it because you think people would prefer you to say that things are working well?

If things are really, completely, good, then there is no purpose in reading further. However, if you think of anything that can be improved, then you need to think it further and outline the main pain points that you are experiencing. Can you list things that can be improved, and things that don't work the way they should? Perhaps, you feel that there is a problem, but you don't know how to put it clearly. Let's work it through.

## *Solution:*

It is generally advisable to confront reality rather than minimizing the issues, or sweeping them under the rug. Things that are not addressed not only do not disappear, but can have devastating consequences down the road.

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# Are you willing to envision solutions that would lead you to think differently about you are currently doing?

## *Audience:*

All Staff Members

## *Questions:*

Can you list a problem that you are currently facing?

It is possible that things don't work as they should just because some details are not handled the way they are supposed to be. That situation has an easy fix. Just make sure that the guidelines and recommendations are followed, make them more precise to prevent this kind of situation to repeat itself over and over.

Case 1. Please describe the fix you are planning to implement.

However, there are situations where the problems come from the way things are designed. They don't work because nothing prepared you to the situation you are in. This situation is more complex, because it would necessitate starting to envision an alternative way of thinking.

Case 2. Are you ready to rethink what you have been doing so far?

## *Discussion:*

Sometimes, there is an elephant in the room. Years of accumulated practice lead to certain ways of doing things. The new hires have to get used to the ways companies are operating. It may first seem counter-intuitive to them, and only make sense after having understood all the ramifications, rationales, etc. Some of the problems a company is facing may be rooted in the traditional, year-long practices that have been in place, and look immutable. A new look from someone external to the organization may provide a diagnosis of what is going wrong. If the organization is rigid and "ossified", there may be no way to change the course of action, and the situation may therefore be unsolvable.

## *Solution:*

Triggering within the organization a change in the way certain things are done can provide improvement to the problems the company is experiencing. The changes must be done, or supported, by people having an executive role. Potential side effects of the changes have to be carefully analyzed before deploying them.

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# You don't want to, or can't, change anything substantial.

## *Audience:*

All Staff level

## *Questions:*

How long do you think the current state of affairs will be sustainable?

Can you think of negative side effects that accumulate over the long term?

Are you bracing for being stuck with the problems you are experiencing?

Do you have contingency plans to deal with the consequences?

What are you afraid of?

Who is going to be upset by a change? Is there anybody supporting a change?

Are you in the category "don't want to" or "can't"?

## *Discussion:*

Organizations may thrive for a certain time, occupying a certain spot on the marketplace. During that time, people are hired to perform related tasks. When the conditions change on the marketplace, adjustments are needed. When a company fails to adjust to react to these external changes, it is at risk losing its traction, and the future of the company may be in jeopardy.

## *Solutions:*

Monitor the adequation between a company and the evolution of its place on the market. Look at the internal factors that may accelerate the fall, and look for the opportunities to reboot and create new dynamics. If internal processes are too rigid, look for ways to change them.

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# Have you ever thought of thinking creatively?

## *Audience:*

All Staff level

## *Questions:*

Design can be done as a long, creative, and tedious process that involves taking into account various use cases, putting together everything that needs to be included, ensuring that all requirements are met.

It also can be done on a much more flexible (agile) basis, with the ability of constant readjustments depending on newly discovered circumstances, changes that have occurred, etc.

Or, it can be somewhere in the middle. You may have global guidelines that are used as a general framework, within which many adjustments are possible.

Once projects have been designed, are you able to review them and modify them as you are discovering new facts that modify the way things have been envisioned? This is how scientific activity works.

So, in other words, how scientific do you think your work is?

For example, inventing something that has never done before?

Are you willing to take risks?

Are you willing to think out of the box?

Can you think of the problem without necessarily coupling the solution with a new software application?

Have you ever experienced brainstorming sessions?

Are you relying on others to help? Do you delegate the work to them, or do you work with them?

Do you outsource the remodeling, or is it an internal activity?

## *Discussion:*

In organizations that are very hierarchical, not everybody can bring their own ideas. The less opportunities there are to benefit from the perspectives of employees, the less the employees think they have something original to contribute, and don't even think about it.

*Solution:*

Taking a few days break sometimes restarts the process of creative thinking. It may be worth trying to listen to every person who works in the company, regardless of their hierarchical level, and listen to what they have to say.

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## Does your work make sense to you?

### *Audience:*

All Staff Members

### *Questions*

If you were allowed to talk about your work with people from outside, how easy or difficult would it be to explain to them what you are doing?

Have you been told about the context surrounding what you are doing?

Do you need extra information to fully explain the purpose of your task?

Does knowing the context even matter to you?

Have you ever felt that something you are asked to do makes no sense?

Have you felt that there were alternative, better ways to do what you are asked to do?

### *Discussion:*

It seems likely that people are most productive when they are fully briefed on what they are doing.

### *Solution:*

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## **Are you willing, or able, to change the organization within your company?**

### *Audience:*

All staff members

### *Questions:*

If not, can you think of getting someone on board at a higher level within the company to support your effort and implement changes as needed?

If yes, can you think of setting up a team to help you do this? Or does the decision rely on you alone?

How are you going to talk to them about it?

Do you have the ability to influence the behavior of other people?

Do you want to convince them about your new approach?

Do you prefer to impose your new approach?

What would you do if nobody is able, or willing, to follow your lead and support this effort?

### *Discussion:*

A company has a structure that has been designed to optimize productivity. But as conditions are constantly evolving, so is the need to perform changes. Often, these changes translate by laying off personnel, and hiring new people who have different levels of qualification.

### *Solution:*

You need to talk to all stakeholders.

Sometimes, less painful internal restructuring is possible. These are more difficult and require a deeper level of analysis than the simple solutions often applied.

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## **Do you consider that problems come from the fact that employees are not good enough?**

### *Audience:*

IT

### *Questions:*

Technology, for example, can be difficult to use, and tools may require training to be properly used.

Have you considered that you may have in your company people who are highly skilled but are not into technology?

Have you considered purchasing technological solutions that are easy to use?

Are you privileging products that have many features? Are all these features ever used? Are some of the features never used?

Have you paid attention to the time it takes to choose among options or change a configuration that leads to unnecessary outcomes?

Have you ever considered that your users need to be trained and retrained?

How easy (or not) is it for new hires to get acquainted with the tools used within your company?

How often do staff members have to contact the help desk to accomplish their current task?

### *Discussion:*

### *Solution:*

Non-technical users are generally more comfortable using user-friendly tools, that require a minimal time effort. The faster they can get to work without having to wonder how to make the tools work, the happier they are and the most productive they are.

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## Where do you work?

### *Audience:*

### *Questions:*

- Are you working full time at the office, or full time remote, or on a hybrid schedule.
- Do you travel for work?
- Is your work location pattern fixed, or flexible?
- Do you consider you are accomplishing more work at home or at the office?
- Is your workplace messier in the office or at home?
- Are you more able to cope with distractions at the office or at home?
- Are some things the same at the office or at home (for example, online meetings)?
- Do you feel more free when working at the office or at home?
- Do you consider that your relations with your colleagues are better when you are at the office or when you are at home?

### *Discussion:*

Nowadays, many people work from home at least several days a week. They can therefore compare how productive they are in both premises, and have some idea of the differences between environments.

Working is challenging as we are supposed at the same time to be able to focus on the main task while being available for a constant flow of urgent requests that need our attention. On the one hand, the ability, or inability, to create a safe space which allows us to focus is key to our ability to perform our work. On the other hand, if we are able to create an environment with zero distraction, we may be overwhelmed by the feeling of isolation and boredom and regret not being in a place where there is movement.

Taking a nap, or going out for a walk, during working hours is considered to be a way to boost productivity. The freedom that we experience with working from home is higher than at the office. Of course, companies have ways to monitor the time employees spend in front of their computers, including the number of keystrokes they emit. But that's not generally a good metrics to measure work efficiency. Just relying on surveillance does not usually produce good effects. On the contrary, it makes people feel that their work doesn't make sense, and they start to hate their work, or find tricks to pretend they are working while they are doing something else.

Another one is how to manage the mess.

*Solution:*

# **Confronting a messy situation**

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## **Do you feel the need to replace everything when problems start to accumulate?**

### *Audience:*

Executive, IT, Decision makers

### *Questions:*

If your information system has become inefficient, messy, or obsolete, how much are the chances that you decide to replace it with a new one, and restart from scratch?

Otherwise, are the fixes just patches that are like band-aids that help you temporarily?

Will you still have the skilled personnel to make your system work?

Are you able to tell what is threshold between fixing things gradually and replacing everything altogether?

### *Discussion:*

Broken beyond repair. Too expensive to fix. New generation => Conflict of generations. We know better.

### *Solution:*

Lessons learned. Take some distance. Try to avoid repeating the same patterns over and over. Try not to focus on features, but on goals.

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# Do you think you will ever get rid of a mess?

## *Audience:*

All Staff

## *Questions:*

Have you ever thought that if you design a cleaner way to handle data, the problems you are experiencing will be solved?

Have you ever encountered a situation where you thought you had everything covered, only to discover a little bit later that something new, unheard of, has happened, and it does not fit any pre-existing item?

Have you envisioned a process of gradual cleaning, like in your house, where you can decide to clean first the kitchen table, then the kitchen, while leaving the living room in a messy state, until you decide to go into it?

Do you believe that once a messy situation has been addressed and cleaned, the new configuration will be working forever? If not, how long do you expect the improved state of affairs to last?

## *Discussion:*

Mess is part of life. It is often denied, as something that should not happen. But it is there.

## *Solution:*

Accept that mess is a given and learn how to accommodate for the fact that it has its own virtues. After all, democracy is the art of managing messy situations.

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# You start simple, but it gets more complicated quickly.

## *Audience:*

All staff

## *Questions:*

Are you always looking first for the simplest possible solution?

Do you prefer to ignore the problems that would make the issue more complex?

Do you think that everybody will agree on what looks simple to you will look simple to them?

Are you confronted with people who tend to make things look more complicated than they are?

Do you have perfectionists on your team?

## *Discussion:*

The reality is not always as simple as we may want it to be. Denying it can result in neglecting important dimensions that can come later to hit you.

## *Solution:*

At the design stage, do not be afraid to look at the problem in different angles, including from perspectives that add complexity. Let it rest for some time. Do testing. Try to anticipate how the solution will be used. Then, revisit the design, remove the parts that are not often used, and simplify. Simplification is an interactive process. You may not be able to reach your goal of simplicity in one shot.

**Novelty**

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## Confronting the unexpected.

### *Audience:*

All levels

### *Questions:*

Have you ever encountered unforeseen circumstances? If yes, what were they?

Are you able to take a quick decision if needed?

Do you know who to talk to in case you need to take a quick decision?

Are you able to perform a task if it's not on a to-do list?

### *Discussion:*

Unforeseen circumstances happen:

- Natural disasters (flooding, fire)
- A colleague departs without notice (death, illness, sudden change of career, winning the lotto, etc.)
- Systems fail. That may result in the failure to deliver the products on time.
- Commercial failure. A contract that was about to close gets canceled at the last minute.

Some tasks may depend on others, and it may not always be easy to separate tasks in clear-cut to-do lists. You may consider a task as completed, but it may come back later to haunt you if it depends on other tasks that have not yet been resolved.

Or if something changes in the way the problems are described, you will have to reconsider the way a task was expressed in a different light. Are you able to constantly readjust to the ways the problems are uttered? Or are you done whenever a task list is completed, whether the completion makes a significant difference or not?

Besides, you may realize that you may have to do something even if it's not on your to-do list. Are you able, or willing, to take the initiative to perform this task, no matter what? How are you reporting this task to your colleagues, whether they are managers or not.

### *Solution:*

Make contingency plans in case you need to take quickly a decision that does not fall into your normal course of actions.

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## **What do you do if you are being asked to perform a task that you know is not going to work?**

### *Audience:*

All staff.

### *Questions:*

Have you ever found yourself in such a situation?

Do you do it without discussing it because your manager is the person who takes decision, and you are not in a position to give your opinion?

Do you tell your manager that what they are asking will not work, even taking the risk of making them feel unhappy?

Do you consider that you have to wait until the task is completed until people realize how badly designed it was?

If nobody else cares, why would you?

### *Discussion:*

You may never have been asked what you think of what you are asked to do. You may not be in a position to have your say. You may think it's wiser to do as instructed rather than opposing to it. You don't want to be perceived as negative. You are afraid of possible consequences for your job. At the same time, you might fear the consequences for the company as a whole of a project that you know will fail. You don't want the company to suffer from the consequences of the expected failures. You have nobody to talk to. You feel frustrated.

### *Solution:*

Try to find a colleague that you trust with whom you can share your concern. They may think of a way out that you may not have envisioned.

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## **Are you able, or willing, to criticize things that have been done for years?**

### *Audience:*

All levels.

### *Questions:*

If your first impression is to be surprised about how things are being done, are you able to express your feelings? Will anybody be listening? The more you will learn and the more you will understand how things are going, the more likely it is that you will modify, or abandon, the judgments you had when you started. But is there not a loss in not having said what you thought before you forget, or minimize it?

Once you are fully onboarded, are you willing, or able, to criticize the ways things are going? Do you put your job at risk by uttering your opinion? Are you covering up something that should not be done the way it is? Do you feel that the company should be in a better shape if it changed course of some of the issues you are raising, or just thinking about?

If that situation generates personal frustration, are you able to cope it on a personal level?

### *Discussion:*

### *Solution:*

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**Are you able to abandon things that you learned, and for that reason believed it was the right thing to do?**

*Audience:*

All levels

*Questions:*

Things change. A lot of things evolve. What you learned may not be applicable anymore. It may have been replaced by better solutions. Are you able to evolve, even if it costs you to have to abandon things you have spent a lot of effort to learn, and that you are applying in your everyday's job?

Have you told, or taught, to your colleagues that things should be done in a certain way, and later had to tell them that you don't believe any more that this is the way to go?

*Discussion:*

*Solution:*

# **Skills Recognition**

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## **IT vs. Subject Matter Experts. Who has power?**

*Audience:*

*Questions:*

*Discussion:*

*Solutions:*

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# Are "Knowledge Workers" used to provide input to Large Language Model like applications?

*Audience:*

*Questions:*

*Discussion:*

*Solutions:*

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**Are SMEs expected to do everything manually while IT is providing automations?**

*Audience:*

*Questions:*

*Discussion:*

*Solutions:*

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**What is the level of technology expertise expected from SMEs?**

*Audience:*

*Questions:*

*Discussion:*

*Solutions:*

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## **Are SMEs involved in the choice of technology?**

*Audience:*

*Questions:*

*Discussion:*

*Solutions:*

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**Are SMEs incenticized to follow training provided by IT?**

*Audience:*

*Questions:*

*Discussion:*

*Solutions:*

# **Tooling**

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## **Do you think that new tools will magically solve the problems that you are having, and that the whole goal is to find the appropriate tool?**

### *Audience:*

All levels, IT

### *Questions:*

Are you listing your requirements before purchasing a software application?

If yes, are you checking which requirement is fulfilled and which is not?

When you purchase a product, do you look for several solutions before you buy?

Do you consider that the price of a license is the main criterion to use for choice?

Do you create a relationship with the company that sells products?

Do you consult with the end users when choosing a solution?

When you are looking for a new software product, do you start by establishing a list of requirements, or do you rather create a list of tasks based on the features of the software you buy?

After you purchase a product, do you communicate with the vendor about missing features that you would want to see implemented?

Do you consider that the users should adjust to the technology or that the technology should adjust to the users?

Have you ever thought that the problems you are currently experiencing could be solved by purchasing a new tool?

Are you working within the constraints of one ecosystem provided by a big technology company?

In other situations, you may be looking for a completely new software, that you think is going to solve the problems you are having with your current environment?

Do you think you will ever find the software package that will be able to address all the things you have to do, and will ever have to?

Are you thinking ahead of possible side effects while upgrading the technology stack such as data migration, retraining your staff?

*Discussion:*

*Solution:*

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# Do you think that artificial intelligence tools will reduce your workload?

## *Audience:*

All levels

## *Questions:*

Have you used AI-based tools, such as Generative AI?

Do you have tasks that can be either using or being replaced by AI-based products?

When using AI, have you found that you can get exactly what you want?

Have you found that it can go a long way in the direction you want to go, even if it is not getting there 100%?

Are you considering editing results from AI-generated materials?

Have you generated results with AI and used them, only to discover later that they contained errors?

Are you considering that use of AI could result in removing some personnel whose work could be replaced by tools?

Do you consider that training is useful in order to use AI-based tools?

Are you interested to know how AI-generated were produced? For example, are you interested to look at the algorithm used to process and generate data?

Are you interested in creating and maintaining you own automated algorithms to process your data?

Have you checked whether the input you provide to AI engines are visible and/or used outside of your own environment?

Do you consider AI as a security risk?

## *Discussion:*

## *Solution:*

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## **Which criteria are used to purchase new technology?**

*Audience:*

*Questions:*

*Discussion:*

*Solutions:*

# **Managing Data**

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## **Are you able to access to what you need?**

### *Audience:*

All levels

### *Questions:*

Are you denied access to things you need to see?

Do you see things that you are not supposed to see?

Are you able to find what you need?

How easy, or difficult is it to find what you need?

Would that make any difference to your productivity if you had easier ways to find what you need?

Do you depend on others to access to what you need?

Have you been in situations where you need to refer to one person and that person is absent?

Have you witnessed situations where information was known by a person who left the company?

### *Discussion:*

### *Solution:*

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# Are you ready, or equipped, to break the existing silos?

## *Audience:*

All levels

## *Questions:*

Do you want to share information with other departments?

Do you know people who do not want to share the information they own with others?

Are people holding information because of a risk of confidential information being leaked or are there other reasons?

(In a bank, data should be anonymized except for departments dealing with money laundering).

Does sharing information require first sorting out what can be shared?

Are personalities playing a role in the decision people make?

Is there anybody in the company which can see what people do?

Is there anybody who has the ability to enforce sharing?

Should sharing be selective?

## *Discussion:*

Silos exist for a reason:

- Focus
- Confidentiality
- Ability to design and be creative before reaching final state
- Specialization. Expertise level needed.

The silos mirror, more or less, the structure of the organization.

## *Solution:*

When you are told the company wants to break the silos, first ask yourself who wants to break which silos? Be prepared to face a lot of opposition at numerous levels.

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## **Do you need to integrate information from diverse sources?**

### *Audience:*

All levels

### *Questions:*

Do you need to integrate information across Departments?

Do you need to integrate information after a company merger?

Do you need to integrate information after restructuring your company?

### *Discussion:*

### *Solution:*

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## **Are you interested in removing duplicate data?**

### *Audience:*

### *Questions:*

Does your company maintain duplicate data sets?

Do you also have the case of data sets which are partly overlapping with other data?

If duplicate data sets exist, do the people using the alternative data set know about the existence of the other one?

Are duplicate data sets synchronized?

If not, do you think they should be?

If not, do people know where to find the most accurate source of information?

Is there an interest to remove duplicate and create company-wide “single sources of truth”? Are you willing, and ready, to change the processes including the workflow to reach that goal?

Can you list the pros and cons of moving your organization into using “single source of truth”?

### *Discussion:*

### *Solution:*

# **Data Architecture**

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# **Do you think it is possible to design an information architecture that will be valid long enough to be efficient?**

## *Audience:*

### *Questions:*

Are you satisfied with the data structures you are currently using?

Do the database have all the fields that you need?

Have you ever been in a situation where the data you need to provide does not exactly fit with the data model (for example, the column header does not correspond exactly to the kind of data that you need to enter)?

When there is no exact match between the data you need to enter and the pre-existing structure, do you force entering data in a field which is not exactly what you need, but is “close enough”?

When you are not entirely satisfied with the existing data structures, is there a known remedy? Do you document the case? Is there anybody who would be in charge of recording these issues? If yes, do you know who that person is? If it is not a person, is there a mechanism in place to report these discrepancies?

Do you believe that you should design an information architecture?

Have you established data governance rules?

How important is it to have a data architecture?

Pros and cons of information architectures.

Do you think it is possible to design a flexible information architecture?

Do you think that designing an information architecture will add rigidity and red tape to your operating mode?

Do you think designing an information architecture is compatible with an “agile” methodology?

Have you consulted the users when you designed an information architecture?

How do you manage with divergent points of view of what the information architecture should be?

## *Discussion:*

## *Solution:*

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## **Do you think you don't need to design anything at all and that you will be able to adjust to changing conditions no matter what?**

### *Audience:*

### *Questions:*

You know that things are complex, and they change all the time. Therefore, you have decided not to bother about modeling anything in advance, and instead to adjust to the situations as they emerge.

Do you believe that the software development life cycle can be applied to data management?

Have you heard of the “Agile” methodology?

Do you feel a need for “Data Governance”?

When you analyze a problem as it occurs, are you aware of the trickling down effects across various places within your company?

Do you think that the issues will accumulate as you go and that it is impossible to have a clear and comprehensive design?

Do you think that any future changes that get added have the potential to break the architecture you have designed or are about to design?

Do you think that it is possible to design an information architecture that will always be evolving?

Are you considering that “refactoring” the architecture is one of the possible activities on the horizon?

### *Discussion:*

### *Solution:*

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## Top-down or bottom-up?

*Audience:*

*Questions:*

*Discussion:*

*Solution:*

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**Do you think that data should be organized hierarchically, into categories and subcategories?**

*Audience:*

*Questions:*

*Discussion:*

*Solution:*

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# Do you have a clear vision of the difference between data and metadata?

## *Audience:*

## *Questions:*

Are you aware of the difference between data and metadata?

Metadata can appear in different forms:

- as column headers in a table or spreadsheet,
- as field names in a database,
- as invisible information automatically provided by the software, e.g. the author and creation date for a document.
- other information that may or not be visible to end users.

Can you cite some metadata that you know about? For example, metadata used as a column header or a database field?

Can you find an example of metadata automatically added to a document?

Have you encountered situations where you would wish that metadata would be data or the reverse?

Who is doing data models in your company?

When they design models that fall into your area of work, are you being consulted about the model?

Have you encountered situations where metadata was labeled differently in diverse situations, but was expressing the same think (e.g., "Last Name" vs. "Family Name").

Have you encountered situations in which the metadata label did not correspond exactly to the content?

Do you know of any situation where the content of the data did not accurately match the existing metadata, and the person entering the data chose to put the data in the field which was as close as possible, knowing that it was not exactly what was expected?

## *Discussion:*

## *Solution:*

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**Do you think you need to encode all information within source documents to be able to exploit them efficiently?**

*Audience:*

*Questions:*

*Discussion:*

*Solution:*

# **Tables, Forms, Templates**

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## Are you interested in connecting data across different spreadsheets?

*Audience:*

*Questions:*

*Discussion:*

*Solution:*

---

**Do you consider that content should be separated  
from presentation?**

*Audience:*

*Questions:*

*Discussion:*

*Solution:*

---

## Do you prefer working using predefined templates?

*Audience:*

*Questions:*

*Discussion:*

*Solution:*

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**As a template designer, do you consider that they cover the whole territory? How do you provide access to templates?**

*Audience:*

*Questions:*

*Discussion:*

*Solution:*

---

**Is your ability to work hampered by the templates in which you are forced to write?**

*Audience:*

*Questions:*

*Discussion:*

*Solution:*

# **Multitasking**

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**Do you use different apps to perform different tasks?**

*Audience:*

*Questions:*

*Discussion:*

*Solution:*

---

**Do you wish you should be able to go to a single place to find anything you need?**

*Audience:*

*Questions:*

*Discussion:*

*Solution:*

# **Cybersecurity**

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## **Cybersecurity: are you afraid of being attacked?**

### *Audience:*

IT, Executives

### *Questions:*

Do you often receive messages about cybersecurity?

Do you think full security is achievable?

Are you afraid of doing something wrong?

Is security presented as a failure by users to do what they should be doing?

Do you feel confident that the setup you are using is fully secure?

Do you have several ways to log in into your company's system.

### *Discussion:*

Cybersecurity is a red herring.

### *Solution:*

# **Storage and Sharing**

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## Where are your files stored?

### *Audience:*

All Staff

### *Questions:*

Do you have a clear vision whether the files you are using are stored on your computer versus on the cloud?

### *Discussion:*

### *Solution:*

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## **How do you share information?**

Audience:

Questions:

Discussion:

Solution:

# Comments

Comment from Derek: Book to get the business. Both door opener and business book. Check with Business Book Publishers. Consulting re: data excellence.