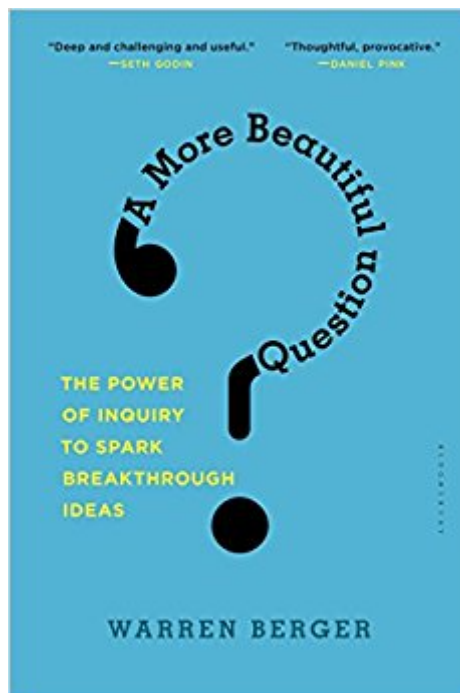




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# A More Beautiful Question: The Power Of Inquiry To Spark Breakthrough Ideas



## Synopsis

To get a great answer, you need to ask the perfect question. Warren Berger revives the lost art of questioning. In this groundbreaking book, journalist and innovation expert Warren Berger shows that one of the most powerful forces for igniting change in business and in our daily lives is a simple, under-appreciated tool--one that has been available to us since childhood. Questioning--deeply, imaginatively, "beautifully"--can help us identify and solve problems, come up with game-changing ideas, and pursue fresh opportunities. So why are we often reluctant to ask

"Why?" Berger's surprising findings reveal that even though children start out asking hundreds of questions a day, questioning "falls off a cliff" as kids enter school. In an education and business culture devised to reward rote answers over challenging inquiry, questioning isn't encouraged--and, in fact, is sometimes barely tolerated. And yet, as Berger shows, the most creative, successful people tend to be expert questioners. They've mastered the art of inquiry, raising questions no one else is asking--and finding powerful answers. The author takes us inside red-hot businesses like Google, Netflix, IDEO, and Airbnb to show how questioning is baked into their organizational DNA. He also shares inspiring stories of artists, teachers, entrepreneurs, basement tinkerers, and social activists who changed their lives and the world around them--by starting with a "beautiful question."

## Book Information

Paperback: 272 pages

Publisher: Bloomsbury USA; Reprint edition (September 13, 2016)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1632861054

ISBN-13: 978-1632861054

Product Dimensions: 5.6 x 0.8 x 0.3 inches

Shipping Weight: 8.8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars 197 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #12,821 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #37 in Books > Health, Fitness & Dieting > Psychology & Counseling > Creativity & Genius #72 in Books > Self-Help > Creativity #84 in Books > Business & Money > Skills > Decision Making

## Customer Reviews

Berger emphasizes the power of inquiry as he challenges us to see things with a fresh eye. He concentrates on game-changing questions, those that can result in actions that lead to real results.

The author focuses on innovation and invention stories, explaining that in business, questions challenge authority and disrupt established structures, processes, and systems, forcing people to at least consider something different. Berger offers his framework for problem solving in three stages. The initial "why" stage involves seeing and understanding, which include noticing what others missed and challenging both our own and others' assumptions. The second, "what-if," stage is about imagining that blue-sky moment of questioning when anything is possible; and the third, the "how to" action stage, is about doing. Asking the right questions will help us discover what matters, what opportunities exist, and how to find them. This thought-provoking book offers important insights to executives, and to those aspiring to leadership, for their business and personal use. --Mary Whaley --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

"Questions have literally moved mountains, powered rockets, and instantly developed images . . . Berger focuses on what he calls 'Beautiful Questions' . . . that can lead to game-changing answers and results. These are questions that, once raised, tend to get people thinking in a different way." --Steven Heller, The Atlantic "A fascinating look at the power of questioning to ignite change--in our companies, schools, careers, and in our daily lives." --Huffington Post "One closes Berger's book newly conscious of the significance of smart questions." --The New York Times Book Review "We know that the art of asking questions is at the heart of discovery in science, philosophy, medicine--so why don't we extend that power to all areas of our lives? The thoughtful, provocative questions Warren Berger raises in this book are indeed the kind of 'beautiful questions' that can help us identify the right problems and generate creative solutions." --Daniel Pink, New York Times bestselling author of Drive and To Sell Is Human "This potential game-changer will help readers identify where opportunities lie and how to seize them." --Publishers Weekly "This thought-provoking book offers important insights." --Booklist "A practical testament to the significance of the questioning mind." --Kirkus Reviews "In the old economy, it was all about having the answers. But in today's dynamic, lean economy, it's more about asking the right questions. A More Beautiful Question is about figuring out how to ask, and answer, the questions that can lead to new opportunities and growth." --Eric Ries, New York Times bestselling author of The Lean Startup "In this wise book, Warren Berger shows us how crucial it is to question every aspect of our lives, from business to school to our choice of toothpaste. My question: Why wouldn't you read this book?" --A.J. Jacobs, New York Times bestselling author

and Esquire columnist "The genesis of many great startups is the simple question, 'Wouldn't it be cool if?' Warren Berger helps you understand the power of questions to change the world. Real men ask questions, they don't spout out answers." -- Guy Kawasaki, former chief evangelist at Apple and author of *Ape: Author, Publisher, Entrepreneur*

After reading *Glimmer*, Warren Berger's 2009 book looking at designers and design thinking, I became a fan of sorts and pre-ordered *A More Beautiful Question* anticipating something good as a follow-up. I wasn't disappointed. Like *Glimmer* -- and perhaps design thinking -- Berger takes both a deep dive and a broad stroke over his subject matter. This is tough to do well, but Berger pulls it off. There is something delightful about looking at something that seems so obvious and simple, but is far from simplistic, in detail. Berger goes through the vast swaths of research and evidence on question formation and innovation and blends it seamlessly with anecdotes, observations and questions...lots and lots of questions. To 'live the title' of the book, the text is organized around questions and, at least with the Kindle, the questions are hyperlinked to explanations at the back about their origin and relevance. This feature was wonderful and frustrating -- but largely due to technology. I read using a Nexus tablet, but my preferred reader is the original Kindle. On that latter device, the linking becomes a frustration in that it is sometimes hard to get back to your place. But that's a small point. Berger's style of writing is engaging, balancing conciseness with informality, and using enough revisiting of ideas in different places in the text to thread ideas throughout the narrative, but not too much to feel repetitive. I loved this just as I loved *Glimmer*. What a reader will take from this is that questions are important, that the best (and most consistent) innovators, leaders and scientists are typically great at asking questions and not just providing answers. Indeed, Berger makes the case that the question and answer are inextricably linked showing dozens of examples of how the habits of questioning lead to exciting outcomes. He also offers a challenge to anyone involved in education -- which, he'd argue is nearly everyone in this age of change and ongoing learning -- to examine how questions are encouraged and discouraged to shun curiosity. This has enormous implications and, as we see, gets replicated in our businesses and other organizations. If this book does anything for you I hope it gets you to ask better questions and enjoy not always having answers. Taken to heart, the message of paying attention to the questions -- living the questions if you will -- is one that may have profound consequences on your life, work, and learning.

It's reading about an issue that's near and dear to my heart, so I read it with a more critical eye than many other pieces of informational writing. The book is strong in examining the role of questioning

and inquiry across various sectors and pointing to those who have asked their ways into making an impact in their given field. While I appreciated the examples from the business world, the book really held me tightly when it was examining questioning for social good. The examples of those approaching problems in their neighborhoods and communities from a "Why?" "What if?" "How?" perspective were the most interesting to me. In some light moments, the tone and language shifted more toward the self-help genre than I was anticipating, and that detour detracted. That said, this book is a helpful entry point for those who are curious and not yet sure how to use that curiosity as a tool for building something worthwhile.

I recently attended an excellent seminar for senior executives called "Authentic Leadership." The facilitator of my small group had some encouraging things to say about the way that I frame questions. He then added: "I think that you would enjoy reading 'A More Beautiful Question.'" At his urging, I ordered the book and found that he was correct in his prognostication. I found this book to be intriguing and inspiring. Using some excellent cases to illustrate principles, author Warren Berger discusses "The Power of Inquiry To Spark Breakthrough Ideas." He quotes liberally from such icons of innovation as Joichi Ito of the MIT Media Lab, David Kelly of IDEO, and Clayton Christensen of Harvard Business School. My office is contained within a hub of innovation, the Cambridge Innovation Center, on the campus of MIT, so I am always intrigued to learn new lessons about innovation and the things that may spark it. One of the threads that weaves itself throughout this book is the fact that children are natural questioners. It is only as we grow older that we tend to squelch our innate propensity to ask questions in order to better understand ourselves and the world around us. In this book, Mr. Berger offers many examples of individuals and companies that he re-learned the art of asking great questions. I was intrigued to learn that Edwin Land, the father of instant photography, was prompted to develop this technology when his young daughter innocently asked him why they had to wait to see a photograph that he had taken when they were on vacation as a family. He makes specific suggestions, based on research done at the Right Question Institute, regarding how to frame appropriate questions at each stage of a process of exploration, discovery and innovation. One insight that stood out for me was the use of terminology that is useful in a group setting that disarms defensive posture on the part of those participating in the conversation. The form of the question that often provokes healthy discussion is to ask: "How might we . . . ?" He also describes the technique that has worked for many companies of replacing "brainstorming" with "question storming." His final challenge which he poses in the final chapter of the book, is to ask how each individual might frame "a more beautiful question" that frames and sparks inquiry and

endeavors to provide meaning and purpose for the rest of one's life. Inspiring!

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