

August 2000

**TO: Executive Addressed**

**FR: James E. Lukaszewski, APR, Fellow PRSA  
Chairman**

**RE: Death by Question: How Raised Eyebrows and Destructive Questions Kill New  
Ideas**

New ideas, creative approaches, and positive thinking are incredibly fragile. Organizations that want to move forward ultimately do so through a process of pragmatic, positive, outcome-driven, situationally specific action where ideas receive protection that improves their survivability. If you want new ideas to flourish in your organization, here are 60 of the most common idea-killing, conversation-stifling, and progress-torpedoing questions or comments to avoid or banish.

1. (Laughter)
2. (Silence)
3. Can you guarantee it?
4. Can't do it in time.
5. Don't we need something more exciting?
6. Don't you know we're in a recession?
7. Far too complicated.
8. Far too simplistic.
9. Great idea, but not for us.
10. Has anybody made it work before?
11. Have you really given it enough thought?
12. Here we go again . . .
13. How do you know it will work?
14. I don't like it.
15. I have a better idea . . .
16. If you can sell it . . .
17. Isn't it too avant-garde?
18. It doesn't go far enough.
19. It's too short sighted.
20. It will cost a fortune.
21. It will never sell/fly/work.
22. It's a great idea, but . . .
23. It's a turn off.
24. It's been done to death.
25. It's below our standards.
26. It's beyond our standards.
27. It's boring, old-fashioned!
28. It's not best practice.
29. It's too political.
32. Not our kind of image.
33. Not our style.
34. Oh, I thought your were going to propose something entirely different.
35. Our computer is not up to it.
36. Remember, my boss/client/customer is very conservative.
37. Will create more problems than it solves.
38. Only solves half the problem.
39. Not your problem.
40. Really fantastic, BUT . . .
41. Very provocative, BUT . . .
42. The board will reject it out of hand.
43. The critics will contend that . . .
44. Who's done this successfully?
45. The executive committee will review it next month.
46. The last manager who suggested that is gone.
47. The timing's wrong.
48. The trade press/dealers will kill us.
49. They'll never buy it.
50. We tried it before and it didn't work.
51. We'll test it with some market research soon.
52. We're not ready for it just yet.
53. We've never done that.
54. What added value will it bring?
55. Who will do it?
56. Why change a successful team?
57. Why should we bother?
58. Will anybody understand what you are

- 30. It's too shallow
- 31. It's too in-depth.

- saying?
- 59. Yes, BUT . . . ; No, BUT . . .
- 60. You can't be serious!

Detoxify the cynicism that often destroys new ideas. Insist on constructive, positive suggestions. The few you do get will be helpful and will preserve, nurture, and foster new ideas, new thinking, and commitment. Good luck.

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