

PQ+A takes a team from fuzzy to precise

Clare Dolan, Oracle Vice President, runs Oracle Academy. Her team successfully delivers Oracle Academy content in over 70 countries worldwide. Clare became known at Oracle for using Precision Q+A, a format for business conversations that are content-driven and focused on tightly aligned questions and answers. Clare was a natural with PQ+A. She built on her innate talent with questioning and analytical thinking by drawing upon on her extensive experience with other high-level executives who held high standards for analytical and intellectual work.

LEARNING PRECISION Q+A AS A TEAM

Clare talks about the value of using Precision Q+A in the toughest intellectual situations she faces. She says, “We use Precision Q+A to tackle the most fuzzy, most complex, most persistent, and most expensive problems.” Having a way to approach complex problems gives Clare and her team confidence that they can work effectively, even in the face of a challenge. “The messier things are,” she says, “the easier it is to demonstrate the value of efficient communicating and efficient thinking.”

While Precision Q+A came to feel like second nature to Clare, it was not second nature for all of Clare’s team members. Clare could see that her team was great: highly intelligent, experienced, and motivated. But something was preventing them from identifying and analyzing tough issues in the way that came easily to Clare.

“After some reflection,” Clare says, “I realized that the missing element for my team was actually a skill that was at the core of my own interactions with Oracle’s senior executives: PQ+A. The team needed to learn how to quickly identify—and then concisely communicate—the key points of a business problem.”

Clare invited Vervago to work with her and her team. As she describes it, “My hope was that my directs could learn to ask each other the tough questions, rather than waiting for me or other senior people to help them focus their thinking.”

“It’s like we’re a new team. A call that was once a rambling 15-minute discussion now takes us just a minute or two.”

CLARE DOLAN, VICE PRESIDENT,
ORACLE EDUCATION INITIATIVES

Most organizations look for ways to develop the analysis at the top of their organization. But as Clare so astutely noticed, at the lower levels of an organization people don’t always have a model for high quality reasoning and problem solving. Precision Q+A gives people at all levels of an organization a way to communicate effectively by using core analytical tools and seven key types of questions.

PRECISION Q+A HEIGHTENS TEAM EFFECTIVENESS AND EFFICIENCY

After training her team in PQ+A, Clare noticed an immediate and clear benefit in the communication efficiency and effectiveness among her team. “It used to take weeks, and sometimes even months, for us to get to the root of a complex problem,” she says. “Now we move in, ask the key questions, and go get answers from our data sources, our technologists and our senior people.”

Clare sees obvious benefit from using Precision Q+A with her team in terms of the quality of their thinking and problem solving. In addition to heightened quality of their intellectual work, Clare remarks on the efficiency gains that translate into bottom-line benefits to her organization. “When we’re saving this much time, it’s obvious we’re saving money, even if there’s no simple way to quantify the gain.”

“Best of all,” Clare adds, “I seldom see half-baked ideas anymore.” Clare’s team understands how to ask key questions before the work gets to Clare’s level, freeing her time for more strategic purposes. Because the team is highly capable of using PQ+A, Clare can trust them to push their own thinking to a deeper level and to hold themselves to collectively-set high standards for their work. As Clare puts it, “Once people understand your standards, you can empower them to attack problems on their own.”