



The Root of Why

How to ask & answer questions without sounding like a jerk

Alberta CoLab Systemic Design

Community of Practice

November 8, 2017



**What do you hope to give and get
from this group today?**

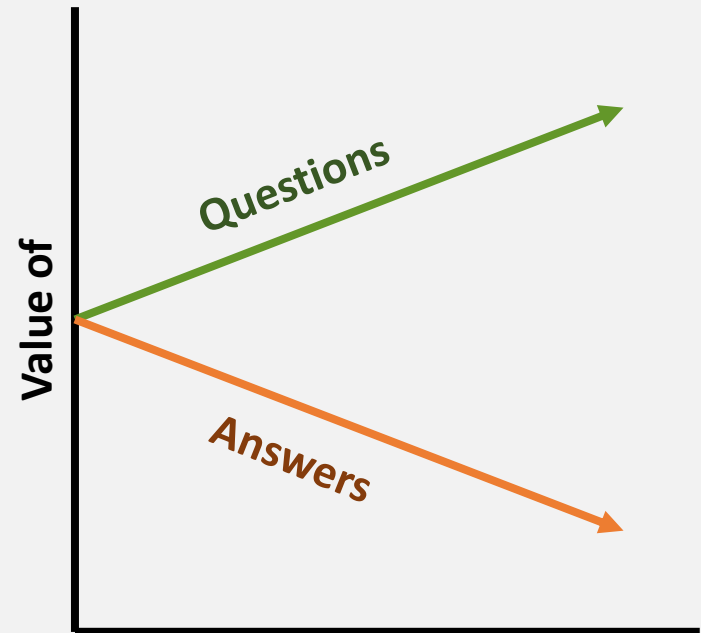
Why do we ask Questions?

Questions facilitate **learning** – they enable us to move forward.

Questions enable us to **challenge assumptions** – ours and those of others.

Questions enable us to act in the face of **uncertainty** by helping us to organize around what we don't know.

The only way to access **network knowledge** effectively is to ask it the right question (Berger).

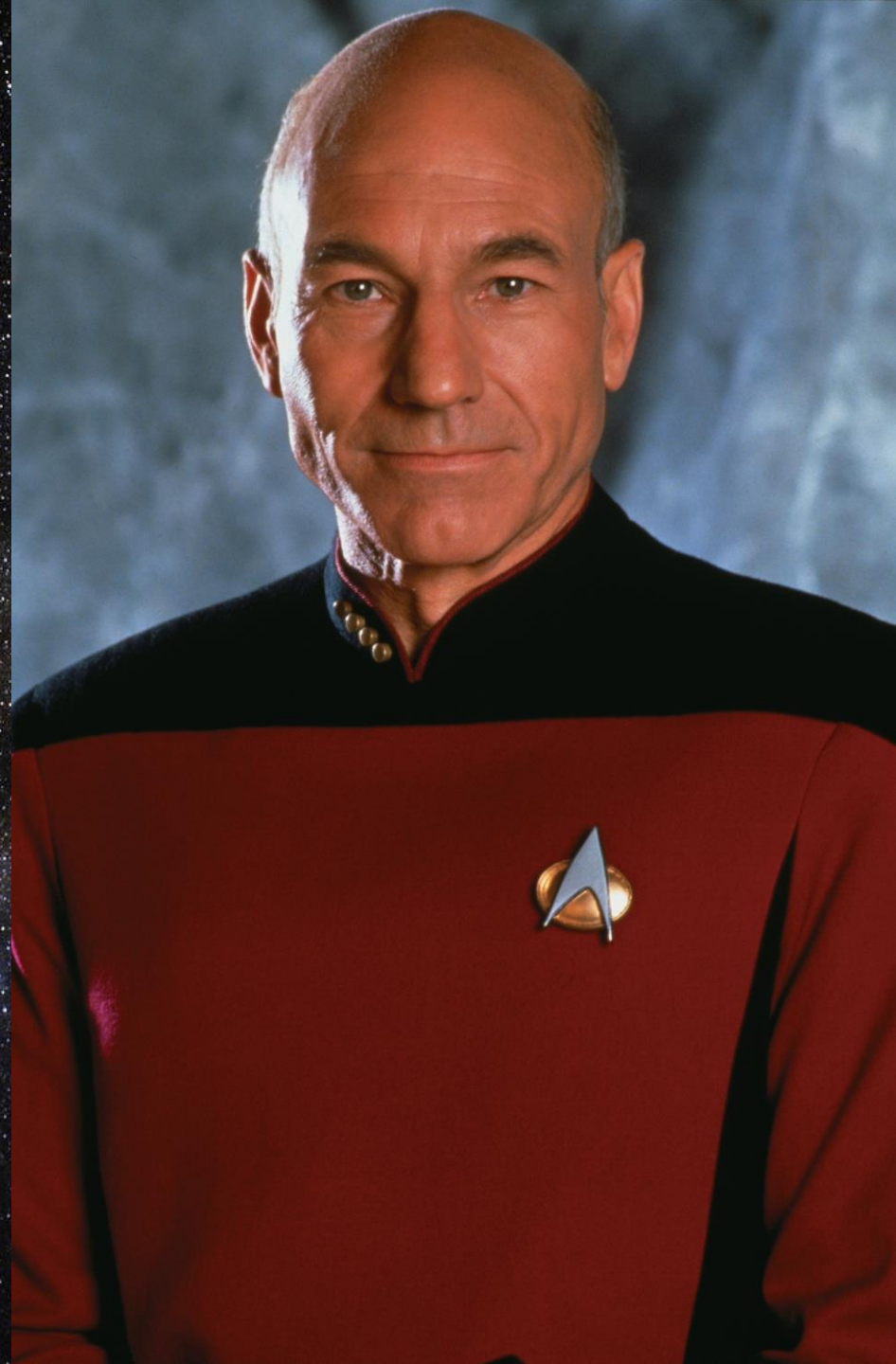


As the world becomes more complex & dynamic

From Berger (2014)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sahSAMj8OIY>

**CLUES THAT PEOPLE
MIGHT THINK
YOU'RE
A JERK...WITH
JEAN LUC PICARD.**



YOU ARE SO ANNOYING.

PLEASE GO AWAY.





GRRRR.

YOU ARE EXASPERATING.

YOU? CHALLENGE ME?

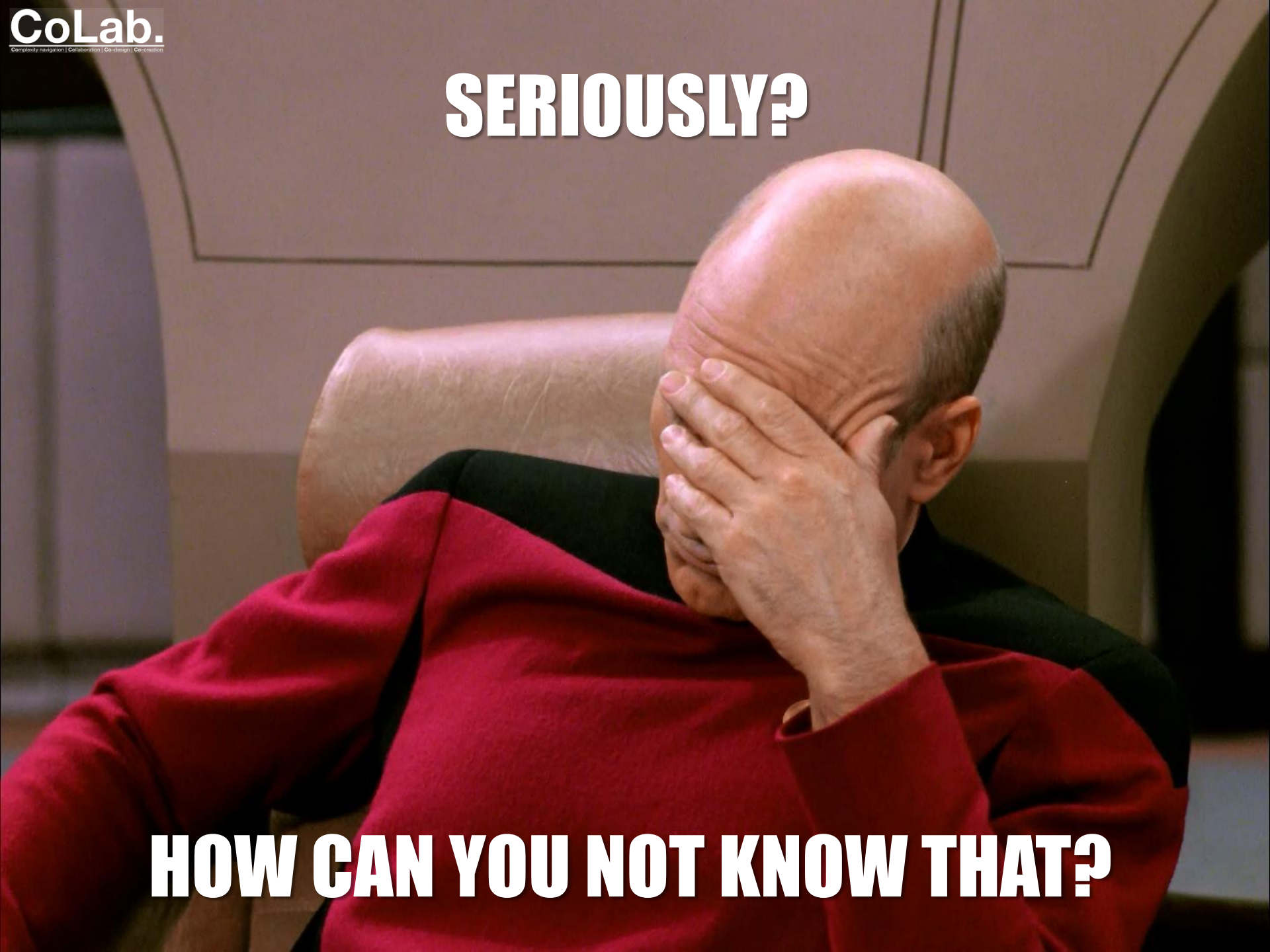
DUDE. COME ON.

FEELS WEIRD.

DON'T LIKE IT.

SERIOUSLY?!

HOW CAN YOU NOT KNOW THAT?!





**We're focused on answers.
We never seem to have time.
We don't know the right questions to ask.
Fear. We may not have the answers.**



You must believe me.

What Questions Ask of Us...

TONE

Listen.

Use our beginner's
mindset.

Use curiosity in lieu
of judgment.

CONTENT

Be comfortable with
not knowing.

Have the ability to
say that 'it doesn't
have to be that way.'

Check that your
questions do not
include assumptions.

INTENT

Trust.

Be willing to answer,
not just ask.

Allow others'
feelings to be
expressed without
attempting to 'fix'
them.

A still from the movie Star Trek: The Motion Picture showing Captain Kirk (William Shatner) sitting in his command chair in the bridge. He is holding a flute to his lips and blowing into it. The background shows the control room with various consoles and a large screen displaying a blue-toned image of a planet or nebula.

**Tone:
How we
Communicate**

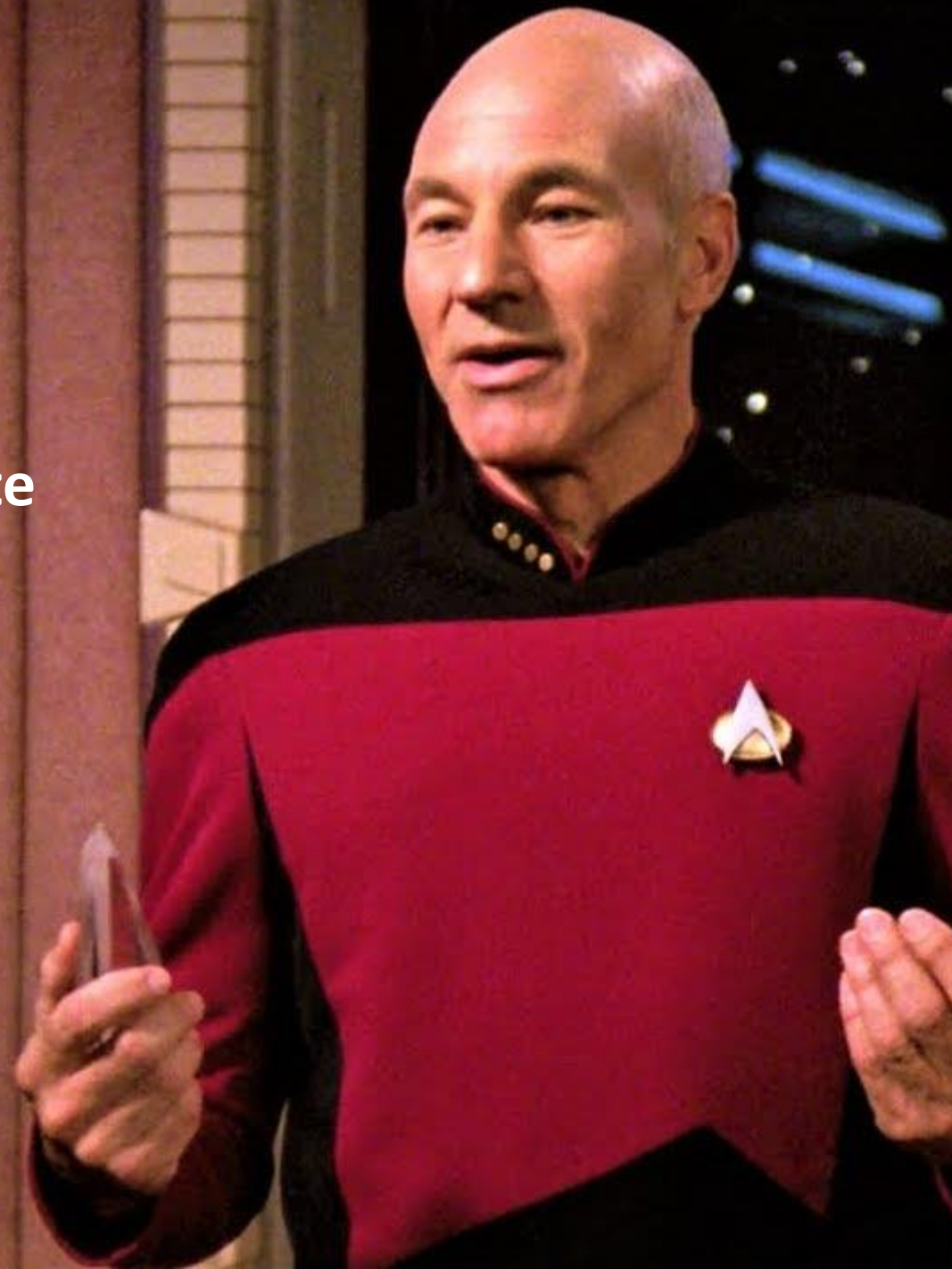
Appreciative Interview

Pair up and take turns sharing a story of a time when you had either great success or great challenge with questions – asking or answering. (5 min each = 10 min)

In fours, relay your partner's story & share insights. (10 min)

- Sit **face-to-face** and **knee-to-knee** for the interview
- Ask about the **context**
 - When, Where, Who, How
- **DO NOT** share your own experience
- Collect **details** of the journey:
 - Status quo, barriers, action, reversals, powerful discoveries
- Try to find a **moment** that sums up the drama and the deeper **meaning**
- Take time to **explore** root issues and the conditions or assets made the success possible.

**Content:
What we
Communicate**



Closed & Open-Ended Questions

- Find a **partner**.
- Each choose a fairy tale **character** – keep it **secret!**
- **Take turns** asking questions, trying to uncover which fairy tale character your partner chose.
- For each **closed-ended question** you ask, your partner gets a point.
- For each **open-ended question** you ask, you get a point.

A photograph of Captain Archer from Star Trek: Enterprise, wearing a red and black uniform, with his arms outstretched. Another person in a similar uniform is visible behind him, also with arms outstretched. The background is dark.

**Intent:
Purpose &
Ownership**

Systemic Design: Main Question Types

Why?



To get at
root causes.



To see and
understand.

What if?



To explore
possibilities.



To imagine.

**How Might
We?**



To creatively
bring our
ideas to life.



To act and
do.

Types of Thinking

Asking questions involves three types of thinking:

Divergent

Broadening,
open, creative

*What if I think
differently
about this?*

Convergent

Narrowing,
focusing,
synthesizing

*Where should I
focus my
energy?*

Metacognitive

Reflective,
thinking about
thinking

*Why am I
asking that?*

Strategic Questioning – Fran Peavey

Creates Motion

Enables the structure of the conversation to move from the static to the dynamic.

Creates Options

Looks for alternatives, asking what is possible.

Avoids 'why'?

Such questions ask people to defend or justify their position, or talk about the present in terms of the past.

Digs Deeper

Avoids 'yes/no' answers and binary thinking (closed questions).

Empowers

Enables someone to further develop their own ideas.

Asks the 'unaskable'

Challenges the values and assumptions on which something is based.

Is simple, not compound

Addresses one thing at a time, and minimizes the need for analysis.

Check your BAAPPS

- **B**ias Check
- **A**bstraction Level
- **A**mbition Level
- **P**oint of View
- **P**ositive Wording
- **S**olution-Free

Brainstorming in Questions

Question Focus: **The Future of Vacationing**

Individually brainstorm as many questions as you can related to the focus area. Number your questions as you go. (2 x 5 min)

Individually, identify open and closed-ended questions. (2 min)

In pairs, work together to prioritize your questions. Name the rationale for why you prioritized them in that way. (5 min)

In groups of four, debrief:

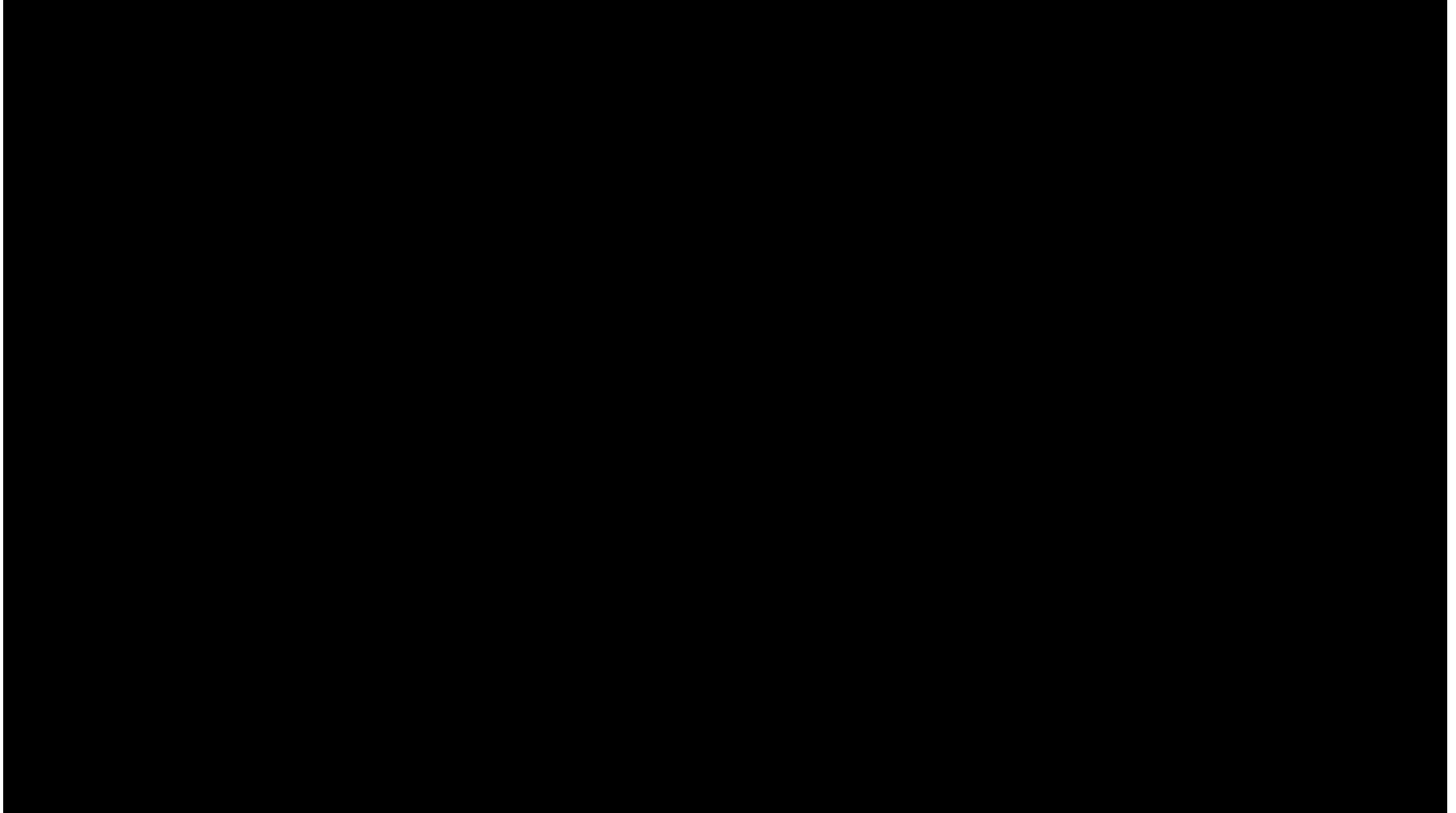
- How was it to brainstorm in questions?
- Did your priority questions come towards the beginning, middle, or end of your brainstorming? Do you notice any patterns related to your priority questions?
- What did you find helpful in this activity? What made it challenging?



There comes a point where there is diminishing returns to questions:

- You feel it. Like poor Jean Luc here.
- You have min specs to move forward.
- You've annoyed/exasperated/challenged someone who is now no longer happy with you. (See earlier slides).

Vuja De...?



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B7LBSDQ14eA>

KERNEL VERSION

3.2.0-29-generic-pae

CPU%
 1.83
 1.77
 0.82
 0.82
 0.63
 0.38
 0.32

MEMORY%
 0.23
 0.40
 21.05
 0.71
 1.25
 0.35
 4.19

SHIP LOGS
 CIFS VFS: Send error in SessSetup = -11
 CIFS VFS: cifs_mount failed w/return code = -11
 warning: `VirtualBox' uses 32-bit capabilities (legacy support in use)
 device eth0 entered promiscuous mode
 device eth0 left promiscuous mode
 vboxnetfl: dropped 0 out of 30007 packets
 device eth0 entered promiscuous mode

ROOT PARTITION	17.6G / T: 24.4G 22%	WEAP
HOME PARTITION	11.9G / T: 33.0G 59%	PHAS
STORAGE DRIVE 1	12.6G / T: 74.4G 78%	QUANTUM TORPE

CLOSE MASTER SYSTEMS DISPLAY :D SOVEREIGN CLASS BLUEPRINTS VIEW SIMULATION OF DESIGN ROOM IN SAN FRANCISCO FLEET YARDS IN NEAREST AVAILABLE HOLODECK

WARP NACELLES BUSSARD COLLECTORS ANTIMATTER MAGNETIC CONTAINMENT PODS WARP PLASMA DISTRIBUTION

STARDATE 16:47:25 Sunday, 16 September 2012



NETWORK INTERFACE ETH0 UP 309B KB/S NETWORK INTERFACE ETH0 DOWN 218B KB/S HELP

Work with people who want and are open to challenge, for whom learning and exploring is vital.

Ask more receptive questions.

Question thyself.

Become a hacker. Work the system. Bwahahahaha.

LINUX DISTRIBUTION Linux Mint 13 Maya CPU CORE 2: USAGE RATE:TEMP 10% 1.60 GHz / +36.0°

SYSTEM UPTIME 4h 51m 35s CPU CORE 3: USAGE RATE:TEMP 12% 1.60 GHz / +33.0°

LIFE SUPPORT ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROLS

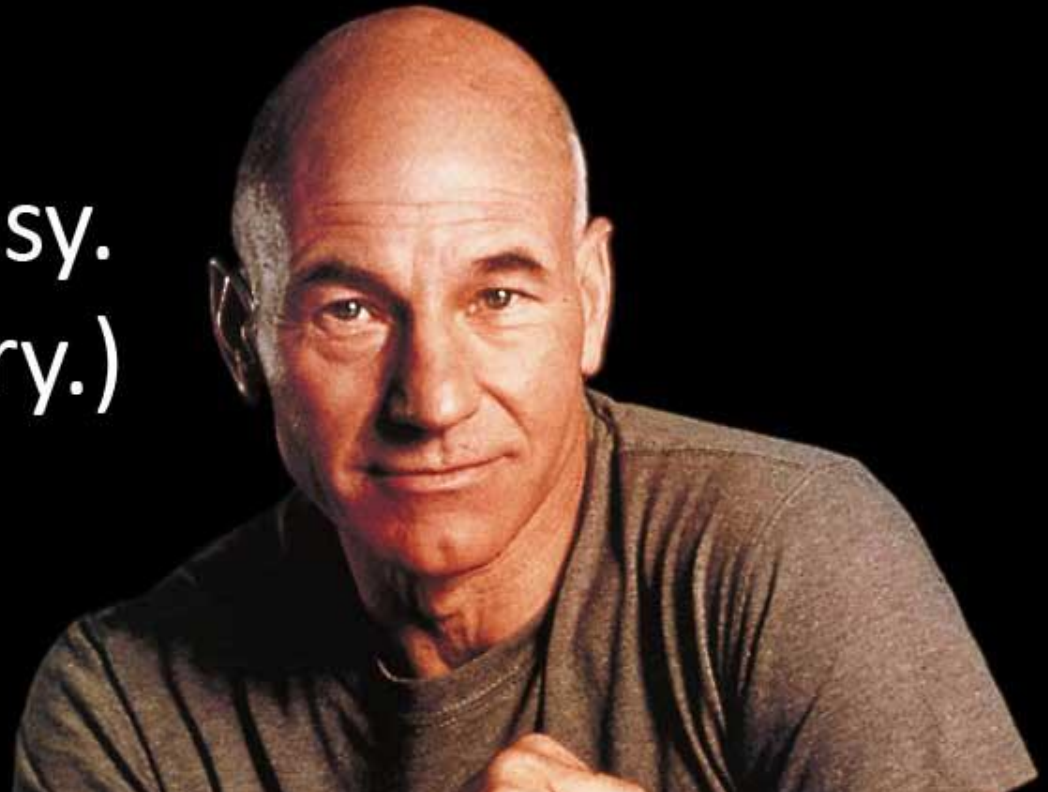
WORLD CLOCKS

Perth	12:47:25
Sydney, Melbourne, Queensland	14:47:25
England/Ireland	05:47:25
Sweden	08:47:25
India	10:17:25
Los Angeles (Pacific US)	21:47:25
Honolulu (Central US)	22:47:25
Wellington (Eastern US)	23:47:25
New York (Eastern US)	00:47:25

FORUM FEED

- Collection of Wallpapers
- Thought It was time I Joined
- Zorin Respin 32 bit Download
- laptop 13wv screenie
- How to replace flash with vlc workaround
- Mint & Ubuntu - new user

Picardin' ain't easy.
(But it's necessary.)



- Walk the talk.
- Invite questions, invite challenge.
- Reward learning, not just success.
- Resource learning and innovation alongside best practice.
- Enable people to work on independent projects.
- When hiring, look at how people ask questions, not just answer.

Creating a Culture of Inquiry

Reflecting on your experience this afternoon:

- **WHAT?** [5 minutes]

Looking back, what facts & observations stand out?

- **SO WHAT?** [5 minutes]

What do you conclude from those observations?
What is important?

- **NOW WHAT?** [5 minutes]

What does it make sense to do moving forward?

How might ...[choose one or come up with your own]

- Captain Picard
- Harry Potter
- Wonder Woman
- Willy Wonka
- JK Rowling
- Your Supervisor
- Your kid

...tackle the challenge of _____?

➤ **Brainstorm questions from their perspective...**



**“With a culture of questioning,
there is always more possibility.”**

– WL Gore, 3M