

# EP 96 - Brian Glibkowski: Keys to Creating Influence and Effective Communication Using the AQ Framework

**Mitch Simon:** Welcome to another episode of Team Anywhere where CEOs, leaders, and experts at building teams,

**Ginny Bianco-Mathis:** companies,

**Mitch Simon:** organizations,

**Ginny Bianco-Mathis:** and amazing cultures share how to lead from anywhere in the world, I'm your co-host on the East Coast, Ginny Bianco-Mathis.

**Mitch Simon:** And I'm your co-host on the West Coast, Mitch Simon. And we invite you to join us Team Anywhere.

What's the best way to influence someone? Is it to ask powerful questions? Or is it to be more intentional with your answers? On today's podcast we speak with Dr. Brian Glibkowski, who just launched his new book, Answer Intelligence: Raise Your AQ. He'll show us how carefully chosen answers are the key to influencing those you sell to, lead, and coach. How you can get your sales team to win insanely huge proposals. How your leaders can better influence your team to work more effectively. And how to ride a bike faster than anyone you know.

Hello, and welcome to another episode of Team Anywhere. I am your co-host Mitch Simon on the West Coast where it's a little bit dreary today, but having magnificent weather on the East Coast is Dr. Virginia Bianco-Mathis. How are you doing today?

**Ginny Bianco-Mathis:** Ohh. just fantastic.

**Mitch Simon:** In the middle of the Chicago. We've got Dr. Brian Glibkowski a man who is passionate about the role of questions and answers in business and society. His new book, Answer Intelligence: Raise Your AQ introduces a new

science of answers and is nominated for a 2022 PROSE Award for Professional and Scholarly Excellence.

Good morning, Brian.

**Brian Glibkowski:** Happy to be here Mitch and Ginny. Thanks for having me. And the weather's nice here as well by the way.

**Mitch Simon:** All right. So, we always like to start off with our first question is how have the last two years been for you and what has surprised you the most?

**Brian Glibkowski:** Last two years I've been focusing in my new book you just mentioned. So, going back two years as the pandemic was unfolding, spending a lot of time writing the book, trying to make use of my time. And then in April, the book came out. And since then, I've been going to market with my Answer Intelligence approach and getting partners and it has been very busy.

**Mitch Simon:** That's great. So, I don't know if anything has surprised you because you probably had your head down banging away at the keyboard. But when you did lift your head up, is there anything that even through the lens now of AQ that has surprised you given the changes in the way we work?

**Brian Glibkowski:** Yeah. I think it was a sort of a surprise that I probably should've seen, but it snuck up on me as I started to talk about my book with people it became clear. Although, obvious in hindsight with the virtualization of work, communication has become more challenging. And as I've been looking at AQ as a framework of questions and the answers reduces communication to question and answer exchange.

And if we look at the virtualization of work, what's gone away. It is long extended lunches. Reliance on nonverbal communication. We have a shrinking amount of time we spend on meetings. So, what surprised me was I think how relevant my research was to the current situation that you have to focus on effective questions and the answers

**Mitch Simon:** So, can you help us understand your trajectory? How did you get to it all boils down to questions and answers? Like, how did you get there?

**Brian Glibkowski:** My background is in and out of academia and as a society, we focus a lot on questions. Going back to grade school. It's a 6-WH questions, right? As an academic, the research question. So, I was doing research on questions, published an academic paper, and then it struck me that we know

comparatively less about answers. There is no typology of answers, how many answer types are there.

And I started digging some more business books on Amazon with question in the title, lot number books with the answer on the title 3 to 1. So, I said, hey, I want to look at the answer side of the equation. And then from there I started to understand the importance of it, which I'm sure we'll get into sooner or later.

**Mitch Simon:** Yeah. We're definitely getting into that. And so, I guess the first obvious question. What are people getting wrong with questions that you then figured out you needed to really focus on the answer?

**Brian Glibkowski:** Yeah. Think of it this way. If you're exercising and you go to the gym, you want to work on your muscles and strength. We also want speed, right? And there's you know, offense on a team and defense is sort of this idea, that balance is important. So, if we take a look at questions, yes, we should focus on questions.

And that makes a lot of sense. Questions as I boil it down relate to curiosity. We ask questions about things we don't know. But the other side of the equation is filling in those gaps. And when you fill in those gaps, you influence someone. And this is really what the discovery was. It's an influence framework.

And if you think about it, you can ask great questions in a job interview. That's probably not going to get you the job but the answers you provide will. And you can have other examples that I can site like in a sales context; you answer the proverbial question that keeps the buyer up at night?

If you can, as a seller, you're going to win. So, is this basic idea that the answer was important? Both sides of the equation were important and there wasn't a lack of emphasis in the answers. And I wanted to fill that point.

**Mitch Simon:** That's great. That's the reason why, when I reach out to you and having our intro conversation, I was so fascinated and Ginny and I through the pandemic have found what really has been helpful in raising engagement scores is when the leader starts asking questions, which is great, you know, how are you? Is everything fine? And then you in a conversation you're saying, well, actually, Mitch, what's more important is the answer and the intention behind the answer.

And when I hear about influence, you know, 'cause I just love that whole science of influence. And that's why I really wanted to delve into this. And

before we get to the 6 answer types. The book is called Answer Intelligence: Raise Your AQ. Explain to us what that really means.

**Brian Glibkowski:** Yeah. As I was writing the book, it didn't have a title at first. It's based on my academic research, which by the way, was with the top golf instructors in the world, very interesting backstory. And I kept on talking about AQ as an ability. This is something you can develop and improve upon.

And in that context, it's sort of a natural relationship to emotional intelligence or cognitive intelligence. And we live in an era where multiple intelligences are well accepted. And perhaps with hubris thought this elevated to the level of emotional intelligence or cognitive intelligence.

And if you can provide these answers, it made sense and that's answering intelligence. And if I can give you a metaphor, I think of cognitive intelligence and emotional intelligence, like the shaft of a spear, they provide direction and force. But it's the tip of the spear, the answers that provide the cutting edge.

So, I could be highly emotional intelligent, and know that my employee that I'm working with on my team is suffering. But unless I can provide the story, the answer to alleviate that pain, it's sort of a blunt perspective. So, that was my overall framing. And as I positioned the book and think about the role of answer intelligence as an ability, that's very important for people to master.

**Ginny Bianco-Mathis:** Yeah. Clarify something for me and obviously I'm going to be reading the book very carefully. Are we looking at answer intelligence as A or B, which I'll explain in a second. Let's concentrate in how you as a person, as an employee, as a team member, a leader talking to another leader. Let's look more closely at how you answer because that will then demonstrate, in fact, almost influence up.

And your spear metaphor confused me a little bit, or is it coming up with the answer however the dialogue is going. 'Cause in the spear, you said that gives a direction. But if you don't come up with the answer, it's dull. So, is problem solving a separate concept? Are we talking about the person in how you answer things?

**Brian Glibkowski:** Let me pack it this way. First with point A. This is an influence framework, upward influence. Case in point, Imperial College of London, their executive education program have adapted AQ in their curriculum 1 of 10 modules. And know what it replaced? Upward influence.

So, it does relate to upward influence and second, and this won't directly relate to your A and B, but I feel like I want to say this answer intelligence is a framework that includes answers and questions. The emphasis is on answers because at the end of the day, that's where the influence is.

I think in a capital "I" sense, can you ask great questions and influence? Yes. But in a fuller sense, it's the answers are for influence. And as reflecting on it as a consultant, for example, people don't hire me for questions, they hire me for answers. And that's what they're interested in. And then, you know, sort of dialogue like this with myself really helped me understand the function of the answers. So, let me pause there and toss it back teaching these. I don't think I fully—

**Ginny Bianco-Mathis:** Actually, in your very first sentence you took care of it. That yes, indeed, it's a type of influencing up. And so, if one looks at, and if you really studied, which now leaders have to get better and better at asking more powerful questions, which as you said, you can pick up one out of three books and it's going to help you address that.

But those of us that have studied powerful questions, how do you peel the onion with your better questions have learned also how to better answer them. Because, you know where a powerful question needs to go. So, if I'm working with a leader who is not asking me powerful questions, I can influence up because I make sure that layer is in my answer.

**Brian Glibkowski:** Absolutely. Totally agree. And if you think of answer intelligence, this research, it was inductive from an academic setting from the bottom up. We studied the top golf instructors in the world and other expert communicators. This is how they do it.

So, you're doing this stuff. This framework it is for experts to refine, to show the way for others, as well as those that are not experts. Here's one point for someone focused on questions. And you said this, you ask questions for the answers you're looking for.

So, with AQ we'll get into the framework. Different answer types map to different questions. I ask a what question; the answer types are concept or metaphor. And so, if you ask the question, it gives you a key. Are they giving me the kind of answer I need? And if it's helpful, Mitch, maybe I could just give one example answering the what question.

So, if you asked me, you're coaching me and you said, what is leadership? I could answer that as a concept. I could define leadership, break it down into dimensions. In AQ terms, I could say leadership is inspiring people and holding people accountable. Okay. That's some command.

Then I can give a metaphor answer and I could say leadership is two ropes when they're separate, they're strong, but when they're braided together, they're stronger. That's how I lead. Each meeting I inspire and hold people accountable. Now that's command. If you have that kind of command as a leader, you know what leadership is for yourself.

So, answers provide sense-making and we provide them to others. You're providing influence. I can tell a new subordinate; this is what leadership means to me. This is what you can expect of me. And it's a powerful difference between that and some muffled answer that's not intentional.

**Ginny Bianco-Mathis:** Yes, indeed.

**Mitch Simon:** I definitely see the power of your metaphor, which almost was a story too, of the braided ropes, which is you asked me a question, I'm going to define it for you.

So, let's get to the six answer types so you can help us understand why we need to buy your book. Or you could help us understand the power of how a certain type of answer is going to influence action and thought.

**Brian Glibkowski:** Yeah. So let me unpack for you and give you one example of the six answers. So, the six answers are—and there'll be a nice visual I'm sure you'll make available for your listeners.

They are story and metaphor, theory and concept, and procedure and action. And you can imagine them as a circle. And around the circle, there's different questions why, what and how. And different questions relate to different answers. And it gives you a key of how to provide these answers. And when you provide all the answers, that's sort of like maximum knowledge transfer, maximum input, impact.

So, my example in my book, we have an interview. I coached one of my students who was going after a job at a big four accounting firm, very accomplished student. And she did very well on our interview. She got the job and they said she was one of the best communicators they've ever seen.

And the reason in part was of course she was an excellent candidate, but she used some of my techniques. And one of those is providing the right answer, but providing all six answers. So, she took her number one soft skill leadership, and she had six answers and she strategically inserted all those answers in every interview because she wanted them to know, regardless of the questions being asked that this is who she is as a candidate and it allowed her to influence.

So, one of the messages here is you want to be in the flow of the conversation. You know, if there's a why question, provide a story, or a what question, a metaphor. But at the same time, you don't want to be a prisoner of someone asking bad questions, take control, provide the answers, guide the conversation, and that's how you're going to get the job.

**Mitch Simon:** Okay. So, Brian, give us an example of a question that is a bad question. And how someone would answer it badly. Versus how someone would answer it using AQ.

**Brian Glibkowski:** Yeah. So, it's high AQ Practice Zero we call question recognition. So, this realizes that questions can sometimes be difficult. You know, take non-verbals, right? I'm shrugging my shoulders right now. In the context of a conversation that could mean, I don't understand why you're here to sell me this, or they could be, I don't understand how your product works. So, you know, communications tricky.

Second, there's natural language and technical language. So, a young child may ask this the same question how. Sometimes it means why. Sometimes it means what. And in parents we interpret it. With AQ in our framework, we have why, what, and how questions that are technical. Meaning the how question is about getting work done. The what question is declarative knowledge concepts and metaphors. And the why question is structural knowledge sort of, you know, cause and effect among other things.

So, we do it all the time naturally, but we have to interpret the question someone asks. And then go to the right answer. And I'll give you just one example of someone falling down. I did a workshop with the sales organization, a SAS organization.

They had inexperienced sellers selling to senior buyers. And the senior buyers were implicitly or explicitly asking, why questions. Why should we use your software? They were looking for story or theory, which is business strategy in our framework. And you know how these sales reps are interpreting questions according to their manager that brought me in.

Every question was a how question. How's the product at work? And they responded with features and functions, which is procedures and actions in our framework. So, you have to understand the question, provide the right answer.

But luckily there's easy ways you can do this. One, you can understand the context of the conversation. Two, hopefully someone's articulate with their question. But three, you can ask simple follow-ups. Do you think someone's asking a why question? You say, would you like me to provide you a story to illustrate that? And they're going to say yes, or they're going to say no. And then you might find out they're really asking a how question. So, at the end of the day, this is all very simple, but then it moves up to the subtlety of expertise.

**Mitch Simon:** Okay. Let's give an example of these bad salespeople turn into good salespeople through your methodology.

**Brian Glibkowski:** Yeah. So, for example, I just did a project with a large pharmaceutical company and they had basically new buyer personas created for them by marketing. But the personas don't go far enough the last mile to actual conversations. We mapped out questions and answers, answer sets to provide to the buyer personas, you know, like the technical buyer, the medical buyer, et cetera. And now they're armed with answers they can begin to use in conversations. And those that really do it well, realize the answers are not a script. But they're sort of a starting point to having rich conversations with others.

And so, that's an example of using AQ and thinking about the answers you provide. And I'll just say one other point more generally done workshops of sales organizations. You want to think of your value proposition in terms of 6 answers. You know, think about it often, have different metaphors, have different stories. And then when you've organically get in a conversation, you're ready to be effective.

**Mitch Simon:** Okay. So, can you give us an example of an actual question, and then answers that would not be helpful and answers that would be more helpful.

**Brian Glibkowski:** Okay. So, this is a tough one, but I'll go with this. So, let's keep it really simple. How do you ride a bike downhill faster? That's the question. An okay answer is change the gear, right? Change the gear, make it more difficult to— more tension. An optimal answer would be doing something that's called the Superman position. The Superman position is when you take your legs off your pedal and you have them behind you directly behind the bike.

And your stomach is on the seat and your body is parallel to the bike. That is the most aerodynamic position you go the fastest.

So, that is the best answer of how to go faster. But that is not the best answer of how to go faster safely. So, this idea of understanding the questions and the specificity and the appropriateness of the answer, that gives you an example of a range of high-quality questions and the answers. And the best communicators can help someone that's asking an average question, put it in position to a better question, give them the proper answer.

Last thing I'll say is effective questions and answers are tied to two things. One, understanding of the AQ framework and question-answer mapping. But two, is focus on the domain you're interested in. When we interviewed the top golf instructors in the world, one of them read 3,500 books. So, they studied everything about the physics of golf, the psychology of golf, et cetera. You don't have to have 3,500 books but if you're going to be a leader of a team, you should study what it means to be a team.

What are the theories of teamwork? What are the procedures we use to run a meeting? What are the stories we can tell our team? What are the metaphors that can tell our team? So, basically you understand how to ask and answer a question, a technique. But it's the substantive answers that are way more important and you have to invest in both.

**Mitch Simon:** So, can you give us an example of a question that might be asked in a work situation, it could be a sales situation, why should I buy your product? And take us through the six answer types and show us why some might be better than others?

**Brian Glibkowski:** Yeah. It's always hard without context to go around every single answer. I always claim I'm a coach, not a player but in a real conversation, there's all this rich context.

The first answer is I'll start with what. What is your product? And I should be able to say the key features of our product. It provides efficiency and that's the main focus of our product. You know, know what the value proposition is. That's really simple. But a real sales organization, usually going to have between three and five sort of dimensions of their product 'cause one may not be enough.

And then you can go into more detail. So, that gets, you know, define what efficiency is. I could maybe say efficiency is producing maximum output with

the least amount of work, right? I need to define what this is for someone that's not familiar with efficiency.

Then I could go through a metaphor. And I could say efficiency is putting your foot on the scale and it goes up and some kind of metaphor where little effort produces a lot of impact. Like a lever.

And then you'd go to story and then I need to have stories that I can illustrate this efficiency. So, I can talk about, every week we reanalyzed our product delivery to you, Mr. And Mrs. Client. And every week we're optimizing our approach. And we're getting more efficient. The thing is with a story that's more of an example I gave you but the story has to have the characteristics of a high-quality story has to have round characters that are interesting.

So, you know, I'd have to tell me about Bob and our team and how he does this. And then I'd have to have stories a beginning, middle and end. And then very crucially, stories have to have drama or reversal. So, I have to present to the client something where it's not obvious and this reversal too often, we just give examples and say, it's a story.

I'm not even going to attempt to give a story of efficiency, but you know, we should have those and there's other attributes of stories and all the other answers. So, we have a high-quality story. Then it's important to translate it into a theory. And I'm going to say efficiency leads to customer service for you.

You have to be explicit to say what the outcomes are and maybe even say, what are the other options you can get to customer service and explain that efficiency is the way to go. You have to map out your logic for someone. Then you get down to procedures and actions. And I have to explain how my product is going to increase your efficiency as a client, right?

You have a lot of other completing options, and I'm going to say, it's going to take two hours out of your day and I'm going to explain to them and show them the procedure and I'll walk them through the three steps and say, look, you gained 20 minutes in step one, 10 minutes in step two remaining minutes in step three. You walk through the procedure. It's how we get work done.

And then finally have to show them actions. And for example, high-quality actions are best practices. So, I'm going to say you have other options related to efficiency in the marketplace. We do all the best practices and then list a couple, right?

And then I could say, here's the things we do unique, and you have to provide both 'cause the unique gets you the deal. And just to punctuate this, I like to give the example of Steve Jobs. Think of high-quality actions when Apple first launched the original iPhone. Steve jobs went out for the product launch and he did something. He touched the screen and swiped it and got a standing ovation. It was the first time ever that a phone had a touchscreen. And at the time it was unique. Fast forward to today all the phones have touchscreens. But going back to the original iPhone, it did the things that other phones did, right?

It could connect to cellular data, et cetera. So, you have to think in terms of selling your products. Both best practice and unique actions. So, that's a really quick tour of all six answers, but the key is if you're the selling organization, you go through with detail, you develop one answer and then probably three exemplar answers for each type. And there you go; you're really developing the language of influence.

**Mitch Simon:** It's great. So, what are the results or outcomes? Why should our listeners and their friends buy this book? What will they get out of it?

**Brian Glibkowski:** Let me give you a story. One of the things, most powerful ones we've seen thus far working with certified partners in 13 countries, and they're just starting to bring in some success stories. Here's one. We had a partner in London that was doing sales coaching for his client, which was a big-ticket project management firms.

So, they were making and building resorts in the Caribbean. So, the project management team, all engineers not salespeople were asked to go pitch a large resort in the Caribbean. And they were terrified. And so, our partner in London said, let's use AQ and they developed six answers for their value proposition and they put it around a circle. Then they went to the Caribbean. They did their presentation and something I wouldn't recommend. But what they did was they prepared one slide for the presentation with the six answers on the circle.

It's sort of like, you know, showing you the strings or something, I'm not going to show or something. But they put up the six answers and then they had a conversation around those answers in the framework in the questions. And the result was they won multimillion dollars. They won two projects right there, and then they have four or five other projects they're working and negotiating with this client.

So, the key point here is that this is a framework that anyone can pour their intellectual property and knowledge into and then use it to successfully navigate conversations.

**Ginny Bianco-Mathis:** Totally. And what's exciting about it is the very shift that you pointed out in the beginning. We've had such an influx of research on the questioning, and now this is going to balance it out and you can take this framework and still use it from the questioning. Because it improves your questioning also. But shifting it to say, you also have to look at it through the answers. I love that shared responsibility. You can get everyone on the same page of seeing that two-way.

**Mitch Simon:** Yeah. I love it. It's great. So, where can we find you and where can we find your book?

**Brian Glibkowski:** Yeah, so you can start by going to my website, [raiseyouraq.com](http://raiseyouraq.com). There's a Free Explore AQ Assessment. Anyone can take a short little test of your answering knowledge. And there's a link on the site to Amazon for the book. And if anyone's interested, they could find me Brian Glibkowski on LinkedIn as well. And I would love to hear from any of your listeners.

**Mitch Simon:** Great. Brian Glibkowski. That's B-R-I-A-N-G-L-I-B-K-O-W-S-K-I. That's a long name.

Well, I know that I am going to get off of this call, purchase this book, and I'm going to send it to my top client who runs a huge sales team. 'Cause I think this is exactly what they need right now.

So, Brian, I want to thank you so much for joining us today at Team Anywhere and as always, Ginny, thank you so much for joining us. And so, please share this information with your friends, your colleagues, your families and give us five stars and promote our site because we're growing and we'll see you next time on Team Anywhere.