

A FIELD GUIDE

The 4 questions that get you the whole story.

Most people ask the wrong one first. Here's the order that turns a polite thank-you into a story worth telling.

Most people ask the wrong question first.

When you want to hear how your work changed someone's life, the instinct is to ask about the outcome. *How did we help you? What did this mean to you?*

You'll get a polite answer. A thank-you. Maybe a nice line you can pull for a caption. What you won't get is a story.

A story needs somewhere to start. Transformation only means something if we know where the person was before it happened.

Ask about the ending first and you get a compliment. Build the beginning and the middle, and the ending arrives on its own: specific, honest, and better than anything you could have written for them.

These are the four questions, in order. The order matters more than the exact wording.

1

CHARACTER

"Tell me a little about yourself and what life's been like lately."

Start here because it's the easiest question anyone will ever be asked. You're not requesting a testimonial. You're asking someone to talk about themselves, which almost everyone can do.

It lowers the stakes, so the person relaxes into a conversation instead of performing. And it gives you the person underneath the outcome, the details that make a stranger real to a donor reading an email six months from now.

IF THEY NEED A NUDGE

- › What was going on in your world before this?
- › Where were you at, emotionally or practically, before things changed?

2

PROBLEM

"What were you struggling with back then?"

This is the question people skip, and skipping it is why most testimonials fall flat. Without the struggle, the ending has nothing to push against.

"I love this program" means very little. "I hadn't slept in my own bed in two years" means everything, and it makes the same ending land with weight.

You may feel like you're making someone revisit a hard season. Usually the opposite is true. People rarely get asked about the hardest part in a way that treats it as important.

IF THEY NEED A NUDGE

- › What made that season hard?
- › How was that affecting your day to day?

3

GUIDE

"Who or what helped you start to turn things around?"

Notice what this question doesn't do. It doesn't ask them to praise your organization.

Ask "how did we help you?" and you've handed them a script. Ask an open question instead, and whatever they name is real. Sometimes it's your program. Sometimes it's one staff member whose name you didn't expect. That answer is worth more than the one you fished for, because it's theirs.

IF THEY NEED A NUDGE

- › Was there a moment when things began to shift?
- › What did that support look like?

4

RESULT

"What's different now?"

By the time you get here, the person has built the whole arc themselves. They've told you where they started, what was hard, and what changed things. The ending comes out specific because they've already laid the track to it.

Ask this question first and you get "it's been great." Ask it fourth and you get the real thing.

ASK THIS ONE EVERY TIME

- › What would you say to someone sitting where you were?

That last question turns a beneficiary into a guide. It's usually the sentence you end up putting on the wall.

Before you start

- **Ask permission out loud.**
"Mind if I record while you share?" Simple, honest, two seconds.
- **Put the phone down.**
Recording means you don't have to take notes, so don't. Look at them.
- **Let silences sit.**
The best answer usually comes right after the pause you were tempted to fill.
- **Follow the story, not the script.**
These four questions are a map, not a cage. If something opens up, go there.

THE PART THAT COMES AFTER

The conversation is the easy part. The rest isn't.

Transcribing it. Shaping it into something readable. Cutting it down for an email. Rewriting it for social. And finding it again eight months later when someone needs a story by tomorrow morning.

THAT'S WHAT CAPTURECULTURE DOES

- Asks these four questions for you, right on screen
- Records the conversation and writes the story
- Turns it into your email, social post, and newsletter
- Files it in a searchable library of impact

Start free for 14 days

getcaptureculture.com

No credit card required · Cancel anytime