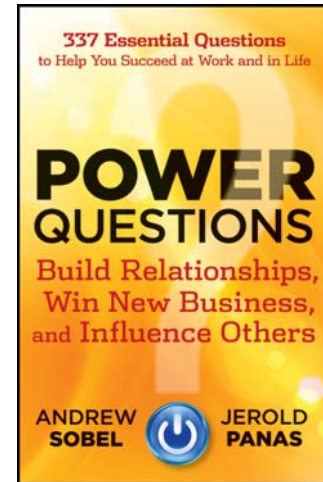


For Immediate Release

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**The Art of Starting Over:****How Seven Simple Words Can Save a Business Conversation Gone Wrong**

When that meeting or conversation gets off to a rocky start—whether tense words are exchanged or you just don't seem to be connecting—it's time to push the reset button. Andrew Sobel, author of Power Questions, reveals the phrase that can turn it all around.

Hoboken, NJ (February 2012)—Has this ever happened to you? You're talking to a client, or perhaps your boss, and you realize the conversation has gotten off on absolutely the wrong foot. You may have learned new and unexpected information from the other person that renders everything you've said irrelevant. You may have walked in with an assumption that was just not true. Or, you find you're not connecting, and tension and anger start to creep into the exchange. It really doesn't matter. What *does* matter is that a potentially productive business conversation has become awkward and stilted—or even worse, superheated and combative.

What do you do next? According to Andrew Sobel you have three options:

1. Continue trying to make your point. The tension and awkwardness will likely escalate, and you'll find that you and the other person are farther and farther apart.
2. Bring the conversation to an abrupt end and exit stage left. Both of you will be left with a bad taste in your mouth.
3. Salvage the situation with the judicious use of seven magic words: *Do you mind if we start over?*

“This question is the Saint Bernard rescue dog that brings a warming barrel of brandy into the conversational arctic,” says Sobel, author (along with coauthor, Jerold Panas) of *Power Questions: Build Relationships, Win New Business, and Influence Others* (Wiley, February 2012, ISBN: 978-11181196-3-1, \$22.95) and three other books on long-term business relationships. “People are forgiving. They *want* things to go well, and this question disarms them and eases the way to a new beginning.”

This question is only one of the many the authors include in their book, *Power Questions*. They explore dozens of questions that light fires under people, challenge their assumptions, help them see problems in productive new ways, and inspire them to bare their souls (which, of course, strengthens the bonds in the relationship). And they wrap up the book with an exhaustive list of additional questions—bringing the grand total to 337 power questions to help readers succeed at work and in life.

Back to “starting over”: Sobel’s coauthor recalls the time he walked into the office of a wealthy benefactor named Allan to ask for a million-dollar donation to his alma mater’s College of Engineering. Though he knew better, Panas failed to gain rapport and explore Allan’s true interests before jumping in with the big request. When he was severely rebuked for his presumptuousness, Panas realized he had made a serious error and dug himself into a deep hole. He got up and excused himself, left the room, and 10 seconds later knocked on the door and asked the power question, *Do you mind if we start over?*

Allan smiled and invited Panas to sit down. Start over they did, and after approaching the revived conversation the right way, Panas discovered that Allan was interested in making a major gift—but to the University’s theater program, *not* its engineering program!

Try it yourself. The next time a conversation gets off on the wrong foot or veers off track, reset with this powerful question. Sobel offers the following pointers:

- **If you’re in the wrong, apologize. Take responsibility for the conversation’s derailment.** You might say something like “I’ve gotten off on the wrong foot and I’m really sorry. Do you mind if I begin again? I haven’t done this justice.” Or, “The reason I’d like to start over is that I put my foot in my mouth. Can I give it a second try?”
- **If you’re NOT in the wrong, and the conversation has simply strayed into unproductive territory, ask in a way that doesn’t place blame.** Try: “Can we step back from this? What *should* we be talking about?”

“Actually, even if the other party made the initial faux pas, it’s still okay to say you’re sorry the conversation went awry,” notes Sobel. “You’re not taking blame; you’re just acknowledging regret that things took a bad turn and that the other person is upset.”

- **Either way, smile.** It goes a long way toward smoothing any ruffled feathers.

“More than words alone, a genuine smile that reaches the eyes can evoke a powerful visceral response,” says Sobel. “It shows that your intentions are pure, and when people realize that, the vast majority are willing to give you another chance.”

- **When you start over, really start over.** You don’t have to actually leave the room and come back in, like Sobel’s coauthor did, but draw a sharp dividing line between the bad conversation and the new one. A good way to reset is to ask the other person a question and draw them back into the conversation as an active participant. It could be something as simple as “Can I ask—how have *you* been thinking about this?” or “Let’s step back for a second—can you share *your* view of the situation?”

Of course, starting over isn’t just for the workplace. It can work just as well to defuse a budding argument with your spouse or any family member or friend.

“It’s a bold, gutsy move to restart a conversation from scratch,” says Sobel. “Yes, it feels awkward. Most of us are not accustomed to swallowing our pride, admitting in real time that we screwed up, and asking if we can make it right. But the next time a conversation goes wrong, try it. Not only will it salvage the moment, it will pave the way for a more authentic and productive relationship in the future.”

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About the Authors:

Andrew Sobel is the most widely published author in the world on client loyalty and the capabilities required to build trusted business relationships. His first book, the bestselling *Clients for Life*, defined an entire genre of business literature about client loyalty. His other books include *Making Rain* and the award-winning *All for One: 10 Strategies for Building Trusted Client Partnerships*.

For 30 years, Andrew has worked as both a consultant to senior management and as an executive educator and coach. His clients have included leading corporations such as Citigroup, Xerox, and Cognizant; as well as professional service firms such as Ernst & Young, Booz Allen Hamilton, Towers Watson, and many others. His articles and work have been featured in a variety of publications such as the *New York Times*, *Business Week*, and the *Harvard Business Review*. Andrew is a graduate of Middlebury College and earned his MBA at Dartmouth’s Tuck School.

Andrew is an acclaimed keynote speaker who delivers idea-rich, high-energy speeches and seminars at major conferences and events. His topics include Developing Clients for Life; Creating a Rainmaking Organization; Collaborating to Grow Revenue; The Beatles Principles; and Power Questions That Win New Business. He can be reached at <http://andrewsobel.com>.

Jerry Panas is executive partner of Jerold Panas, Linzy & Partners, one of the world's most highly regarded firms in the field of fundraising services and financial resource development. His firm has served over 2,500 client-institutions since its founding in 1968. Jerry's clients comprise many of the foremost not-for-profit institutions in the world. They include every major university, museum, and healthcare center in the United States. Internationally, Jerry has advised organizations as diverse as the University of Oxford, The American Hospital in Paris, and Nuestros Pequeños Hermanos in Mexico, the largest orphanage in the world.

Jerry is the author of 13 popular books, including the all-time bestsellers *Asking* and *Mega Gifts*. He is founder and chairman of the board of the Institute for Charitable Giving, one of the most significant providers of training in philanthropy.

Because of the prominence of the firm and the impact of Jerry's writing, few have had a greater influence in the history of the profession. He is a favorite speaker at conferences and workshops across the nation. He gives over 50 keynote speeches a year with a variety of titles, including *Shaking the Money Tree*; *Be the Best You Can Be*; *The Magic Partnership*; *Listen!*; and *I Hear a Gift, Aim High*. He can be reached at <http://jeroldpanas.com>.

About the Book:

Power Questions: Build Relationships, Win New Business, and Influence Others (Wiley, February 2012, ISBN: 978-11181196-3-1, \$22.95) is available at bookstores nationwide and all major online booksellers.

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