

# ANSWER INTELLIGENCE



RAISE YOUR AQ

"I know I would  
have been a better  
leader with *Answer  
Intelligence* (AQ)."

**Mike Soenke**  
Retired SVP and CFO of  
McDonald's USA

The answers to...

emotionally connect,

explain and predict,

and achieve results.

Brian Gilbkowski, PhD

# ANSWER INTELLIGENCE

## PRAISE FOR AQ

“We know that communicating with impact is critical to the success of individuals and organizations, yet there have been little to no resources on the most effective ways to connect and influence thinking through answers. I know I would have been a better leader with Answer Intelligence (AQ).”

— *Mike Soenke, SVP and CFO at McDonald's USA*

“The ability to sell is a critical skill not only for the salesperson, but for anyone seeking to advance their ideas through political skill. The Sales AQ chapter of this book leverages a data-driven approach to successfully navigating the various stages of any sales conversation, giving the reader phenomenal insights on how to approach either side of the sales conversation for a successful outcome. I'll keep this one on the shelf for reference when planning my next big pitch.”

— *Cindy Goodwin-Sak, Vice President, Global Security Sales Engineering, Cisco Systems*

“Never before has brand authenticity and connection with stakeholders been so important. Answer Intelligence (AQ)<sup>TM</sup>'s holistic and inquisitive approach to understanding a brand is pivotal to its effectiveness.”

— *Paul A. Quaranto, Jr., MBA, LLIF, Chairman, CEO and President, Boston Mutual Life Insurance Company*

“Most sales professionals have been taught which questions to use in order to sell more, but they're missing a huge aspect of highly effective sales conversations – how to answer questions masterfully. Answer intelligence reveals the hidden meanings behind questions

and answers, so sellers can better understand their buyers and communicate more meaningfully.”

— *Devin Reed, Head of Content Strategy, Gong*

“Practical to its core, this novel book provides a nuanced and compelling case for paying attention not to just what you say but how you say it.”

— *Grace Lemmon, (Ph.D), Associate Professor of Management, DePaul University*

“Intelligent, insightful and well-written, “Answer Intelligence: Raise your AQ” is a Master Class into the art of the answer. Brian Glibkowski elegantly defines structure to answers in a clear and thought-provoking manner and directly links it to real-world outcomes. In taking this approach Brian provides the reader the keys to success – application. This book is essential for anyone endeavoring to become a great conversationalist. Through story, metaphor, and a solid academic approach, Answer Intelligence deftly answers the question: “What is the best book about answers ever written?”

— *Bob Kulhan, Founder and CEO & Author of “Getting to Yes And”*

“This book is a must read for anyone in business. Brian Glibkowski and his chapter co-authors really have answered many of the questions that corporate leaders have been battling forever.”

— *Tom Gimbel, President & CEO, LaSalle Network*

“Interview AQ is important preparation for any student entering the job market.”

— *Sandy J. Wayne, Ph.D., Professor of Management,  
University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC)*

“‘Answer Intelligence: Raise Your AQ’ is an insightful, and useful guide for how to more effectively communicate in a question and answer exchange.”

— *Joseph P. Gaspero, CEO & Co-Founder, Center for  
Healthcare Innovation*

“This book is so valuable for sales professionals it could be called ‘Sales Conversation Intelligence.’ Dr. Glibkowski and his co-authors provide structured guidance on how to elevate every sales conversation through the entire sales funnel. From discovery, during which the quality of our questions dictate the quality of the answers we receive, to the C-Level close, at which time our ability to answer difficult questions effectively means the difference between win or lose. Simply put, Answer Intelligence will forever improve your sales results.”

— *Chris White, Author of “The Six Habits of Highly  
Effective Sales Engineers”*

“The Sales AQ chapter is incredibly powerful because the data amplifies the research. The AQ framework allows our sales teams to have more tailored conversation, resulting in a better customer-experience.”

— *James Kaikis, CoFounder, PreSales Collective*

“Answer Intelligence (AQ) is the solution to many of the long standing issues inherent in client relationships. Everyone in the wealth management industry needs to equip themselves with the tools to appropriately, effectively, and empathetically answer client questions. The industry needs this book and should be on the reading list of every new and seasoned professional.”

— *Ryan Decker, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Economics and Finance, North Central College, Director, Center for Financial Literacy*

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# ANSWER INTELLIGENCE

Raise Your AQ

BY

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

*I dedicate this book to my wife Jennifer, and our two boys  
Holden and Henry – you are my source of inspiration  
and your support nourishes me daily.*

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## PREFACE: BINDER ON THE SHELF

As a second year management PhD student, I traveled across the country from Chicago, IL, to Austin, TX, for a feedback report to a research site, a growing software company. In my PhD seminars, I had been studying leadership, motivation, culture, teamwork, negotiations, and all the important topics of organizational behavior. Now, I was finally in the field. If you are a culinary student, you want to be in the five star restaurant cooking, a medical student wants to be in surgery saving lives, and a management PhD student wants to collect survey data that will be published in the top peer reviewed academic journals. This was exciting. I had a chance to ask research questions, and ultimately be part of a team that added to the body of knowledge that informed managers around the world.

Prior to collecting data, my job involved the academic grunt work of survey design – I identified survey measures to test our hypotheses and additional survey items that addressed an interest of the client, under the direction of senior faculty. Ideally, the research team and client have shared interests. Usually, this overlap is only partial at most. A research project more resembles two separate surveys, combined into one. Academic research projects are not like consulting projects. In a consulting project, a client pays, and the survey would focus entirely on the client's needs. In academic research, there is no client fee, but the catch is the research team gets to collect data on a topic of interest to their research, and in exchange the client chooses a topic to be examined in the survey. The software company in Austin was interested in improving leadership at their organization.

As a research assistant, it was my responsibility to identify the most important leadership variables and associated survey items

that were relevant to the client. As a rule of thumb, a survey can only be 10 minutes in length, inclusive of all questions, before survey fatigue and disinterest kick in. This meant approximately 5 minutes of survey space reserved for the client. Assuming a question took 3 seconds to respond to, that amounts to 100 questions ( $60 \text{ seconds} \times 5 \text{ minutes} = 300 \text{ seconds}$ ;  $300 \text{ seconds} / 3 \text{ seconds per question} = 100 \text{ questions}$ ) that could be pulled from the existing literature, adapted, or written for this survey. My job was to best use those precious 100 questions.

I did my job. I examined leadership literature reviews, the equivalent of guided tours by prominent professors of the leadership landscape. A literature review uses expert opinion to point out which leadership theories are most important. Situational leadership, leader-member exchange, path-goal theory, servant leadership, and all the important leadership theories were on display, like animals on a safari. Next, I examined leadership meta-analyses, each representing a statistical combination of individual studies, to increase the total sample size, and importantly power (the ability to accurately detect correlations). A meta-analysis is the equivalent to using GPS to find the tagged animals on the safari tour. Finally, I went out into the brush on my own, and reviewed individual studies. When my exploration was over, I had compiled a list of the most important variables and associated survey items.

The survey was finalized, data was collected, analyzed, and the results prepared. I was tapped with the responsibility of leading the executives through a feedback presentation. It was my chance to be the leadership safari tour guide. Impressive, exciting, and informative, my presentation was *not*. The executives were bored. It felt anticlimactic. I was crushed. After the presentation, I could only imagine the thick binder we prepared for each executive was destined to be a decorative fixture on their respective shelves, put there once, resigned to collect dust, not to be consulted. We had all the best leadership theories, prescriptions from the results were clear. What went wrong?

The binder on the shelf is the origin story of Answer Intelligence (AQ)<sup>TM</sup>. Starting with the plane ride home, continuing through my doctoral studies and graduation, my subsequent appointments as a professor at two colleges, and parallel consulting with clients, the

through line has always stretched back to Austin. I have tried to understand what went wrong.

In the aftermath of a traumatic experience, I did soul searching and examined my assumptions. Nothing is more important to the zeitgeist of academic scholarship than the “research question.” Surprisingly, PhD programs do not formally teach about research questions, for the most part an aspiring researcher learns how to ask questions during craft-like experiences that include observation and osmosis from senior faculty, and trial and error. Very quickly, it became clear the assumptions of questions, and by extension answers, were not tethered to a solid foundation that could be built upon. Questions and answers became my obsession, and I became convinced that the problems in Austin had to do with questions and answers.

I realized that academics and practitioners did not ask the same questions. In Austin, we had two separate surveys, welded into one. Fundamentally, scholarly questions were different than practical questions. As middle schoolers we learn the six WH-Questions (what, why, when, where, who, how). Academics are concerned primarily with the why-question, the subject of testable hypotheses. In contrast, practitioners are concerned primarily with the how-question, and associated practical recommendations. My examination of questions resulted in an academic paper on questions that was recognized by the Academy of Human Resource Development as one of 10 papers that will shape the twenty-first century (Glibkowski, McGinnis, Gillespie, & Schommer, n.d.).

After publishing this paper, I shifted my attention from questions to answers. I came to realize the gap in our understanding of answers was truly profound, much bigger than any gap in our understanding of questions. To substantiate the size of this gap in my mind, I came to fixate on one simple observation. We have a taxonomy of questions, the six WH-questions, but we don’t have a taxonomy of answers. I reflected upon my education as a middle schooler, I was taught about the six WH-questions, but there was no parallel lesson about a taxonomy of answers. I came to appreciate the binder on the shelf story in terms of answers. Not only did we not ask the same questions, we did not provide the answers to the questions the executives were most interested in. Fueled by this self-reflection, my

colleagues and I studied answers with the top golf instructors in the world as rated by Golf Digest and Golf Magazine (I know you are asking, “Why golf?” I will answer this question in Chapter 2). Based upon this research, we published an academic paper that identified a taxonomy of six answers (story, metaphor, theory, concept, procedure, action) (McGinnis, Glibowski, & Lemmon, 2016). In my subsequent research, consulting, and a TEDx presentation (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7eeXf5dfJRE>), this original research has been extended into a communication paradigm I refer to as Answer Intelligence (AQ)<sup>TM</sup>. This book is an introduction into a new communication paradigm, centered upon the science of answers. The need for AQ, its make-up, and its application is the focus of this book.

## ORGANIZATION OF THIS BOOK

This is a book about answers. We all know answers are important. But, until now, there has not been a critical examination of answers. Answer Intelligence (AQ)<sup>TM</sup>, the ability to provide elevated answers, is the product of this critical examination.

The book is organized into four parts. Part 1 is a grand tour overview of questions and answers, associated academic research I have published, six answer types (story, concept, metaphor, theory, procedure, action) at the heart of AQ, and an introduction to the five High AQ practices that give rise to elevated answers. Part 2 examines the five High AQ practices in detail, to provide prescriptions for you to raise your AQ. Part 3 is AQ Conversations – AQ applied to distinct AQ topics: Interview AQ, Sales AQ, Coaching AQ, Brand AQ, Wealth Management AQ, and Physician AQ. These chapters are co-authored by executives, subject matter experts, and academics to add realism and depth. Assuming curiosity in AQ is peaked, Part 3 of the book culminates with a discussion of how to learn AQ, and ultimately use it in your important conversations.

In Part 4, I revisit an implicit question, one that was not fully addressed prior – Do we need AQ? To answer this question, existing models of communication and intelligence are examined.

An argument is made that AQ is unique, adds value, and is a needed addition to the communication and intelligence landscapes, respectively.

Some readers may prefer to read Parts 1, 4, 2, 3 in that order. However, I suspect most will prefer the order as I have sequenced the book. This order emphasizes a quick start and a gradual unfolding and deepening of the material as the book progresses.

Finally, interested readers are directed to [www.rasieyouraq.com](http://www.rasieyouraq.com) to access an AQ digital assessment and additional resources.

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PART 1: ANSWER INTELLIGENCE  
(AQ)<sup>TM</sup> INTRODUCTION

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# ANSWERS DESERVE OUR ATTENTION

*Judge a man by his questions rather than his answers.*

–Voltaire

Voltaire's message: Questions determine our character.

*We thought that we had the answers, it was the questions we had wrong.*

–Bono

Bono's message: Questions are hard.

*If I had an hour to solve a problem... I would spend the first 55 minutes determining the proper question to ask.*

–Einstein

Einstein's message: We should spend our time on questions.

As illustrated by the preceding quotes, society's luminaries are focused upon questions, not answers. In school, any child can identify a taxonomy of six question types (the WH-questions; what, why, when, where, who, how). However, if pressed, this same child cannot identify a taxonomy of answers. The professor stresses the "research question," but the parallel phrase "research answer" does not exist in the vocabulary. Society's education from middle school through higher education is focused upon questions. Outside the classroom, questions are emphasized. Sales methodologies focus upon questions, not answers. Business books with "question" in the

title outnumber books with “answer” in the title 3 to 1.<sup>1</sup> The imbalance is real. Society is focused upon questions, not answers.

There is a baseline fallacy that answers necessarily follow questions, in a way that parallels how a chemical reaction follows from mixing chemicals in a beaker. Everyday chemical reactions are commonplace, and their cause-and-effect interactions are taken for granted. Imagine you are on your deck in the backyard. Look at the plants around you. Photosynthesis occurs when carbon dioxide and water are combined to form oxygen. Combustion occurs every time you strike a match to start the fire for the charcoal grill. The metal chair you are sitting on is showing signs of rust – oxidation that has resulted from iron and oxygen combined. If you combine the right chemicals, a chemical reaction necessarily occurs. This is a causal model.

Causal and process models are often conflated. If you ask the right question, the answer does not necessarily follow. Questions and answers represent a process model. Humans have been asking questions since the beginning of time. Are we alone in the universe? We still don’t have an answer. What do I want to do when I grow up? Many kids struggle to find an answer (and adults too). Who should I hire? Many organizations get this wrong and turnover is high. In a causal model, like chemical reactions, it makes sense to focus upon the inputs. If you get the chemicals just right, the chemical reaction must occur. But, if you get the question just right, the right answer does not necessarily follow.

Case in point, the right answer does not necessarily follow from the right question, I was pulled into a consulting project with a company that had turnover problems. The question was clear, “Why was turnover occurring?” The client simply did not have the answer. My expertise was developing and testing theory. In this case a theory of turnover was used to answer their question. I could examine the academic literature on employee turnover and identify a theoretical model (tentative answers), that would be followed by data collection, and confirmation of answers. My expertise on answers, not questions, was the reason I was hired.

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<sup>1</sup>Keyword search for “Business & Money” in [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) books.

It was not adding up. Voltaire, Bono, and Einstein had high praise for questions. But answers did not necessarily follow from questions, like a chain reaction. Indeed, my clients could often ask the right questions, but they fell short in their ability to identify the answers. Contradicting society's rhetoric, when it came down to spending money, I was routinely hired as a consultant for my ability to provide theoretical answers, not for my ability to ask questions.

It was at this point, when my intrigue with answers was at a high point, that I conducted academic research into the nature of answers with the top golf instructors in the world (see Chapter 2). My understanding of answers deepened. My colleagues and I identified a taxonomy of six answer types (theory, concept, story, metaphor, procedure, action). This research also identified how these answers mapped to the primary questions focused upon in a conversation (why, what, how). The why-question is answered by theory and story answers. The what-question is answered by concept and metaphor. The how-question is answered by procedure and action.

Eventually, I referred to this framework as Answer Intelligence (AQ)<sup>TM</sup>, representing an ability to communicate centered upon answers that any communicator could improve upon. Even in the early days of the research, the AQ framework helped me improve my conversations with others. Accordingly, "Why was turnover occurring?" could be answered with a theory and story. Using AQ, I was able to expand upon and dramatically improve my conversations by using story in addition to theory.

Prior to the research with top golf instructors, I regularly used theory (a type of answer). My consulting had always been based upon my ability to identify and test theoretical models for clients. I was also familiar with the shortcomings of theory in conversations with many clients. For example, as I developed theoretical models to explain and test turnover, it would be helpful if the client could provide me information about what was missing in my model, so it could be refined and improved. After all, the client was closest to the problem so their insights would be critical. In an attempt to get this information from the client, I would show them a diagram of my theoretical model and ask them to identify what was missing. This was helpful to an extent, but this often led to frustrating

conversations, where the client might say: “I can’t think of anything to add.” “This looks very abstract.” “What is a moderator?” In short, they often did not think about their problem in terms of the cold and objective perspective of theory, and often they did not understand its subtleties. This was not surprising. Again, this was precisely the reason I was hired to begin with – to develop and test a theory they had difficulty identifying themselves.

Nonetheless, the need still existed to engage the client in a conversation to get valuable information that would inform the theoretical model. Out of frustration, and a newfound awareness of AQ from my research, I began to experiment with stories to answer the why-question. Narrative scholars have argued that next to language itself, the defining attribute that makes us human is our ability to story the world. I started to ask for stories. For example, I could ask them for a general story about turnover: “Can you tell me a story about why employee turnover is occurring?” Or, I could ask them a specific story about the impact of turnover: “Can you tell me a story about the importance of the supervisor to employee turnover?” I found executives could tell me meaningful stories about anything. The stories were full of details about turnover; I learned about the impact upon the business, the emotional toll upon the employees, and beliefs about why the turnover had occurred. If I listened to their stories close enough, I could find an endless supply of relevant details. This was in sharp contrast to the terse and bankrupt conversations I would often have regarding theory with the clients.

I came to appreciate that stories had themes (for example, “turnover occurred because of poor supervisors”) and these themes could be translated into theoretical answers. A theory is a cause-and-effect relationship between variables (e.g., supervisors → turnover). It was through this transformational process that I was able to turn aspects of a story into individual variables that I could add to and sequence into any theoretical model. One positive experience with using stories with one client led to me focusing upon stories with other clients. Eventually, I would start every consulting project out by identifying stories at the company. These stories would then be translated into a theoretical model that I would test for my clients. To my surprise and delight, I found that

when I translated the client's stories into theory that the executives became fully engaged. The theory imbued with their stories became more meaningful. I could show the cause-and-effect theory diagram, and the executives were engaging, asking questions about the model, and actively making suggestions to the theory itself. I was hooked.

Answers were important. AQ was transforming my conversations and I started to believe it had the potential to do the same for others. Even in the early experiments with AQ, important lessons were being learned about answers.

- There are six answers. In my own conversations I confirmed the value of the six answer types discovered with the top golf instructors. I started by experimenting with theory and story, and quickly started using the other four answers (concept, metaphor, procedure, action) to navigate important conversations with clients, in the classroom, and at home.
- Questions mapped to answers. Given my interest in theory, the importance of the why-question answered by theory and story was first to be confirmed. Shortly thereafter, I confirmed that the what-question was answered by concept and metaphor; and the how-question was answered by procedure and action. Understanding the mapping of questions to answers provided insight into answers, questions, and suggested a newfound understanding of effective conversations (emphasis upon the relationship between questions and answers).
- Early on I realized that there were individual differences in preferences for answers. My clients often preferred to communicate in story, not theory. Stories created an emotional resonance that theory did not. However, my colleagues in academia, and some within companies, preferred theory because of its objective, codifiable, and testable nature.
- Answers represent skills that can be improved upon. The core of theory is cause-and-effect; a simple structure theory consists of two variables causally related ( $X \rightarrow Y$ ). Anyone can be trained upon this. Moreover, this training could expand to greater

depths. The skill could be further developed. After all, I was hired by clients for my ability to provide theory answers that I had developed in my formal PhD training. I had been trained on theory development. I knew the difference between mediators and moderators. I understood how to partition variance between multiple levels to assess the separate statistical impact of culture upon turnover, as compared to supervisors upon turnover.

In a similar way, the ability to tell stories could be improved upon. At its core stories are simple – they involve characters and a theme that occurs in a setting. We all know a story when we see one at the movies. But, like theory, one can be trained upon story and improve their ability to provide story answers. For example, in learning about story, I was exposed to the different structures of narrative, such as the three-act play. I began to story my presentations for dramatic effect using a three-act structure. For example, in the classroom, I would move around the stage (the front of the classroom) to three different points, with each movement meant to correspond to shifts in the focus of the lecture from the beginning, middle, to the end.

In addition to theory and story, I have found the other four answer types (concept, metaphor, procedure, action) each represent skills that can be improved upon.