Lessons From Reinhard: Ask Questions!

by Cara Martin

Naturally curious and a critical thinker, Reinhard was excellent at asking questions – and he wasn't afraid to ask the hard ones. He had a knack for finding the right time and tone to ask something critical, recognizing that progress could depend on ensuring deep understanding and not overlooking seemingly minor issues.

Reinhard asked questions of everyone. He would frequently call colleagues to ask for their insight on industry trends or new ideas. He would question new connections at conferences or client meetings to learn more about their work. And he especially questioned his students to enhance their research and push them to new levels of comprehension.

Given his reputation, but also his general kindness and respect for others around him, Reinhard was also exceptionally good at getting answers to his questions. He had a way for probing for deeper insight without sounding critical or disbelieving. He was truly curious and used questions strategically to dig for answers.

Some of his favorite questions and phrases to prompt discussion and discovery included the following:

- **How are things going?** (a general opener – this was never the real question, but an easy one to help you get started)
- **Time for a quick meeting?** (usually an indication that some hard questions were coming)
- **What is your biggest challenge / pain point?** (one he loved to ask new contacts as the answer almost always spurred some creative brainstorming and problem solving)
- **Tell me more about that** (not a true question, but his way of prompting for deeper understanding)
- **What else?** (usually at the end of the conversation, to make sure nothing was missed)

Are you a good question asker? In your conversations this week, get curious. Ask some questions that you may not normally and see what you learn.

Cara's Recommended Reading: More of an activity that a hard read, *4,000 Questions for Getting to Know Anyone and Everyone* by Barbara Ann Kipfer is a fun book to explore for family gatherings, team building events, or general fun.