

PQ+A takes a team from fuzzy to precise

Clare Dolan, Oracle Vice President, runs Oracle Academy. Her team successfully delivers Oracle Academy content in over 70 countries worldwide. Clare became known at Oracle for using Precision Q+A, a set of intellectual tools that offers a core set of analytical ideas along with a category framework for questions and answers. Using Precision Q+A allows for tightly aligned questions and answers that promote problem solving and effective teamwork.

Clare was a natural with Precision Q+A. She built on her innate talent for analytical thinking by drawing upon her experience with other executives who held high standards for intellectual work. As she became more and more successful using Precision Q+A, she realized that she could do even more if her team updated their skills as well.

LEARNING PRECISION Q+A AS A TEAM

While Precision Q+A came to feel like second nature to Clare, it was not second nature for all of her team members. Clare could see that her team was highly intelligent, experienced, and motivated, but something was preventing them from analyzing tough issues. “After some reflection,” Clare says, “I realized that the missing element for my team was actually a skill that was at the core of my own interactions with Oracle’s senior executives: Precision Q+A. The team needed to learn how to quickly identify—and then concisely communicate—the key points of a business problem.”

Clare invited Vervago to work with her team. As she describes it, “My hope was that my directs could learn to ask each other the tough questions, rather than waiting for me or other senior people to help them focus their thinking.” Clare talks about the value of using Precision Q+A in the toughest intellectual situations she faces. “Now,” Clare says, “we use Precision Q+A to tackle the most fuzzy, most complex, most persistent, and most expensive problems.”

Having a way to approach complex problems gives Clare and her team confidence that they can work effectively, even in the face of a challenge. “The messier things are,” she says, “the easier it is to demonstrate the value of efficient communicating and efficient thinking.”

Most executives look for ways to develop analytical thinking at the top of their organizations. But people at the lower

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levels of an organization need to develop analytical thinking skills as well, and they don’t always have a model for high quality reasoning. Precision Q+A gives people at all levels of an organization a way to develop analytical skill by using core tools and to communicate their thinking effectively.

PRECISION Q+A HEIGHTENS TEAM EFFECTIVENESS AND EFFICIENCY

After her team learned Precision Q+A, Clare noticed an immediate and clear benefit in their communication efficiency. “It’s like we’re a new team. A call that was once a rambling 15-minute discussion now takes us just a minute or two.” That gain comes from the tight alignment between questions and answers.

An additional benefit comes from the team’s increased capacity for analytical thinking. “It used to take weeks, and sometimes even months, for us to get to the root of a complex problem,” she says. “Now we move in, ask the key questions, and go get answers from our data sources, our technologists, and our senior people.”

Clare sees obvious results from using Precision Q+A with her team in terms of the quality of their thinking and the efficiency of their discussions, and these results translate into bottom-line benefits to her organization. “When we’re saving this much time, it’s obvious we’re saving money, even if there’s no simple way to quantify the benefit.”

Precision Q+A has generated returns even beyond more effective problem-solving and more efficient business discussions. “Best of all,” Clare adds, “I seldom see half-baked ideas anymore.” Clare’s team understands how to ask key questions before the work gets to her level, freeing her time for more strategic purposes. Because the team is highly capable of using Precision Q+A, Clare can trust them to push their own thinking to a deeper level.