



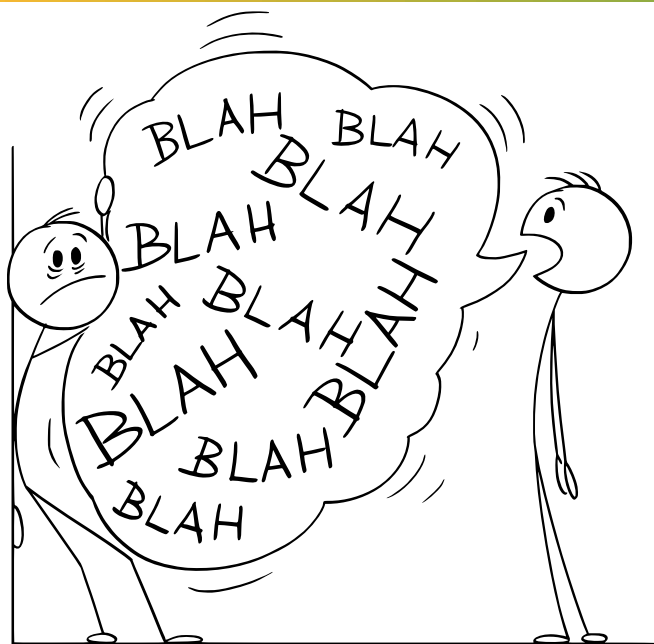
Let's Talk About...

10 Easy Questions to Get a Talkative Client to the Point!

Every one of us has had (or has!) a client who likes to tell stories and go into great detail about what happened to whom, when, where, how.

There are a number of possibilities. For example, your client might be attracted to the drama of storytelling. Or perhaps they want to distract you (or themselves) from a difficult issue. They could be a verbal processor - someone who processes by talking out loud. Or they could just be a super 'detail-oriented' person.

There are plenty of reasons WHY some people talk at length, but in this post we're going to look at specific things you can ASK or SAY to get those long-winded storytellers to the point - when you need to!



10 Easy Questions to Get a Talkative Client to the Point!

First, take a deep breath and say firmly, "I'm going to interrupt you here..." and then try:

1. So, tell me what finally happens.
2. In a nutshell, what's the issue/goal here?
3. So, what would you like to handle first/now?
4. Can you give me your goal/issue in one sentence?
5. If you were to take a helicopter view, what do you need me to know?
6. May we take a quick time out. How does this relate to the goal/issue you want to work on?
7. So, how did that make you feel? (great for the 'avoiders')
8. I'm looking for the storyteller here and not the story - what are the key points that you need to tell me?
9. If you could sum the situation up in one word or phrase, what would that be?
10. Lastly, use ONLY with caution and good rapport: "Do you want to spend time talking about your problems or get things sorted?"

The Trick

You need to be firm and confident. By all means try a 'soft' interruption first, but if this doesn't work take a deep breath and - if necessary - cut right across them. With some clients this is the only thing that will work. Remember: your client is paying you to help them move forwards - and to do and say the things that others may struggle to do...

But watch out for

Sometimes a client's story contains essential elements they need to be coached around. Or perhaps your client needs to feel heard and have a safe place to 'vent' and explore how they feel. Your client may also simply be a person who likes detail or finds it helpful to work through their thoughts sequentially.

So when this situation arises, you'll need to use your coaching skills (both your head and your heart) as well as trusting your gut - which of course gets easier with practice and experience!