



G R E A T

Q U E S T I O N



The Art of the Ask
and Getting More of
What You *Really* Want



LARRY ROBERTSON

Award-Winning Author of *Rebel Leadership*

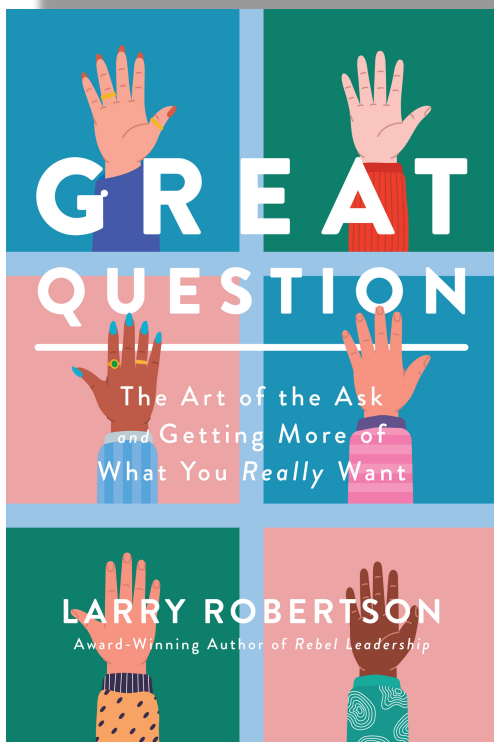
Book Summary

The capacity to question is our greatest and yet least understood human asset. It's why we've lasted as long as we have. In truth, we'd be dead without our ability to question. This is not how we typically think about questions.

While it's often said we are a storytelling species, the deeper more enabling truth is that we are a *questioning* species. Questions give life to our curiosity. They fuel our personal growth. We problem solve and innovate through them. They're how we find meaning and come to grasp why we matter. This is a book about that vital capacity in all of us. Including you. It's your *yield* guide for mastering *the art of the ask* and getting more of what you really want.

In important ways, this book is a first. It reveals the secrets of great questioning, no matter where it's applied. Its groundbreaking research and intimate storytelling teach a kid-simple framework, then show how to practice using it. It truly helps you understand how to get more of what you really want, yet better and more importantly, it shows how we can achieve that collectively. And why we must.

The lessons at the core of *Great Question* are nothing short of the key to thriving in a deeply uncertain world. They enable the fundamental mindshift we need to make, right now – not just in how we ask, but how we adapt, achieve and advance.



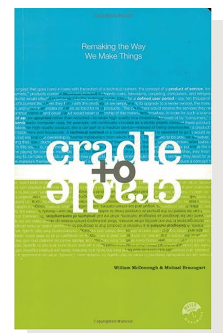
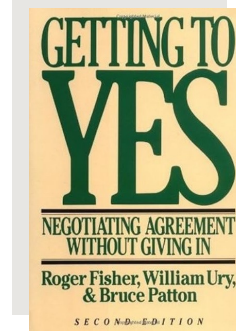
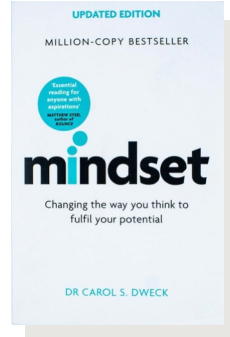
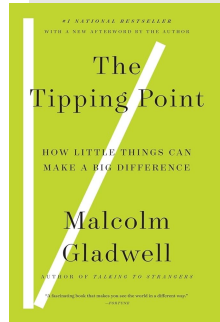
Book Highlights

- More than 140 intimate interviews with experts spanning psychology, business, neuroscience, the arts, education and more
- Designed as an action-oriented 'yield' guide, teaching readers while moving them to action – and results
- Linked to an online, living toolkit for readers' continued practice of the art of the ask
- Aimed at both individual readers and at groups, teams, and organizations
- Reveals questions as more than simply leverage, but a survival tool needed to thrive and prosper in uncertain times

Individual **chapter summaries** are included later in this press kit

What kind of book is *Great Question*?

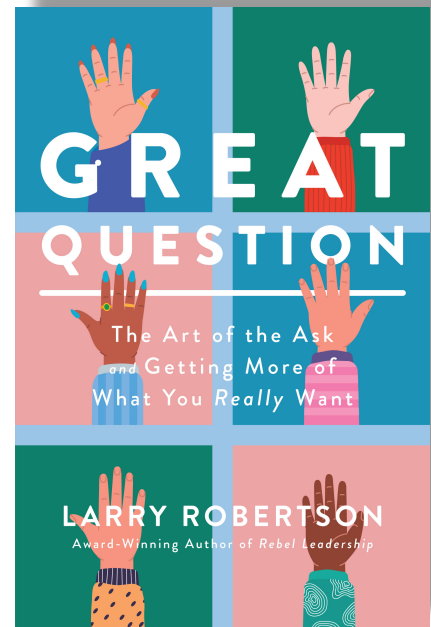
Some books stand out more than others for what they reveal, how they do it, and the impact they have. *Great Question* is designed to be just such a book.



Every once in awhile a book triggers a paradigm shift. We don't just learn, we evolve. We reorient how we think, what we see and how we do things.

Great Question fits that model. Like only a handful of others before, it ...

- Flips our default thinking on its head
- Reveals patterns of what's really happening
- Ties those patterns to actual human behavior
- Simplifies how to leverage such insights
- Entertains even as it compels you to act
- Shows you what you can do for yourself and others
- Leaves an impression you can't forget

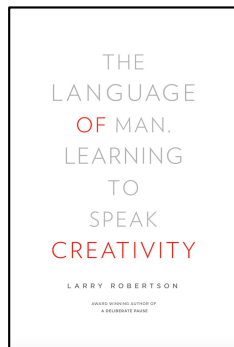
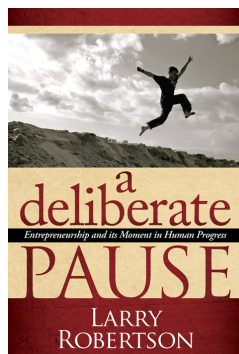


Great Question is a book that will change you...

- for the better
- for good
- in ways that help you not only get more of what you want ...
- but more of what you *really* want (and need)

See what people are saying about the book in the [endorsements included in this kit](#).

Larry Robertson's Unique Value Adds



A Distinct Perspective

- Larry Robertson is the award-winning author of four books, each highlighting one of his areas of expertise: creativity, entrepreneurship, leadership, and asking great questions. No matter the format or focus, interviews with Larry are special because they inevitably incorporate all these topics, making the conversation and content vibrant as well as wide-ranging.

Rare and Intimate Access to Thought Leaders

- Larry has interviewed nearly 500 of the world's most innovative and successful leaders including: some of the most successful for-profit and non-profit founders of all time, noted researchers in dozens of fields, Nobel Laureates, MacArthur Fellow Genius award-winners, and countless bestselling authors. Conversations with him feel like being at an intimate dinner party with a rare council of thought leaders sharing stories and insights you couldn't hear anywhere else.

Practical, Proven Insights

- Larry's focus has always been on what works in actual practice. His stories and insights give audiences information they can actually use, and ideas they can build on.

A Versatile, Compelling Communicator

- His crossover roles of author, innovator, advisor, speaker, and columnist mean Larry's communication skills are well-honed and versatile. He's known for his vibrant and intimate connection with audiences and hosts.

Larry Robertson's books have received 21 honors to date, including...



leadership



entrepreneurship



creative
process



business

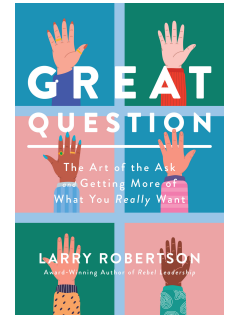


career



FINALIST
superior
debut
author

About Larry Robertson



Short bio:

Larry Robertson is an innovation advisor who works, writes, and guides at the nexus of creativity, entrepreneurship, leadership, and great questions. He's the author of three previous award-winning books: *A Deliberate Pause*, *The Language of Man and Rebel Leadership*. As founder and president of Lighthouse Consulting, for more than three decades he has guided organizations and their leaders through uncertainty, change, and growth to lasting success. A popular columnist and speaker, he has a unique ability to bring his audience into the story and, more importantly, help them craft and realize their own story. In 2021, he was named a U.S. Fulbright Scholar, a rarity for non-academic professionals.

Added relevant professional highlights:

- Larry Robertson has advised leaders in growth, strategy, adaptability, and innovation for nearly three decades. He's been described as "a big firm consulting brain, without all the worthless baggage." The results, and over 30 years in business, speak for themselves.
- His knowledge is deep, and his style direct, passionate, and creative.
- In addition to his writing, original research and consulting, Larry is a frequent board member and a sought-after keynote speaker—as engaging, impactful, and memorable in a one-on-one podcast as he is in front of a 3,000+ audience.
- As an internationally-acclaimed author, to date his books have won a combined 21 distinct honors.
- For nearly a decade he's been a popular columnist, writing regular columns for *Inc. Magazine*, *SmartBrief on Leadership* and *The Creativity Post* and contributing columns for publications including *Fast Company*, *The Chicago Tribune*, Thrive Global, *CEOWorld* and other respected publications.
- Larry is a proud graduate of Stanford University and Northwestern University's Kellogg School of Management, and a former Adjunct Professor of Entrepreneurship at Georgetown University's McDonough School of Business and of Leadership at the University of Maryland's Smith School of Business.

Want to learn more?

Please visit:

- Irspeaks.com
- lighthouse-consulting.com
- [LinkedIn](https://www.linkedin.com/in/larryrobertson)



Praise for *Great Question*

"Few books center on questions rather than answers, but this one does so with a rare clarity that can change your life."

Teri Evans, former Editor, Gartner, Inc. Magazine, Wall Street Journal

"The quality of our lives depends on how well we understand ourselves, other people and the world. Larry Robertson's fascinating deep dive into the art of asking questions provides readers with insights and skills that will increase their understanding and boost their ability to meet challenges in every area of their lives."

Mark Leary, Professor Emeritus of Psychology and Neuroscience, Duke University

"Great Question is more than a guide to the art of asking; it's a powerful reminder that to question is to be human. Larry Robertson shows how the right question isn't a tool, but a bridge to connection and deeper self-awareness. (This book) is an essential guide. With it, you will never look at questions the same way."

Virginie Helias, Chief Sustainability Officer

"This is the most original book I've read in years, if not ever, befitting the original mind of Larry Robertson. It's a masterstroke of forensics cutting through layers of fuzzy thinking to reveal secrets of mind, philosophy, education, progress and self-discovery. My own work has seen the benefit of looking at things in different ways but after reading this I realize I need to raise my game and now have the tools to do it. Great Question left me with one great question: Why didn't I think of that?"

Billy Shore, Cofounder, Share Our Strength, author *The Cathedral Within* and *Revolution of the Heart*

"One of the greatest things questions do is to bring fresh perspective. We don't always think about that. Larry Robertson's newest book builds on this insight, then takes it deeper. He doesn't just tell, he shows. The real-life stories of compelling thinkers he shares do more than entertain. They motivate, guide and help us begin the practice of asking. Great Question is a guide worthy of your time."

Matt Halprin, V.P. and Global Head of Trust and Safety, YouTube

"Great Question is an intensely practical guide. Its wonderful storytelling, illumination of profound ideas and its toolkit of ideas and applications all ensure an enhanced return on our inquiry. Robertson's distillation and recognition that asking great questions is a skill to be rediscovered is a marvelous reminder of the inherent power and wisdom of our underlying human nature."

Lynne Lawrence, Executive Director, Association Montessori Internationale

"This book is a revelation about the quiet power of questions. Through vivid stories and insights from experts across many fields, it shows how asking better questions can transform connection and problem-solving. I started confident I knew the territory—and ended up humbled by how much more there is to learn."

Bill Doherty, Cofounder, Braver Angels, Professor Emeritus, University of Minnesota

"In Great Question, Larry Robertson brilliantly and passionately articulates the ONE skill we can all practice to elevate our abilities: asking better questions. The book is full of rich insights from experts and provides a simple framework to embrace uncertainty with confidence. What is most exciting about this book is it provides a practical guide to grow a stronger, longer-lasting brain. It's a must read."

Sandra Bond Chapman, founder, Chief Director, Center for BrainHealth, author, *Make Your Brain Smarter*

"Great Question is a long overdue look at the powerful capacity to question within each of us and the key to our ability to thrive far into the future. What most of us leave as unfinished ideas and thoughts about questions, Robertson gives the quality of action, a rare gift."

Dean Carignan, AI Innovation Lead, Microsoft Corporation

"In a world that demands instant answers, Larry Robertson reminds us that the art of the ask is actually a survival skill. By combining a surgical approach to logic with a deeply soulful understanding of human uncertainty, he provides a roadmap for anyone looking to navigate the ambiguities of modern life. It is a masterpiece of practical wisdom that will leave you seeing every situation through a clearer, more insightful lens."

John Hunter, award-winning educator, creator, the Wordl Peace Game

Praise for *Great Question*

"Great questioning goes to motivation, to meaning, to what matters. It's what makes you, you and us, us. You couldn't have a better guide than Larry Robertson to help you get to the heart of this force in every one of us. It's like talking to Obi Wan Kenobi, Confucius and King Solomon all rolled into one."

Jacki Lyden, bestselling author, former host and correspondent, NPR

"Without a doubt, questions matter. With his utterly captivating and wonderfully accessible new book, Larry Robertson has given us a gift: the chance to understand and better use an ability all of us have but most underutilize. I highly recommend this guide to anyone with a pulse hoping to have an impact in the world."

Keith W. Light, Director, International Admissions, Yale University

"Great Question is a long-overdue, fascinating, and powerful guide to how questions quietly but profoundly shape understanding and action. We need questions. But we also need to understand what truly great questioning is, and how it happens. Particularly at a time of deep uncertainty and growing division, this book reminds us that meaningful change, connection and adaptation begin not with answers, but with better questions."

Helen Taylor, Researcher, University of Cambridge, Originator of the Theory of Complementary Cognition

"We are, in Larry Robertson's elegant phrase, "a deeply question-dependent species." Now comes Great Question, a book built from and for our times. Here are insights that are both wise and wonderful, tips and tricks that reveal and leverage the underappreciated power of asking. It's an exciting and important contribution to the conversation about questions and how we can get at what we really need and want – as individuals and as a society. Bravo!"

Lynn Borton, Creator, Host, Choose to Be Curious

"Today's intellectual environment is polluted by impatience and know-it-all-ism, filter bubbles and disinformation. In Great Question, author Larry Robertson crafts insightful interviews into exemplars of how meaningful inquiry can realize clarity and nuance. With a parallel 'yield guide' providing a road map for collective comprehension, the result is a cogent read and a valuable resource."

Abe Peck, Director of Business to Business Communication, Medill School, Northwestern University

"In Great Question, Larry Robertson offers a rare blend of research, story and practice, showing that the 'art of the ask' is not an abstract idea but a trainable skill. He helps readers move beyond chasing the 'perfect' question and toward a sustainable habit of curiosity, humility and meaning-making. This is the kind of guide that strengthens learning and leadership, and it belongs on the desk of anyone who wants better conversations and better outcomes."

Fumiko Hoeft, neuroscientist, Professor of Psychiatry/Math, Dean, University of Connecticut Waterbury

"Larry Robertson has spent thousands of hours asking questions, listening thoughtfully to the responses, and weaving together the stories that diverse experts shared. When I learn something, I want to learn it from someone like Larry, who grounds these powerful narratives in deep and measured research. Reading this book is affirming. You will be glad for all the questions you have asked, and you will want to ask more, and you will know better which questions lead you forward. Are you in?"

Laura McBride, author of the best-selling novels *We are Called to Rise* and *In the Midnight Room*

This is my absolute favorite kind of book; it's wise, thoroughly researched, and it helps me see what I've been missing."

Leidy Klotz, author of *Subtract: The Unstoppable Science of Less* and *In a Good Place*

"Great Question engages the reader in an in-depth exploration of the power and potential of questions. The book illuminates the elusive art of great questioning in new and instructive ways, making a clear case for the practical and profound value of asking great questions in the reader's own life."

Lani Watson, author, *Q: The Hidden Power of Questions in a World that Wants Answers*

"This book helps illustrate why well-posed questions – and a critical questioning of what we take most for granted about the world we share – are as vital and empowering as whatever consensus we think we have on our answers to them. Great Question is a worthy read."

John L. Jackson, Jr., Provost, University of Pennsylvania

Praise for *Great Question*

"Ours is an increasingly puzzling world. And while most of us are scanning the landscape for answers, Larry Robertson is one of the few who has turned the telescope around to focus on finding the great questions. This book is a rich harvest of provocation that is guaranteed to spark your curiosity. A must for the creative seeker inside you. And if you're suffering certainty, read on."

David Pearl, Founder, Street Wisdom, author, *Wanderful*

"Wow! This is more than a book. It shows us how to question the question in ways that bring our humanity back into our lives. Great Question takes us on a journey where we explore all facets of questions, up, down, sideways and in and outside from science to art only to reveal we are the question. I love this book. It brought me back to my youth and catapulted me forward to think seriously and jovially about how I question and how I live. Enjoy!"

Elliot Washor, Founder, Big Picture Learning

"Larry Robertson has focused on one of the most interesting and timely issues for society: awakening and using our curiosity to improve our own, and other peoples' lives. He includes so much great research, and equally important, he shows how to use that research to change the way you use questions and inquiry in our daily lives."

Susan Engel, Senior Lecturer, Psychology, Williams College, author, *The Hungry Mind*

"Robertson is a rare thinker who understands that progress—personal and collective—begins not with answers imposed, but with questions courageously owned. This is an essential book for anyone committed to shaping their life, work, and world intentionally, in no small way because Larry Robertson doesn't just teach how to ask better questions—he shows why doing so is an act of responsibility."

Rajshree Agarwal, Founding Director, Snider Center for Enterprise and Markets, University of Maryland

"In a world that is replete with hot takes and scorching criticism, Larry Robertson's book about the beauty of questions arrives at a perfect time. The author doesn't treat questions as a simple vehicle to gather information but rather challenges readers to appreciate questions as a powerful tool to express curiosity, uncertainty, and vulnerability. It's as groundbreaking, thought-provoking and deeply accessible of a book I've read in some time, and about a topic critical to all times."

Todd Edwards, Professor and Program Chair, School of Leadership and Educational Sciences, University of San Diego

"The insights contained in Great Question illuminate what matters most in our daily lives and helps us navigate complexity courageously and purposefully. One question at a time. (Great Question is) a timely must-read for leaders, learners, seekers and anyone looking for steadiness amid rapid change."

Diane Kresh, Director, Arlington Public Library, former Director, Library of Congress

"This is a book you sit with, return to, and carry into conversations that matter. In reminding us how to ask with purpose and care, Robertson offers something rare, a guide that helps us better understand not only the world around us, but ourselves and one another."

Maja Zelihic, Forbes Contributor, Professor Emerita, Forbes School of Business & Technology

"Great Question is a thoughtful, timely book for anyone who believes that not knowing is often the beginning of something truly important. It belongs on the desk of every leader, innovator, and strategist trying to escape the gravitational pull of the status quo."

Greg Galle, Founder, CEO, Solve Next, coauthor, *Think Wrong*

"Don't simply buy this book, dive into it deeply. You're sure to find it a thought-provoking read, one that will challenge the way you approach learning, communication and more. It will powerfully remind you that it's not the answer that's so vital to our ability to thrive; it's the questions we ask."

Irene Alvarado Van der Laet, International Consultant, circular economy, founding faculty, EARTH University

"If you're ready to stop chasing perfect answers and start living better questions, this book will change the way you create, collaborate, and see the world."

Author, *The Mattering Instinct*, National Humanities Medal winner, MacArthur Fellow

Great Question Chapter Summaries



What if? – Prologue

Our sense of questions is quite limited, even as our experience is often expansive. Using two extended stories, this chapter starts by demonstrating the unexpected range that questions can span, from “weapons of the mouth” used to attack, to powerful filters for determining what matters. The chapter explains the pattern, the void and the trendline that moved the author to write the book and uses these to give the reader their own motivation for pursuing the art of the ask. The meaning and importance of ‘great’ is explained; the five elements of the art of the ask are defined and given a powerful visual; and what a ‘yield’ guide is and can do is explained. The chapter concludes by introducing readers to their first opportunity to engage in the art of the ask, an opportunity that will then be given at the close of each chapter and often within chapters as well.

Ever wonder? – What a Question Is and Why Knowing Matters

The Introduction starts with contrasting windows into how we come to learn about questions. It quickly builds on this to go right to the heart of the book and the central question of what a question is – offering unexpected insights the rest of the book will build on. With the new perspective for thinking about and exploring asking this introduction provides, the chapter then takes on directly why most of our questioning slips into a messy middle ground, why we fear and forget questions and ends with the insight of questions being linked to the human need for direction and light.

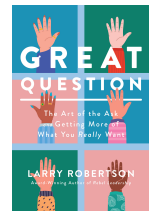
Who are you? – Chapter 1: Core

This chapter is the first of the five remaining, each dedicated to describing one of the five elements of the art of the ask. The focus of this chapter is the element of ‘core.’ Like the coming four, this chapter embodies and answers a centering question, in the case of this chapter: Who are you? The chapter proceeds to introduce the reader to themselves. The typical absence of this knowledge turns out to be a major limiting factor in our ability to successfully hone the art of the ask. Two key research patterns that link us to questions are explored and offer a base understanding – indeed important motivation – for mastering this art. From this overview of core, the chapter next moves ‘inside’ – literally, exploring what more than a dozen uniquely focused neuroscientists can tell us about our question asking engine: the human brain. The reader learns about what we know happens in the brain when we ask, how asking is directly linked to brain health and more. The chapter then offers three ways to maximize the yields of our question-seeking brains and the vital roles of curiosity, play and search.

Why do you ask? – Chapter 2: Context

To keep readers actively engaged, chapter two both begins and ends with a Dip in the Toolkit. The starting exercise also brings readers to an immediate understanding of just how critical context – the second element of the art of the ask, is to our questioning asking. The consequences of failing to perceive context are explored before three fundamental context relationships that can dramatically raise the odds of your asking power are explored. In this chapter, uncertainty makes its first formal appearance and begins to reveal why rather than an impediment it’s a key ingredient to great questioning. Because it’s such an important part of the art of the ask, a story and discussion of the power of ambiguity ends the chapter. Over the rest of the book, the reader gradually learns how to move from seeing ambiguity as something to fear to seeing and leveraging it as a force for asking greater questions.

Great Question Chapter Summaries (cont)



Who else? – Chapter 3: Concession

Concession, the third element is in no small way the fulcrum element. In this chapter, readers learn that the skill of questioning means little without the skill of truly listening, and that to truly listen requires intellectual humility. A growing field of research, intellectual humility is shown in this chapter to be a powerful skill every one of us must practice – at least if we hope to thrive in a deeply uncertain world. The science is explored, and powerful stories are shared. The link to listening is then pursued and redefined in the new contexts of intellectual humility and the art of the ask. Three ways to practice intellect humility are then explored: confidence, noticing and reflecting. The research is unique, rich and revealing. Among the things this discussion will show is that, quite the opposite of the weakness some assume intellectual humility must be, it's far more the very thing that enables us to stand tall, adapt and thrive. Repeatedly. A timely thought on concession ends this chapter.

What's this about? – Chapter 4: Connection

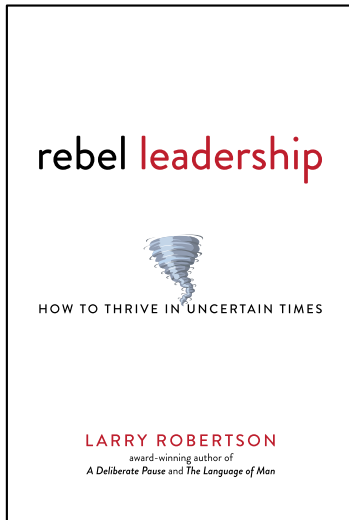
Context is a close cousin to connection. But context alone is not enough. This chapter describes the fourth element of the art of the ask and shows the reader what questioning is ultimately all about – in other words, how connections enable us to thrive as a species and actually derive a yield. The chapter explores four foundational types of connection that dramatically raise the odds of both great questioning and our yield. Idea-to-idea, person-to-person, question-to-question and story-to-story connection are each highlighted by some of the most surprising stories of the book. Before the chapter concludes, the need to deliberately direct questions and connection is investigated – as is the important concept of mattering.

Then what? – Chapter 5: Continuation

We often think of questions as linear, a straight line from question to answer, which once arrived at signals an end. This chapter explains and emphasizes the ongoing, sometimes circular nature of asking. The chapter begins with surprisingly raw honesty about questions, and why we sometimes dislike them or even see wonder if they are the problem. How to contend with that then comes boldly through as the chapter explores several common hurdles that either keep us from asking in the first place or keep us from reengaging when we lose our way. The role of questions in the world of AI is explored as well, with some surprising truths revealed by several experts. The book ends with a forward lean into the future and greater questioning.

Award-winning Books by Larry Robertson

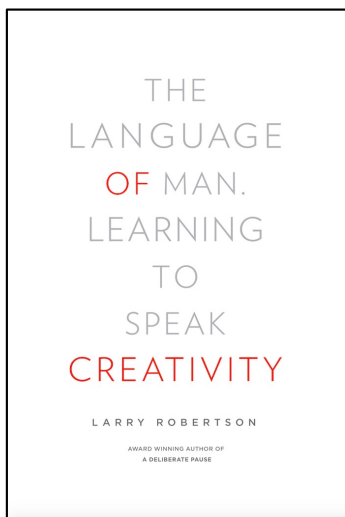
Great Question is the latest book from internationally-acclaimed author Larry Robertson. His previous books on leadership, creativity, and entrepreneurship have won a combined 21 awards:



Description: Two decades into this new century, we now live in a world more uncertain than certain. In this new *abnormal*, our ability to sustain far into the future, to realize our dreams and our potentialities and to progress depends on seeing leadership in a whole new way. Rebel leadership is that new way, and this book shows not just why, but how.

More:

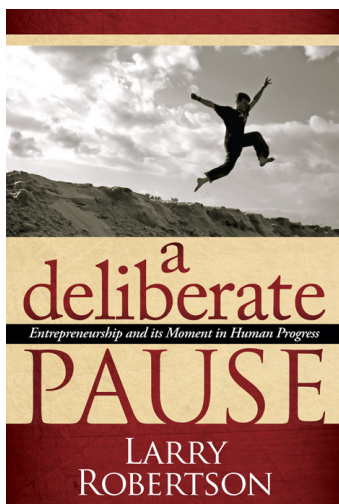
- *Rebel Leadership* was released in the spring of 2021 by Post Hill Press, and has received awards including Outstanding Book of the Year (Independent Author Network, Career/Occupational category).
- The book draws on extensive research from business, science, creativity and the social sciences; in-depth interviews with leaders whose organizations are thriving in these uncertain times; and wise insight from thought leaders across the spectrum.
- The book is aimed at current leaders and rising ones.



Description: We have many impressions about creativity, but here's the truth: Creativity is about the possible. It is the seed of *any* human advancement ever made or yet to be imagined. Most important and powerful of all, creativity is a uniquely human capacity that *each* of us possess—including you. This book reveals these truths and how to tap them.

More:

- *The Language of Man* has been honored with many awards, including a Gold Medal in Entrepreneurship (Axiom Book Awards), a Silver Medal in Creative Process (Nautilus Book Awards) and as the Runner-up in Business for the Eric Hoffer Award.
- The book was published in the fall of 2016 by Daymark Press.
- Notably, *The Language of Man* includes in-depth interviews with 66 MacArthur Fellow 'Genius' Award winners.



Description: A deliberate pause is that conscious moment in which we open our minds and ask, "Why are things the way they are?" and wonder aloud, "How could life be better?" It is a natural and uniquely human inclination. It's also the critical factor that sparks fresh ideas and is seized by entrepreneurs to catalyze seismic changes—ones that allow humanity to progress. *A Deliberate Pause* sheds a whole new light on why this little-known insight is the key to lasting entrepreneurial success.

More:

- Among *ADP's* honors are a First Horizons Finalist Award for 'superior debut author,' an International Book Award in Leadership, and a Hoffer Legacy Finalist Award for books that stand the test of time.
- *A Deliberate Pause* was published by Morgan James Publishing in 2009.

Great Question and Larry Robertson

Possible Talking Points, Interview Questions

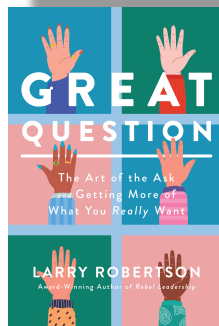
As a show guest, Larry Robertson is more than just the expertise he brings:

- He seeks to **match what he knows with the show**, the host and the audience
- He's **selective** about the interviews he does
- Larry **prepares and customizes** to the host's style and objectives
- He delivers in ways that are **fresh and distinct**
- He's able to stay high level and action-oriented, or to dig in deep

In short, **he seeks to be a partner with the interviewer and show** so that everyone walks away better for the exchange.

Questions and Topics:

- **What drove your desire to write this book?**
(Fun fact: I tried to talk myself out of it)
- **What *is* a question – and why does it matter that we know the answer?**
(the answer is BIG)
- **Why did you interview the 140 experts you did?**
(their range is both wide and deep)
- **Don't we already know all we need to know about questions?**
- **Where did the 5 elements of 'the art of the ask' come from, and what the big take-away?**
- **Was there a most interesting or unexpected finding in your research?**
(the answer to is: plenty)
- **Why did the people you interviewed agree to talk to you?**
(Fun fact: more than 95% were cold calls)
- **Tell us about the Great Question Toolkit and why it's so important?**



Larry is **happy to work with you** to craft the discussion to meet your needs.