

Conversation starters for manager-employee 1:1 meetings

As a manager, you play an integral role in ensuring lines of communication between yourself and your employees remain open and healthy. One way to do this is by ensuring you and your employees participate in regular, meaningful one-on-one meetings. But sometime, it can be difficult to know how to start the conversation — and keep it going.

Here are some questions to keep conversations relevant, focused and valuable.

ENGAGEMENT:

Description	Questions
<p>Asking employees job-related questions can increase engagement while at the same time conveying just how important employees are to the organization.</p> <p>Use these questions to zero in on what's important to your employee, including what motivates/demotivates, what they like/dislike about their job and what they need to be successful.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> What things de-motivate you at work? <input type="checkbox"/> What talents or skills do you have that you aren't using often enough in your work today? <input type="checkbox"/> If you could change one thing about your work, your role, or your responsibilities, what would it be? <input type="checkbox"/> What type of support or assistance would help you to do your job better? <input type="checkbox"/> What are the pressures/issues that affect your daily work? <input type="checkbox"/> What aspect of your work do you think is most worthy of recognition or praise? <input type="checkbox"/> What do you find most rewarding about your current work/role? <input type="checkbox"/> What do you enjoy least/most about your job/work? <input type="checkbox"/> What would make your job easier? More fulfilling? <input type="checkbox"/> What do you need from me that you are not getting? <input type="checkbox"/> If your role changed completely, what would you miss the most?

Goals:

Description	Questions
<p>Effective goal alignment and management requires a regular continuous dialogue between managers and employees to see what's on track, what's not —and determine what support is needed.</p> <p>If you'd like to have a goal-focused meeting with your employee, here are some questions that can help drive the discussion.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> How do you feel your goals progressing? <input type="checkbox"/> Are any of your goals causing concern to you? <input type="checkbox"/> What could I start or stop doing to help you achieve your goals? <input type="checkbox"/> What barriers are preventing you from achieving your goals? <input type="checkbox"/> What skill gaps do you see, that, if left unattended, may prevent you from reaching your goals?

Career Development:

Description	Questions
<p>Employees need to know they have the opportunity to progress in their careers and expand or enhance their knowledge, skills and experience.</p> <p>Gain a deeper understanding of employees' aspirations and career goals by asking these questions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> In thinking about your long-term career, what's most important to you? <input type="checkbox"/> What are your career aspirations — short and long term? <input type="checkbox"/> What do you need me to do to help you on your career path? <input type="checkbox"/> What training, skills and development do you see as helping you in your career progression? <input type="checkbox"/> Would you be interested in working with or becoming a mentor? <input type="checkbox"/> Are there other areas of the business you would like to learn more about?

LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT:

Description	Questions
<p>Today, employees expect the organization to commit to developing and enriching their skills and experiences. The result?</p> <p>Improved engagement and retention.</p> <p>Start your discussion about learning and development by asking employees what they want and need.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> What would you like to learn more about? <input type="checkbox"/> What might be one area for development that would allow you to perform more effectively? <input type="checkbox"/> What types of training or development opportunities would interest you in the weeks and months to come? <input type="checkbox"/> How do you learn best? <input type="checkbox"/> Would you like to participate in a special work project?

LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT:

Description	Questions
<p>Special focus on a recent project can help you learn more about your employee and also help your employees learn more about themselves.</p> <p>Use these experience- / project-related to demonstrate your interest in your employees and to gain deeper insight into them.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> What was most challenging about a recent project/experience? <input type="checkbox"/> Do you think the project was a success? <input type="checkbox"/> Looking at a recent project/experience, where do you see opportunities to improve the process (or quality, timing, etc.) <input type="checkbox"/> What most surprised you while working on a recent project? <input type="checkbox"/> What would you do differently next time?

Coaching Conversation Guide

Coaches instruct, train, develop, assist and support ongoing performance. They use an effective feedback process to direct and redirect work efforts and behaviors. When coaching your employees, you help them gain self-awareness and insight into their demonstrated behavior. Successful coaching helps the employee understand what behaviors they should continue and which do not support their development.

Here are some tips for effective coaching conversations.

Coaching Tips for Reinforcing Successful Behaviors:

- Focus on one successful behavior.
- Recount the successful behavior, its outcomes and impacts in detail to the employee
- Use a specific example.
- Point out the elements that contributed to the result being such a success.
- Work with the employee to identify the root causes for this successful behavior.
- Brainstorm with the employee about ways that the behavior can be replicated in other circumstances.
- Describe the benefits of this behavior and your confidence in the employee's ability to continue to demonstrate it.

Coaching Tips for Addressing Poor Performance:

- Focus on one specific behavior that you consider to be poor performance.
- Rather than describing in detail the behavior that is causing lower-than-desired performance, describe one thing the employee could do differently to achieve greater success.
- Describe the benefits of this new, desired behavior and your confidence in the employee's ability to demonstrate it.
- Use specific examples.
- Listen carefully and be open to the employee's perspective without judgment.
- Involve the employee in identifying how they can master and apply the new, desired behavior.
- If required, draft a mutually agreeable development plan.
- Document key elements of this discussion.

Coaching Tips for Following up on Poor Performance:

- Ensure that you have gathered sufficient evidence of demonstrated behavior and results: direct observation, specific work results, reports and records, feedback shared from others.
- Review the initial discussion around poor performance, and commend any progression made by the employee in demonstrating the new, desired behavior as well as on their development or performance improvement plan.
- Engage the employee in discussions about why an improvement in behavior may still be insufficient; look for reasons why.
- Describe again, in detail, the desired behavior and when/how it should be exhibited.
- Discuss consequences of poor performance (these should be consistent across the organization), and agree on next steps.
- Check in with employee to ensure they have all the support and resources they believe necessary to help them change their behavior; allocate as required.
- Set dates for improvement milestones.
- Continuously communicate your confidence in the employee and your support of their development.

Feedback Template

For feedback to be effective, it must be given in the right spirit, and with a goal of helping the employee to develop and be more effective. Before you give an employee feedback, ensure you've met the following pre- conditions for success.

Here are some tips for effective coaching conversations.

Before Your Share Feedback, Confirm:

- Focus on one successful behavior.
- Recount the successful behavior, its outcomes and impacts in detail to the employee
- Use a specific example.
- Point out the elements that contributed to the result being such a success.
- Work with the employee to identify the root causes for this successful behavior.
- Brainstorm with the employee about ways that the behavior can be replicated in other circumstances.
- Describe the benefits of this behavior and your confidence in the employee's ability to continue to demonstrate it.
- Document notes of this discussion.
- Watch for and praise repeated demonstration of the successful behavior.

The Feedback Dialogue:

Giving the feedback:

<p>Identify the specific behavior you want to talk about:</p>	
<p>Give examples:</p>	
<p>Describe your experience and interpretation of the behavior, being sensitive to the impact of your message: For example: "When you did x, I thought you were..."</p>	
<p>Check your assumptions: For example: ·Am I missing some information? ·Am I misunderstanding what transpired?</p>	
<p>Ask the employee for their suggestions on what they did well and should continue to do, and what they could do differently to be more effective: For example: If you were going to do it again, what would you do the same and what would you do differently?</p>	
<p>Provide your suggestions on what the employee did well and should continue to do, and how the employee could act differently to be more effective:</p>	

Development Planning:

What, if any, development activities could help the employee become more effective?	
What coaching/mentoring/role-playing support can you commit to providing?	

After you've shared feedback:

Encourage reflection with a few questions:

For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none">•Did it go as planned?•How did you feel about the interaction?•What did you learn from this event?•How do you think x felt?	
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Summarize what you've discussed, learned and agreed to as an action plan.