



# Performance Conversations Toolkit

# Conversations toolbox



There are generally 3 types of conversation that we should all have with our line manager or with our team members;

1. The check - in conversation
2. The reward conversation
3. The career conversation

However, there is a further type which hopefully we do not have to have often, but if something is going wrong;

4. The difficult conversation

The conversations toolbox is designed to help conversations flow as we adapt to having performance conversations. There are no complicated forms or training modules, just simple human conversation starters which can be led by individuals or line managers.

## Top Tips For Use:



The toolbox is for everyone to familiarise themselves with, including line manager guidance. Everyone is encouraged to read it!

Try to not read the toolkit guide as a script it may seem disingenuous. Begin with 1 or 2 conversation starters and see where the conversation takes you...



Don't worry about having the perfect conversation – we are only human.

# The Check-In Conversation



Designed to be simple, owned by individuals. It is a perfect opportunity to agree priorities, discuss recent work and receive feedback and coaching from your line manager.

Agree a structure/ frequency with your line manager that works for you both; typically these should be 30mins at least once a month.

## Meeting tips:

- Individuals - don't wait to be asked by your line manager for a check-in; request and arrange it yourself, **you own your performance!**
- If you want to talk about something else – career, health etc just say/ask.
- Individuals record their check-in/actions in a way that works for them. No formal record is needed.
- Meetings do not need to be overly long – little and often can be better.
- Give it your undivided attention, turn off phones/emails.
- Check-ins can happen anywhere – over video call, call, outside of the office.



## Team member conversation starters:

- Let me share what I've been up to...
- How do you think I did at that meeting/event last week? I thought... went well but could have done better at...
- Is there anything else I should be focussing on?
- How am I doing in general?
- Is there anything I should be doing differently?
- Can I ask for your support on something?



## Line manager conversation starters:

- How are things going? Tell me what you are working on?
- How do you feel about things right now?
- How can we make better use of your strengths?
- Can I share what I think you are achieving in your goals?
- What can I do differently to make work better for you?
- Let me share what I know about how the business is doing..
- Do we need to change any of your team goals?
- Let me tell you what I thought you did fantastically this week.
- If there's one thing I would like to see you do more of/less of it's....



# The Reward Conversation



Having a discussion about pay can be awkward, but it is an important discussion to have – the more open and honest the better. Reward is not just about pay, there are other options to recognise and delight individuals such as on the spot rewards for a job well done that are thoughtful and tailored to the individual eg. time off, vouchers, personal gift also never forget the power of sending personal notes of appreciation! Whilst we want to invest in our reward structures this goes hand in hand with our profitability and if trading conditions allow investment.

Suggested timing: at least annually.

## Meeting preparation:

- Line managers should be able to articulate our approach to reward and consider what is within their control.
- Reflect on what matters most to you/ or the team member and what they most value or need at this point.
- Consider what contribution you or the individual is making now and expectations for the future.
- Individuals should consider what matters to me today eg. Flexibility, money, development and how would you like to be recognised for what you do?
- Individuals reflect on whether they do really want more money or do you want to feel more valued? It is an important distinction to think through before any discussion.



## Team member conversation starters:

- How would you sum up my contribution?
- Can you tell me how I stack up against my peers?
- What is the approach to pay and reward here?
- The most valuable thing to me at the moment is... eg. Cash, development, time off, new responsibility...
- These are the changes I would like to see in my reward package and why.
- What do I need to do to make a valuable contribution in the future?



## Line manager conversation starters:

- Let me explain our approach to reward here...
- How are you feeling about your reward package in general?
- Do you think your reward reflects your contribution and if not why?
- This is where I see your reward package at the moment...
- Let me tell you what I am proposing and why..
- Which things matter most to you in your life right now? (security, flexibility, development etc.)
- What concerns do you have about your reward?
- To achieve a higher level of reward you would need to.... (develop these skills, be prepared to move, take on more responsibility etc.)



# The Career Conversation



Inflexible career ladders and a “one size fits all” approach to career development is now irrelevant and impossible. Career development today is about playing to your strengths, getting exposure to new skills and trying new things. A career conversation assists in discovering what is important to an individual, what their strengths are and how we can support you to play to them. Individuals may be people orientated and be fantastic with people, others may play to the strengths by being a true expert in their area of expertise; there are no moulds or rules to follow when it comes to career moves!

Suggested timing: 30min – 1hr quarterly

## Meeting Tips:

- Individuals own their career – don’t wait for someone to set one up, do it yourself!
- Line managers will champion advancement, be known for opening doors and connecting people whilst being honest and transparent about opportunities.
- Individuals consider what aspects of their job they are good at and love.
- Be creative in how to/ or support others to develop new skills or be happier in what they do...eg. projects, shadowing, consider a mentor.
- A career conversation does not have to be about changing roles, why not focus on how you/they can be better at what they do today?



## Team member conversation starters:

- Can I share my aspirations – short and long term?
- These are some of the things I’ve been doing recently to develop and learn.
- Can we discuss my strengths and how I can make better use of them?
- Can you help me understand how I progress to...?
- I am thinking a sideways move to... would be good for my development – what do you think?
- I have been thinking about what I want to learn next and want to discuss ideas with you.
- Would you be able to introduce me to a mentor who could help me develop in.... ?



## Line manager conversation starters:

- Tell me about your aspirations short and long term?
- How have you grown in the last few months?
- How can we take advantage of opportunities in your current position to learn new skills?
- Let me tell you what I think are your biggest strengths and how we can utilise them.
- Let’s think about what we can do now to help you with your future aspirations.
- What makes you stay here?
- I think a sideways move to... would be great for you right now.
- Lets discuss ideas of how you might get that development.
- Is there anyone I could introduce you to who could help you?



# The Difficult Conversation



A difficult conversation is tough for both the individual and the line manager, how individuals respond will make all the difference to the outcome. We are a business where we nip issues in the bud and discuss things openly.

Suggested timing: when necessary

## Team member conversation starters:

- I know that piece of work was due last week but I am struggling with it, can you help me?
- I just don't feel that I'm playing to my strengths and it's demotivating me. Are we able to discuss options?
- If I could get some support with .... I really think it would help.
- What do you think I could do differently, so I can get back on track?



## Meeting Tips:

- Be honest about the ideal outcome of the meeting. Prepare specific examples of the issue to be discussed.
- If you know what the conversation is going to be about, take ownership and lead by sharing your thoughts first – you are your best critic and you will feel less guarded.
- Line managers will be giving you feedback because they want you to succeed, it is natural to be defensive when we hear something we do not like; take time out to reflect.
- Provide specific examples when delivering feedback, avoid feedback sandwiches to soften the message, be kind with your language, transparent and straightforward.
- Take responsibility; if you do not like your job or something is bothering you, do something about it.
- All feedback is subjective and the individual may not agree with it, or think it's fair. Try and accept it is their view and work together to put things right.



## Line manager conversation starters:

- The piece of work you agreed to deliver was due last week. How are you getting on?
- You seem unhappy to me so I wanted to have a chat to find out what is wrong and see what we can do?
- How do you think work is going at the moment? .... Are you struggling with this work? Lets talk about what we can do and how I can help.
- I am not sure this is the right role for you because.. So let's talk about what we can do.

