

5 Conversation Tools for Managers

This guide is for managers looking to level up their relationships with their team members. After reviewing Gallup's research and recommendations, we put together these resources to help you get started.

The 5 Conversations:

1) Role and Relationship Conversation: The Foundation for Performance and Development

In this initial conversation with your people, you align on expectations for their role, how they fit into the larger organizational picture, and goals towards their success.

Cadence: one time upon hire or as needed

2) Quick Connect: Engaging Conversation

Quick connects are informal human connection points – think water cooler or coffee pot chats.

Cadence: casually throughout the work week

3) Check-In: Discuss Priorities and Progress

The check-in is the more formal 1:1 many managers are familiar with.

Cadence: At least monthly, more frequent is better

4) Developmental Coaching: In-the-Moment Feedback

This fourth conversation is all about providing your people with meaningful feedback in real time that they can use to develop and perform.

Cadence: in the moment / when needed

5) Progress on Goals: Achievements and Future Growth

This final conversation invites your people to reflect on the past and paint a vision for the future.

Cadence: annually

Role + Relationship Conversation

Name:

Title:

Top 5 Strengths:

Items to review:

- Review the job description and expectations of the role
- Review the company values and yearly goals
- How does this role help the company achieve its goals?
- Ask how this person likes to receive feedback?
- Share your relationship rhythms (i.e. how often you will meet, what will be discussed etc.)

Quick Connect

Name:

Questions to Consider

What are some hobbies you do outside of work?

Who are some of the important people in your life?

What are some of your current favorite shows, books, podcasts, musicians?

What is bringing you life right now?

What are the names of your pets/children/partners?

What is your go-to snack or treat to get you through the day?

The Check-In

Check-in with:

Date/Time:

Suggested Time: min. of 30 min

Connection – I care about you.

- o "How are you right now?"
- o "What is going on in life outside of work for you?"
- o "How are the important people in your life?"
- o Check in on past hobbies, activities, people mentioned in previous connections.

Notes:

Status Updates - Key projects or programs

- o Updates on project/programs/tasks/action items from the last 1:1.
- o "What other issues, challenges, updates can we discuss?"
- o If issues arise, make a note in Issues to discuss.

Goal Progress - Hitting established goals

- o On track or off track 90 day goal?
 - On track = goal is on course to be fully completed by due date
 - Off track = something is hindering the progress of this goal
- o If off track: "Is it helpful to discuss and problem-solve together?"

| On Track | Off Track | Goal |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="text"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="text"/> |

Issues / Coaching Areas – Support and Empower

- o "What about this feels stuck right now?"
- o "What have you tried?"
- o "How have you navigated this in the past?"
- o "How can I support you?"

Action Items

- o Clarity around expectations
- o What are your takeaways?

Powerful Questions

“It is not the answer that enlightens, but the question.” – Eugene Ionesco

The Kickstarter.

- What’s on your mind?
- Where’s the best place for us to begin?
- Where’s the most useful place for us to begin?

AWE.

And what else?

Challenge.

- I don’t know: Well what would it be if you did know?
- What would this look like if it were easy?
- What would it take to create change? What might happen?
- Is It worth It?
- How’s that working for you?
- If you’re saying YES to this, what are you saying NO to?
- What’s really going on here?
- What do you not want me to ask you?/What are you afraid that I’ll ask you?

Miracle Questions.

- Suppose that tonight, while you are sleeping, a miracle happens. When you get up in the morning tomorrow, how will you know that things have suddenly become better?
- If success was guaranteed, what bold steps would you take?

Focus.

- What’s the real challenge here for you?
- What really going on here?
- What’s the hard part?
- Who’s it for? What’s it for? Who’s it not for?
- What do you want?

Instead of *Why?*

- What were you hoping for?
- What made you choose this course of action?
- What’s important for you here?

Learning Questions.

- Is there anything (else) you want me to know?
- What was the most useful for you?

Meaningful Feedback

Tenets of Meaningful Feedback

- **Make it timely** – This feedback should be a common occurrence, feeling like an ongoing conversation you are having with your people in the moment as things happen.
- **Keep it focused** – Be super specific. Speak to your people’s strengths, their goals and priorities, and actions and behaviors you see.
- **Look to the future** – Recognize their accomplishments. Connect what you see to what the person might learn from, how they can grow next time, and how they can prepare for the future.

An example of “meaningful feedback” instead of saying “great job on that presentation” could be, “Thanks for bringing the presentation across the finish line. I really saw your talent for responsibility in your preparation. What do you think you are going to take forward with you from this experience for next time?”

Often our people have naturally occurring ideas about how to grow and develop, and all we need to do is be a mirror for their experience and offer them the opportunity to reflect.

Achievements + Future Growth

Use these ten questions as an outline for a yearly discussion on achievements and future growth. You can provide these questions to your people ahead of time and ask them to bring their responses to your meeting, or you can ask them live in your conversation.

- Successes: What are you most proud of in the last 6 months?
- Challenges: What has been most difficult about the last 6 months?
- Learning needs: What do you need/want to learn to improve your work performance?
- Goals: What do you want to achieve in the next 6 months?
- Actions: How will you do these goals?
- Strengths: How can your natural talents and strengths support you in your actions?
- Evaluation: How will you know whether or not you have met your goals?
- Motivation: What makes these goals important to you?
- Future: Looking out 3 years from now, where would you like to be?
- Support: What support do you need from me? From others?