

Quality conversations at Work

Quality conversations are the manager's number one motivation and leadership tool.

Most of our management of employees happens in a conversation. That conversation may be face-to-face, on the phone or by email; it may be planned or happen by chance. However and whenever these conversations take place, they have a huge impact on the employee's engagement with the organization, their level of motivation, and their performance at work.

There are many reasons why managers are unable to make the most of the conversations that they have with their employees. These include:

- ▶▶ time pressures,
- ▶▶ beliefs which limit the manager's scope
- ▶▶ fears about how the employee may react
- ▶▶ lack of appropriate role modeling
- ▶▶ lack of preparation
- ▶▶ lack of appropriate skills

Each of the seven conversations outlined below provides its own unique opportunity to engage with and build up the performance of your employees. Each has its own challenges and good practices.

- The 'Day 1' Conversation fosters the full engagement of new team members.
- The Goal-Setting Conversation fosters continuous development through new challenges.
- The Delegation Conversation ensures the right job is done to the right standard.
- The Feedback Conversation ensures recognition of the employee's performance and enables changes where necessary.
- The Coaching Conversation enables the employee's self-reliance and growth.
- The Performance Management Conversation ensures the fair assessment and recording of performance.
- The Tough Conversation ensures follow-through on commitments made and given.

A series of workshops or coaching sessions can be built, depending on the needs of individual organizations, teams or managers.

Step 1: The Foundation Workshop in Effective Communications (1/2 day)

- The psychological contract – what did the manager and employee sign up for when they joined the organization?
- What do people want at work? – the Gallup Q12 Motivational Factors
- Identifying enabling and limiting beliefs and expectations that drive the manager's behaviour
- Active Listening – the single biggest thing you can do to communicate more effectively
- Assertive behaviour – communicating with concern, clarity and honesty
- The fundamentals of quality conversations at work:
 - ▶▶ The three Cs – clarity concern, consistency
 - ▶▶ The two Is – integrity, insight
 - ▶▶ The single H – honesty

Step 2 – The Seven Conversations – Pick and Mix

While it makes sense to go through the seven conversations in order, organizations can tailor-make the training course that they need.

The Day 1 Conversation (1/4 day)

- The golden opportunity of Day 1 – creating powerful expectations
- Getting the relationship off to the best start
- Creating expectations about performance – and performance management
- Skills practice – role play

The Goal-Setting conversation (1/4 day)

- The golden opportunity of goal-setting – building on progress
- Goal-setting – the Power and the pitfalls • The spirit and the letter of the goal
- Being clever about SMART goals
- How to set SMART goals
- Skills practice – 'spirit and letter' exercise

Delegating Work (1/4 day)

- The golden opportunity of delegation – developing staff
- Why most managers don't delegate enough
- How delegation often goes wrong
- How to delegate so that you get the right results
- Skills practice – case study

Giving Feedback (1/2 day)

- The golden opportunity of giving feedback – focusing on performance
- Why most managers don't give enough feedback
- Why good performance is often overlooked
- Why poor performance is often noticed – but not addressed
- A simple and powerful model for giving feedback
- Turning up the heat if the problem continues
- Skills practice – role play

Coaching (1/2 day)

- The golden opportunity of coaching – to increase employee self-reliance
- Finding opportunities to coach
- Making time to coach
- A simple and powerful coaching model
- Skills practice – role play

The Performance management Conversation (1/2 day)

- The golden opportunity of Performance Management – to review and look forward
- Form-filling exercise or meaningful dialogue?
- No surprises – laying the groundwork throughout the year
- Going into writing – with courage and tact
- Scoring and the link to pay
- Skill practice – case studies, exercises and role play

The Tough Conversation (1/4 day)

- The golden opportunity of the tough conversation – buy-in or opt out
- Keeping it professional – even if it seems personal
- Navigating the grievance and discipline procedures
- Ending on the best possible note
- Skills practice – role play

SPECIALS

- Depending on the situation of individual managers and their teams, the following 'add-ins' can also be incorporated within any of the modules
- Conversations with the team – running effective team meetings
 - Dealing with inappropriate behaviour – aggressive, passive or passive-aggressive
 - When people can't agree – dealing with conflict
 - Inappropriate conversations at work