



DISCUSSING CAREER GOALS

A Handy Guide to Having a Conversation with Your Employee

As a people manager, it is your responsibility to develop your employees, so they can improve their current job performance and prepare for future career opportunities. This guide contains guidelines to make the most out of the goal setting conversation.

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As people managers, we want to create an environment of growth where our employees can develop and continue to progress in their careers. Here are some guidelines and questions to follow to have a meaningful conversation.

A FEW BASICS TO REMEMBER...

- **Discussing your employee's career is not only about the future but also about the present.** This is your opportunity to assist your employee in finding relevant learning experiences to improve current skills to enhance performance in his or her current position. However, by also showing genuine interest in supporting future development, you build trust in your relationship and, frequently, commitment towards what you need to get done today.
- **Creating a solid employee-manager relationship is a process that takes time.** Correct! It is not a single event. Be an active participant in building rapport with your employee. This effort will facilitate all sorts of discussions (not only the career-related ones). This investment will become particularly important if you are talking about difficult issues or bringing up challenging questions.
- **Allow at least one hour of uninterrupted time to have your conversation.** Find the best place to have this meeting. If your office tends to be a high-traffic area, suggest meeting somewhere else that is appropriate and convenient for both of you.
- **It's important to be truthful, but your perceptions are not always "the truth."** People see the same things through a different set of lenses. Therefore, be open to new or different points of view. **Listen actively and intently**, which means being present in the moment, not thinking about your answers while your employee is talking. Put your agenda aside to pay attention to what your employee is really saying.
- **Start the meeting on a positive note.** For example, ask your employee about an exciting project that he or she has thoroughly enjoyed doing or ask him/her to highlight something he/she likes about the current position.
- **Keep in mind what you are there to accomplish: you are jointly creating short and long-term career goals and a related learning plan.** Some actions and choices will be addressing areas of development that may have stemmed or showed in your employee's performance. You are welcome to use it *only* as a reference for growth, but be very tactful on how you do it. If there are performance issues that have been recently brought up or are pending, acknowledge them if they arise, but don't concentrate on them during this discussion. This conversation should focus on action planning related to **professional development**. If you end up focusing on remedial ideas, you are having the wrong discussion. A career development meeting is *not* a performance review.

3. Have you noticed any extraordinary talents that you would like to invite your employee to leverage?
4. Do you have in mind any potential assignments of increased responsibility that you would like to present to your employee?
5. Did you notice any skills that your employee needs to work on or should develop because they are essential for a future position?
6. How do you propose that your employee develop these skills? Does your organization provide training? If not, where can training be obtained?

EMPLOYEE QUESTIONS IN PREPARATION FOR CAREER GOAL SETTING

1. What do I enjoy the most about my job or current position?
2. What was my favorite project in the last six months?
3. What am I passionate about? How does that passion show in my work?
4. What type of work is the most interesting and challenging for me?
5. Do I find my current work rewarding and challenging?
6. What key skills do I use in my current position?

7. What talents do I have that I am not currently leveraging and I would like my manager to know about?

8. In what areas would I like increased responsibility for my current tasks?

9. Identify three to five skills that are crucial to my success in my current position. Within those areas, which ones would I like to improve or develop further? How?

10. Are there any specific topics that I would like to get more education on? How can I tie them to my current position or future career goals?

11. Does my organization provide continuing education? If not, where would I get adequate training?

12. Other points related to my career growth I would like to discuss.