



# SETTING YOUR CAREER GOALS

## A Handy Guide to Having a Conversation with Your Manager

As professionals, we oversee our development, and this guide will assist you in clarifying key points that can serve as the basis for a meaningful conversation with your manager to gain support for advancement in your current position and explore new opportunities.

## Setting Your Career Goals:

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As a motivated individual, it is your responsibility to take charge of your own professional development, which encompasses working on improving the abilities required for your present job and developing new skills to prepare you for upcoming career opportunities.

#### **A FEW BASICS TO REMEMBER...**

- **Discussing your career goals is not only about the future but also about the present.** This is your chance to seek assistance in finding meaningful learning experiences to improve your current skillset to enhance performance in your current position. However, by also showing interest in future development, you demonstrate motivation. By engaging the support of your manager, he or she will also gain your commitment towards what needs to get done today.
- **Creating a solid employee-manager relationship is a process: it takes time to build, and it is not a single event.** Be an active participant in building rapport with your manager. 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 or, perhaps, out-of-the-ordinary requests.
- **Allow at least one hour of uninterrupted time to have your conversation.** Find the best place to have this meeting. If your manager's office tends to be a high-traffic area, suggest meeting somewhere else that is appropriate and convenient for both.
- **It's important to be truthful, but your perceptions are not always "the truth."** People see the same things through different sets of lenses. Therefore, be open to new or different points of view. *Listen actively and intently*, which means being present in the moment and not thinking about your answers while your manager is talking. Try putting your agenda aside to pay attention to what he or she is sharing – a thought, an observation or a suggestion.
- **Start the meeting on a positive note.** For example, talk with your manager about an exciting project that you have really enjoyed doing or highlight something you like about your current position, duties, responsibilities, or assignments.
- **Keep in mind what you want to accomplish during your meeting.** You are jointly creating short and long-term career goals and a related development plan for yourself. Some actions and choices will be addressing areas of development that may have stemmed or showed in your job performance. Be open to feedback as it relates to learning and improving but be careful not to get derailed into a different kind of conversation.

- **If there are performance issues that have recently been 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.
- **Be creative! Some of the chosen *action steps* or *activities* might not be classes.** Learning occurs outside of the classroom. Nowadays, there is so much available: live and on-demand online courses, videos, independent learning projects, on-the-job training, special training assignments, off-site visits, and informational interviews are just a few examples. Suggest and pick learning that is interactive, experiential, and fun. Remember that professionalism and fun are compatible.
- **Be mindful of your career stage and generational differences.** These might have an impact on your professional development choices and decisions you make as you put together your plan, craft goals, and choose related learning activities.

### **PREPARATION IS KEY! QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT BEFORE YOUR MEETING**

Take the time to think through and complete the questions below in preparation for your meeting. Your pay off will be proportional to your time and effort investment!

To assist you in preparing for your meeting, write down your answers to the questions below:

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 things (or values) are important to me? Which values are met or not met at work? Is there something that me or my manager can do to change the ones that are not met?

4. If I had to choose among working with people, data, or hands-on activities, which mixture would make me the happiest? Why?
  
5. What am I passionate about? How does that passion show in my work?
  
6. What type of work is the most interesting and challenging for me?
  
7. Do I find my current work rewarding and challenging?
  
8. What key skills do I use in my current position?
  
9. What talents do I have that I am not currently leveraging and I would like my manager to know about?

10. What is my personality profile or preferred style? (e.g. True Colors, MBTI, DiSC). How do I bring my strengths to the work that I do?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
11. In what areas would I like increased responsibility for my current tasks?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
12. 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?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
13. 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?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
14. Does my organization provide continuing education? If not, where would I get adequate training?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
15. Other points related to my career growth I would like to discuss.