



Conversation Starters

5 FOCUSED Conversations for Greater Employee Engagement & Productivity

Conversation Starters



The following pages contain suggested questions and conversation starters for each of the 5 FOCUSed Conversations™ and the exercises that accompany them.

These are simply suggestions.



You may not be comfortable with some or may find them inappropriate for your environment.

That's okay. Use these as examples to devise your own. We encourage you to make these conversations personal, using your own style as well as that of your individual staff members.



The Career Development Conversation



What happens during the Career Development Conversation?

Our career development process consists of 5 steps:

1. Alleviate small frustrations before they turn into big thorns in your side, infecting every other aspect of how you feel about your job (Fall in Love with My Job Again Exercise).
2. Understand and play to your strengths (Strengths Module).
3. Understand and evaluate what you value in your job and career (Career Values Exercise).
4. Ensure that your professional goals support and align with your personal goals and make a plan to achieve your professional goals (1-3 Year Career Plan).
5. Be able to get back on course when you are inevitably knocked off of it (currently beyond the scope of this program).

Your organization may have a career development process and resources to help you and your team. If they do, by all means, use that.

However, the exercises contained in this program can supplement what your organization already provides.

The Conversation Starters for The Career Development Conversation relate to each of the three individual exercises provided in this program but provide alternatives for individuals who do not complete the exercise.



Fall In Love With My Job Again™ Exercise

Instructions

The Fall In Love With My Job Again Exercise can be a very powerful exercise to give someone if you sense they are getting frustrated by something work related. This exercise can get them into a more neutral state of mind by addressing small frustrations before they grow into big challenges that cause them to make more rash decisions about their career.

It is designed for the team member to complete on their own as they may feel strange completing it with or in front of you. The intention is to give them the autonomy to address any frustrations themselves. They may or may not want to talk to you about any of the frustrations they identified. Either way is fine.

Give them the exercise to complete 1 - 2 weeks before the One to One.

Conversation Starters when you give them the exercise

- I'm going to be giving you an exercise to complete before our next One to One. It's called the Fall In Love With My Job Again Exercise and it's a mini-stock take to help you assess and address any small frustrations you might be having before they grow into big pains in your side.
- You don't have to share anything with me, but we will be talking about it during our next One to One, and I'd really like you to give this some serious thought before we meet.

Conversation Starters during One to One

Your conversation around this exercise begins with a few simple questions, but depending on what these challenges are, the conversation can become quite involved.

Experience shows this is one of the most rich and deep conversations managers can have with their team. The smallest things really do make the biggest difference!

- How did you go with the Fall In Love With My Job Again Exercise?
- Did you discover any frustrations that surprised you?
- Did you identify anything that you can fix yourself?
- Do you need my help with anything?
- Is there anything that you'd like to talk with me about personally?
- What else would you like to say about this?



What if they don't complete the exercise?

No problem! These exercises are highly encouraged but not mandatory. You can simply ask the following questions.

- Sometimes we just get used to things that bother us instead of taking the time to fix them. I'd like to give you a chance to think about things that might be bothering you that would be simple to fix and then give you the opportunity to fix it yourself or to find out what I can do to help.
 - Think about things that might be frustrating you now. It can be anything; your relationship with me or with your colleagues, the work you do or how you do it, your work environment, the company, policies, procedures. It can even be as simple as your desk or work station set up.
 - What can you do to resolve this frustration?
 - How can I help?
 - What else? (Repeat above).



Career Values Exercise

Instructions

The Career Values Exercise gives you another lens through which to help your team member look at their job or career by identifying those things that are a Must Have, Nice to Have or something they Must Not Have.

Without thinking about their current role, ask them to place an X in one of the three columns on the spreadsheet for each value listed.

You want to pay special attention to any Must Have values which they do not have in their current role, or any Must Not Have that they do.

The team member can either complete it on their own or with you during your One to One.

If they complete it on their own, give them the exercise 1 - 2 weeks before the One to One and ask them to bring it with them to your meeting.

Conversation Starters when you give them the exercise

- I'm going to be giving you an exercise to complete before our next One to One. It's called the Career Values Exercise, and it's a simple spreadsheet where you evaluate a number of things related to your job or career and tick whether these are things that you Must Have, would be Nice to Have or something you Must Not Have in your job or career.

Do not think about your current role when you are completing this exercise. When we sit down during the One to One, we will discuss your Must Haves and Must Not Haves.

Conversation Starters during One to One

- How did you go with the Career Values Exercise?
- Are there any Must Haves that you don't have in your current role?
 - If so, is there anything we can do to help you get these?
- Are there any Must Not Haves that you do have in your current role?
 - If so, is there anything we can do to eliminate these?



What if they don't complete the exercise?

No problem! These exercises are highly encouraged but not mandatory. You can simply ask the following questions after showing them the exercise.

- I want to talk about the things that you truly value in a job or career. I'm going to show you a list of potential items.
- Is there anything on this list that you feel you must have that you are not getting here?
 - If so, is there anything we can do to help you get these?
- Is there anything on this list that you feel you absolutely must not have in your job but that you do have here?
 - If so, is there anything we can do to eliminate these?



1-3 Year Career Plan

Instructions

Feel free to use the simple 1 - 3 year career plan that we've developed, or use your own. Either way, you may find the following questions quite effective in drawing information out around their professional goals.

Give them the exercise 1 - 2 weeks before the One to One and ask them to bring it with them to your meeting.

Conversation Starters when you give them the exercise

- During our next One to One, I'd like to talk about your career development. I really want to make sure that we work together to help you achieve your goals because the happier you are at work, the more successful and productive you'll be, and the better your relationship with the entire team will be.

Here is a simple career plan I'd like you to fill out before the meeting. You don't have to share your personal goals with me if you don't want to. But it's important that your professional goals help you achieve your personal goals, so I want to encourage you to give those some serious thought.

Then fill in the boxes on this exercise.

Please give serious thought to why you want to achieve each goal. I want to make sure that these are actually your goals and not what you think you should want to achieve or what you think I want you to say.

Conversation Starters during One to One

What are your current professional goals? **OR**

- Where do you see yourself in the company or industry (even if outside of the company) within 1 - 3 years?
- For each one:
 - Why is this important to you?
 - Will it help you achieve your personal goals?
 - What training, development or experience will you need to achieve it?
 - How will you get this?
 - What can we do to support you?



Sometimes you might want to drill down a bit further:

- Do you see yourself managing staff? Why or why not?
- If you could move into any other department or function, where would you move and why?
- Are there additional responsibilities or projects you'd like to take on? Why?
- What else can we do to help you grow professionally?

What if they don't complete the exercise?

No problem! These exercises are highly encouraged but not mandatory. You can simply ask the following questions after showing them the exercise.

- Today I'd like to talk a bit about your career development. I really want to make sure that we work together to help you achieve your goals because the happier you are at work, the more successful and productive you'll be and the better your relationship with the entire team will be.
- Have you set personal goals for yourself? If not, I'd encourage you to do so because I want to make sure that your professional goals align with your personal ones. I don't need to know what those are, just that your professional goals are congruent with and support your personal ones.
- What are your professional goals? Where do you see yourself in the company or industry within one to three years?
- How would you rate yourself (most to least important?)
 - I want to climb as far as I can on the career ladder
 - I want to successfully manage work around family
 - I want to do interesting work with people I like at a company I can back
- Do you see yourself managing staff? Why or why not?
- If you could move into any other department or function, where would you move and why?
- Are there additional responsibilities or projects you'd like to take on? Why?
- What can we do to help you grow professionally?

