

7 steps to having effective career conversations with employees

If you want to bring out the best in your employees, you must support their growth as both employees and individuals.

These seven action points will help guide HR professionals in how best to initiate and manage effective career conversations with employees.



1 Be mindful to ensure your colleague feels comfortable and supported

Role responsibilities have shifted and some workers may feel their career progression has slowed due to the pandemic and remote working. It's important to make employees feel comfortable during career discussions to ensure a positive and productive outcome. If talking points are received negatively or with frustration, employees can close off emotionally.

2 Define practical frameworks to make employees more receptive to feedback

Employees may never have received effective career support before. Recognising contributions, facilitating projects that provide challenge and growth, encouraging directional development, and providing reassurance are key steps to laying a solid foundation where more challenging subjects can be discussed.

3 Tailor career support to each individual

The emotional needs and preferences of employees vary hugely so it is important to tailor career conversations to each individual case. Where one employee may thrive through autonomy at work, another may prize psychological safety through regular check-ins, goal alignments, and a clear path to advancing their career.

4 Use your whole business ecosystem to support career development

Managers, HR and individuals all have a role to play to truly enable careers, so each party needs the appropriate focus. Make sure employees and line managers are aware of internal initiatives which can benefit the individual's career progression. Career coaching, interaction with other teams, learning and development opportunities, and supporting goals go hand-in-hand with wider HR programmes such as mentoring schemes, stretch assignments, and internal show-and-share networking events.

5 Use mapping exercises to help employees identify their career position

Mapping activities can help employees gain a greater perspective on their career. Employees can then place or rank themselves in these areas, providing a visually-reinforced understanding of their present state from which to move forward.

6 Use frameworks like SOAR to help employees identify strengths and achievements

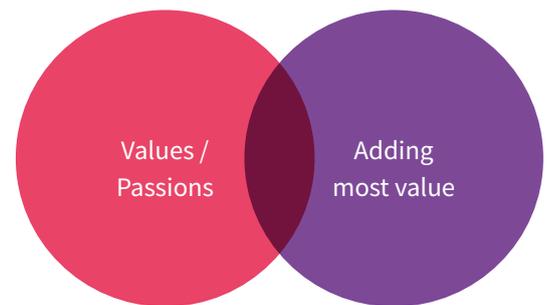
Without support, many employees struggle to celebrate their achievements at work. HR can encourage this by using SOAR, a strategic planning framework that focuses on outcomes and actions.

- ▶ Situations recalled
- ▶ Obstacles remembered
- ▶ Actions noted
- ▶ Results specified.

This can act as a launchpad for reconsidering talents and goals for redeployment. Use SOAR to help energise, encourage and refocus employees at a critical stage in their careers.

7 Focus on both aspects of the career sweet spot

The Sweet Spot model is effective in encouraging employees to consider their passions, positive attributes, and where they feel they can add the most value in their careers. Using Venn diagrams as a visual aid, employees can map both their passions and understanding of their value to see where these two areas overlap. To support this activity, HR can implement workshops where staff are encouraged to consider their priorities in terms of achievements, creativity, helpfulness, responsibility, service, freedom and talent.



Loves technology
but can't code

Great
with people

Head of sales for an IT firm

The career sweet spot is where these two areas interact, e.g. Head of sales for an IT company for an individual with these values and skills.

Kickstart successful career conversations

Focus on compassion as you guide employees through tailored career decision-making. If HR professionals and managers recognise contributions and enable growth on an employee's terms, they can accelerate career development while supporting an employee's wellbeing.

