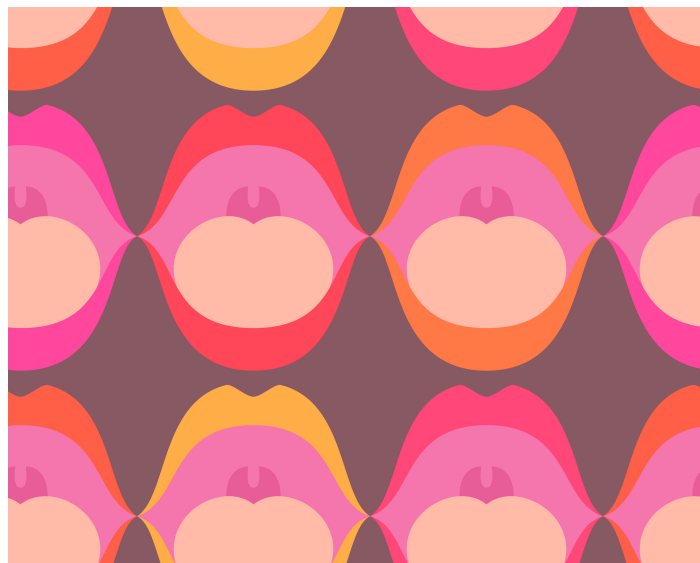




**4 Must Have Conversations
Every Manager Needs To Have**
Handout Notes



Academi**Wales**



THE 4 MUST-HAVE CONVERSATIONS EVERY MANAGER NEEDS TO HAVE

“TO EFFECTIVELY COMMUNICATE, WE MUST REALISE THAT WE ARE ALL DIFFERENT IN THE WAY WE PERCEIVE THE WORLD AND USE THIS UNDERSTANDING AS A GUIDE TO OUR COMMUNICATION WITH OTHERS.”

TONY ROBBINS

1. The Expectation Conversation

The purpose of an expectation conversation is to help the person succeed. What do we need to know to succeed in this organisation, role, or project? When we explain expectations, we give each other context and align on what success looks like. An expectation conversation is a must-have when we start a new job, have a new manager or start a new project. Also, people’s expectations can change. We operate in very dynamic and fluid environments, which can result in changing expectations, so it can be helpful to initiate this conversation every few months.

There are four sets of expectations to be covered:



i. My Expectations:

This is your expectations as the manager in relation to the individual and their work.

➤ **Goals: What are the goals of the project/role, and my own goals?**

Consider:

- What is success in this role or project?
- What does below average, good and great performance look like here?
- What is important to me about this role or project?
- What would I like you to learn from this role or project? How would I like you to develop?

➤ **Ways of Working Preferences: What are my preferences in terms of ways of working? What do I need to be able to do my best work?**

Consider:

- Management needs and communication preferences: How, when and what? (e.g. when should pre-read material be sent to you)
- Learning preferences: How do I like to learn?
- Ways of working style (e.g. stimulated by ideas, collaborator, reflector).
- What are my values, which influence how I work?
- What are my standards at work? (e.g. time-keeping, response rates, grammar).

➤ **Responsibilities: What are their responsibilities and yours? What will you hold them to account for?**

Consider:

- What am I responsible for in this role/team/project?
- What is the decision-making process?
- What is the budget and how is it to be managed?
- What are the delivery requirements and timings?

ii. Their Expectations:

This is the same conversation as the one above but from the other person's perspective. For example: What do you need from this organisation and me to enable you to be successful? Where do you want to be, in 1, 5 and 10 years' time, in your career? What do I need to know about you to help you reach your potential?

Notice where you align and where there are differences, and then contract (i.e. agree) how best to move forward on these points.

iii. The Organisation's Expectations:

What do you need to know about this organisation to be successful in this role or project?

➤ **The Organisation's Culture**

Consider:

- What do you need to do, and how do you need to be successful here?
- What are the standards here?
- What are the values here?
- What are the elephants in the room that you need to be aware of?

➤ **The Organisation's Goals**

Consider:

- The organisation's vision and mission.
- The organisation's priorities and strategy (and this will change).

iv. Specific Stakeholder Expectations:

What do they need to know about specific stakeholders and the wider ecosystem they operate in to be successful in their role and in projects?

➤ **Specific Internal Stakeholders:**

Consider:

- Tell them how, in your experience, to work most effectively with person X or department Y.
- Tell them what has worked well in the past with person X and department Y.

➤ **The Wider Stakeholder Ecosystem**

Consider:

- External organisations
- Customers/Consumers/Clients
- Networks
- Government

When we take the time to do this, people understand what and why something is important.

2. The Feedback Conversation

“TRUE INTUITIVE EXPERTISE IS LEARNED FROM PROLONGED EXPERIENCE WITH GOOD FEEDBACK ON MISTAKES.”

Daniel Kahneman

Feedback can come in two forms:

- **Feedback** - when one person gives helpful information to support the other person. Typically focused on the past.
- **Feedforward** – when one person gives helpful information to support the other person for something in the future.

i. **Feedback**

Giving feedback requires preparation and practice. Feedback can be positive as well as constructive. Feedback needs to be:

- **Specific**

It needs to be as specific as possible for it to be meaningful. Consider the difference in the following two sentences:

‘You had a great meeting with Julie; well done.’

‘You were very effective in the meeting with Julie. You put forward your point of view succinctly and clearly, so she could understand the background to the decision full. Well done.’

The first sentence is like wallpaper to the recipient. The second sentence enables the person to understand what it was about their behaviour specifically which led to a great meeting – so they can replicate it in future meetings.

- **Timely**

Always give feedback as soon as you can. It allows the moment to be fresh in the person’s mind. It allows them to learn and, if appropriate, to action your feedback as soon as possible. When feedback is left for a longer period of time, there is a possibility that there may be a difference in the interpretation of the events that the feedback is based on.

- **Generous**

This is about being human. The word feedback leaves many with a cold chill; it can trigger the brain to believe that something negative is about to be said. Be generous in your words and what you say. Consider what the best language to use is. For example, the word ‘encouragement’ has more positive connotations than the word ‘feedback’. Consider where and when it might be most appropriate to give the feedback.

To give effective feedback, follow this three-part sequence:



- 1) **Observable behaviour:** A clear, data-based statement about the recipient's concrete, observable behaviour, presented in a factual way.

e.g. When you handed in the policy document late on Wednesday, it was the second document that you had handed in late this month...

- 2) **Impact of the behaviour:** Information about why the feedback is important to the recipient, to the organisation, and to you.

e.g. The impact on me was that I had to stay late to review it and it went to the senior management team a day late, which makes the department look unprofessional...

- 3) **Preferred behaviour:** Ideas about alternative behaviour so the recipient can consider multiple options.

e.g. I would prefer it if you would let me know the day before if you think it may be late, to enable us to discuss options to help deliver it on time... and for me to manage senior management's expectations about the timing of the document.

Manager Ideas:

- Think about giving feedback as encouragement. How can I encourage this person to be even better? This has more positive and helpful connotations.
- First, ask the staff member to feedback on their own performance.
- At the end of each part of the sequence, check in with the individual. This is especially important if the feedback is more involved and complex.
 - Do you agree?
 - Is there anything you would add to what I have just said?

ii. Feedforward

The concept of feedforward was first identified by coach Marshall Goldsmith. Marshall realised that the problem with feedback was that it focuses on the past and not what might happen in the future. At its simplest it is about suggestions for the future.

This concept can be very helpful for managers to ask their direct reports for feedforward for example, “what do you need from me to help you to deliver X?”

iii. 6 Steps to Move Forward On A Difficult Conversation

1. Reframe your mindset – perhaps to curiosity, or learner
2. Verbalize your intention – *“I want to learn about the challenges that you are facing with this project.”*
3. Avoid assumptions – *“What am I assuming about this person, the team, the project?”*
4. Examine the other’s perspective with openness and curiosity – what is driving their behaviour?
5. Acknowledge your part – *“I know that I should have given you more background information on the situation.”*
6. Use the concept of feedforward – *“If this situation rose again what would you like from me?”*

3. The Good Stuff Conversation

Talking about the good stuff is important for everyone, as it makes us feel valued. However, we often don't experience it. In the workplace, appreciation is undervalued and underutilised; it is the 'nice to do', the warm fluffy stuff and not business critical. BUT here's the catch... people's thinking improves when they are appreciated.

The neurons in the brain need positive feedback in some form to create long-term connections. Thomas Czerner in *What Makes You Tick* says: "The brain needs to see a happy face and to hear occasional laughter to cement its neural circuitry. The encouraging sounds of "Yes! Good! That's it!" help to make a synapse for preservation rather than pruning.'

A Gallup survey of 4 million people found that people who received regular recognition and praise increased their individual productivity, increased engagement amongst their colleagues, and were more likely to stay with the organization.

Ways to Build the Good Stuff into Daily Business Practice

- At the start of a meeting, ask each person to comment on one thing they valued last week in the business.
- Ask each person to say one thing they want to recognise the person next to them for.
- List three good things about the person or the situation at work. It enables people to focus on what is going well rather than what that is going badly.
- At the end of a meeting, ask each person to go round the table and acknowledge (being specific on why) what they appreciated what about the person on the right contributed today.

Today or tomorrow, make the neurons in someone else's brain happy and tell them.

**“THERE ARE TWO THINGS PEOPLE WANT MORE THAN SEX
AND MONEY... RECOGNITION AND PRAISE.”**

MARY KAY ASH

4. The Growth Path Conversation

The myriad of both career choices and challenges today means we need to think deeply about what we want from our working time, what will fulfil us and make us happy. This is particularly true because:

- We will live for longer requiring us to be both flexible and creative to find ways to create fulfilling careers over a longer period of time.
- The length of time we stay working for one company is shorter than ever.
- Our competition is global with candidates seeking new work adventures in different countries and the flexibility to work remotely.
- Technology and AI will play an increasing role and redefine the opportunities in our career paths.

One positive aspect of this is that we can be more creative than ever when we are thinking about our working lives and careers. Thinking about a growth path rather than a career path, encourages people to think creatively and see their career as a journey with a series of destinations on the path rather than one overarching goal.

Interestingly, only 16% of employees indicate that they have ongoing conversations with their managers about their career (Right Management Global Career Conversation Study, 2016). This represents a big opportunity for managers to actively support people's development – increasing employee engagement and potentially retain people for longer.

These conditions require active engagement from managers in supporting staff to manage their careers through the career conversation.

As a manager, consider:

1. Prep, Prep and Prep for the Conversation

This is the person's future. You are about to discuss their hopes, wants and desires, so this conversation – out of every one you have – will be the one they care about the most. We are all heavily invested in our futures. Being prepared shows you are vested in their future too.

2. Be Positive

Focus on what makes them unique, and what they bring to the business that others don't. It might be the combination of their talents, such as a creative and analytical mind. This is about leaning into their gifts and talents and looking at how and where to best apply them.

3. Be Honest

You should not be positive at the expense of being honest. People appreciate being given the facts. Long dangled carrots are not the way to motivate or keep them. We all know when someone is not being honest with us and the problem is, if you are dishonest in one area of the conversation, it will lead them to question the whole conversation.

4. This is a Separate Conversation to Their Review

A review is primarily focused on the short term and the career conversation is about their future and how they can get there. Yes, they do overlap, but both deserve their own space. Both require a certain frame of mind to get the most out of them.

5. Have At Least One Career Conversation A Year And Keep It Live

The main career conversation needs to be a thorough deep dive with the person. At the end of it, agree how to keep the conversation live throughout the year, perhaps by following up on actions, or mini 'check-in' chats.

How to Structure the Growth Path Conversation

In fact this is a series of conversations, which you can also ask the individual to reflect on in between sessions. The conversations can be summed up in one sentence **Today Grow, Tomorrow Success**. The four blocks are:

1. What makes you, you **TODAY**?
2. What do you want to **GROW** in?
3. What opportunities will there be **TOMORROW**?
4. What do you need to do to be **SUCCESSful**?

At the heart of this model is the focus on continually growing and by becoming increasingly masterful, we are developing unique and rare talents, which will enable us to navigate the pressures on our careers.

1. What Makes You, You TODAY?

1.1 By understanding who you are and the unique talent mix that you bring to an organisation, it enables you to lean into your talents further and prepare for future opportunities. There are 4 areas to consider:

i. Purpose	ii. Interests	iii. Skills & Strengths	iv. Experience
<p>Purpose – Why do you do what you do? What do you care about most?</p> <p>Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Why do you do what you do?</i> ○ <i>What problems do you want to answer?</i> ○ <i>If money didn't come into it, what would you do and why?</i> ○ <i>What motivates you about your work/the business/organisation (beyond money)?</i> ○ <i>What are your values?</i> ○ <i>What from your life history (all the different parts of your life) influences your why?</i> 	<p>What am I interested in? – What do you want? This might include ambitions e.g. I want to run my own business or it might be areas you are interested in e.g. I am curious about systems thinking</p> <p>What am I NOT interested in? And what would you prefer not to do? E.g. I don't want to lead a large team of people, or work on my own.</p> <p>Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>What parts of your current role interest you the most?</i> ○ <i>If you were to develop a skill in any area what would you be most interested in?</i> ○ <i>What would make you happy?</i> ○ <i>What would you prefer not to do if it was offered to you?</i> ○ <i>What roles would you say no to if you were offered them here?</i> ○ <i>What energises you?</i> 	<p>Skills – These are about what you do. You learn through being taught or through experience, such as how to write code, or how to put together a compelling presentation.</p> <p>Strengths – These are about how you do what you do. They are the softer qualities, which may be natural talents or you may have learnt to develop them over time, such as strong communication or analytical skills.</p> <p>Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Completing Gallup's Strengths Finder an online test to identify strengths</i> ○ <i>What work experience have you felt good about? What did you do?</i> ○ <i>What feedback do you get from others?</i> ○ <i>What tasks do you do that make time fly?</i> 	<p>Experience – This is all your experience to date (and it maybe relevant to consider what you do outside of work e.g. a trustee of a school has experience of leadership).</p> <p>Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>What is your career story to date?</i> ○ <i>What sectors, industries, and brands have you worked in?</i> ○ <i>What stages of work have you been involved in? (i.e. setting something up, a launch, driving growth, a change agenda and/or a turn around)</i> ○ <i>How do your interests outside help you in work?</i> ○ <i>What training courses have you done?</i>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>What environments do you flourish in?</i> ○ <i>What changes in your role or organisation would make you want to leave?</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>What do you enjoy doing most? (We tend to like what we are good at.)</i> ○ <i>What are the key skills that you have developed in the past and which you are developing in this role?</i> 	
<p>1.2 SUMMARY: In one or two sentences, answer each of the following questions (enabling you to summarise each of the above conversations).</p>			
<p><i>i. Why do I do what I do?</i></p>	<p><i>ii. What am I interested in?</i></p>	<p><i>iii. What is my unique combination of talents (talent stacking)?</i></p>	<p><i>iv. Why am I qualified to do this?</i></p>

2. What do you want to GROW and develop MASTERY in?

By growing our skillset and abilities it will enable us to capitalise on the future. Deep skills are the currency of the future and by becoming obsessive about our growth and developing mastery will help. Mastery is why people will hire us, not status and job titles. To develop mastery, we need to think about both 1) our skills and strengths, and 2) our experience and education... followed by practice, practice and more practice. This part of the conversation is deliberately put before opportunities because it is hard to predict the future, but we can always focus on developing our own mastery.

2.1 What you would like to develop greater mastery in, from your current INTERESTS, SKILLS AND STRENGTHS? Be as specific as possible.

Consider:

- What areas ignite your interest?
- What areas are you already good at and could get even better at?
- Where others who have this skill or strength and who inspire you, what is it about them that inspires you?

2.2 What EXPERIENCES AND EDUCATION would help you grow and gain greater mastery in these areas?

Consider:

- What different situations would you need to use this skill in?
- Who does this well? How could you learn from them?
- What further study could you do (reading, courses, work shadowing)?
- Can you break the skill down into components and set goals for each?

2.3 How can you take opportunity to practice, practice and practice these on a regular basis?

Consider:

- In what ways can you change your normal week to incorporate the opportunity to deepen this further?
- What opportunities, if any, do you have to practice this outside of work?
- What will stop you practicing these and what can you do to overcome these?

2.4 SUMMARY: In a few sentences answer each of the following questions (enabling you to summarise each of the above conversations).

i. What do I want to develop mastery in?

ii. What actions am I going to take to deepen

iii. What actions am I going to take to practice,

	<i>my experience and education in this area?</i>	<i>practice and practice on a regular basis?</i>
--	--	--

3. What opportunities may there be TOMORROW?

Consider what opportunities may arise or that you may want to create yourself, thinking both within the organisation and externally. Consider the following questions and how they may create a growth path for you:

3.1 What OPPORTUNITIES are we already aware of?

E.g. An organisational restructure, a new role overseas and people moves.

3.2 What PROBLEMS are we trying to solve?

E.g. We have poor customer service and need to improve it by training all our field staff. This will create an opportunity for a team of trainers.

3.3 What INFLUENCES are shaping us?

Influences may be trends, competitors, external factors e.g. we will all live longer, so what is the impact on this organisation of that? And also, personal influences e.g. in the next 5 years I want to live nearer to my family because of aging relatives

3.4 SUMMARY: Considering all the opportunities above what would you like to focus on to help make your growth path TOMORROW a success?

4. What do you need to do to be SUCCESSful?

In this final part of the conversation, we review the summaries the actions identified already and consider how to build “Brand Me”.

4.1 What are the actions to help you grow and develop mastery?

4.2 What are the actions to build “Brand Me”

Building our personal brand is important to enable us to maximise opportunities. There are 4 areas to consider:

i. What do you want to stand for?

This is what you are known for, or put another way what you are famous for.

Consider:

- What do you want to have a reputation for? What do you want the conversation to be about you?

ii. What is others perception of you?

People’s perception is critical to shaping your brand. If their perception differs you’re your intention then this is a challenge to be overcome. Consider:

- What is people’s perception of you currently? What would you like it to be? What do you need to do differently?

iii. Where do you want to be visible?

Visibility is important – it is about awareness of you and the environments you are seen in.

Consider:

- What is your current visibility? What would you like it to be? What do you need to do differently?

iv. How are you proactively building strong connections?

A strong connection has a positive view of you across the other three brand questions. A weak connection is someone who only knows your name.

Consider:

- Who are your strong connections? What are you doing to maintain these?

			Who would you like to have stronger connections with and what can you do to make that happen? Who would you like to start building connections with?
4.3 SUMMARY: What do you need to do to be SUCCESSful ? In answering the above questions what are the key actions that you need to take to be successful?			

Our role as managers is to help facilitate this conversation with our direct reports, enabling them to achieve growth today and creating the path for future successes tomorrow.

*"IN EVERY DAY, THERE ARE 1,440 MINUTES.
THAT MEANS WE HAVE 1,440 DAILY OPPORTUNITIES TO
MAKE A POSITIVE IMPACT."*

Les Brown

CONTACT DETAILS:

Jenny Williams

Jenny@jennywilliamscoaching.co.uk

07984 762002

www.jennywilliamscoaching.co.uk

@jenfi

**"ANYTHING WORTH DOING
IS WORTH GETTING HELP WITH."**

THOMAS LEONARD