

How to have better Career Conversations with GROW

A leader's guide for turning career conversations into ownership, learning and momentum by coaching



Career Conversations are often dreaded and postponed by people leaders, because they're framed as "difficult conversations". A manager may worry about being asked for a promotion, a raise, or another outcome they can't commit to. A coaching approach changes that. When your team member does the thinking, they own the outcome, and that's what creates progress.

Here's how you can create movement even when the formal next step isn't available.

A DIFFERENT OUTCOME IN FOUR STEPS

Built on the GROW model: Goal, Reality, Options, Will

1 SET THE GOAL

Hand over the wheel immediately. Ask what they want from the conversation. Let them define what matters.

"What would you love to get out of our time today?"

2 NAME THE REALITY

Name the constraint plainly, without closing down possibility. Separate what's fixed from what can still move.

"There isn't a promotion available this cycle. Given that, what could we still work on?"

3 OPEN THE OPTIONS

Go beyond the obvious answer. Keeping asking "What Else?" to uncover stretch, exposure, mentoring and new experience.

"What else could move you towards the role you want?"

4 TURN IT INTO WILL

Finish with ownership. Make the next step specific, time-bound and theirs, and clear about what they need from you.

"What are you taking away, and what will you do next?"

QUESTIONS THAT UNLOCK

- › What matters most?
- › What would you love your role to be?
- › What else?
- › What could you learn now?
- › Who could help you grow?
- › What would stretch you?

THE PAUSE

Don't fill the silence.

Give them space to think, reflect and answer.

LEARNING EDGE

What skills or experience can they build now?

Explore:

- stretch
- exposure
- mentoring
- responsibility

BREAKTHROUGH CHECK

- ✓ My team member set the goal of the conversation.
- ✓ I listened more than I talked.
- ✓ We explored beyond the first option.
- ✓ The coachee left with a specific next step and knew what they needed from me.

