

5 Characteristics of Highly Effective Career Conversations

It's a sad fact that people can often identify a memorably bad career conversation more easily than a career conversation which was of significant positive value to them.

I ask people in my Career Conversations workshops to think about a valuable career conversation so we can draw out the characteristics that makes them so effective.

The following 5 are ones that come up repeatedly. So, if you want your employees to have positive career conversations that will help them take ownership for their career development, bear these in mind.

1. Not necessarily with "the boss"

When it comes to who has the most effective career conversations, the consistent view is that it's not necessarily the boss.

The fundamental priority is the person is objective, has the best interests of the individual at heart and has no underlying agenda.

And for all those reasons, career conversations can be difficult for the immediate line manager. Eventually, career conversations do need to take place between employees and their managers but that might be the place to finish rather than start the conversation.

2. Often take place informally

Good career conversations often take place outside any formal management or HR process. Or they may take place in what we might call 'semi-formal' settings (such as mentoring discussions, regular progress meetings, follow-up meetings after an appraisal).

Although good conversations can take place in formal HR processes such as appraisal, they're not all that frequent.

3. Sometimes are unplanned

Most meetings where good conversations take place are planned but they can also be spontaneous and unplanned. Valuable conversations with friends and work colleagues, for example, often happen spontaneously.

4. Don't have to take a long time

Good conversations usually take time, say three-quarters of an hour to an hour. But sometimes a short first conversation is useful as a prelude to setting up a longer meeting. Sometimes a single conversation on its own can be pivotal. Other times employees need several conversations to make progress.

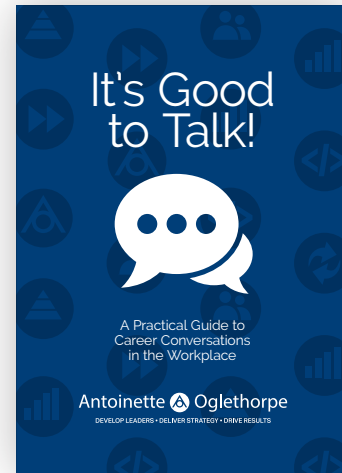
5. Provide different levels of support at different times

Employees often need career support at defining points like starting a new role, considering a job move (internally or externally) or when they come to the end of a development or training programme. At other times a lighter touch is needed.

Do your managers and employees need help to have constructive career conversations? Learn more about how to have them by downloading your free eBook

It's Good to Talk! A Practical Guide to Career Conversations in the Workplace.

Exclusive eBook for Managers, Mentors and Coaches



Engage, Retain and Develop Employees Through Career Conversations

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Help employees feel more satisfied in their current role no matter what their ambitions

Encourage employees to identify development opportunities and take steps that will help them and the organisation

Have conversations that make employees want to stay with the organisation rather than go elsewhere

Have a flexible approach which means that employees take ownership for their career development and don't look to you for all the answers

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