Positive Performance Conversations

A PROGRESSIVE WAY TO BETTER OUTCOMES



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A progressive way to better outcomes

Individuals left to their own devices seldom deliver to their full potential.

So, we need to find a better way to have the conversations that need to be had in a manner that improves the odds that they enhance, not erode, collective performance and connection.

We think we've found it...

Highly engaged employees are 87% less likely to leave their roles

EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT STATISTICS



Why aren’t the ‘current ways’ working?

Too much review, not enough preview
Excessive focus is placed on what has happened in the past rather than what needs to happen going forward.

Too leader driven
The person who best knows what occurred, why it occurred, the other contributing factors and the most relevant and deliverable success strategies for the future is the individual themselves - so why do leaders do most of the talking?

Too granular
High emphasis is placed on specific operational practices and singular instances where expectations weren’t met, rather than taking a more high level approach and looking at broader trends of behaviour and outcomes.

Too data driven
Metrics are often viewed as the irrefutable truth. Numbers should guide your questions, rather than give you the answers. Current processes don’t always support this logic.

Too much new information
Interactions with staff members are often times when pre-existing issues or past transgressions come to light, rather than the interactions being an opportunity to strategise around known, and previously discussed topics.

Too disconnected
The process is such a departure from the way you normally do business and interact with one another on a daily basis. This places a strain on the relationship and detracts from the outcomes you are trying to achieve.



— POSITIVE PERFORMANCE CONVERSATIONS

What's your "better" way?

For a more 'human' and future-focussed conversation to occur you need a simple framework to follow that asks open questions that then promotes open (and honest) answers.

Much analysis, and plenty of trial & error has led to the following six-step approach:

Also noted is what you should be aiming to achieve with each question

1. How are you getting on?

Outcome
Building individual accountability through honest self-analysis

2. Team player?

Outcome
Challenging the team member to think beyond self

3. Learning and developing?

Outcome
Establishing a culture of continuous improvement

4. What help do you need?

Outcome
Supporting the team member to identify and overcome roadblocks

5. How am I doing as a leader?

Outcome
Modelling vulnerability (as the leader) so the team member will respond in kind

6. Where to from here?

Outcome
Ensuring the meeting produces actionable outcomes and objectives

This is called a DEVELOPMENT DISCUSSION



So how do we use this?

If you are confident & capable, and your team members are equally skilled, you can engage exclusively in a conversation.

For the rest of us, the following is a highly useful scaffolding system to prepare both parties for an effective (and less confronting) conversation...

STEP 1 Employee completes their pre-work questionnaire

STEP 2 Employer completes their pre-work questionnaire

STEP 3 Employer compares and considers the pre-work

STEP 4 Employer prepares notes for the conversation

STEP 5 The conversation is conducted (both parties have their own pre-work)

STEP 6 Employer prepares a post meeting recap with - the key points discussed and agreed actions documented, critical dates are calendared, and all of this is shared with the Employee - ideally in an email.

— POSITIVE PERFORMANCE CONVERSATIONS

How often should we do this?

Similar to what we said in the Pulse Surveying eBook, most research suggests that quarterly is best practicel. Annual (and even six monthly) reviews tend to leave too long between touchpoints, with objectives losing impetus and points of contention given too long to fester. We recommend avoiding any seasonal peaks and find most teams land on three times per year as a happy medium.

These two employee voice processes can work well in unison, with a pulse survey conducted at the mid-point between your development discussions. They cover very similar concepts and layer together nicely to give you year-round contact points with your people.

TEAM MEMBER PRE-WORK DOCUMENT

Development Discussion

An important opportunity for you to think about you - and your future focuses

This process (and the subsequent in-person conversation) follows a simple 6-step format:

1. How are you getting on?

A self evaluation of your current state of wellbeing, workplace enjoyment, workload and performance

2. Team player?

Considering your contribution to the collective performance of your team and broader business

3. Learning and developing?

Reviewing your progress in advancing & achieving your growth objectives

4. What help do you need?

Ensuring we minimise any potential barriers to success

5. How is my boss doing as a leader?

Feedback is a two way street - a chance to provide useful insight and help your leader grow.

6. Where to from here?

Identifying focuses for us to monitor and execute on going forward

MOST of the following questions are asked in a statement format, you just need to decide the level to which you agree or disagree using the 10-point scale provided.

1 = Totally Disagree 10 = Totally Agree

Just circle the number that best aligns with your perception.

If you WANT to give further context to support your selections, use the text spaces throughout to do so. Your written insights help paint a clearer picture of your opinions and perceptions, so please add your extra input where you feel comfortable to do so. It will likely make the following in-person conversation easier for both you and your boss!

Let's get started!

YOUR NAME _____

How are you getting on?

YOUR BOSS _____

PERSONAL WELL-BEING

"From a general wellbeing perspective, I am content"

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Totally Disagree											Totally Agree

Optional - Further explanation and/or evidence:

WORKPLACE ENJOYMENT

"Our work environment is great"

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Totally Disagree											Totally Agree

Optional - Further explanation and/or evidence:

FAIR EXPECTATIONS

"The work I'm required to do daily is manageable"

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Totally Disagree											Totally Agree

Optional - Further explanation and/or evidence:

GENERAL PERFORMANCE

"If I were my boss, I would impressed by my performance"

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Totally Disagree											Totally Agree

Optional - Further explanation and/or evidence:

Team player?

WIDER TEAM CONTRIBUTION

"I pitch in whenever possible"

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Totally Disagree											Totally Agree

Optional - Further explanation and/or evidence:

KNOWLEDGE SHARING

"I share my thoughts and experiences to help others"

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Totally Disagree											Totally Agree

Optional - Further explanation and/or evidence:

ROLE MODEL

"The way I behave, in and out of work, sets a good example"

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Totally Disagree											Totally Agree

Optional - Further explanation and/or evidence:

PERCEPTION OF OTHERS

"My teammates would describe me as a team-player"

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Totally Disagree											Totally Agree

Optional - Further explanation and/or evidence:

Learning and developing?

What have been your development focuses recently / since our last meeting?:

Use these focuses as the basis for your following ratings…

ADVANCING MY GROWTH GOALS

"I have made good progress"

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Totally Disagree											Totally Agree

Optional - Further explanation and/or evidence:

ALIGNED OBJECTIVES

"Most of my goals have clear links to those of the business"

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Totally Disagree											Totally Agree

Optional - Further explanation and/or evidence:

SHOWING MY VALUE

"I am proud of the outcomes I've been able to deliver"

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Totally Disagree											Totally Agree

Optional - Further explanation and/or evidence:

ONWARDS AND UPWARDS

"I try to find new/better ways of doing things"

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Totally Disagree											Totally Agree

Optional - Further explanation and/or evidence:

What help do you need?

PRIORITISING MY TIME AND TASKS

"It is easy for me to know what jobs need to be done, by when, and in what order"

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Totally Disagree											Totally Agree

Optional - Further explanation and/or evidence:

WORKING SMARTER

"I have all the 'tools' I need to complete my work safely and successfully"

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Totally Disagree											Totally Agree

Optional - Further explanation and/or evidence:

KICKING GOALS

"I have clear targets that help me know if I am meeting expectations"

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Totally Disagree											Totally Agree

Optional - Further explanation and/or evidence:

PERSONAL RECOGNITION

"My boss gives me plenty of encouragement and recognises when I do a good job"

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Totally Disagree											Totally Agree

Optional - Further explanation and/or evidence:

Feedback for my boss?

COMMUNICATION

"My boss keeps me in the loop with what's going on"

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Totally Disagree											Totally Agree

Optional - Further explanation and/or evidence:

ROLE MODEL

"My boss sets a good example"

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Totally Disagree											Totally Agree

Optional - Further explanation and/or evidence:

ON-JOB TRAINING

"My boss helps me build the skills that make my workload easier to manage"

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Totally Disagree											Totally Agree

Optional - Further explanation and/or evidence:

PROBLEM-SOLVING

"My boss helps to resolve issues in a calm and supportive way"

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Totally Disagree											Totally Agree

Optional - Further explanation and/or evidence:

Where to from here?

These will be confirmed in your 1:1 conversation, but, based on everything you've noted to this point, what do believe could be some viable focuses for us to monitor going forward?

Try and provide a minimum of 3 and ensure at least 2 of those are focuses for you personally:

#1 ACTION/GOAL/TARGET: _____

#2 ACTION/GOAL/TARGET: _____

#3 ACTION/GOAL/TARGET: _____

#4 ACTION/GOAL/TARGET: _____

#5 ACTION/GOAL/TARGET: _____

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME & EFFORT!

TEAM LEADER PRE-WORK DOCUMENT

Development Discussion

An opportunity to co-evaluate your people - and their future focuses!

This process (and the subsequent in-person conversation) follows a simple 6-step format:

1. How are they getting on?

An evaluation of their current state of wellbeing, workplace enjoyment, workload and performance

2. Team player?

Considering their contribution to the collective performance of your team and broader business

3. Learning and developing?

Reviewing their progress in advancing & achieving their growth objectives

4. What help do they need?

Ensuring we minimise any potential barriers to success

5. How am I doing as a leader?

Feedback is a two way street - a chance to provide useful insight and help you grow as a leader.

6. Where to from here?

Identifying focuses for us to monitor and execute on going forward

IMPORTANT: DON'T review your team members' responses until you have completed this task!
Doing so will likely alter your responses and reduce the effectiveness of this process.

MOST of the following questions are asked in a statement format, you just need to decide the level to which you agree or disagree using the 10-point scale provided.

1 = Totally Disagree 10 = Totally Agree

Just circle the number that best aligns with your perception.

It is HIGHLY recommended you give further context to support your selections, use the text spaces throughout to do so. Your written insights help paint a clearer picture of your opinions and perceptions. It will likely make the following in-person conversation easier to navigate/facilitate.

Let's get started!

YOUR NAME

How are they getting on?

YOUR DIRECT REPORT

PERSONAL WELL-BEING

"From a well-being perspective, they appear to be content"

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Totally Disagree											Totally Agree

Further explanation and/or evidence:

WORKPLACE ENJOYMENT

"They are a great contributor to our work environment"

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Totally Disagree											Totally Agree

Further explanation and/or evidence:

FAIR EXPECTATIONS

"The work they're required to do daily is manageable"

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Totally Disagree											Totally Agree

Further explanation and/or evidence:

GENERAL PERFORMANCE

"I am impressed by their performance"

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Totally Disagree											Totally Agree

Further explanation and/or evidence:

Team player?

WIDER TEAM CONTRIBUTION

"They pitch in whenever possible"

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Totally Disagree											Totally Agree

Further explanation and/or evidence:

KNOWLEDGE SHARING

"They share their thoughts and experiences to help others"

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Totally Disagree											Totally Agree

Further explanation and/or evidence:

ROLE MODEL

"The way they behave, in and out of work, sets a good example"

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Totally Disagree											Totally Agree

Further explanation and/or evidence:

PERCEPTION OF OTHERS

"Their teammates would describe them as a team-player"

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Totally Disagree											Totally Agree

Further explanation and/or evidence:

Learning and developing?

What have their development focuses been recently / since our last meeting?

Totally Agree

Use these focuses as the basis for your following ratings…

ADVANCING MY GROWTH GOALS

"They have made good progress"

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Totally Disagree										

Further explanation and/or evidence:

Totally Agree

ALIGNED OBJECTIVES

"Most of their personal goals have clear links to our business goals"

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Totally Disagree										

Further explanation and/or evidence:

SHOWING MY VALUE

Totally Agree

"They should be proud of the outcomes they've been able to deliver"

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Totally Disagree										

Further explanation and/or evidence:

ONWARDS AND UPWARDS

"They continually find new/better ways of doing things"

Totally Agree

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Totally Disagree										

Further explanation and/or evidence:

What help do they need?

PRIORITISING MY TIME AND TASKS

"It appears easy for them to know what jobs need to be done, by when, and in what order"

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Totally Disagree											Totally Agree

Further explanation and/or evidence:

WORKING SMARTER

"They have all the 'tools' needed to complete their work safely and successfully"

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Totally Disagree											Totally Agree

Further explanation and/or evidence:

KICKING GOALS

"They have clear targets that help them know if they're meeting expectations"

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Totally Disagree											Totally Agree

Further explanation and/or evidence:

PERSONAL RECOGNITION

"They're given plenty of encouragement and recognised when they do a good job"

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Totally Disagree											Totally Agree

Further explanation and/or evidence:

How am I doing as a leader?

COMMUNICATION

"I keep them in the loop with what's going on"

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Totally Disagree											Totally Agree

Further explanation and/or evidence:

ROLE MODEL

"I set a good example for my team"

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Totally Disagree											Totally Agree

Further explanation and/or evidence:

ON-JOB TRAINING

"I help them build the skills that make their workload easier to manage"

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Totally Disagree											Totally Agree

Further explanation and/or evidence:

PROBLEM-SOLVING

"I help to resolve issues in a calm and supportive way"

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Totally Disagree											Totally Agree

Further explanation and/or evidence:

Where to from here?

These will be confirmed in your 1:1 conversation, but, based on everything you've noted to this point, what do believe could be some viable focuses for us to monitor going forward?

Try and provide a minimum of 3 and ensure at least 2 of those are exclusively for the team member:

#1 ACTION/GOAL/TARGET: _____

#2 ACTION/GOAL/TARGET: _____

#3 ACTION/GOAL/TARGET: _____

#4 ACTION/GOAL/TARGET: _____

#5 ACTION/GOAL/TARGET: _____

NOW YOU CAN COMPARE & CONTRAST YOUR INSIGHTS WITH THOSE OF YOUR DIRECT REPORT!



I have this information - now what?

The intention here is not to interrogate every rating. Neither you nor your team members have the time or energy for that. Our suggestion is to review the results ahead of time, consider which ones you want to dig deeper into - either to build mutual understanding or identify ways to improve.

If you're unsure how to broach a topic, or just want to mix up your approach then our selection of starter questions (below) should hopefully prove useful. If you're confident to do it your way - that's great!

As a rule of thumb, 20-30% of questions should be discussed. This shows a good level of interest in the results but keeps the meeting a manageable duration.

Look for the commonalities and differences
Compare your pre-work and consider where you hold similar opinions and where those opinions clearly differ. As you likely know, it's significantly easier to have conversation around topics where your views are aligned than where they aren't. Be sure to seek out a balance of both to discuss.

Decide what you want to dig into
What do you want to commend and correct in this person's recent performance? Look for the links and opportunities within the framework to discuss these things. REMEMBER at regular intervals to afford the same opportunity to the other person.

Document your discussion questions
As the saying goes, "experience is something you get just after you needed it". To avoid the pitfalls of this, be sure to go into your conversation with something of a script. You don't need to hold rigidly to this plan but it's helpful to have this to refer back to so things stay on track.

Here's some starter questions

Using a solution-based mindset, how could you potentially help to improve this?

Do you think others around you perceive that the same way?

Can you think of anything that might lead others to hold a different view?

Why do you think we ask this question?

Who are you comparing yourself to when you consider this?

Who immediately came to mind when you answered this?

What gives you this impression?

What room for improvement still exists?

What quick wins can be had, how (and with who)?

Is there anything you're doing that others might also benefit from attempting?

It appears to me that _____ … Is that fair/correct?

How can I better monitor things or check-in with you to ensure you're doing okay?

What have we done that has helped? Should we be doing more things like that?

I agree with your assessment. (Beyond what you've noted) what needs to happen?

We're aligned on this. I thought we could _____. Do you think that would help?

I am happy that your perception is so positive - how do we maintain that?

I'm curious, what is happening around you that's impacting your perception?

As a positive influence I'm keen to know what you're seeing that I'm not?

Is there anything you're doing that others might also benefit from attempting?

Do you still feel this way? Was this just an exception rather than the rule?

What am I not seeing (and/or) not acknowledging that you are doing?

What do you perceive my key criteria to be? Where do we differ in that regard?

What areas do you think you're doing well in, and where is there room for improvement?

Looking forward, how do we ideally maintain this positive momentum?

What particular situations were you thinking about as you gave this rating?

What would it take for you to give yourself a higher rating in the future?

What recent examples do you have of doing this?

Where do you ideally see an opportunity to do this more consistently going forward?

What is holding you back from _____?

How could you be more actively involved in this way?

How do we better leverage this strength in the future?

What did you learn during this period that you can carry forward?

What were the key repeatable habits you can likely use in the future?

Considerations for the recap

Putting on our HR hat for a moment, it's important to remember the contents of these conversations can have implications for broader employment relations.

What isn't documented becomes hearsay - so keep yourself safe by considering (and ideally documenting) the following:

- Important insights that you weren't aware of (e.g. friction points)
- Reprimands or course-correction tips
- Key directives or mutual commitments made
- Concessions made or incentives offered
- Leadership work-ons acknowledged
- Accountability offered or requested
- Key dates and/or milestones set
- As a positive influence I'm keen to know what you're seeing that I'm not?
- Is there anything you're doing that others might also benefit from attempting?
- Do you still feel this way? Was this just an exception rather than the rule?
- What am I not seeing (and/or) not acknowledging that you are doing?
- What do you perceive my key criteria to be? Where do we differ in that regard?
- What areas do you think you're doing well in, and where is there room for improvement?
- Looking forward, how do we ideally maintain this positive momentum?
- What particular situations were you thinking about as you gave this rating?
- What would it take for you to give yourself a higher rating in the future?
- What recent examples do you have of doing this?
- Where do you ideally see an opportunity to do this more consistently going forward?
- What is holding you back from _____?
- How could you be more actively involved in this way?
- How do we better leverage this strength in the future?
- What did you learn during this period that you can carry forward?
- What were the key repeatable habits you can likely use in the future?

Parting thought

Remember Questions get answered, statements get judged!

This is especially true as it relates to performance analysis. Coach your team members to the right answers, remembering that if the idea was theirs, it is much more likely to come to fruition, and much easier to query if it doesn't.

Stay curious. Lead on!

