Engaging and Growth-focused Talent Conversations

As a leader, you are in the best position to build trusting relationships that influence and develop your team. When done right, one of the easiest and most effective ways to develop others is through ongoing "Talent Conversations".

> *"Before you are a leader, success is all about growing yourself. When you become a leader, success is all about growing others."- Jack Welch*

Sincere dedication and consistency to coaching your team members toward their greatest potential will be key to shaping an environment in which they want to stay and thrive.

This guide is designed as a 2-step process to help you customize your dialogue to the individual to create, together, meaningful areas of focus for their development plans.

STEP 1 – Identify & Discuss

- Areas of Interest (Passions, strengths, and demonstrated excellence)
- Connections to Purpose (Their value & impact on customers & outcomes)
- Ways to Measure ('What success looks like' for the role/department/individual, how do we measure success, follow-up with each other, create growth areas & celebrate successes)

STEP 2 – Customize & Plan

Ignite/Re-ignite Top Talent

Your high-performing team members, who clearly exceed expectations and deliver consistent, superior results are your top talent. They provide tremendous value to your team and the organization...super-engaged, skilled, innovative, and reliable. Often, they're viewed as a role model by those outside of the department. But in some cases, they can be more prone to burnout and feel undervalued, thus overlooked as a potential departure risk. It's up to you to support them in a balance of their drive & engagement.

- **Recognize their great work with specific examples of their actions & impact.**
  - Find tangible forms of recognition so they feel valued; reinforce desired behaviors.
  - High performers may not take time to rest and recharge, so pay attention to how they are feeling and help facilitate work-life balance.
- **Look for interesting, complex work based on their areas of interest to avoid complacency.**
  - *"What do you consider to be your greatest strengths and struggles this past year/month/quarter?"*
  - Find alignment to their motivations.
  - Allow them to take full ownership of a task/project once assigned or serve as your delegate to represent the department at a meeting you normally attend.
- **Look for developmental opportunities, as many high performers have a passion for learning.**
  - Gauge situations that push the team member's growth & tie to their interests.
  - Consider training, participation in new team projects, presentations, etc.
- **Define career goals, even if this means they leave your team (but not the organization).**
  - *"How can I assist you in furthering your career growth?"*
  - Help them identify goals and competencies to help them advance that plan, including critical feedback on obstacles to their success (accountability, credibility, etc.).
  - Consider networking opportunities or committee and volunteer involvement.

Stretch Successful Talent

Your successful team members deliver consistent, reliable results while meeting and often exceeding service expectations. They have the potential to move their performance in one of two directions. They may become complacent and disengaged or, with the right support, stretch toward Top Talent!

- **Recognize their great work with specific examples of their actions & impact.**
  - Find tangible forms of recognition so they feel valued; reinforce desired behaviors.
  - Reinforce their value to you, the team, and the organization.
- **Consider setting a stretch goal together. These are high-effort and high-risk targets, within the scope of their role, designed to inspire growth and counter complacency.**
  - *"What would you like to accomplish this year and how can I support you?"*
  - Look for projects or tasks just outside of their comfort zone that connect to organization and/or team goals.
  - Use the SMART model for greater success. Dedicate time to this activity, removing obstacles, ensuring objectives connect to your team's work, their personal goals, and current workload.
- **Pairing them with a mentor can provide an additional level of support, opportunities for timely feedback, and can serve as an accountability partner.**

Improve Inconsistent Talent

Working with low performers can be difficult for leaders because identifying the root cause of the performance issue can be time-consuming and uncomfortable. But not addressing the issue can negatively impact the rest of your team and your leadership credibility. Ensure you have identified the correct reason and root cause for the underperformance or ineffectiveness.

- **Recognize their successes with specific examples of their actions & impact.**
  - Find tangible forms of recognition so they feel valued; reinforce desired behaviors.
  - Reinforce their value to you, the team, and the organization when fully functional.
- **Diagnose the root cause of the deficiency.**
  - Clearly and candidly (not cruelly) define why and where improvement needs to occur.
  - Lack of motivation/poor attitude: *"What environmental or other factors impacted your work this year/month/quarter?"*
  - Lack of skill: *"What training or resources do you want/need to be successful?"* Were they given clear expectations and metrics for success?
  - Situational: Is there a work/life balance issue? Discuss ways to support better balance.
- **Build an improvement plan together. [Form in Policy Manager>Human Resources>Forms]**
  - Specify focus areas and define actionable steps (clear expectations) required by the individual to achieve success within the next 30/60/90 days, including how you'll measure progress.
  - Establish a frequency for follow-up, including ways you can support and recognize them.