Leadership Development: A Leader's Conversation Guide

Developing UBC Leaders

Leadership development is the ongoing process of setting and pursuing learning goals that advance a leader's ability to remain highly engaged with their work and bring out the best in others. Development happens in many ways, from organizational opportunities and stretch assignments to self-directed or external learning opportunities.

Performance Development Conversations

Conversations are at the heart of performance development.

A central feature of your role as a senior leader at UBC is your willingness to support the development of others. Strategically, this contributes to the fulfillment of UBCs vision, purpose and values and ensures we attract, retain and advance exceptional leaders.

Principles for Effective Learning Conversations

Grounded by a leadership philosophy that sees leadership as a shared responsibility, it is important to observe three principles shown to enhance the experiential quality and outcomes of performance conversations. Taken together, they inspire the conditions necessary for authentic, two-way dialogue.

A Coach-Approach: A focus on curiosity, active listening and suspending advice

- Ground your conversation in curiosity and a genuine interest to explore.
- Encourage dialogue by asking open-ended questions, summarizing, and probing for insights.
- Appreciate that everyone is naturally creative, resourceful and whole.

Strengths-Based: The ability to look for and see the best in others, as well as yourself

- Amplify the positive in people—their attributes, knowledge, approach and skills.
- Actively look for what is working so you can get more of it.
- Be fair and objective in your acknowledgement and feedback on the work performed.

Mutual Learning: A desire to collaborate and learn something new

- Embrace the potential to learn something new.
- Remain open to ambiguity, uncertainty and change.
- Honour diversity of experiences, beliefs and attitudes.

COEC Conversation Model for Performance Development Planning

The Connect, Open, Explore, Close (COEC) Conversation Model is an established UBC communication approach developed through a partnership with HR, Coaching Services and Extended Learning. The COEC Model supports effective learning conversations of all kinds and is easily applied when preparing for annual and ongoing leadership development conversations.

CONNECT *Build trust and safety*

It is important to take a bit of time to connect before diving into the agenda of any conversation. It allows both parties to transition from their previous engagement, settle in with each other, and demonstrate care and interest beyond the task or agenda on hand. For most people, performance conversations bring some level of anxiety. Making an effort to connect in a genuine manner signals a commitment to the other person's psychological safety and general wellbeing.

Connect by:

- Taking an interest in the whole person—their family, health, wellbeing, general interests, etc.
- Demonstrating undivided attention and eye contact.
- Clarifying your hopes for being an effective and supportive thinking partner.
- Being vulnerable and transparent.

EXAMPLES FOR CONNECTING:

- I appreciate that we have carved out time for this conversation.
- How are you *really* doing and managing with everything on your plate these days?
- How do you feel about today's meeting? Did you get a chance to prepare as you wanted?
- Is there anything you need to attend to before we get started?
- I hope we can work together to make this an impactful conversation that focuses on you.

OPEN *Co-create intent and expectations*

A good opening to a conversation helps to create alignment around expectations, approach and desired outcomes. By confirming where you are in the performance management cycle and aligning on how you want to work through the material, you create a shared vision for success. For some leaders, looking back before planning ahead will meet their needs, while others will want to cast their eye on the future and then do some backward planning. In either case, once the agenda is set, both people can settle into a creative and engaging dialogue.

Open by:

- Co-creating a meaningful agenda of essential topics and areas of focus.
- Discussing and confirming expectations.
- Reviewing process, paperwork.
- Agreeing to a few key success measures.

EXPLORE *Discover ideas, options and insights*

Exploration is at the heart of learning and key to impactful performance development conversations. As leaders, performance is assessed and developed in alignment with organizational goals and objectives. Leaders are invited to reflect on their own leadership attributes, successes, and setbacks to identify opportunities for growth and development. In a true two-way conversation, exploration invites both people to activate their creative and divergent thinking and to find solutions that neither could have come up with on their own.

Explore:

- Recent accomplishments, breakthroughs and setbacks.

- Interpersonal effectiveness, collaboration and conflict engagement.

- Strategic vision, goals and values alignment.

- Networks, interdependencies, complexity and change.

- Personal resiliency and team wellbeing.

- Feedback received, new awareness and insights.

- Leadership attributes and opportunities for growth and development.

- Ways to support and sustain momentum.

CLOSE *Determine a plan and next steps*

Bring the meeting to a close by revisiting the agenda and expectations and signing off on the agreed-to plan for learning and leadership development. Close allows both of you to contribute to the final summary of key points, takeaways, insights and next steps. A strong close also allows for thoughtful acknowledgments and appreciations to be expressed while setting the stage for how you will come together in a follow-up meeting.

Close by:

- Reviewing goals, actions, accountabilities and support.

- Sharing key takeaways such as knowledge, new ideas and insights.

- Ensuring important topics were not overlooked.

- Agreeing how you will complete all documents and signoffs.

- Offering a summary of what you appreciate and what you have learned.

EXAMPLES FOR CLOSING:

- What was most beneficial about this conversation for you?

- What are your key takeaways and insights?

- What would support you in solidifying your goals and commitments

- What further refinement do you need to make to your plan?

- Let's clarify our shared commitments so we agree on the next steps and follow-ups.

- Here is what I have appreciated about you and our conversation today...

- What is the feedback you need, and how can you get more of it?

- What is the real opportunity here for you?

Reflect on the Conversation

Effectively hosting a performance conversation takes practice and reflection. Enhance your leadership learning and future impact by working through the following reflection statements:

- What I most appreciated about the performance conversation was...

- My commitment was...

- My learning about my employee, the work and myself as a leader included...

- The aspects of the conversation that I found challenging were...

- My learning edge is...

- If I were to do something differently next time, I would...