# Developmental Feedback Conversation Guide for managers

Developmental feedback helps people to recognize where best to grow their capabilities further. Encourage your team member to lead as much of the conversation as possible.

PURPOSE: To build performance

HOW LONG: 1 to 30 minutes

HOW OFTEN: Whenever helpful

3. DIAGNOSIS
2. EXAMPLES
4. ACTION
1. CONTEXT
5. REVIEW
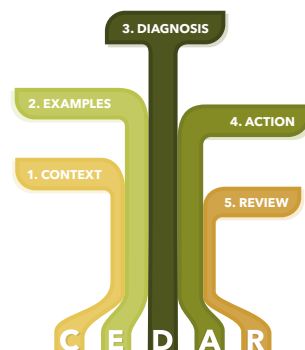
C E D A R

Use the CEDAR™ framework to guide the conversation

To guide the conversation		Say something like
CONTEXT	• Help the team member to understand the significance of the feedback and how it fits into their overall performance. • Ask for their view and acknowledge that perspective. • Be supportive, show you trust they were trying their best.	*What did you see as the impact (on others/the task)?* *How important is this?* *What's your perspective? I understand the pressures you're under.* *I know you're keen to handle this as well as possible.*
EXAMPLES	• Explore specific examples to illustrate the context. There may be one big example or two or three smaller ones.	*What happened?* *What did you/others say or do?*
DIAGNOSIS	• Help each person to understand **why** they are where they are. • Start with wider issues first, then explore where their own actions may have influenced outcomes. • Be curious and patient. • Offer your insights were helpful.	*What led up to where you are now?* *Can you walk me through your thinking?* *What wider influences were there?* *Looking at your own actions or capabilities, where do you think these might have influenced outcomes?*
ACTION	• Ask what actions they want to take. This plan needs to be clear and led by the team member. • Add your suggestions where helpful, but don't give these too early. • Explain any non-negotiable boundaries clearly and calmly.	*What actions do you want to take next?* *What if you tried [X]?* *What's essential here is....* *How can I help you?*
REVIEW	• Decide how best to follow up together. • Help each person embed new behaviors through deliberate practice. • Support progress with resources or coaching where appropriate.	*When should we follow up next?* *What steps will you have achieved by then?* *Here's how I will help...*

OIL IN THE ENGINE

Managing Your Stress

Developmental feedback conversations can feel almost as challenging for you as for your team member. Give yourself permission to feel apprehensive, it's only natural. It also shows you care. Here are a few top tips to help.

Before the conversation:

- **Assume good intentions.** When people feel trusted, they're more likely to try harder to understand your point of view, too.

- **Choose the best time and place to talk.** Ask them to let you know when they're ready to talk it through, (just don't let it slip too long). Always hold the discussion where others can't overhear.

- **Prepare your opening words.** Don't wing it. Be ready with your two or three opening sentences.

During the conversation:

- **Expect people to feel a sense of threat.** Developmental feedback often creates a fight-or-flight response. Understand that people may feel anxious and show empathy.

- **Avoid giving a knee-jerk reaction.** Take a deep breath to help you take a mental step back from the brink. It can also relieve physical stress in your body.

- **Keep your focus on reaching a constructive outcome.** You're investing in them to help them improve. That's a good thing.

- **Be clear about any boundaries that can't be crossed.** Know what limits are necessary and be ready to explain why they exist.

- **Don't "own" the conversation.** Your role is not to solve the problem or do the thinking for people. It's to help them develop their own insights so that they can make more informed choices about what action they wish to take.

For more guidance on how to lead difficult conversations see Now You're Talking!

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