

# Conversation guide for Same conversation twice

It can be frustrating when an employee shows few signs of improvement after an earlier discussion. You will need to hold a second conversation, but—importantly—having exactly the same conversation twice is the wrong conversation.

Before you talk, be ready to stay calm and positive. Keep in mind that although the discussion may be difficult for you, it's probably far more challenging for your team member.

## Use CEDAR™ to lead the conversation

## Say something like...

<p><b>C</b></p>	<p><b>Context – set the <i>updated scene</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explain the purpose of the discussion, i.e., to explore progress <b>since</b> your earlier conversation.</li> <li>• Give recognition for any progress and effort.</li> <li>• Next, highlight where gaps in the task remain.</li> <li>• Explore their perspective, ask for their thoughts about the situation.</li> </ul>	<p><i>This is an important chance to explore together how you're progressing with your action plan after our last conversation. We talked about how this area is essential to your role.</i></p> <p><i>You put effort into [X], which was helpful. However, it looks like there are still some challenges with [Y]—is that right?"</i></p>
<p><b>E</b></p>	<p><b>Examples – explore specifics</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Look at specific examples together, create clarity.</li> <li>• Flag up anything essential they leave out.</li> <li>• Ask non-judgmental questions and show empathy if they are struggling.</li> </ul>	<p><i>It would be good to know your thoughts about what's going well and where there are still gaps, as it looks as if the plan may not be helping overall.</i></p> <p><i>For example, [X] is on the right track, but [Y] is still not at the level needed...</i></p>
<p><b>D</b></p>	<p><b>Diagnosis – understand why</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus most here. Re-analyse underlying cause extra carefully, as this informs the action plan (and hasn't been effective up to now).</li> <li>• Start with wider causes first, e.g., issues with resources, support, etc, then their capabilities.</li> <li>• Listen especially for problems with motivation as this is likely to need action from you.</li> </ul>	<p><i>What do you think has helped / not helped you in achieving the earlier action plan?</i></p> <p><i>What's behind that?</i></p> <p><i>What were you aiming for?</i></p> <p><i>What got in the way?</i></p>
<p><b>A</b></p>	<p><b>Action – ask for action</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask what actions the team member wishes to take based on the <i>new</i> diagnosis.</li> <li>• Be clear about boundaries or 'non-negotiables', including the impact of <i>not</i> taking action.</li> <li>• Provide extra support if needed.</li> </ul>	<p><i>What actions will be important moving forward? These actions matter because without change it means we are not achieving [X results].</i></p> <p><i>How best can I support you?</i></p> <p><i>How sure are you that these are the right actions for the outcome you want?</i></p>
<p><b>R</b></p>	<p><b>Review – set a follow-up</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask them to choose a follow-up date.</li> <li>• Fulfil supporting actions needed from you or others as quickly as possible.</li> <li>• Show your confidence in their ability to move the situation forward.</li> </ul>	<p><i>These are very positive actions. Let's make sure we prioritise them. When should we follow up on this next?</i></p> <p><i>What do you want to have achieved by the time we next meet?</i></p> <p><i>I'm sure you can do this—just take it one step at a time, come for a chat whenever you need.</i></p>

## Still no change?

What if, after sustained and thorough support, your team member is still struggling? It can be easy to think of this as under-performance. However, if they have been provided with learning and are feeling motivated, it can often come down to being a 'round peg in a square hole'. Two main reasons for this are often:

- **A lack of fit with the role.** Not all capabilities can be developed, as we know for ourselves. In other instances, the organisation itself may not have the capacity to support that development, even though it may be possible to achieve.
- **A lack of fit with organisational culture.** Each organisation has its idiosyncrasies and sometimes they don't align with a person's capabilities or preferred approach.

Your next conversation together will be as much about championing your team member and working through together what is a fit for them, as it will be about what is a fit for the role.

### Say something like:

*'This is an important chance for us to look together at how the role is working for you overall. Every job has its pluses and minuses, and getting that fit right is as important for every one of our team members as it is for our organisation.*

*Although we've worked hard at this together over the last [x] months, this role doesn't look as if the fit is as good as it could be for you. You have valuable contributions to make, just not necessarily in this role.*

*It would be helpful to explore your thoughts about this, and what might be the best possible way forward.'*

Following the conversation, ask your HR team about the best way to support your team member. For example:

- Finding a position that's more suitable to their aptitude or attitude.
- Reconfiguring the original role to suit the team member's capabilities.

If opportunities can't be found, help people to consider what sort of role might be a better fit for them in other organisations. In the end, the specific process will depend on your local labour laws, but making sure their exit is respectful, transparent, and compassionate will be essential.

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Wishing you great conversations.

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