

Prep a little, gain a lot

Tips to help make the conversation with your manager count

Take a partnership approach

Influence by first understanding your manager's and the organisation's goals. Then seek to align as best as you can.

Think in three levels, to keep your work both high impact and personally meaningful.

Personal

Your own
growth and
satisfaction

Team/Manager

Contribute
directly to
team outcomes

Organisation

Help advance
strategic
objectives

Step 1. Understand the big picture. What are the key strategic priorities this quarter or year? (For example, growth, innovation, customer retention, efficiency.) What is your manager accountable for? What pressures or objectives are they managing? Review organisational updates and strategic plans. Or ask your manager directly about team priorities.

Step 2. Reflect on how your role fits into the bigger picture. Which aspects of your work directly support team or organisational goals? Where do you have the most influence, and where could your contributions be better aligned?

Step 3. Set SMART actions that align. Specific, Measurable, Attractive/Important, Realistic, and Time-bound actions – explicitly linked to a team or organisational priority. For example, instead of “Improve presentation skills”, try “Deliver 2 stakeholder presentations this month to support the project launch and hit our team's Q3 engagement targets”.

Step 4. Collaborate with your manager. Share a draft of your aligned actions and ask for input: “How do these actions align with what you and the team are aiming to achieve? Where can I contribute more or help address a gap?” This encourages alignment and shows ownership.

Adopt a growth mindset

Adopting a [growth mindset](#) demonstrates openness, adaptability, and a commitment to continuous development – qualities that stand out in any high-performing team member. Based on Carol Dweck's research, a growth mindset holds that intelligence and abilities can be developed through effort, learning, and persistence. It contrasts with a fixed mindset, which views intelligence and abilities as static traits. A growth mindset encourages pushing beyond current limits and learning from setbacks. Challenges become opportunities for growth, not threats to abilities. Feedback is embraced as a tool for development, with a focus on the learning process (such as strategies or effort) rather than just the outcome.

Reflect on trust

Trust = Credibility + Reliability + Connection / Self-interest. [Self-evaluate](#) and reflect on where you could deepen trust within your working relationships.

Clarify purpose and support

Go into the conversation clear on:

- Your purpose.
- How your manager can support you.
- What you want them to think, feel, and do after your chat.

Then follow up and follow through

- Deliver on agreed actions.
- Set a date for your next check-in.
- Reflect on what to stop, start, and keep doing for your next career conversation.