

FACILITATING IMPACTFUL SKIP LEVEL CONVERSATIONS

Retain Your Top Talent: Drive Engagement and Foster Connection!



Human Resources
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WHAT ARE SKIP LEVEL CONVERSATIONS?

Enhance Connection! Senior leaders who take the time to engage with employees one level below their direct reports send a powerful message: your contributions, feedback, and experiences matter. These connections not only build trust but also strengthen engagement and a sense of belonging. Here's why step-down conversations are essential.

- Employee's who have the opportunity to engage with senior leaders are 37% more likely to feel motivated and committed to their roles (Gallup, 2022).
- 82% of employee's believe senior leaders should interact more frequently with employee's to demonstrate transparency (Edelman Trust Barometer, 2023).
- Senior leaders who engage directly with employees are 25% more likely to identify critical operational challenges early (Harvard Business Review, 2021).

When Should You Conduct Skip Level Conversations?

Engagement Initiatives



Drive Recognition & Development!

Build rapport with employee's across all levels. Celebrate successes and identify development needs.

Solicit Regular Feedback



Foster Consistent Open Dialogue!

Check in to gauge the employee's relationship with their direct leader. Solicit positive and developmental feedback to strengthen the leader's presence.

Organizational Changes



Address Uncertainty!

Check in during major changes such as leaders transitions, restructure, and/or strategy shift. Check-in to gauge the impact.

LEADER FEEDBACK CYCLE



PREPARE: Review the Skip-Level Conversation Guide (page 3). Plan the conversation. Schedule the meeting (define right time and place).

FACILITATE: Set the tone. Assess trust levels and create an environment where open dialogue can occur.

FOLLOW-UP: Identify opportunities to engage with employee's outside of formal check-ins'

LEADER PROCESSES

Consider the factors below when implementing skip level conversations amongst your team.

Preparation:

- When implementing this new process with a team, gauge the level of trust that exists to foster effective conversations. If you've not engaged with these employees informally before, consider opportunities to build the relationship. Consider starting with psychological safety practices.
- Plan key questions and share the intent, what employee's should expect.
- Consider an "informal setting" which can put employee's at ease, such as a meeting over coffee.

During:

- Reiterate confidentiality and the intent of the discussion.
- Ask open-ended questions, remain open and stay positive for constructive feedback.

After:

- Document key takeaways, establish a plan to address concerns and needs.
- Follow-up and follow-through by regularly checking in with the employee , strengthening the ongoing relationship.

VIDEO Resources: Skip Level Conversations



SKIP LEVEL CONVERSATION GUIDE

Consider navigating skip level conversations by following this question guide.

CATEGORIES	SAMPLE QUESTIONS / STATEMENTS
Opening	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How are things going for you and your team right now?• What's been the most rewarding part of your role recently?• Is there anything you'd like me to know about your work or team that you haven't had the chance to share before?
Understand the Day-to-Day	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What do you enjoy most about your current role?• What challenges are you/your team currently facing?
Feedback for Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How is your relationship with your manager?• What's one thing your manager does really well that helps you succeed?• Are there areas where you think your manager could provide support or guidance?• How can your leader best deliver feedback to you?• How does your manager motivate and inspire your team to perform at its best?• Where can team priorities be better aligned?• What areas is your leader strong? Where could they be even stronger?
Team Dynamics	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How would you describe the dynamics within your team?• Where can collaboration or communication be improved amongst the team?• What's something your team does really well that others could learn from?
Growth & Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What skills or experiences are you hoping to gain within the next year?• What barriers are preventing you from achieving your professional goals?• What development opportunities have you capitalized on?
Closing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is there anything else you'd like to share that I didn't ask about?• What's one thing I, as a senior leader, can do to support you and your team?• How can we continue to make this a great place for you to work?

STAY INTERVIEW QUESTION GUIDE

Consider using this template to document critical feedback.

PHASE	SAMPLE QUESTIONS / STATEMENTS / NOTES
Opening	
Understand the Day-to-Day	
Feedback for Leadership	
Team Dynamics	
Growth & Development	
Closing	