
Career conversations toolkit

This toolkit gives you two short guides:

- **Pages 2 – 3** are for people guiding conversations, for example a line manager
- **Pages 4 – 5** are for employees.

Both guides cover the essentials on:

- the purpose and benefits of these conversations
- roles
- how to prepare
- what to talk about and how.

You can:

- copy and distribute these pages
- adapt them in any way you wish.

For team managers, mentors, etc

Having career conversations with your employees

A career conversation is time spent with another person to explore where they might want to head and how they might get there.

- It requires an open mind about what the outcome should be.
- It conveys interest in the person and their future.
- It connects employee career ideas with business needs.

Career conversations are the foundation of employee development programmes. These:

- help employees to see a future for themselves in the business
- increase employees' job satisfaction, loyalty and motivation
- develop and retain the skills the business needs for the future.

Your role in the conversation

Your role is to:

- ask questions to help your employees to better understand themselves
- be well informed about the development opportunities in your business
- identify opportunities where the employee's interests and business needs overlap.

You must be genuinely committed to helping the other person to build their potential. At the same time be clear about the limits. Don't agree to actions that you can't deliver on.

You are not expected to provide answers or make decisions for your employees.

You don't need to have had a perfect career yourself.

When to have conversations

Career conversations need to be regular and ongoing. They can be shorter or longer depending on the employee's situation.

- You can have conversations as part of regular processes such as progress meetings, coaching or mentoring discussions.
- You could have them alongside performance appraisals, but this doesn't always work.
- Short, unplanned conversations can be a useful addition to the regular process. They are a good way to share new information, strengthen your relationship or check whether anything has changed. They may sometimes sow a seed that has a significant impact even though it is not apparent at the time.

In the first conversation start by talking about what a career conversation is and the roles each of you have in the conversation.

Expect that not everyone will be ready to talk about their career ideas or future direction. Make it easy for the person to opt out if that's how they feel. Repeat the invitation for a conversation at suitable times in the future.

How to prepare

Think about the person you will be talking to:

- What have I noticed about this person recently?
- When have I seen them fully engaged at work? What skills were they using?
- How do they currently fit into the business's strategic goals?
- What opportunities do I see in the future for them?
- What is the business prepared to do to support them to develop their skills?

Review any notes and actions agreed in previous conversations.

If necessary, gather information about opportunities in other areas of the business that might be useful to the employee.

Having the conversation

The steps:

- Make the person feel comfortable and confident – get talk flowing.
- Help them to examine their ideas about themselves and possible future directions. Use open-ended questions starting with 'What', 'How', 'When', 'Tell me about'
- Pick up on ideas which fit with business needs and share information about possible opportunities in the business
- Offer ideas on next steps – where to go, who to talk to – and agree actions.

Questions you could use to do this include:

- What work tasks have you enjoyed most in the last six months?
- What would you like to do more of?
- What would you like to do less of?
- How could you take the next step towards that?
- How could we help make that happen?
- What things are influencing your ideas about your future at the moment?
- What direction would you like to take in the future?

For employees

Having career conversations with your manager

The nature of work and working today means we all need to put time and thought into managing our own careers. Talking to someone else can help you to gain:

- a deeper understanding of your interests, skills and values
- motivation and confidence
- an understanding of the possibilities for you in the business
- a clearer idea of where you are going.

Your role

You are the driver and the expert in your life and career. The person you are talking to is someone who is willing to help you to understand yourself and the opportunities for you. Try to develop a relationship with them that will actively support your career.

Be as open as you can. The more honest you can be about your ideas and concerns, the more you are likely to get out of the conversations.

Try to link your ideas to business needs. Think about how what you'd like to do will contribute to the performance of the business.

How to prepare

Ask yourself these questions:

- What's important to me in my life and work now?
- What am I interested in?
- What motivates me? What am I good at?
- What tasks do I do daily, weekly or monthly that make time fly?
- What is it about those tasks that I really enjoy?
- Where do I see myself in the next 12 months?
- What are the areas I want to grow and develop?
- What support do I want from my employer to develop my skills?

Review your notes and the actions agreed in previous conversations. Think about what you want from this conversation.

Gather information that will be useful, such as possible ways to develop your skills or experience inside or outside work. A good starting point is the Careers New Zealand website, www.careers.govt.nz.

Career management is what we do when we make considered decisions and take appropriate actions to manage our careers throughout our lives.

Get help and advice through www.careers.govt.nz

1

Take a look at what being your own career manager is all about.

→ [Plan your career](#)

2

Review the skills, training and experience that is needed to progress in your job or career.

→ [Jobs database](#)

3

If you can't find the help you need on our website, call or chat online to our career advisers. They will help you work out what to do next.

→ [Contact us](#)

The screenshot shows the careersnz website interface. At the top left is the logo. A search bar is in the top center. On the top right, there are links for 'My Career Space', 'You are not logged in.', 'LOG IN', 'Forgotten password?', and 'Register'. Below the logo is a navigation menu with items: Home, Plan your career, How to get a job, Jobs database, Education & training, Interactive tools, and For practitioners. The main content area features the headline 'Helping you make smart decisions about work and learning in New Zealand.' Below this is a 'Get started' section with a dropdown menu containing: 'Go in the draw to win a netbook', 'Interview advice', 'Future-proofing your career' (highlighted), and 'CV and cover letter templates'. To the right of the dropdown is a 'Contact us' section with a list of links: 'I'm not sure what I want to do', 'I'm at school and need ideas', 'Helping young people', 'I want to change career or return to work', and 'Looking for work in Canterbury?'. Further right are contact details: 'Call us on 0800 222 733', 'Chat online', 'Email us', 'Facebook', and 'Twitter'.

Plan your career

POPULAR PAGES
Where to start
Get ideas for your career
How to make a decision

How to get a job

POPULAR PAGES
Job hunting tips
CVs - getting started
Job vacancy websites

Jobs database

POPULAR PAGES
Search the database
Labour market situation
Jobs in skill shortage

Education & training

POPULAR PAGES
Course database
Scholarships
Choosing school subjects

Events calendar

Wellington Coca Cola Careers Expo
June 25 | Wellington