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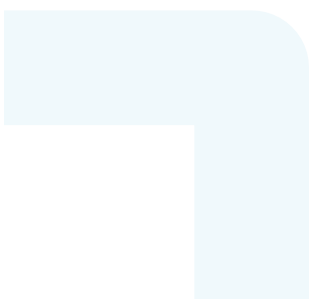
Growing your Potential

AN EMPLOYEE'S GUIDE TO
PARTICIPATING IN EFFECTIVE CAREER
CONVERSATIONS



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Project History

This guide was developed through the Responsive Career Pathways Research Project, and in consultation with working Canadians and small and medium-sized employers in Manitoba.

In March 2023, The Manitoba Institute of Trades and Technology (MITT) joined forces with Blueprint ADE to create a new proactive career services and workforce development model for working Canadians, involving both working Canadians and employers. The project tested a forward-thinking intervention to address the pressing workforce needs of small-to-medium enterprises (SMEs) and the career development needs of mid-career workers. This was achieved through three service delivery pathways: 1) Worker-centered; 2) Employer-driven and 3) Intersections between working Canadians and employers.

Usage Agreement: MITT Responsive Career Pathways Project Materials

The materials provided through MITT's Responsive Career Pathways Project are designed to support workforce development and career engagement. Redistribution or use of these materials, whether in whole or in part, is not permitted without prior written permission from MITT.

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What is a Career?

We define Career as a **person's journey** through their occupation(s), education, training, volunteering, jobs, hobbies and other experiences over a lifetime. A person's career path can be intentional or unplanned and does not need to be a vertical climb.

What is a Career Conversation?

A career conversation is a discussion between you (the employee) and leadership (usually your manager), and can be initiated by either party. These conversations provide an opportunity to discuss goals and growth needs, and how these align with job and development opportunities within your organization. The intent of these conversations is to **establish a partnership** that meets the needs of both you and your employer.

How Career Conversations Benefit You

Having thoughtful career conversations with your employer is a great way to gain insights and awareness of possibilities and opportunities while taking ownership of your growth and development. By raising awareness of your goals and aspirations, and taking time to look deeper into your strengths, values and interests, you'll be better equipped to see how and where your talents and ambitions fit within the organization.





Career Conversations - Expectations

A career conversation will support you with one or more of the following opportunities for career clarity and growth, including:

Building and Nurturing Relationships – Engaging in career conversations can help you and your employer develop a meaningful connection. It can also provide you with opportunities to work alongside and learn from others in your organization who possess diverse skills, abilities and valuable experience.

Receiving Guidance – Career conversations can provide a platform for you to seek advice, insights, and get suggestions from experienced colleagues and leadership on how you can better navigate your career.

Inviting Feedback – By utilizing a positive, solutions-focused approach to invite feedback you can work with your employer to enhance your performance, creating a space for success and helping to create a respectful workplace.

Sharing the Unknown – You likely have hidden skills, education, experiences and talents, from both inside and outside of the workplace (think hobbies, volunteering, a side hustle, etc.), or you may have experiences outside of Canada. Sharing these unknowns can be a great opportunity to help your employer understanding how they could benefit both you and the organization as you grow together.

Creating a Development Plan & Preparing for Opportunity – By exploring potential career paths and opportunities for skills development, mentorship and training, you and your employer can work together to develop a plan that will help you grow, advance in your current role, or prepare you for a new role within your organization.

Big Goals & Small Actions – Discussing your short and long-term career goals can help you take actionable steps towards aligning your wants/needs with your employer's wants/needs. Not sure what these goals are yet? That's okay too! This can also be an excellent opportunity to track your growth to date and then assess which small actions you could take next so you can continue to grow and make a positive impact in your organization.

Evaluating and Documenting Progress – Regular career conversations are great for tracking your growth and identifying actions to continue your development while benefiting your organization. They enhance job satisfaction and showcase your commitment to growth and development. Remember, this is an ongoing process that requires agreed-upon methods and times for accountability and follow-up to be effective for both you and your employer.



Preparing for Career Conversations

Personal Reflection

To set the stage for an effective career conversation, **you should invest time in personal reflection and preparation.** This will help you effectively communicate how you can contribute to the priorities of your organization while growing the skills that will advance your career. To help you prepare for the meeting, here are some questions for you to consider as you reflect on your career history:

1) What are you naturally good at?

- What can't you keep yourself from doing?
- What are you known for?

2) What do you enjoy learning about?

- What do you wish you had more time for?
- What topics or tasks do you naturally gravitate to?
- How would you spend your time if you didn't have to work?

3) What aspects of your work have you enjoyed the most?

- Which activities or projects energized you?
- Who have you worked well with? Why?
- What kinds of work settings have helped you do your best work?

4) What kind of work do you resist doing?

- Which tasks get consistently pushed to the bottom of your to-do list?
- What parts of your job do you routinely procrastinate on?

5) What lessons do you find yourself learning over and over again?

- Which choices continue to result in less than satisfactory outcomes?
- Which attitudes have hindered your growth?

6) Which skills have contributed to your successes or satisfaction?

- What knowledge would you need to develop further to strengthen those skills?
- What additional skills would complement your current skills and provide new opportunities for growth?

7) How have your contributions supported the goals of the organizations that you've worked with?

- What impact(s) have you made?
- What impact(s) would you like to make?
- What feedback have you received from others?



Preparing for Career Conversations Employer Research

The next step in preparing for a career conversation is to research, to understand the needs of your employer. When you are able to find opportunities for alignment - how your skills, experiences, talents and interests meet up with your employers wants and needs -you are on-track to developing a mutually beneficial partnership with your employer.

What's current/known?

- Type of industry
- Size of company/organization
- Current location(s)
- What they do/make/provide/sell
- Who they help/serve/sell to
- What they are known for

What's new?

- Industry changes
- Recent news (internal/external)
- New location(s)
- New products or services
- New clients or customers
- What they want to be known for

What challenges do they need to solve?

- Current and/or future roles to be filled
- Ways to develop skills/knowledge to address current and future staffing needs
- Messaging to reach clients/customers
- Change of work structure/environment
- Change of image or reputation

What growth opportunities are available?

- Job shadowing
- Mentorship
- Cross-training
- Secondments (temp. assign to new role)
- In-house professional development
- Funding/support for education and training from outside the organization



Preparing for Career Conversations Thinking Ahead

You have completed a personal reflection and looked into the needs of your employer and where opportunities might exist. An important next step is to visualize where you want to be in both the short and long term. Consider what you would like to be doing and what problems or challenges you want to tackle. What skills and knowledge will you need? Your answers to these questions will help clarify your growth areas and allow you to develop an actionable plan.

1) Where do you want to grow next?

- What would you like to be doing?
- What skills do you want to use or develop?

2) Where are you now in relation to your goal?

- What knowledge and skills do you need to develop?
- What knowledge and skills do you already have?

3) What training or experiences might you need to achieve this goal?

- What growth opportunities are available in your workplace?
- What growth opportunities are available outside of your workplace?

4) Who could help you gain the experience or develop the skills you desire?

- Is there someone who could mentor you?
- Can coworkers support your learning on the job?

5) What is your current goal, or most important to you right now, in terms of your career growth?

- Why is this goal important to you?
- Where are you now in relation to your goal?
- Who could help you with this goal? How can they help?
- What training or resources can you access to move closer towards your goal?

6) What challenges could prevent you from achieving your goal?

- What strategies or tools could you use to overcome these challenges?
- Where could you access support to assist you when challenges arise?
- Who can you lean on for support during challenging times?

7) What challenges could prevent you from achieving your goal?

- Do you have a **SMART Goal**?
- How will you celebrate your success?

Roles and Responsibilities Employees & Employers

Employees	Employers
<p>Take ownership of your career conversations and desired growth. Initiate and prepare for career development conversations with your manager/leader and strive to develop a curiosity mindset to further support these conversations.</p>	<p>Prioritize career conversations. Provide employees with opportunities to share career aspirations and reflect upon their experiences. Encourage employees to develop a curiosity mindset and take ownership of their career development.</p>
<p>Keep the focus on career development and growth. Separate these conversations from formal performance reviews or workplan discussions.</p>	<p>Keep the focus on career development and growth. Separate these conversations from formal performance reviews or workplan discussions.</p>
<p>Be open about your career aspirations and desired growth. Understand your strengths and interests and ask for honest feedback on your goals and expectations.</p>	<p>Be transparent about career development and growth opportunities. Provide honest feedback on the employee's goals, aspirations and expectations.</p>
<p>Research the skills and experience your organization needs. Stay abreast of changes and emerging needs within your organization and your specific role or field.</p>	<p>Communicate future organizational needs. Help staff understand the skills and experience your organization is looking to acquire in the future.</p>
<p>Take initiative to seek out development opportunities. Actively look for opportunities or experiences that will further your desired career growth.</p>	<p>Help employees find development opportunities, including outside your team or area. Utilize networks/colleagues to identify and share opportunities that align with an employee's desired growth.</p>
<p>Build your network within the organization. Network with peers, other supervisors and senior leaders to learn more about growth opportunities and what skills and experiences to focus on.</p>	<p>Help employees expand their internal networks. Connect them with peers, other supervisors and senior leaders that match their areas of interest.</p>



Video: Unlocking Career Success - The Power of Curiosity (3:38 mins)

Adapted from: United Nations. (n.d.). Career Development Conversations: A Guide for Managers (p. 16).

Career Conversations - The Approach

When initiating a career conversation, it's important to present yourself in a manner that will allow you to be heard. Here are some examples for you to consider:

After doing some self-reflection, I would like an opportunity to share information about my career goals and some additional skills I have so I can learn how these might fit with the current and future needs of the organization.

or

I have been thinking about my future and the types of contributions I could make to our organization. I would like an opportunity to share information about my skills and abilities, some that you may not be aware of, and get your feedback on how I can further use and grow these for both our benefit.

or

I would like to discuss my current role and responsibilities and how I can continue to make a positive impact. I would also like to explore ways to further develop my skills so I can grow within our organization to continue to make a solid contribution now and in the future.

What do you think of these suggestions? How will you decide to approach this? How can you demonstrate that this conversation is not only for your benefit, but the employer's benefit also? Write down your ideas below.

By taking time to thoughtfully prepare, being clear about your intentions and demonstrating your desire to create a win for both you and the organization, you'll be poised for a successful conversation.



Video: How to Have a Career Conversation with my Boss (1:53 mins)

Career Conversations - Sample Questions

Now that you've taken steps to understand your employer's needs (page 5) and clarify your own goals by thinking ahead (page 6) as part of your preparation for a career conversation, it's important to select situation-appropriate questions to help your manager understand how they can support you in taking action toward your desired growth within the organization. To help with this process, please select appropriate questions from the list below - or create a list of your own questions - and bring them with you to your next career conversation.

- How can I better align my skills and learning to meet both my goals and the goals of the organization?
- I feel that my strengths/values/interests align with _____ project/initiative. How could I participate or demonstrate my desire to contribute to this?
- As someone who enjoys doing _____, in what ways could I include more of this type of work as a part of my regular tasks?
- What are the skills and knowledge that will be needed most by the company in the upcoming years?
 - What should I start doing now to prepare myself to compete for these opportunities in the future?
- How could the skills and experience that I've gained from outside of the workplace/Canada provide additional value to my existing team and/or another role or department?
- In what ways could I expand my skill set and take on new challenges and growth opportunities within the organization?
- What steps can I take to position myself for growth or advancement opportunities?
- How could I demonstrate my readiness for more responsibilities, a new challenge, or a different or higher-level role?
- How can I set up an informational interview to learn more about _____ department or role?
- How can I participate in mentorship or leadership development programs to learn more about _____ or develop my skills in this area?
- What opportunities are available for professional development, training, or skill enhancement within the organization?
- When should we schedule a check-in to discuss my career progress and/or consider next steps?



Video: Career Growth Questions to Ask My Manager (3 mins - 8:15-11:23)

Write it Down - A Commitment to Success

To be effective, it's important to not only have career conversations regularly, but for you to evaluate your goals and document your challenges, changes and progress along the way. To help you do this, you can use this sheet to take notes and establish next steps.

NAME OF EMPLOYEE:

DATE OF MEETING:

NOTES: (Information, ideas and feedback shared.)

ACTIONS & NEXT STEPS: (What commitments did I make? What are my next steps? What goals have I set? When do I intend to take action? What suggestions or commitments did my manager make?)

NEXT CHECK IN: (When I will follow up or schedule another conversation.)