

Engagement conversation guide

Leadership and learning hub

Why conduct an engagement conversation?

Engaged staff are more satisfied with their work, their organisation and their overall employment. Engaged staff are committed to their work and have a desire to perform at high levels and go the extra mile; they remain with their organisation and recommend it to others as a great place to work.

[Leadership competencies for Queensland](#) recognise the importance of leaders to identify the strengths, aspirations and areas for development of their team. The first step is to get to know each of your team members and what motivates them. We recommend regular (monthly, quarterly) one-on-one conversations with everyone in your team. This guide provides a framework for these conversations.

Make a one-hour appointment with each of your team, get to know each team member, understand who they are and help connect their roles to the strategy and success of your agency.

Plan the engagement conversation

Before the meeting ask yourself:

- What is the purpose of the meeting?
- What is the outcome I want – for myself and my team member?
- What is the process?

LET US MAKE A SPECIAL EFFORT TO STOP COMMUNICATING WITH EACH OTHER, SO WE CAN HAVE SOME CONVERSATION.

[Mark Twain](#)

Allow a minimum of one hour, with phones off and be fully present How are you going to approach the invite? Will it be informal, at a team meeting, or via calendar invitations?

Whatever approach you use, allow time for questions about what the meeting is for and why it is happening now. People are concerned in times of change so being prepared with answers is essential.

On the day

When you first get started, it's helpful to establish the setting. For example, explain that this is a confidential conversation to get to know each other and better understand each other's priorities. Confirm that any notes you take are for yourself only and that while you have a loose framework of questions (see page 3 for recommendations), a wider conversation is certainly welcome. Emphasise that you are also happy to answer questions—it's a two-way street—and the conversation is not just about work tasks.

It's important to be authentic, so relax and enjoy the opportunity to really connect with your colleagues. Share your story, your strengths and goals as well. Remember this is not an interview, but a shared conversation, so really talk and really listen. Listening is an active process, ask questions for understanding and try listening twice as much as you speak.

Most staff will have questions about any change or transition currently occurring, so you need to be able to answer the **4 P's**, - and if you don't have the answer, at least share your opinion.

- **P**urpose – why we have to do this
- **P**icture – what it will look and feel like when we get there
- **P**lan – the stepby-step to how we will get there
- **P**art – what they can do and need to do to move/get on board.



Follow-up

If you commit to something, be sure to do it. If you plan to have a second meeting, do it. DO NOT bring information from the conversation to others in the team unless you have consent. Trust is vital. Always ask for permission before sharing anything from a private conversation with other employees.

Plan the next round of conversations

Make a note in your diary or schedule in time for the next round (monthly, quarterly) of conversations. As a leader you will reap the rewards of regular conversations.

Engagement conversation template

History and background

Work, study, qualifications, interests, family etc.

Transition (if relevant)

What has changed for you as a result of the recent organisational change?

Explore the subjective perspective (friends, history of success, reputation etc) and the objective perspective (change to space/location, reporting relationships, travel arrangements etc).

Performance

What do you understand are your priorities / planned results areas?

How do you measure success - the value proposition?

What do you perceive are the barriers to your success?

Talent

What are your strengths?

What are your career ambitions?

Work / life arrangements

What are the current work arrangements? (e.g. leave early Tuesdays to coach a cricket team)

Are there any proposed changes in the next year?

What is your need for leave over the next six months?

Open discussion

Any questions?

Summary points / reflections