

# CAREER CONVERSATIONS TOOLKIT FOR PEOPLE MANAGERS





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## Introduction

Supervisees want direction on where they need to develop for the future. By having an honest and open career conversation, they will feel more engaged by their work and more committed to the organisation.

This guide will help you prepare for a career conversation with your supervisees to empower them to take ownership of their own career development while providing the information and support they seek on their career journey. This will help your supervisee feel satisfied in their role no matter what their career ambitions are.

The resources provided in this toolkit will show you effective ways to ask the right questions and support your supervisee in setting goals and creating a development plan.

## Career Conversations: What are they? And how can they help?

The main purpose of a career conversation is to help a supervisee develop specific goals, identify the skills and experience needed to achieve their career goals, and then create a plan for development that is mutually beneficial to the supervisee and UNDP.

As a result, the career conversation will help the supervisee find a better work/life balance, feel more personal/professional fulfilment, and in return UNDP will have more satisfied, loyal and motivated staff. And they will be able to develop and keep the skills UNDP needs for the future.

Effective career conversations have many positive and practical outcomes for supervisees. The most important outcomes are:

- A clearer sense of career direction and career options.
- Increased confidence, motivation and self-insight.
- Improved retention and job progression within UNDP.

## What's in It for You?

Research has shown that supporting supervisees in better managing their careers is a key factor in their level of engagement.

And high levels of engagement are recognized as a key element in boosting productivity.

Helping your supervisees with their career planning helps you in many ways:

- **Leadership:** By inspiring and supporting others you will practice and develop your own leadership skills.





- **Clarity:** Being clear on your role in career conversations makes these meetings easier and much less stressful for you and your supervisees.
- **Time Saving:** Having a process in place, including knowing which questions to ask, saves you preparation time.
- **Better Results:** Having people that are more engaged increases the likelihood of success for your work unit (and for you).

## What is Talked About in a Good Career Conversation?

Supervisees typically want these three things from their career conversations:

1. Information about new opportunities, different roles and career development options.
2. Feedback on their skills and performance. They are also interested in how UNDP views their potential.
3. Guidance about possible career paths, growth opportunities and development options.

The areas to discuss in a good career conversation are:

1. **Feelings about work**—how do they feel about their current job and career? It can help discharge any negative emotions which can get in the way of positive thought and action.
2. **Skills and reputation**—feedback on how they are doing and how the organisation views them.
3. **Values, drivers and ambitions**—what's important to them in their career? What are their values in relation to work? What does success look like for them?
4. **Career options**—what opportunities are available to them in their current role and elsewhere within UNDP?
5. **Processes and politics of UNDP**—do they understand how things get done 'around here'? How can they raise their profile and be more visible to key people?
6. **Next steps**—what career development strategies can they use to make progress and what actions can they take?

Ongoing career conversations allow supervisees to evolve and improve as they receive feedback. They encourage them to focus on areas of strength and areas for improvement. They help them reflect on their behaviour and consider whether adjustments are needed to reach short- and long-term goals. Whilst we expect supervisees to take control of their own career, People Managers can enable this by providing valuable support.





## **When to Have Career Conversations?**

It is more effective to keep career conversations separate to the performance reviews. They need to be regular and ongoing. In the first conversation start by talking about what a career conversation is and the roles each of you have in the conversation.

The conversation can be shorter or longer depending on the supervisee's situation.

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 plant a seed that has a significant impact even though it is not clear to them at the time.

## **Understanding the People Manager's Role in Career Conversations, the Skills and Qualities Needed**

As a People Manager People Manager, you play an important role in supporting your supervisees career journey as they work through their planning. You need to ask the right questions, provide support and guidance, and identify development opportunities within the organisation.

Our UNDP Values are essential elements of a career path for all supervisees. Our shared values of Integrity, Professionalism, and Respect for Diversity are what we expect of everyone.

There are many skills and qualities that are important if People Managers People Manager are to have meaningful and effective career conversations with Supervisees.

### **1. Motivation and Attitudes**

Motivation and attitudes are as important as skills. People Managers must show real interest in the person, focusing on the needs of the supervisee and wanting them to succeed.

### **2. Personal Qualities**

Supervisees look for and respond to different qualities in People Managers depending on their own personality. The important traits are empathy, honesty, frankness and being non-judgemental. It also helps to be positive and enthusiastic.

### **3. Facilitation and Coaching Skills**

Facilitation and coaching skills involve listening attentively, showing empathy and the use of effective questioning techniques. These skills are all important in building trusting relationships and breaking down information sharing barriers. Another important skill within this subset is intuitive listening – hearing what is not being said as much as what is being said.





#### **4. Knowledge and Experience**

Where possible, People Managers should draw on their experience in the organisation. It could involve explaining the organisation's structure and processes. Or it could mean sharing knowledge about the organisation's strategy and vision.

People Managers who have a wide experience are able to share information and different perspectives. That can open the supervisees mind to new possibilities.

#### **5. Feedback Skills**

People Managers must be able to challenge in constructive ways. Supervisees want to be pushed outside of their comfort zone and value frank and honest feedback, even when it is tough to hear.

Providing honest and open feedback can help supervisees develop their self-awareness. They gain insight into how they are perceived and their impact in the workplace. As a result, they can identify their strengths and the areas they need to develop to make progress.

### **How to Have a Career Conversation**

#### **Set expectations.**

- Share the purpose of having a career conversation and your expectations for the meeting.
- Express appreciation for time spent by staff preparing for the meeting
- Ask if there are specific things the staff member would like to cover.
- Emphasise that the conversation is confidential.

#### **Establish trust**

- Establish an open feel to put the other person at ease, show interest and listen carefully. Be open about your own career and experience if appropriate.

#### **Let staff share current and future career goals.**

- Listen intently to what staff would like to do in their careers and work to identify what matters most to them.
- Ask questions to help identify their interests, skills, values, and needs. Let them speak (remember the 80/20 rule). They should be doing most of the talking.
- Your role is to help balance individual goals with business needs.

**Help them to explore, discuss and evaluate options for development and growth. You may be able to share options/ideas that staff may not have considered.**





- Encourage them to discuss what they really want out of work – what drives and motivates them. Identify ways to move forward.
- Consider different ways to develop and grow
  - Moving across
  - Growing in place
  - Moving up
  - Taking on an exploratory or stretch assignment
  - Talking with others to increase awareness of different career options
  - Exploring external opportunities

### **Identify gaps.**

- Provide information on opportunities within and outside UNDP. Challenge their ideas where appropriate in a constructive way.
- Share insights on how to explore options, identify support needed, and link to available resources.
- Discuss any changes staff may want to consider opportunities in the same unit, in a different unit, or externally
- Discuss any challenges or potential obstacles.

### **Agree actions.**

- Agree on next steps and actions. Ensure the individual knows what they need to do next and can come back to you if required. If you agree to do something, do it - and quickly.

## **Questions to ask during the Career Conversation**

### **Let the supervisee share their current and future career goals:**

- What do others tell you that you do really well? What do you enjoy doing?
- What kinds of roles or projects are you interested in that you aren't currently doing?
- In what technical, functional areas would you like to gain greater knowledge or experience?
- What else would you like to learn about?
- What do you wish you could do more of / less of?
- Think of a time when you were performing at your best, what were you doing?
- Which skills are you not using now that you would like to use?
- Where would you like to develop or improve?
- What would be the three most important motivators for you?
- What gives you the greatest satisfaction in your current role?
- What kinds of work settings help you to do your best work?
- Are there any areas or roles you wish to stay away from? Why?





### **Questions to help you identify gaps:**

- Which option do you want to explore first? What information do you need?
- How can I help you connect with others? (consider information interviews, networking, etc)
- Let's talk about experiences that would enable you to test out an option. (Consider job shadowing, developmental opportunities, cross-functional support, etc.)
- Let's look at (skill development, knowledge/training, experiences) that would provide greater depth and/or breadth for current 1-3 years, 3 years + timeframes.
- Let's talk about additional certifications that would be useful.
- It might be helpful for you to meet with... as a good resource for advice or information. Would you consider doing this?
- Let's talk about (meetings, activities, projects, training) that you could participate in to (broaden your skillset, gain experience, increase exposure, build visibility).
- Note: You may have to give feedback to help the supervisee themselves clearly or work through a Gap Analysis. Be specific, concrete, and constructive, providing examples where you can.
- What might get in your way?
- How do you plan to handle this?
- Where (or to whom) are you going to go for support?

### **Encourage action and follow-through:**

- What specific action steps can you take to move this forward?
- Would you like us to meet again in a few months to review progress? If so, when and where?
- Where (or to whom) are you going to go when you have questions or concerns?

### **Tips for People Managers in Holding Constructive Career Conversations**

1. Remember your role.
2. Take time to prepare.
3. Listen actively, understand and offer support.
4. Manage expectations at the start of the conversation.
5. Create a safe and supportive space.
6. Help them to examine their ideas.
7. Don't judge and don't interrupt.
8. Pick up on ideas which fit with the organisation's needs.
9. Offer ideas on next steps if asked.
10. Agree actions.
11. Follow up.



## Understand the UNDP Career Journey

Our career planning journey is rooted in the fundamental principle that career planning is a very personal journey. As such, it must be driven by the supervisee. This exploration has four key stages:

**Stage 1: Know Yourself.**

**Stage 2: Know Your Actions.**

**Stage 3: Plan Your Actions.**

**Stage 4: Create Your Future.**



To gain further insight into the UNDP career planning journey, review the [Career Development Experience Website](#).

## Getting Prepared for Success

Preparation before the session, is essential to build trust and rapport with the supervisee. It demonstrates the seriousness with which the People Manager takes their role.

1. Become familiar with the UNDP Career Journey.
2. Review notes from your supervisee's Performance Review Discussion.
3. Review any notes and actions agreed in previous conversations.
4. Consider your own view on the supervisee's strengths.





5. Consider how to manage individuals' expectations about the level of support you and UNDP can give them.
6. If necessary, gather information about different opportunities available in Programme or Operations.
7. Prepare some open questions to ask in advance.
8. Think about your own experiences and career journey.

## How to Guide the Career Conversation

This section outlines your role at each stage and tips on how to guide the conversation.

### Stage 1: Know Yourself

In this stage, the supervisee begins to assess their values, capabilities, personality and ambitions.

#### Your Role

- Help them reflect on their experience by asking open, solution-focussed questions: *What is going well in your current role? What is it about that achievement that you found satisfying?*
- Develop self-awareness by providing positive, constructive feedback.
- Enable them to gain clarity of direction by talking through their self-assessment and ambitions: *What positive qualities will help you make progress? What unique talents do you possess?*

### Stage 2: Know Your Actions

In this stage, the supervisee evaluates their options before making a decision on their career development goals and charting a plan to advance their career.

#### Your Role

- Enable a change of perspective by challenging them to think differently and move out of their comfort zone: *Where would you like to be working? What would you like to be doing day to day?*
- Aid their decision making by helping them evaluate different alternatives and opportunities. Help them look at the pros and cons and seek out the information they need to make a decision: *How might you make your current role more satisfying and enjoyable? How might you explore different possibilities and alternatives?*



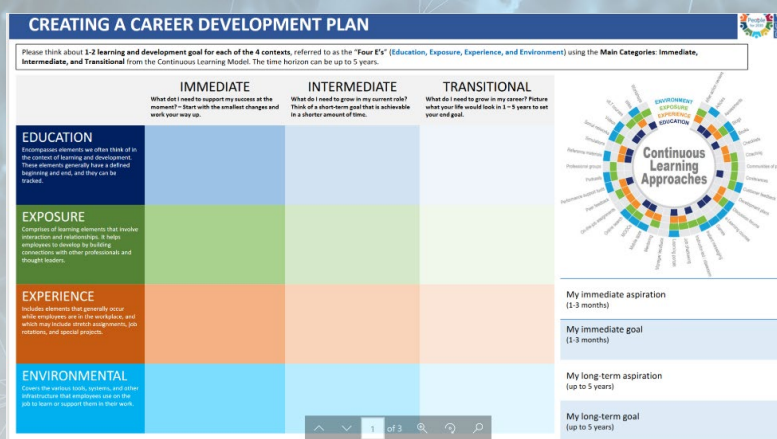
### Stage 3: Plan Your Actions

In this stage, the supervisee creates a plan for their Career Journey.

Taking advantage of such experiential opportunities will allow the supervisee to be ready for new opportunities when they develop.

#### Your Role

- Help them define their career aspirations and goals: *What are your short-term and long-term career goals? Where do you want to be in 3-, 6-, 12-months' or 3 years from now time?*
- Help them create a career development plan using the UNDP [Career Development Plan tool](#) (more info [here](#)): *What knowledge do you need to gain? What relationships do you need to develop?*



**CREATING A CAREER DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

Please think about 1-2 learning and development goal for each of the 4 contexts, referred to as the "Four E's" (Education, Exposure, Experience, and Environment) using the Main Categories: Immediate, Intermediate, and Transitional from the Continuous Learning Model. The time horizon can be up to 5 years.

	IMMEDIATE What do I need to support my success at the moment? Start with the smallest changes and work your way up.	INTERMEDIATE What do I need to grow in my current role? Think of a short-term goal that is achievable in a shorter amount of time.	TRANSITIONAL What do I need to grow in my career? Picture where you'd like to be in 1-5 years to set your end goal.
<b>EDUCATION</b> Recognizes elements we often think of in the context of learning and development. These elements generally have a defined beginning and end, and they can be tracked.			
<b>EXPOSURE</b> Comprises of learning elements that involve interaction and relationships. It helps employees to develop by building connections with other professionals and thought leaders.			
<b>EXPERIENCE</b> Includes elements that generally occur within employees' day-to-day work, and which may include stretch assignments, job rotations, and special projects.			
<b>ENVIRONMENTAL</b> Covers the various tools, systems, and other infrastructure that employees use on the job to learn or support them in their work.			

**Continuous Learning Approaches**

- My immediate aspiration (1-3 months)
- My immediate goal (1-3 months)
- My long-term aspiration (up to 5 years)
- My long-term goal (up to 5 years)

- Emphasise the importance of the Continuous Learning Model. Help them identify learning opportunities in the four different contexts (Education, Exposure, Experience, Environment).

### Stage 4: Create Your Future

In this stage, the supervisee takes ownership of their future. They implement their career development plan and take action.

#### Your Role

- Regularly review progress: *What progress have you made? And what helped you make progress?*
- Congratulate them on their progress and achievements.
- Provide information and resources to support your supervisee's continued career development and continue to identify relevant opportunities to help them make progress.



## **Ideas for growth and Development**

Often, supervisees may ask for your ideas on preparing for their next role or remaining in their current role and continuing to grow and develop.

Here are additional ideas to consider when thinking about career and developmental experiences:

- Special or short-term projects to apply and develop strengths and areas of interest
- Stretch assignments
- Expanded responsibilities
- Inclusion in key presentations, meetings, projects to build visibility and gain exposure, joining working groups or taskforces
- Involvement in communities of practice
- Greater exposure to different functions or clients
- Introduction to others who are in role/global practice
- Mentoring
- Coaching
- Education/training courses/ conferences for development and growth
- Certifications
- On-the-job Learning
- Cross-support
- Rotations
- Developmental assignments
- Position move to gain breadth and/or depth or acquire greater life/work balance
- Position move to better meet interests, strengths and motivators
- External assignment

*For more information and resources on Career Development, feel free to explore the [UNDP Career Development website](#).*





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