

HOW TO MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR APPRAISAL CONVERSATIONS - AND WHAT TO AVOID

Here's how to improve your performance conversation management.



THE ART OF PERFORMANCE CONVERSATIONS: HOW TO TACKLE, PREPARE, AND EXCEL



WHAT DO MANAGERS COMMONLY GET WRONG IN PERFORMANCE APPRAISALS?



1. Don't reach a conclusion or act on what's decided.



2. Focus solely on what people have done, rather than how and why they've done it.



3. Fail to clearly define objectives and targets.



4. Make the whole process 'us and them'.



5. Never give praise.

HOW CAN I MAKE A PERFORMANCE CONVERSATION BETTER?



TAKE TIME TO PREPARE.

Think carefully about what you both want from it and how you're going to keep the conversation positive and moving forward.



BE CLEAR.

Make sure both sides understand the reason for and intent of the conversation, especially the actual topic for discussion.



BE SPECIFIC.

Support any assertions with evidence. Provide evidence-based feedback.



BE POSITIVE.

Make the conversation more about improvement and growth than sanction or punishment.



ENCOURAGE QUESTIONS.

Try to make the process a genuine dialogue, with both sides listening to each other.

HOW CAN I MAKE A 'DIFFICULT' CONVERSATION EASIER?

1. CHANGE YOUR MINDSET

Rather than labelling the conversation 'difficult' try to make it something more positive, less binary, and more like a 'normal' conversation.

2. REMEMBER TO BREATHE

Pausing to collect your thoughts and ensuring you are calm, collected and feel in control will also help.

3. PLAN BUT DON'T SCRIPT

You need to plan out how the conversation will go, but remember it is supposed to be a conversation, a dialogue, not a lecture.

4. ACKNOWLEDGE YOUR COUNTERPART'S PERSPECTIVE

Don't go into a difficult conversation with a my-way-or-the-highway attitude.

5. BE COMPASSIONATE

This doesn't mean 'be a rollover'. Be firm and clear about what you want to achieve from the conversation, but it is important to be honest, empathetic and understanding.

6. SLOW DOWN AND LISTEN

To keep tensions from blazing, slow down the pace of the conversation.

7. BODY LANGUAGE

Look at your body language and work on improving your emotional intelligence.

8. ASK WHAT YOU CAN GIVE BACK

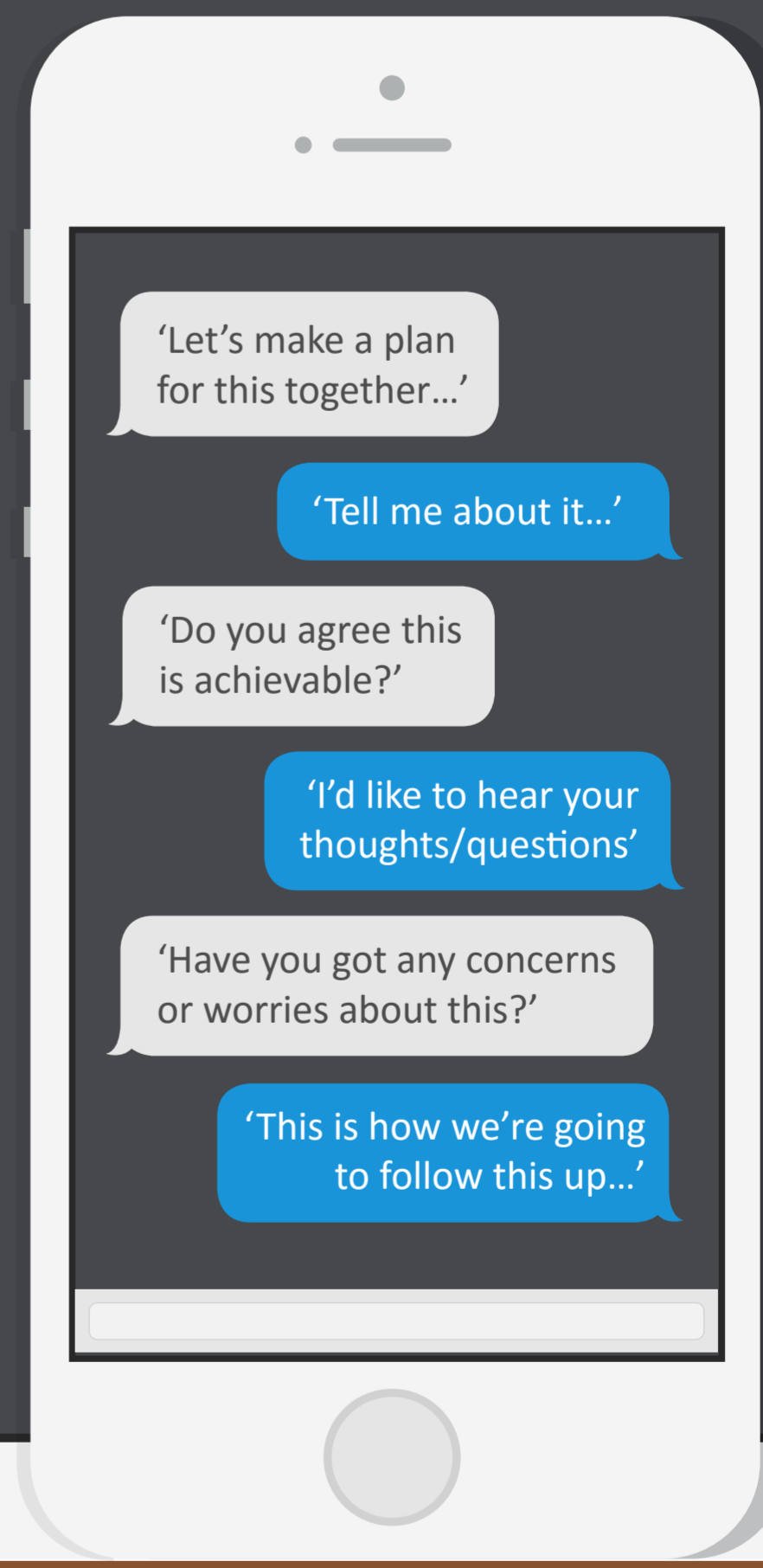
You're asking or telling someone something difficult, so try and give or offer something back. Try to propose options or solutions that both of you can agree on, 'own', and take forward.

9. REFLECT, LEARN, FEED BACK AND ACT

Reflect on what the conversation has achieved and what you have learned. Feed it back to the employee to ensure they've come away with the same perspective. Then you can set out practical actions going forward.

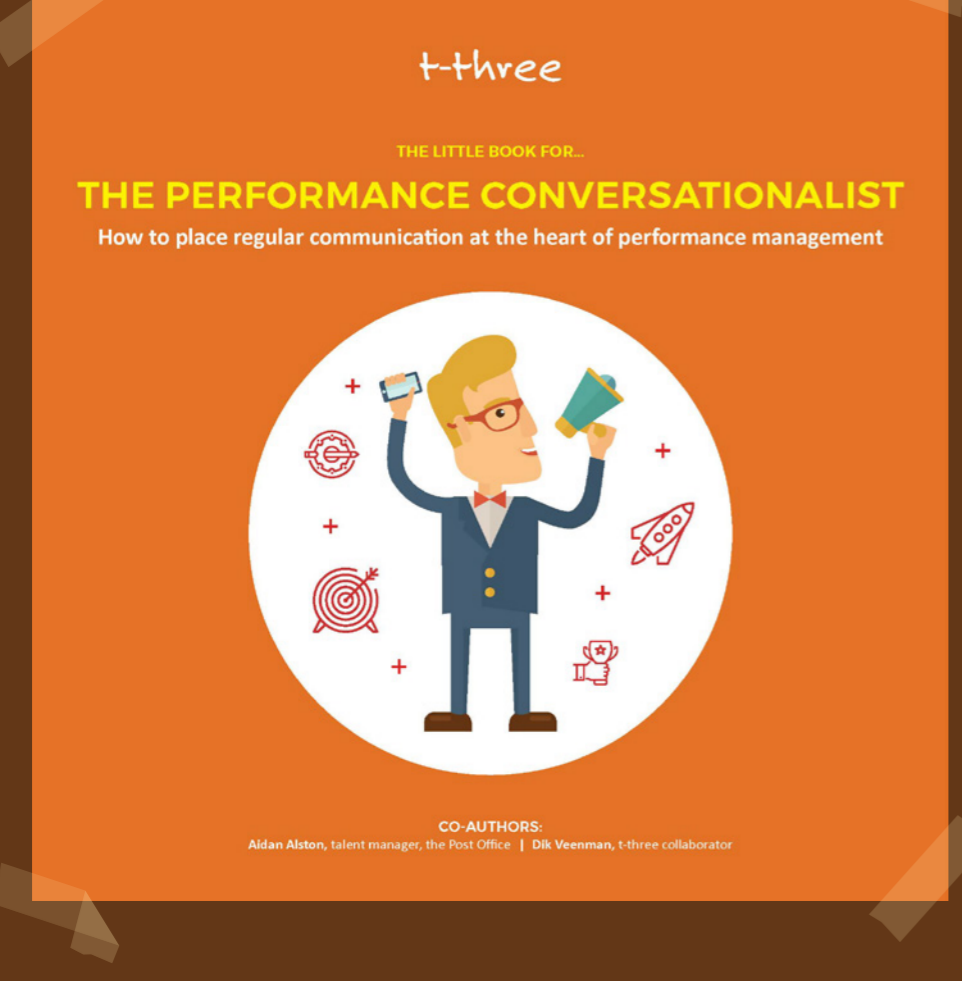
SOME USEFUL 'DIFFICULT CONVERSATION' PHRASES

- "Why don't we work together to solve this?"
- "I understand what I'm saying is difficult, but..."
- "Were you aware...?"
- "How might we solve this?"
- "I'd like to get your point of view on this"
- "I'm sure you agree..."
- "I'd like to reach a better understanding about..."
- "Can you provide me with examples...?"
- "What would you say I'm not understanding about this?"



TAKEAWAYS:

- ✔ Encourage a climate of openness, transparency and genuine dialogue.
- ✔ Focus on positive feedback, improvement rather than criticism and creating a coaching culture.
- ✔ Having great conversations with colleagues is perhaps the most important part of a manager's role.
- ✔ Look at your body language and work on improving your own emotional intelligence.
- ✔ Slow down and listen, reflect, learn and feed back as well as act. Paying attention to how you talk can dramatically improve the effectiveness of these conversations.
- ✔ Don't "store up" performance conversations. Instead, make them a regular, ongoing part of how you manage your team.



Discover why the traditional annual appraisal model is broken. Long live performance conversations! Download:

THE LITTLE BOOK FOR... THE PERFORMANCE CONVERSATIONALIST.

How to place regular communication at the heart of performance management.

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