

How to have effective performance conversations with your manager



ILLUSTRATION: ZARIF FAIAZ

In the frenzy of daily tasks, employees often prioritise performance conversations with their managers. One might falsely believe that their performance will speak for itself. In reality, giving visibility of your work to your manager is a job in itself, and failing to do so may have unexpected repercussions such as a lower performance rating than what you anticipated.

SYEDA ADIBA ARIF

Don't let "crucial tasks" that perpetually pop-up take precedence over your self-growth and follow the below tips on having conversations that truly matter.

SCHEDULE AHEAD

To avoid putting off conversations to a later date when the "time is right", agree on a frequency with your line manager and block invites for an entire year. Even if your team changes, it's a good way to maintain a relationship with a former manager who may become a mentor. While you can always reschedule for urgent business priorities or if your manager is having a horrible day, it's important to have it on your calendars so they act as periodic reminders to prioritise yourself.

PREPARE EXHAUSTIVELY

There is not a thing that we do that lacks a strong correlation between preparation and likelihood of success. Before you attend the meeting, make sure you've compiled everything you've done between two performance conversations. I use Microsoft Planner to keep track of my work and the "Completed" section is very useful for me to recollect my key achievements. Reflect on instances of team collaboration and

leadership demonstration. I like to keep a live excel sheet with rolling feedback from these meetings so I can refer to them and share the progress I've made. This assures managers that you value and act on their feedback. Conduct a thorough self-assessment of your weak areas. Consider any short-term problems you're facing to reach your long-term development goals. Think about aspects that your manager can guide you on, be it your job, your career trajectory, or your team.

DELIVER YOUR PITCH

During the meeting, focus on your tone and structure. Sound approachable and open to feedback. When presenting evidence of your work, speak in a Situation-Behaviour-Impact format, where you first specify the context, then describe your behaviour or action, and finally elaborate on its impact on the business or team. Non-verbal communication is also crucial for a good outcome. Demonstrate curiosity through sitting upright, leaning slightly forward, smiling, and maintaining good eye contact, or whatever feels right for you. The idea here is to engage your counterpart, listen and be listened to. Give your manager the time and space to digest the information you're imparting.

METABOLISING FEEDBACK

Ask for your manager's perspective on your work and listen to their feedback with poise and composure. Take notes. Both immediate acceptance and over-deliberation of feedback are problematic as they hinder your ability to process and apply it. This may lead to a decay in the usefulness of the feedback or even end up in you handling it begrudgingly. If you don't agree with something, address your concerns respectfully and seek further clarification. Make sure you have a complete picture of how your manager views your strength and development areas before you leave the meeting. Express your intentions to work on the feedback assertively and with focused clarity.

CREATE A FORWARD FOCUS

After the meeting, organise your notes and reflect. If you've spent some time in corporate, you are very aware that people may have varying motives for saying what they say. If you trust your manager's motive behind the feedback, and if the feedback aligns with your goals, go ahead and craft an action plan to work on it. If it doesn't align, continue conversations with your manager to reach better sync. If you don't trust their motive, discuss with your mentors to decide if you want to accept or discard the feedback. It is highly recommended to engage your mentors and people important for your career in separate conversations about your performance, so you can have a 360 view on how you're perceived.

On having a good number of these conversations, you will be able to trace similar areas of strengths and weaknesses. Ultimately, consistent performance conversations help shape your career in a way that aligns with personal and organisational goals.

Performance conversations can be a crucial tool in an employee's lifecycle. When done right, it can go a long way to inspire positive change in careers. To best leverage this, stop treating them as a mere end-of-year exercise. Recognise the substantial impact it can have on your professional development. Remember, you are probably not your manager's only reportee, but they are your only manager for now. Accept the onus and take charge of your career.

Adiba Arif is an HR Manager at BAT Bangladesh and a corporate columnist for The Daily Star. Having completed her Bachelor's from IBA, University of Dhaka, she is currently pursuing a Master's in Data Science & Analytics at East West University.

JOBS SPOTLIGHT

United International University (UIU)

Assistant Professor,
Civil Engineering

Deadline: November 30

Eligibility:

PhD or equivalent in the relevant subject from a recognised university.

Minimum experience: N/S



International Rescue Committee (IRC)

Cyber Security System
Engineer

Deadline: November 20

Eligibility:

Minimum bachelor's degree in the IT field. Master's degree will be given preference.

Minimum experience: 5 years



Daraz

Payment Solution
Specialist

Deadline:
November 25

Eligibility:

Bachelor's degree in CSE, MIS, or Business Administration from any top-tier university.

Minimum experience: 3-5 years



Plan

Manager, Talent
Management &
Development (People & Culture)

Deadline: November 23

Eligibility:

University degree in Human Resources, Organisational Development, Business Administration, or a related field.

Minimum experience: 7-10 years



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TikTok parent ByteDance reaches \$300 billion valuation: report

ByteDance, the parent company of TikTok, is valuing itself at approximately \$300 billion through a new share buyback program, according to a recent report by the Wall Street Journal.

As per the report, the Beijing-based tech giant recently approached investors with an offer to purchase shares at \$180.70 each, compared to \$160 per share during its last buyback program. The latest move highlights ByteDance's strategy to provide liquidity for its investors amid the absence of plans for an initial public offering (IPO), shares the report.

This is the third buyback program ByteDance has conducted since 2022. In the previous round, the company bought back around \$5 billion worth of shares, valuing itself at \$268 billion, according to the report.



ILLUSTRATION: ZARIF FAIAZ

5 ice-breakers to make your next professional gathering less awkward

SHAMS RASHID TONMOY

We've all been there: stuck in a professional meet-up, awkwardly lingering in a corner, unsure of how to jump into a conversation. In these moments, remember that networking isn't just about making connections—it's about making an impression. Instead of relying on a rehearsed pitch, try asking thoughtful questions to spark meaningful dialogue.

Here are five practical ice-breakers to help you break the silence and get the conversation flowing.

"What's something you're working on right now that excites you?"

This is an excellent follow-up after introductions, easing into a topic that naturally engages people. Asking about current projects or goals not only provides insight into their professional life but also opens the door to finding common ground.

Pro tip: Use your existing knowledge to contribute to the conversation and share relevant industry insights when appropriate.

"What's a challenge you're currently tackling at work?"

This question demonstrates genuine interest in the complexities of their job, beyond just their title. Talking about challenges can feel personal, but finding shared experiences in professional struggles often leads to deeper, more meaningful conversations.

Pro tip: If relevant, share a similar challenge you've faced and how you approached it.

"What is your proudest professional achievement?"

People love sharing accomplishments, and this question gives them the opportunity to highlight their hard work. It's a great way to encourage positivity and pride, setting the tone for an engaging discussion.

Pro tip: Show genuine interest in their story and avoid interrupting or downplaying their achievement.

"What inspired you to pursue your current field?"

Move beyond surface-level topics by exploring their career journey. This question helps humanise the conversation, encouraging them to share the motivations and values that drive their work.

Pro tip: Acknowledge their story and share any parallels from your

own career journey to connect on a deeper level.

"What trends do you think will shape your industry in the coming years?"

This question works especially well with experienced professionals or industry leaders. It sparks a dynamic exchange of ideas, and you may gain valuable insights into market trends or emerging opportunities.

Pro tip: Add your own observations or ask for advice on how to prepare for these trends.

BONUS TIPS

Close the conversation with a thoughtful remark about something you genuinely appreciated. For instance, "I really admire how you tackled that particular challenge. It gave me a new perspective." Compliments like these leave a positive impression and show that you were actively listening.

Exchange business cards or connect on LinkedIn to keep the conversation going beyond the event. Social media platforms like LinkedIn are especially useful for staying updated on their professional achievements and activities.

Drone manufacturer Skydio secures \$170 mln in extension round

Skydio, the American drone manufacturer, has raised \$170 million in an extension of its Series E funding round, which initially brought in \$230 million in early 2023. The new funding attracted investors like Japanese telecom operator KDDI and Axon, renowned for its police technologies such as the taser. Linse Capital, a major stakeholder, also participated. KDDI contributed approximately \$60 million, aiming to deploy Skydio drones at 1,000 locations across Japan while improving their LTE connectivity.

According to a recent report by Techcrunch, Skydio generated over \$100 million in annual revenue in 2023, with 30% of it derived from software. Following the discontinuation of its consumer drone line in 2023, Skydio has gained traction with enterprise, public safety, and military clients.

The company's revenue for 2024 is projected to reach \$180 million, with defence orders making up over half of its \$1.2 billion pipeline, as per TechCrunch. Skydio's drones are increasingly used by law enforcement agencies, a growth area supported by investors like Andreessen Horowitz, a private venture capital firm.



The Onion acquires Infowars in bankruptcy auction

The Onion, a satirical news outlet, has recently announced its acquisition of Infowars, the controversial website founded by conspiracy theorist Alex Jones in a bankruptcy auction.

Infowars is set to relaunch in January 2025 with a new focus on humour. In a statement posted to X (formerly Twitter) on November 14, The Onion declared its intention to change the platform. "The Onion's goal with the acquisition is to end Infowars' relentless barrage of disinformation for the sake of selling supplements and replace it with The Onion's relentless barrage of humour for good," the post read.

The acquisition was backed by the families of victims of the 2012 Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting, who sued Alex Jones for spreading false claims about the tragedy. In 2022, Jones was ordered to pay over \$1 billion in damages to the families, prompting him to file for bankruptcy later that year. In September, a judge approved the liquidation of Jones' assets, including Infowars. The Onion has not disclosed the amount for the acquisition of Infowars.

"Failure is unimportant. It takes courage to make a fool of yourself."

CHARLIE CHAPLIN

