



Check-In Conversation Starters

Workplace & Social Engagement

Guidelines for effective check-ins.

Outcomes

- Conversation starters for Team Leaders.
- Conversation starters for Team Members.

Guidelines for Effective Check-ins

Effective Team Leaders have frequent conversations with their Team Members to talk about work priorities and outcomes, strengths, performance and development. Check-ins enable these conversations by providing Team Leaders and their Team Members to develop a shared understanding of what is expected, how a Team Member is performing and what they need to focus on.

This 'how to' guide will cover:

- Conversation topics and starters for check-ins.

Check-In Conversation Starters: Team Leaders

The Team Leader is the direct supervisor leading the Team Member's work and is best positioned to evaluate day-to-day performance.

As a Team Leader, your role in check-ins is to facilitate the conversation so that you and your Team Member develop a shared understanding of the Team Members current work, development opportunities, whether they are performing as expected, barriers to address, and their state of well-being. This will enable you to support their growth and development whilst also reducing miscommunication regarding future expectations and actions. Below are some conversation starters to help guide your check-ins.

First Check-In

When a new Team Member joins your team, use your first check-in to connect and get to know them. It an opportunity to build rapport, clarify your expectations of them in their role, and establish priorities to track and review in future check-ins.

Below are some conversation starters for your first Check-In:

- In this role, my expectations of you are...
- Your immediate priorities are...
- What questions do you have about your role?
- How can I help you be successful?
- What type of work do you enjoy doing?
- What do you want to get out of this role?
- What are your expectations of me?
- Will fortnightly check-ins be sufficient, or do you prefer something more frequent (temporarily or longer-term)?

Status of Work

Since check-ins are about work, many of your conversations will be purely about the status of work. These are important conversations; you will want to understand what your Team Members' upcoming priorities are so you can ensure the team is focused on the right things. This is an ongoing opportunity to ensure Team Members know what is expected of them, minimising any potential of miscommunication. Below are some conversation starters for a status of work:

- What is the status of <key deliverables> or <project work stream>?
- What progress has been made in <key area> since we last spoke?
- What are your immediate priorities?
- Are your current workload expectations realistic?
- How can I help? What do you need from me?

Barriers

Check-ins can also be used to discuss any barriers the Team Member might be facing, so you can step in and help clear the path towards progress. Some Team Members will naturally bring these items to your attention, while others might opt to try and work through those issues on their own first. Team Leaders should always provide the opportunity for Team Members to voice their concerns about anything that could potentially impact their work. Below are some conversation starters for barriers:

- Is there anything that may impact your work over the next week or two?
- What do you see as potential issues (if any) in the longer term?
- How do you think we can mitigate those issues?
- How can I help? What do you need from me?

Strengths

As a Team Leader, perhaps the most significant thing for you to do during check-ins is to learn and understand the strengths of your Team Members. By providing them with more opportunities to work on the things that energise them, Team Members can bring the best of themselves to work. The result is higher levels of Team Member engagement and higher team performance overall. Below are some conversation starters for strengths:

- What about your work on this team (or work you have done in the past) energises you?
- Tell me about some of your recent successes...
- When are you at your best?
- What do you look forward to doing at work?
- What activities are difficult for you not to volunteer for when the opportunity arises?
- What did you enjoy doing least this week? Why was that?
- How do you believe we can put your strengths to work on this team?
- How can I help you use your strengths more at work?

Wellbeing

It is easy to get caught up in the details of the work, but check-ins should also be used to understand and monitor the overall well-being of Team Members. Below are some conversation starters for well-being:

- What is your desired work/life balance?
- How are you managing your work/life currently?
- Is there anything I can do to help you manage this?
- How can we manage or mitigate the potential for burnout in the future?
- What are your well-being goals? How can I help you achieve them?
- How can I help? What do you need from me?

Course Correction

When you provide feedback during your check-ins, you might find yourself addressing one, perhaps two, particular performance issues. However, if there are numerous items you need to discuss, or Team Members are simply not meeting the expectation of their role, they may require a course correction. These conversations are integral in helping Team Members get back on track, but they can be challenging to initiate. Below are some conversation starters for course correction:

- Do you feel you met the priorities you outlined for this check-in? Why/Why not?
- I am noticing something we need to address...
- I am observing (describe the behaviour/action), which was different from what I expected. I expected (describe the action you expect the person to be able to complete).
- How can we rectify/help you gain the skills to address this?
- How can I help? What do you need from me?

Check-In Conversation Starters: Team Members

A Team Member is any individual who works for the company

As a Team Member, it is important that you drive your development and growth. Check-ins offer an opportunity for you to do so by providing a space for you to share any concerns and barriers you need assistance with. Check-ins also offer an opportunity for you to identify development areas and gather an understanding as to whether you are performing at the expected level. Below are some conversation starters to help guide your check-ins.

First Check-In

Your first check-in is to really connect and get to know your Team Leader. It is an opportunity to build rapport, clarify your expectations, and establish priorities to track and review in future check-ins. Below are some conversation starters for your first Check-In:

- What are your expectations from me on this job?
- I am looking to get.... out of this job
- Some of my recent successes have included... I believe I was successful because...
- One thing you can do to help me be at my best is...
- I will drive our check-ins – is there anything that I should come prepared to discuss at each check-in?
- Is there anything I should send in advance of the check-in?
- What are the immediate priorities that I need to work on?

Strengths

As a Team Member, it is important to identify your strengths so that you can determine how best you can support the team and increase the value of your contribution. It is also important that you communicate to your Team Leader any working preferences so that your team is aware of how you operate best. Below are some conversation starters for strengths:

- I have enjoyed doing... are there more opportunities to do this?
- I felt like I was at my best when I...
- I really look forward to doing...
- Through my coaching conversations, I have identified some particular strengths...
- I would really like to use of my strengths when doing...
- Can I volunteer to do...

Performance

During check-in conversations, you will want to evaluate your performance to ensure you are meeting the expectations of your Team Leader. You will also want to identify how you can perform better and contribute more to the team. Below are some conversation starters for performance:

- What would significant impact look like on a job like this?
- I feel I am doing the following well... Do you agree? Is there anything else I am doing well?
- I feel I could do the following better... Do you agree? Is there anything else that I need to do better?
- What is the one thing you have seen me do that you would like me to do more or slightly differently?
- Am I operating at the level that I am expected to?

Final Check-In

For your final check-in, the purpose is to evaluate your overall performance and contribution to your project / engagement. Look to identify what you did well but also lessons you learnt and areas to further develop. This will help with further growth and learning. Below are some conversation starters for your final check-in:

- What do you think were my most valuable contributions?
- What are the things that you would like to see me do differently?
- How might I continue to build my strengths in my next job?
- Any recommendations about my overall career growth and development?
- What is the one thing that you have not seen me do that you would like me to do