

## BOOK REVIEWS

# Confident Career Conversations: Empower Your Employees for Career Growth and Retention by Antoinette Oglethorpe

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Rethink Press, 2023, 196 pages, ISBN 978-1781337813, US\$ \$18.50

Long gone are the days of working for the same organisation for your entire career. Yet employees still want and need guidance on how to progress their careers. If you are someone who leads or manages others or a coach, this book provides you with a structured process for conducting career conversations with your people.

There is an inherent conflict of interest in having an honest career conversation with someone. What that person wants and what their capabilities are may not align with the organisation they are currently in. As their manager, you need to consider both your organisation's needs and also deeply care for the individual with whom you're having the conversation. The Career Conversation toolkit and process presented in this book give you the confidence to conduct a conversation where you don't have all the answers. Instead, you engage in a co-constructive process of discovery to find what's wanted, why, and how to make progress towards this desired future.

Experienced SF practitioners will recognise the tools presented which explore:

- the past - where are they at, how did they get there, what resources do they have.
- the future - what does success mean to them, options and possibilities, what do they need to make progress.
- the present - scaling to where they want to go, small steps, reviews.

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While the tools themselves are useful and clearly described, the context in which to conduct the conversation, and the cyclical nature of these conversations, are also well presented. For example, combining a career conversation with a performance review is not a good idea because performance reviews are past focused and usually made to fit some specific framework. Career conversations are complex, creative and emergent and require time to think and explore rather than attempting to answer an overly simplistic question such as “What are your career goals?”

The 8 Stages of a Career Conversation are presented as an infinity symbol (a lemniscate; figure 8 lying on its side) and encourages an ongoing process rather than a one-and-done task. This process may iterate within one conversation as well as across multiple conversations.

The detailed instructions throughout the book are broken up by case studies from the author’s extensive experience which helps humanise the approach.

A great additional resource is the Manager’s Questions presented in the second last chapter covering many of the frequent concerns that managers have such as: “What if the employee wants something I can’t provide?” and “What if the employee is not interested in career conversations?”

I would recommend reading this book if you want to have more meaningful career conversations with your people. Maybe this helps them stay with your organisation and deliver more value. And if their career lies elsewhere, hopefully, they will remember you as the manager who cared enough about them to help them clarify what’s most important for them and guided them towards future fulfilment and well-being.

[More details on the book’s website.](#)

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