



# **WORKPLACE CONVERSATIONS**

A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR MANAGERS



**EUGENIA LUNDEN**  
LUNDEN INTERNATIONAL LLC  
[www.lundenintl.com](http://www.lundenintl.com)



*My Notes*

## *Table of Contents*

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>How to Use this Workbook</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>The Basics of Conversations</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Communication Styles</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Listening Techniques</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Conversation: Giving Feedback</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Conversation: Giving Recognition</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Conversation: Performance Issue</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Conversation: Career Goal</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Conversation: Checking-in Meeting</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Conversation: Work Objectives</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Conversation: Company Policies</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Conversation: Phone Etiquette</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Conversation: E-mail Etiquette</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Conversation: Personal Issues</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Conversation: Being a Team Player</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Conversation: Interpersonal Issues</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Conversation: Employee's Values</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Conversation: Employee's Interests</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Conversation: Employee's Strengths</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Conversation: Work Habits</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Conversation: Attendance Issues</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Conversation: Training &amp; Development</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Conversation: Health Issues</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Conversation: Negative Attitude</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>My Topic of Conversation</b>	<b>34</b>



*My Notes*

---

## INTRODUCTION

---

**Communicating with others.** Sounds so simple, doesn't it? Yet we are all busy, and in a rush to get things done in the shortest possible amount of time. We frequently forget how to do it and don't take the time to put into practice the most fundamental interpersonal skills.

This tool is designed to assist the professional on the run to prepare to have both the everyday and the difficult conversations to maximize precious time, achieve the desired outcomes, and, ultimately, create a productive workplace environment where everyone wants to be!

---

## HOW TO USE THIS WORKBOOK

---

**Browse through the entire workbook** once. The content does not require heavy reading but acquainting yourself with a few basic concepts and format that will help you leverage the ideas and techniques more efficiently.

After becoming familiar with the content **carefully read and make your own notes** on the first three sections: The Basics of Conversations, Communications Styles, and Listening skills, noting anything that you find interesting or would like to use as a reference.

Once you are familiar with the foundational concepts, **flag the pages with the topics that echo what you will be discussing with your employee.**

Topics are divided in three sections: the first one addresses the crucial questions of **why, when, where, what, and how** to have your conversation. The second one proposes some related questions to think about in preparation for the conversation. Finally, the third section allows you a space to jot down notes of issues or thoughts that you will want to remember when meeting with your employee.

So, read through the guide, think through and answer the proposed questions as thoroughly as you can, and, finally, add any other thoughts at the bottom of each **"Points to Remember"** portion.

Two reproducible pages with room for **blank topics** has been included at the end of the workbook for you to create your own discussion worksheets, when needed.

### TIPS & TRICKS

- Refresh your memory by first reading the basics.
- Choose the topic related to your conversation.
- Use the pages in this workbook to write down your personal notes, questions, and thoughts that may be useful to you.

## THE BASICS OF CONVERSATIONS

**Everyone wants to be seen.** Adults in the workplace bring their whole selves. Regardless of observable behaviors, there is one strong, common driving force: we want to be acknowledged, listened to, recognized for our efforts, and noticed for the unique individuals that we are.

- **On a regular basis, make the time to talk with – not down to – your employees.** Developing relationships, building trust, and establishing good communication is a process not a single event.

### TIPS & TRICKS

- Get into the habit of doing most of the listening and less of the talking.
- Find ways to show genuine interest in what the other person has to say.
- Match your body language cues to what you are verbalizing while showing genuine interest.

- **Choose your timing wisely.** Allow enough time and pick a date that is convenient for all the parties involved. Find a time when your mind is fresh and ready for a conversation. Typically, surprising your employee first thing in the morning or at the last minute in the afternoon before going home is not wise.

- **Select the right place.** Your office could be appropriate for a formal conversation; however, you might want to have the discussion somewhere else if it is a high-traffic area or if you want to set a more relaxed, informal tone. People tend to be more receptive in a welcoming neutral environment.

- **Have your discussions earlier** rather than waiting until issues have escalated, when it may be too late to address an issue, or when the situation may have become too emotionally charged. In other words, get into the habit of talking regularly.
- **Try your best to start your conversation with something positive, even if it is *wanting to resolve the issue between you*.** If it comes from the heart and is true, you are increasing your likelihood of being heard and trusted. Always talk from a place of authenticity.

***MORE ON THE BASICS OF CONVERSATIONS***

- **Talk to the whole individual, not just “your worker bee.”** Contrary to what *old management* practices used to teach us, humans bring their physical and emotional self into work. Honor this fact and understand that there may be situations affecting your employees in other areas of their lives that may impact their work.
- **Establish the parameters and the specific topic** either before or at the beginning of your conversation.
- **Stop the conversation** if you find yourself being distracted, need to leave, or it gets out of hand. It is better to resume later than to be rushed or regret something that was said.

***TIPS & TRICKS***

- “When in doubt, check it out!” Assumptions are the worst conversation enemies.
- Practice quieting your mind. You don’t have to have an answer ready at all times; and it’s ok to say “I don’t know but I’ll find out and will get back to you,” if necessary.



*My Notes*

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## COMMUNICATION STYLES

- **Humans prefer to communicate in different ways.** These preferences are usually at the core of an individual's being; and, oftentimes, he or she might not even be aware of them!

**TIPS & TRICKS**

- It is human to feel more comfortable and relate better with people who are more "like us."
- Pay attention to the individual's choice of words and body language to identify their preferred style.
- Mirroring the other's style improves connection.

- **"First, know thy self."** We all tend to see the world through our own set of lenses, unless we make a conscientious effort to see things from someone else's point of view. This takes practice and comes naturally to only a few privileged people. The rest of us need to work at it!

- **Always check for understanding.** Unless you communicate on the same—or at least *similar* wavelength—it will be hard to get your messages across and get plans of action that will produce lasting results.

- **Pay attention to the verbal and non-verbal cues** that your employee is demonstrating everyday as well as during your conversations.
- **Become familiar with a useful behavioral model that works for you,** such as MBTI, True Colors, DiSC, Keirsey temperaments, or similar. Fortunately, these models organize behaviors in a way that can help us make sense out of what people are saying or doing.
- **Even if you consider yourself an expert in communication styles, allow room for people to be themselves.** Although you will read some high-level guidelines in this workbook, each person brings a level of uniqueness that cannot and should not be ignored.



**COMMUNICATION STYLE: FORMAL/CONSERVATIVE**

**What You Might Observe**

- Tends to show business-like manner
- Appears to have traditional look and dress
- Has a neat, somewhat formal appearance
- Makes lists or takes careful notes
- Demonstrates controlled body movements

**TIPS & TRICKS**

- Approach the conversation in a precise, systematic way
- A detailed agenda (that you will stick to) is always valued and appreciated.
- Provide direction and clear expectations.
- Be ready to provide explanations, if needed.

**What You Might Hear**

- Tends to use "either...or" phrases
- Voice tone sounds business-like, usually even and with little variation
- Prefers information in writing or summarized
- Wants detailed answers
- Requests thorough information
- Stays focused on topic
- Wants to establish schedules and deadlines
- Requests closure on subject or activity
- Likes to explain things comprehensively
- May sound authoritarian at times



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**COMMUNICATION STYLE: OUTGOING/ACTION-ORIENTED**

**What You Might Observe**

- Shows active body movement
- Transitions quickly from one thing to another
- Wears attention getting or casual dress
- Possesses dramatic or flamboyant manner
- Presents visible facial expressions
- Tends to have a playful approach
- Often points while speaking
- Often appears excited

**TIPS & TRICKS**

- Get to the point... fast!
- Be open to explore alternatives and to come up with an outcome different than expected.
- Don't get upset if you don't follow the agenda. It will take a little extra effort to stick to your topic and outcome, yet the innovative thinking will make up for it.

**What You Might Hear**

- Tends to use "Let's do it!"
- Has fast paced, brief conversations
- Shows enthusiastic expressions
- Has varied pitch, animated, excited voice
- Moves from one topic or point to another
- Frequently uses unfinished sentences
- Often reports being involvement in many things
- Uses playful speech, laughter, and stories
- Often promotes ideas, products, and activities



*My Notes*

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**COMMUNICATION STYLE: RATIONAL/ANALYTICAL**

**What You Might Observe**

- Does not show emotions easily
- Presents self in formal, more serious manner
- May not appear casual or friendly
- Appearance may be more unconventional
- May come across as a quiet individual
- Hands may be used to explain/show models

**TIPS & TRICKS**

- Internal processors might come across as quiet, but, don't be fooled! They are listening and thinking.
- You may not get immediate reactions or responses. A follow up may be necessary to allow for thinking time.
- Watch out for the conversation becoming too intellectual.

**What You Might Hear**

- Tends to use "I think..." or "Let me think..."
- Asks a lot of questions, particularly "why"
- May want to establish credibility of speaker
- Modulates voice with little emotion
- May not always respond immediately and usually needs to think about it
- Will respond negatively to wrong information
- May point out errors or mistakes quickly
- May want to improve on ideas shared
- Will act irritated if asked to rephrase
- Tends to be brief, concise, and sequential



*My Notes*

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

*COMMUNICATION STYLE: REFLECTIVE/PEOPLE-CENTERED*

---

**What You Might Observe**

- Makes good eye contact
- Focuses on the person they are talking with
- Appears to listen attentively
- Facial expressions indicate warmth and friendliness
- Usually dresses in soft fabrics/warm colors
- Shows a polite manner and nurturing posture
- Stops doing paperwork to engage with others

*TIPS & TRICKS*

- You will have the best dialogue if you have taken the time to develop some closeness to this individual.
- People come before processes or deadlines.
- You may feel a little lost or uncomfortable if you are not used to openly expressing the feelings in the workplace.

**What You Might Hear**

- Tends to use "I feel..." and speaks with feeling
- Tends to use mellow, soothing tone of voice
- Does not use threatening and might even use apologetic language
- Often repeats what is said (active listener)
- Checks before interrupting
- Avoids or deflects conflict
- Often enthusiastic about helping out
- Uses frequent "I" statements



*My Notes*

---

---

---

---

---

---

## *LISTENING TECHNIQUES*

- There are many ways of listening, but, what will get you the best results has to do **with being present and in-the-moment with your employee**. Nothing else matters. Think about it: even if you are thinking about something else, does it do any good to clutter your mind with distracting thoughts when you can't go there anyway?
- **Practicing active listening:** the art of intentionally focusing on what the other person is saying to fully understand what is being communicated. It does not imply agreement but conveys comprehension of key points.
- **Showing empathy:** you may want to not share your thoughts and feelings, but always make the effort to put yourself in the other person's situation.
- **Clarifying or checking for understanding:** repeat back what you've heard in your own words to ensure that you've heard the actual intended message. Make sure you've got it!

**TIPS & TRICKS**

- Techniques are developed over time. Very few people are great the first time around.
- Practice all you can. Role play with some trusted co-workers or friends.
- Choose your techniques appropriately. You don't have to use them all at once!



*My Notes*

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

***MORE ON LISTENING TECHNIQUES***

- **Asking open-ended questions:** these are the ones that stay away from “yes/no” answers and allow the employee to expand on what you are discussing. After developing *active listening*, probably the greatest skill to have as a tool.
- **Paraphrasing or summarizing:** Ways of giving feedback to let the person know that he/she has been heard. In paraphrasing, you may want to use something like *“This is what I’ve heard you say…”* or *“You are telling me that…”* to capture a concept. In summarizing, you are trying to pull-it-all-together. Conclude with something like *“You have said that…”* or *“This is what I’ve gotten from our meeting…”*
- **Go beyond the actual words:** Sometimes people say one thing with their words but mean another. Listen for “the message within the message” and repeat it back. Remember that over ninety percent of communication is non-verbal, so you employee can be saying a lot without too many words.

***TIPS & TRICKS***

- If you ask open-ended questions, allow for about 6 seconds of “thinking time” to answer. Learn to be comfortable with moments of silence.
- Listening effectively takes time. The first step is to have the intention to do it and learn to quiet your mind. If you can accomplish this, the rest is downhill!



*My Notes*

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Conversation: Giving Feedback

**WHY:** Your employee deserves to hear input in a timely manner so that the positive can be reinforced, and he or she is given an opportunity to work on changing what needs to be done differently while there is time to do it.





**WHEN:** As soon as possible but not in a rushed manner. Depending on the nature of the feedback, set up a time or ask: "Do you have a few minutes to talk?"

**WHERE:** Depending on the tone you would like to set, choose your office for a more formal environment or a conference room. Go to a coffee shop for a more relaxed, neutral place.

**WHAT:** Bring up specific examples of the situations that reflect the behavior you want to reinforce or change. Stay away from generalities or second-hand information.

**HOW:** Describe the behavior, show the impact (for example on the team or business), reinforce or explore alternatives as appropriate, and agree on a plan of action, if needed.

  
 **Think Ahead**

-  What is the behavior I want to point out?
  
-  If it needs to be changed, what alternatives can I suggest?
  
-  What is the outcome I would like to get from this conversation?
  
-  What kind of follow up am I going to propose?

  
 **Points to Remember**

---

---

---

---