

## Tips for Talking with Employees About Career Development



It is important for supervisors to conduct regular and ongoing conversations with employees about career development activities and options in an open and collaborative manner. There are many benefits to career development conversations – from the viewpoint of both the manager and the employee.

First, these conversations build trust and demonstrate a genuine interest in the employee's development. Further, employees are more likely to feel committed and loyal to the organization when they have a supervisor who is engaged and supportive of career development activities.

It's helpful to differentiate between performance discussions and career development discussions by looking at them as two separate, but sometimes related, conversations. Discussions about career development often focus on ways to enhance opportunities for employees and less on the evaluation aspects associated with performance appraisals. However, like good performance conversations, discussions about career development should start by focusing on the employee's strengths.

As a supervisor, it is important to:

- Share what you can about your career path and what you've learned along the way
- Be open to questions your employees have about your experiences
- Meet regularly to help them develop, improve and periodically re-evaluate Individual Development Plans (IDPs)
- Reference the resources below to continually use coaching skills: Ask questions, listen, and summarize what you hear to help your employees prepare for next steps
- Focus these career conversations on the employee
- Collaborate on finding solutions, sharing resources, and suggesting development experiences
- Allow the employee to take the lead when creating and following through with plans
- Hold regular check-in conversations on career development

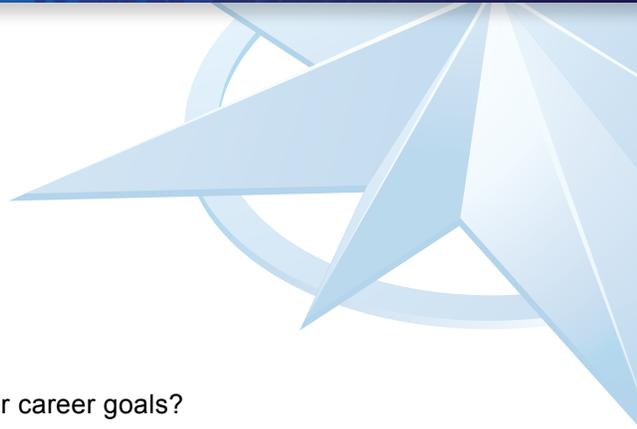
The following are examples of questions you can use in a career conversation with your employees:

### Career Development

- ▲ Tell me about the projects you have worked that make you most proud.
- ▲ What activities in your job motivate you to excel? Which activities are most interesting to you?
- ▲ What do you think your talents and skills are? Let me share some observations about your skills and how they contribute to the mission of the organization.
- ▲ What are your short-term and long-term career goals?
- ▲ What values are important to you? Can you apply your values at work?

### Career Awareness

- ▲ Do you know what the organization's goals are for the year? If not, let me share those with you so that you can align your individual goals with those of the organization.
- ▲ What projects, committees or other responsibilities would you like to be a part of in order to develop your career?
- ▲ Who are the people I know that could be helpful to you? Would you like me to introduce you to them?



## Goal Setting

- ▶ How is your Individual Development Plan coming along? I am happy to forward you a template and share some suggestions. It would be helpful to complete your IDP before our next meeting so we can explore development opportunities together.
- ▶ How can I help you achieve your career goals?

## Skill Development

- ▶ What developmental experiences might help you progress toward your career goals?
- ▶ What education or training might help you progress?
- ▶ Let's set up a follow-up meeting schedule so that we are checking in on your career development progress regularly.
- ▶ How can I help you in your current role?

Source:

<http://hrweb.berkeley.edu/learning/career-development/career-management/planning/resources-managers>

## Coaching Tips for Supervisors

Some employees may not feel comfortable fully sharing their career goals and aspirations with a supervisor. You can help put employees at ease by using the following tips:

- ▶ Explain how your role as a supervisor can help them with career development and planning.
- ▶ Assure them that discussing their goals candidly will not affect their performance evaluation.
- ▶ Demonstrate your comfort with their exploration of opportunities outside their current role or team by openly discussing the possibilities.
- ▶ Be supportive of an employee's goal to remain in his or her current position by identifying development opportunities and/or restructuring their current responsibilities.
- ▶ Refer employees to other VA professionals with whom they may feel more comfortable discussing opportunities and goals candidly.
- ▶ Encourage all employees to use the resources provided on MyCareer@VA and by providing access and time for them to explore the site at work.
- ▶ Hold an information session or brown bag with your staff to demonstrate the Portal.