Be Curious!

Here are several conversation “prompts” and “deepeners” to help you in your meetings. Notice that some are questions and others are statements. Avoid using all questions or your employee will feel as if he/she is on the witness stand!

For Developing a Relationship:

- Tell me a couple of high points and a couple of challenges in your day/week/month.
- (For high points) What skills, knowledge, or attitudes did you use to help make this happen?
- (For challenges) What part, if any did you play? Is this part of a larger challenge you’re dealing with?
- Describe how you best like to learn.
- I’d love to hear your story.
- Tell me some key experiences in your life. What made ______ so important?
- What do people say you do best?
- What talents are you most proud of?
- What makes you laugh?
- What is the most important thing you and I should talk about?
- What keeps you up at night?
- How do you balance work and the rest of your life?
- What’s standing in the way of what you would like to be or do?
- What was the best working situation you’ve ever had?
- What do you hope your life will look like in one to five years?
- What do you wish you had known or done 10 years ago? Earlier than that?
- What do you wish you had more time to do?
- What things are you doing that you would like to stop doing or delegate to someone else?
- May I ask your advice about____? 

For a particular situation or dilemma:

- Would you say more about that?
- What have you already tried?
- Tell me what happened next.
- What should be the results? What steps have you taken to get to the results?
Powerful Questions

- If you _____, what will probably happen? What would you prefer to happen?
- What are the reasons this didn’t work as well as you had hoped?
- What behaviors produced the results with which you’re now dissatisfied?
- How do you feel about this?
- What are other choices? What options do you have?
- What has worked well for you in the past?
- What is the most important thing to do here? What is your ultimate goal?
- What is the area that, if you made an improvement, would completely change the game? How can you pull this off?
- What values do you stand for and are there gaps between those values and how you actually behave?
- How long has this issue been going on? What are you pretending not to know?
- If nothing changes, what are the implications?
- What is currently impossible to do that, if it were possible, would change everything?
- What’s the most important decision you’re facing? What keeps you from making it?
- What topic are you hoping I won’t bring up?
- What area under your responsibility are you most satisfied with? Least satisfied with?
- What part of your responsibilities are you avoiding? What conversations are we avoiding?
- I’m curious about...
- Are there other ways of looking at this issue?
- Are there ways to make the situation different?
- How do other people you admire handle similar situations?
- At this point, what matters most to you?
- Describe how this is connected to other events.
- Is this a pattern of some kind?

To gain commitment:

- What needs to happen next? What needs to happen differently?
- Of all the options we have discussed, what is the most attractive one? What is the one you want to own?
- What is your next step? When will you do that? What might prevent you from doing that?
- What are you committed to?
- If this were resolved, what would become possible?
Powerful Questions

- What might prevent you from accomplishing that? What are the reasons to take this on?
- In the next week, what could you do? What will you do?
- What is the most potent step you can take towards resolution? When can I follow up with you?

Question starters:

- Tell me about...
- What did you know...?
- What did you do...?
- How did you feel..?
- How did it happen...?
- What occurred...?
- Where did it happen...?
- When did it happen...?
- Can you remember...?
- What could you do...?
- How would you know...?
- It sounds as though...
- You seem to be feeling...