

Between you and me: Candid conversations develop careers

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Thinking about how employees across the company can achieve their career goals is something that keeps me up at night. Each year, Boeing provides employees with the opportunity to develop skills through a combination of training and educational programs. These initiatives only represent part of the development process. The remainder relies on actual job experience, as well as managers, employees and co-workers providing ongoing feedback to one another.

Feedback that is constructive and timely is critical for future career growth. In order for feedback to occur, all team members need to contribute to a work environment that supports candid conversations. These open and honest discussions provide the opportunity to resolve sensitive issues, ask for help and develop skills.

Employees who are open to learning through every interaction will help sustain a culture that supports candid conversations. This includes proactively discussing any issue, as well as actively encouraging team feedback.

Candid conversations help all employees play an active role in shaping their careers. By performing an initial task well, and then identifying additional opportunities to support the business, the individuals profiled in this issue on pages 38–45 were able to accelerate their careers. The ability to connect our everyday work responsibilities with our overarching business goals cannot occur without discussions between team members that are open, honest and positive.

As a young engineer, I had visibility into high-level strategies through my exposure to the product life cycle—from an initial idea to walking through a finished airplane. Participating in this process helped me identify where I could add value and develop my career. Part of my success is the result of taking the initiative to actively seek feedback from peers and managers to make something happen. That's foundational in our business.

For many people, providing feedback is the most difficult—and the most painful—part of the job. No one wants to be hurtful, and there is a temptation to simply ignore issues and hope they go away. In the majority of instances when I did not proactively address an issue, the problem got bigger and harder to solve. By



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not supporting an environment that encourages feedback, employees hinder their personal development, as well as the growth of the company.

Employees who take the time to foster a work environment where candid conversations occur will help ensure they receive the feedback required to fuel future career growth. While sometimes difficult, these discussions will ultimately have a positive impact on all of us as we approach individual assignments and achieve our personal career goals.

Remember, feedback is no different from any other business process. You reap what you sow. Not getting enough feedback? If you pay attention, you'll find feedback all around you. From the hard numbers we deliver during quarterly earnings to the deadlines each of us has for the work we perform to Employee Survey results. And if you're still not getting enough feedback, all you have to do is ask. ■