



Strengths-Based Check-In Conversation Questions

Studies indicate 70% of managers are not sharing routine conversations with their employees. This is tragic because this causes employees to feel *uncared* for and *unseen*. The problem is most managers don't know what to talk about. This resource will help put an end to this dilemma, providing a treasure trove of deep and meaningful strengths-based check-in conversation questions that focus on the employee and their teams.

Focusing on *employee wellbeing* is essential to building *resilient* and *thriving* employees and teams. Disengaged employees are merely *surviving*. Engaged employees do more than just survive. Engaged employees *THRIVE*.

Gallup has discovered Five Key Elements of Wellbeing (thriving). These five elements of wellbeing are not only essential to human thriving, but they are also closely linked to *employee engagement* and *performance*. An employee that is both engaged and thriving is far less likely to experience burnout, anxiety, stress, sadness, and anger. People who are not thriving are either *struggling* or *suffering*. The five elements of wellbeing include (Clifton & Harter, 2021):

- **Career Wellbeing** – *I like my job and what I get to do every day*
- **Social Wellbeing** – *I have meaningful friendships in my life*
- **Financial Wellbeing** – *I manage my money well*
- **Physical Wellbeing** – *I have the energy I need to get things done*
- **Community Wellbeing** – *I like where I live*

Research has discovered the most important and foundational element of wellbeing is *career wellbeing*. In other words, if career wellbeing is lacking, it will negatively impact the other four elements of wellbeing. This means it is imperative the workplace is committed to creating an environment that feeds the four basic needs of every follower (Rath & Conchie, 2008):

- **Trust** - Not just truth & honesty, but clarity. A willingness to build the confidence of others.
- **Compassion**- Listen to, understand, & share the pain of others.
- **Stability** - A rock who can be counted on to maintain a psychologically safe place to be. Words & actions match.
- **Hope** - Confronts the brutal facts to paint an idealistic, yet attainable picture of the future, one where others are willing to put skin in the game.

The Check-In

Research shows that managers should be sharing *at least one, weekly, meaningful, 15-minute conversation* with every member of their team. If this is not possible because of your own workload, then you are likely supervising too many people. Said differently, the ideal span of control for a supervisor is not a specific number of people (e.g. 6-8 direct reports). The ideal span of control is the number of employees you can meet with each week for at least 15 minutes. As you can see, this will be different for each supervisor. The typical, one-size-fits-all approach regarding span of control is deeply flawed.

These weekly 15-minute conversations need to be **check-ins, not check-ups**. Check-ups are focused outward on tasks assigned to the employee. You should be doing check-ups during the regular course of the week through meetings, emails, texts, and phone calls. Check-ups are important, but they do absolutely nothing to inspire, motivate, or retain an employee.

Check-ins are much different than check-ups because they are focused inward. Check-ins focus on what's going on inside the employee and the team. Check-ins are 100% about and for the employee. Check-ins show the employee you value and care about them as a person.

Try to calendar your check-ins as a weekly standing occurrence. If you don't, you'll likely forget. At the same time, be sure to never turn a check-in into a meeting and never make a meeting a check-in.

This also brings up a final important point about check-ins. Think about a common real estate phrase: *location – location – location!* The location of the check-in matters – *A lot!* Check-ins should be done in a place that is psychologically comfortable and safe for the employee. For instance, if a particular work location has been used to discipline or correct the employee, then the check-in should **not** occur there. Consider letting the employee choose where the weekly check-in takes place. Neutral ground like a coffee shop, restaurant, or park are always great choices.

Below are some great *strengths-based check-in questions* managers and leaders can ask to help make sure the needs of their employees are being met and so their employees and teams remain healthy, human, and strong.

Helpful Reminders Before You Begin

When asking these questions, **be quiet** and **deeply listen** to what the employee has to say. When they are finished, keep the conversation going by asking follow-up questions such as:

- You mentioned _____. Tell me more about that.
- And what else?
- Why do you think that is?
- What's the real challenge here for you?

- What do you want?
- How can I help?
- What was most helpful to you?

Meaningful Openers

- What's on your mind?
- How are you? *Really*, how are you doing and how are things going?
- How are things going between you and the team?
- What things are going well for you at work? What do you think is contributing to this success?
- What things are going well for you on a personal level? Can you think of anything about your job/career that might be contributing to this personal success?
- At this point in our relationship, do you feel like you can trust me? What can I start/stop doing that will deepen our level of trust with one another?
- What would you like to know more about me/the team/the organization?
- How can I best help you?
- What do you most need from me right now?

Career Wellbeing Questions?

- What do you love most about your job?
- Of all the things you do well in your job, which ones do you do best?
- If you could make one change for the better, what would it be? How might you use your top talents to be a catalyst for this important change?
- What goals do you plan to achieve this week? Which of your top talents will you rely on the most to achieve these goals?
- How well do you see your personal values aligning with the purpose and core values of the organization?

- How well do you see your personal values aligning with the other members of your team?
- When you look ahead at the week, what do you most look forward to?
- Which work activities provide you the most energy?
- When do you feel the most creative and alive at work?
- How do you see your current work goals/projects/tasks connecting to our organizational purpose and values?
- As your supervisor, do I do a good enough job connecting your work to our stated organizational purpose and values? How could I be better at doing this?
- Are we as a team doing a good enough job recognizing and celebrating individual and team wins? How could we be better at this?
- In what way does your job provide you with a sense of fulfillment? What could we start/stop doing that would increase your sense of fulfillment while at work?
- How does *your* work fulfill our purpose as a team?
- How will *your* work today fulfill your purpose?
- Are there any specific work activities that are frustrating, draining, or depleting you?
- Which activities seem to reignite your career wellbeing?
- When it comes to your own sense of career well-being, which talent theme is your go to life jacket when you feel like you are drowning or depleted?

Social Wellbeing Questions

- What would be the best way for me to show that I care about you?
- Which activities seem to reignite your social wellbeing?
- How often do you get to spend quality time with your workplace colleagues and friends?
- As your supervisor, how could I create more opportunities for our team to socially connect?

- How do you go about showing others you care about, value, and appreciate them?
- Do we spend enough social time together as a team?
- Who do you think needs your support and attention today?
- How well do we do when it comes to celebrating each other's personal and professional successes?
- How might we do a better job of showing our support for each other's social wellbeing?
- Which activities seem to reignite your social wellbeing?
- When it comes to your own sense of social wellbeing, which talent theme is your go to life jacket when you feel like you are drowning or depleted?

Financial Wellbeing Questions

- Why do you think talking about financial wellbeing at work is so rare?
- How could we do a better job initiating these types of financial conversations?
- What are some of your financial goals?
- What additional tools and resources do you think you need so you can meet these financial goals?
- What can I do to help you reach your financial goals?
- What can other members of the team do to help you reach your financial goals?
- Are we doing a good enough job encouraging one another to be financially healthy?
- Do we do a good enough job of encouraging each other to have enjoyable experiences such as going on vacation?
- What financial educational opportunities might be valuable to us as a team?
- How can we support each other in pursuit of our financial goals?
- What financial habits could we modify to enhance our individual financial wellbeing?

- What is the best way for us to learn financial wellbeing strategies from one another?
- Which activities seem to reignite your financial wellbeing?
- When it comes to your own sense of financial well-being, which talent theme is your go to life jacket when you feel like you are drowning or depleted?

Physical Wellbeing Questions?

- What are some of the healthy things you do to boost your energy throughout the day?
- When do you tend to have the most physical, mental, and emotional energy? What days of the week and what time of the day?
- Have you started any new habits to enhance your physical wellbeing?
- What barriers can I remove or how can I support you in turning these new habits into a healthy way of life?
- How could we incorporate more physical wellbeing into the workplace?
- How do our work areas and schedules support our physical wellbeing?
- How can we support each other's physical wellbeing?
- Where can we add physical wellbeing elements to our day?
- What physical wellbeing obstacles do we encounter at work?
- When it comes to your own sense of physical well-being, which talent theme is your go to life jacket when you feel like you are drowning or depleted?
- Which activities seem to reignite your physical wellbeing?

Community Wellbeing Questions?

- What do you most love about where you live?
- How could your community be even better?
- What community events or activities do you participate in?

- In what way could our team support those events or activities?
- What do you feel most passionate about in your community?
- How can I support you when it comes to the community activities you most enjoy?
- What connections do you see between the community activities you enjoy and our workplace?
- How can people get more involved in their communities?
- What shared community interests do we have as a team?
- What are some things we can do as a team to show support for our communities?
- How does the work we do every day have an impact on our communities?
- When it comes to your own sense of community well-being, which talent theme is your go to life jacket when you feel like you are drowning or depleted?
- Which activities seem to reignite your community wellbeing?

Other Great Strengths-Based Questions

- When was the last time you lost track of time at work? What were you doing?
- What was the last activity you excitedly volunteered for?
- When was the last time somebody had to pull you away from what you were doing?
- When was the last time you felt completely in control of what you were doing?
- When was the last time you amazed yourself by what you were doing or accomplished?
- When's the last time someone singled you out and praised you for something you did?
- When was the last time you noticed something that really stood out, but nobody else saw it?
- When was the last time you really looked forward coming into work? What was it that excited you the most?

- When was the last time you discovered a new way of doing something? Did you discover it or did somebody else point it out to you?
- When was the last time you were doing an activity you never wanted to end?
- When was the last time you learned something new and it just clicked?
- Finish this sentence: I hate it when I have to...
- Finish this sentence: I love it when I get to...
 - Does it matter *who* you're doing it with?
 - Does it matter *when* you get to do it?
 - Does it matter *why* you're doing it?
 - Does it matter *what* you're doing at the time?
 - Does it matter *how* you do it?
- How would you define a personal *strength*?
- How would you define a personal *weakness*?
- At work, do you feel like you get to do what you do best every day?
- *My Purpose*: Describe to me why you do what you do at work?
- *My Goals*: What do you want to accomplish? How can I help align you and align your talents so you meet your goals and objectives?
- *My Metrics*: What measurements and scores could we create or use to gauge your progress on individual achievement, collaboration with team members, and customer value?
- *My Development*: What do you want your professional future to look like?
- *My Strategy*: Thinking critically about your purpose, goals, metrics, and development; how might you use your strengths to create a professional action plan?
- *My Team*: Who do you work best with and why?
- As your supervisor, and as you look at my top talents, are there any specific talent(s) I might be overusing that are frustrating or preventing you from reaching your personal best?

- What activities at work make you feel strong; the ones that make you feel alive and bring you the most personal fulfillment and joy?
- What activities would you like to do more of?
- What was the last activity at work where you actually lost track of time because you were so involved? Why do you think this happened?
- What are you most interested in and curious about at work?
- What work activities do you hate doing that make you feel depleted? Can you think of any solution to this problem?
- Have I done a good enough job praising and affirming your work? How might I do better?
- How do you prefer to be recognized?
- When was the last time somebody really complimented your work?
- What else do I need to start/stop doing to make you and your work feel seen and valued?
- Do you feel like your work matters?
- Do you feel like your work aligns with our organizational purpose?
- What is unclear about our organizational purpose?
- What activities do you need to start/stop doing so you play more to your strengths?
- What are your thoughts on individual well-roundedness and multi-tasking?
- What are your thoughts on primarily focusing on weaknesses?
- What else should we be looking for when it comes to hiring the right people for this job?
- Do you feel you have enough time to participate in creative or strategic thinking?
- Do you feel like you can truly be yourself at work or do you hold back? Why or why not?
- What adjectives would you use to describe a typical day at work?

- What adjectives would you use to describe those activities that play to your strengths?
- What adjectives would you use to describe those activities that make you feel weak?
- What adjectives would you use to describe our team?
- Do we as an organization focus enough on the development of your strengths?
- How essential are the following traits when it comes to your supervisors: *trust, compassion, stability, and hope*? How would you define each trait? What does each trait look like to you in practice?
- When looking at your work performance, do you feel more like you are living in the past, the present, or the future? Why? Where is the healthiest place for you to primarily be – past, present, or future?
- Which of your talents do you see most aligning with our organizational purpose and values?
- What makes you most enthusiastic about our organizational purpose?
- What would make you more enthusiastic about our organizational purpose?
- Is there anything you are uncertain or unclear about regarding what is expected of you?
- Tell me about the last time at work you got to play to your strengths and do what you do best?
- How cohesive is our team? What would you never change and what could be better?
- How confident are you in the future of our company? How about our industry?
- How are we doing when it comes to challenging you to grow?
- Do you feel like you get to do what you do best every day at work?
- What is it you do best at work and how does it make you feel?
- What is something you are really good at, but hate doing?
- Do you feel like you work with people who share your values?

- How well do your teammates support you? Do you feel like they have your back?
- Am I doing a good enough job providing opportunities for you to grow and develop?
- How does your current position challenge you to grow and develop?
- What's the best thing that has happened to you in this organization?
- What's the best thing that happened to you this week?
- Which one of your personal values is the most important one you bring to our organization?
- Where did we miss an opportunity to celebrate/recognize your contributions or the contributions of others this week?
- How is the project you're currently working on making you feel?
- When do you feel most connected to your work?
- When do you feel most connected to your coworkers?

Additional Strengths-Based Questions For You To Add

Several questions adapted from and inspired by:
The Coaching Habit (Stanier, 2016)
Wellbeing at Work (Clifton & Harter, 2021)
It's the Manager (Clifton & Harter, 2019)
Nine Lies about Work (Buckingham & Goodall, 2019)
Love + Work (Buckingham, 2022)

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