VIP Conversation starters: Spotlight Customer and Community

This exercise is designed to stimulate conversation about working effectively with customers and the community. Working well in this area is a key objective for our workforce within our Council Plan and everyone’s team performance, regardless of role or service area will benefit from excellent customer and community working.

This exercise allows individual’s to reflect on their strengths and natural talents in this area and explore opportunities, practical tasks and training that can help stretch their skills and performance. This exercise is suitable for all employees.

**Exercise Part 1: Areas of strength**

1. Start by having a quick discussion about what working with customers and the community means to your team and service area.
2. Now print out 2 copies of the skills table below; one for the individual and one for their line manager.
3. Individually, employee and line manager should review the table and circle the skills and attributes where they feel the individual has a particular strength or natural talent.
   1. Avoid circling lots of skills- whilst they may perform well across a number of areas, the focus of this exercise is to concentrate on the areas where they excel. Aim for 3 and no more than 5.
4. Both manager and employee should now reveal their results to each other and discuss.

**CONFIRMED STRENGTHS:** Are there particular areas that you have both circled? These are likely to be the individual’s strongest areas and known as ***Confirmed Strengths***.

* + 1. What makes performance in these areas so strong?
    2. Think about and discuss what **impact** these strengths have to the performance of the team and their contribution to the delivery of the service.
    3. **Explore and assign development goals that support these areas**. How can the individual stretch these areas of natural talent, use them more and /or further develop them? Think specifically about planning in practical tasks, training or mentoring that can be put in place to enhance exposure, build knowledge and / or skills across the team.

**BLIND SPOTS AND HIDDEN STRENGTHS:** Now explore any areas where the individual and manager did not align- are there strengths that one party recognised more over another?

**Blind spots**: Areas of strength that the manager easily recognised, but the individual did not.

**Hidden Strengths:** Strengths that the individual acknowledged in themselves, but weren’t immediately recognised by the manager.

* + 1. Identify any **blind spots** or **hidden strengths** and in turn, explore why one party recognised these more over the other.
    2. Hidden Strengths: Are there any qualities or skills the individual would like to be recognised for in the future?
       1. Does the individual need more exposure in these areas or opportunities to showcase these talents?
       2. What practical steps can be taken to help develop these areas?
    3. Blind Spots: explore why the individual not immediately recognise these areas of strength, when their manager did?
       1. Think about examples of good performance in this area
       2. Is there anything that could be holding the individual back in this area?
       3. What support or practical tasks can be taken to help stretch these skills?

VIP: Customer and Community

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| Listening Skills / Attentiveness | Clear Communication / Articulate | Friendly / Approachable style | Empathy / Compassionate |
| Anticipation of Needs | Time Management | Patience | Problem Solving |
| Efficiency | Responsible | Professionalism | Organised |
| Respectful | Flexible / Adaptable | Team Work | Relationship Building |
| Technical Ability and Knowledge | Encouraging / Inspiring | Positivity / Can-do Attitude | Solution Focused |
| Thorough | Consistent | Personal Resilience | Effective Questioning |
| Managing Conflict | Understanding / Analysing Situations | Having Difficult Conversations | Seeing Things From Multiple Perspectives |
| Other: |  | | |

Development Goals:

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Skill or Style**    What area do you want to focus on? | **Impact**  What impact will this have on performance? | **Support**  What barriers may be faced? What tasks / actions will help to achieve success? |
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Exercise Part 2 (optional exercise):

Inspiring Customer and Community individuals

This tool can be used to identify any aspirational strengths or areas the individual would like to cultivate and develop to help enhance their future performance.

1. Building on part 1, the individual should think of someone that inspires them in this area.
2. Drawing upon their knowledge and / or experience of them, the individual should use the table above to circle up to 5 of the most important qualities this person possesses which allows them to work effectively with customers and the community.
3. Individuals and managers should now compare the individual’s strengths and feedback against this person that inspires them. This will help to focus the discussion on any areas they would like to strive to develop or build on.
   1. Are there any qualities you admire in others that you would like to build on?
   2. Do these qualities work for you and your natural strengths?
   3. How can you develop these areas?
   4. What barriers might you face and how can these be overcome?