people talking

Conversation Audit Guide.

The reflective conversation audit every leader should be doing.

Every leader believes their conversations are working. This reflective guide tells you whether they actually are.

Hazard identification, consultation, risk assessment and incident reporting systems all depend on the quality of the human conversations underneath them, yet few leaders stop to consider how much their own conversations shape that standard. This conversation audit is a self-directed reflection. A chance to pause and consider whether your conversations have the basics of high quality ones covered, or where there might be room to grow..

Why this reflective audit may be more impactful than another policy review.

When psychological safety is low, concerns are less likely to be raised, difficult truths stay unspoken and organisations end up managing only the risks they already know about. Hazard visibility shrinks, taking the chance of early intervention with it. When conversations carry unclear intent or unchecked power dynamics, psychosocial hazards are far more likely to develop into harm before anyone catches and manages them.

Where a policy review looks at systems on paper, this audit invites you to reflect on the everyday conversations that bring those systems to life, and where your own habits might be helping or quietly getting in the way..



How to use this conversation audit.

Work through each prompt and reflect on one real, recent conversation. Tick the box that matches your score against each question, using the scale below.

1. **Rarely**
   This happens hardly ever if at all
2. **Sometimes**
   It happens occasionally but isn't yet the norm
3. **Often**
   It happens most of the time
4. **Consistently**
   It happens every time without fail

The scores aren't a verdict.

They're a starting indicator of the quality of your conversations and a pointer to where the biggest opportunities are to make them work better.





Clarity of intent

When leaders clearly frame the intention behind a conversation, the outcomes they want and the guardrails for participation and input, it makes the implicit explicit rather than leaving people to second guess. Clarity of intent lets people engage with you more effectively, arriving at a more informed outcome together. Think about your recent conversations.

	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Consistently
Did the people you spoke with know why the conversation was happening and what it would be about?	☐	☐	☐	☐
Was fact-finding separated from decision-making, so people weren't guessing which information to offer?	☐	☐	☐	☐
If an onlooker described your intent, would it match your own view of it?	☐	☐	☐	☐



Power dynamics

Power sits in every leadership conversation whether it's named or not. When leaders actively invite participation from those below them in the hierarchy, it clearly signals that other input is valued and valuable. The reverse is equally true. Even when a leader genuinely wants to hear from their team, if that invitation is never made explicit, offering an opinion can feel like a risk not worth taking. Reflect on your recent conversations.

	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Consistently
Do you actively invite challenge (which is different to just hoping it will be voluntarily offered)?	☐	☐	☐	☐
When someone disagrees with you, is your reaction one of appreciation?	☐	☐	☐	☐
Would someone observing a team meeting see a range of people contributing, not predominantly only the most senior person?	☐	☐	☐	☐



Psychological safety and hazard visibility.

This is the climate your conversations create and how they 'land' with others, not just your intentions. Here are a few quick ways to read the room on your level of visibility on psychosocial hazards.

	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Consistently
Do people bring you problems early, rather than you finding out about issues only once they've escalated?	☐	☐	☐	☐
When someone raises a concern, is your first response curiosity?	☐	☐	☐	☐
Do people leave conversations with you more willing to speak up next time, because they can predict their input is likely to be welcomed?	☐	☐	☐	☐



Psychological safety and hazard visibility. Cont'd.

This is the climate your conversations create and how they 'land' with others, not just your intentions. Here are a few quick ways to read the room on your level of visibility on psychosocial hazards.

	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Consistently
When was the last time someone raised a concern that surprised you?	☐	☐	☐	☐
Is there a lot of silence in your team when a question is asked about risks?	☐	☐	☐	☐
Do quieter voices in the room get the same weight as the loudest ones in team meetings?	☐	☐	☐	☐
Could you point to a specific recent decision that changed because of something raised in consultation?	☐	☐	☐	☐

Reading your results.

A pattern of low scores in any one section is worth treating as a leading indicator, not a failing grade. It tells you where investment in your own conversational capability will have the biggest payoff. Being aware of the architecture and skills to facilitate high quality conversations is what gradually strengthens psychological safety, improves how easily hazards come to light and helps reduce the chance that psychosocial risks quietly become harm.

The audit is a starting point for reflection, not the whole answer. Making conversations work is. That is the belief People Talking is built on.