

RADICAL CANDOR

HOW TO HAVE  
**RADICALLY CANDID**  
**PERFORMANCE**  
**DEVELOPMENT**  
CONVERSATIONS

How to have

**RADICALLY  
CANDID**

performance development  
conversations



In this guide, we'll cover:

- What is Performance Development Anyways?
- Having Regular Impromptu Development Conversations
- How Radically Candid Performance Development is 'HIP'
- Why It's Worth It

Most everyone has had a boss who failed at performance development—helping people on their team grow and move forward in their careers. In fact, before Kim Scott developed the Radical Candor framework, Caring Personally while also Challenging Directly, she was this boss.

Because she was uncomfortable delivering difficult feedback, Kim inadvertently set herself and her team up to fail. While she didn't intend to sabotage the teams' chances to succeed, by not properly offering performance development feedback, this was the impact of her behavior.

In addition, by not addressing problems immediately, her team began to lose confidence in her ability to be an effective leader. It was a clear performance development fail.

# What is **PERFORMANCE DEVELOPMENT** anyways?

It is a manager's job to help each person on their team develop and grow their careers, as well as manage their performance. Balancing the intrinsic desire to improve and grow and the extrinsic desire for rewards like bonuses, equity, and promotion is one of the most difficult things about being a manager.

It's important to note that performance *management* is different than performance *development*.

The two are often conflated. Giving a person a performance rating that translates to a bonus is very different from having a series of weekly impromptu guidance conversations that help a person develop the skills they need to succeed, help them know what to do more, and what to do less.

People often talk about feedback as if the impromptu conversation and the performance review conversations are one and the same. They are two very different things. Impromptu conversations should be happening multiple times a week and should be focused on coaching a person to do more of what's good and less of what's not.



**GIVING GUIDANCE  
THAT'S KIND, CLEAR,  
SPECIFIC, AND SINCERE  
IS THE CORNERSTONE  
OF PERFORMANCE  
DEVELOPMENT.**

A performance review process without regular development conversations is like capping a rotten tooth. It will just rot faster and more painfully. Performance reviews should happen once or twice a year and should help the person understand their compensation, and their promotion prospects or termination risks if any. Most companies expend so much energy on performance management that they don't focus as much on development.

Because of this, employees are often blindsided during performance reviews because they haven't received any guidance or feedback about their performance prior to their formal review. If a company is actively committed to performance development, there shouldn't be any surprises when performance review time rolls around.

Why does performance development matter?

**"Everyone can be exceptional somewhere and that it is a boss's job to help them find that role. It's also a boss's job to strive to have 100% of the team doing exceptional work."**

📖 [Do You Have the Right People In the Right Roles?](#)

📖 [The Problem With Career Conversations Today](#)

📖 [Understand Radical Candor In 6 Minutes](#)

# Have regular *IMPROMPTU* development conversations

The atomic building block of Radical Candor is the two-minute impromptu development conversation. You don't want to try to operationalize impromptu chats. The motivations of both the feedback giver and the feedback receiver need to be intrinsic.

The motivation to solicit guidance and to act on it is the desire to improve, to grow, to do good work and then make it better, to build strong relationships and then make them stronger.

**"I'm listening to you because I want to develop the skills and the team I'll need to succeed."**

The motivation to give guidance is mostly altruistic—to help another person and the team as a collective flourish.

**"I'm telling you this because I want to help you develop the skills you need to succeed and because it's not fair to your peers if I don't tell you."**

If you tie each two-minute conversation too explicitly to extrinsic motivators like bonuses, promotions, or termination, you can ruin the motivation for them. If an employee thinks each two-minute impromptu conversation is going to impact their compensation or future career prospects, they will be less open to hearing what was said and more prone to fight it.



## How to Have Quick Feedback Conversations

**"Giving impromptu feedback is more like using a toothpick than getting a root canal. Don't schedule it. Just do it consistently and immediately when it's needed, and maybe you won't ever have to get a root canal."**

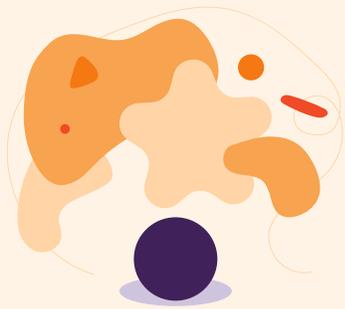
📖 [Give Immediate Feedback Because Feedback Has a Short Half-Life](#)

📖 [Double Down On Radical Candor During a Crisis](#)

🔊 [Navigating Emotional Reactions at Work](#)

# *REMEMBER,* Radically Candid Performance Development *IS HIP*

An easy way to remember how to succeed at Radically Candid performance development is by thinking of it like this: **Radical Candor is HIP**. Keep this top of mind when you're having your impromptu conversations.



*HUMBLE*



*HELPFUL*



*IMMEDIATE*



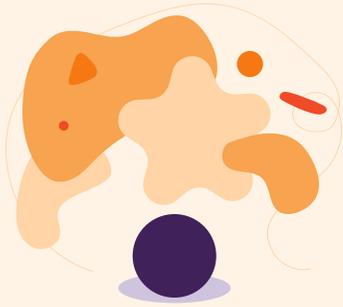
*IN PERSON*  
*OR ON VIDEO*



*PRIVATE* (CRITICISM)  
*PUBLIC* (PRAISE)



*NOT ABOUT*  
*PERSONALITY*



## *HUMBLE*

Don't be arrogant. Be curious. Deliver your feedback firmly and with supporting rationale, but be open to push-back. Listen with true intent to understand so that you get full command of both perspectives before agreeing or disagreeing.

## *HELPFUL*

You don't have to have all the answers. Simply exposing your intent to be helpful offers clarity to the other person about your intentions. Most people will want to hear whatever it is you're going to say.



## *IMMEDIATE*

Feedback has a short half-life. When you give feedback while the details are all fresh in your mind, you can be much more specific. You also give the person a better chance to improve immediately.



## IN PERSON OR ON VIDEO



The clarity of your feedback gets measured not at your mouth, but at the other person's ear. The majority of communication is non-verbal, and you won't know if the other person understood what you were saying if you can't see the reaction. When talking in person, you can make adjustments based on their body language and emotions. If you work with a remote team, opt for a video call so you can still communicate face to face.

## PRIVATE WITH CRITICISM, BUT PUBLIC WITH PRAISE

A good rule for feedback is to praise in public, but criticize in private. Public criticism tends to trigger a defensive reaction and make it much harder for a person to accept they've made a mistake and learn from it. Public praise tends to make the recipient feel great, and it encourages others to emulate whatever they did that was great.



## NOT ABOUT PERSONALITY

Feedback has a short half-life. When you give feedback while the details are all fresh in your mind, you can be much more specific. You also give the person a better chance to improve immediately.



### How to Have HIP Feedback Conversations

*"Listen with true intent to understand so that you get a full command of both perspectives before agreeing or disagreeing."*

- [Meet Like A Boss — The 411 On 1:1s](#)
- [Relationships, Not Power, Drive You Forward](#)
- [A HIP Approach to Feedback: How to Achieve Radical Candor](#)

# Why it's *WORTH IT*

While there's no doubt that it's a challenge, aligning performance development with performance management is such a key part of succeeding as a boss that Kim has devoted a bonus chapter to it in the second edition of the book **Radical Candor: Be a Kick-Ass Boss Without Losing Your Humanity**, available now. (This new chapter discusses performance development and offers an in-depth guide for how to create a performance management strategy.)

By balancing the two, you can create a culture where people can grow in their careers or discover that perhaps the role they're in isn't a great fit for them. But if you fail to have regular development conversations, someone might get labeled as a B player when they're simply just not suited for the position.

Everyone can be excellent at something. That's very different from saying anyone can be good at anything—definitely not true. Sadly, lots of people never find work they are truly excellent at because they stay in the wrong job too long.

Bosses keep this kind of employee on for several reasons: they're not sure they can find someone better; it takes time and effort to train new people, and they like the person and feel it would be unfair to encourage them to find a job they are better suited for.



The lack of courage and energy to put the right people in the right positions leads to a tremendous loss of human potential--to lives of quiet desperation. Assuming that people who are not thriving are therefore mediocre and can't do any better is both unjust and unkind. Allowing them to continue down that path may be the worst case of Ruinous Empathy that managers regularly display and a great contribution to wasted possibility.



**EVERYONE CAN  
BE EXCEPTIONAL**  
SOMEWHERE AND IT IS  
A BOSS'S JOB TO HELP  
THEM FIND THAT ROLE.

But you can't do this if you skip performance development conversations.

The bottom line? You're going to have to get HIP in order to create a talent-retaining culture where people actually like coming to work.

## Why Performance Development Works

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"It's not enough to care only about people's ability to perform a job. To build authentic relationships, you have to care about each of the people who work for you as a fellow human being."

- 📖 [Is Your Feedback Falling Flat?](#)
- 📖 [Radical Candor: Be a Kick-Ass Boss Without Losing Your Humanity](#)
- 📖 [Radical Candor Book Club Discussion Questions: A Complete Guide](#)

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