

RADICAL CANDOR



6 STEPS
FOR ROLLING OUT
RADICAL
CANDOR

RADICAL CANDOR

is about more than just “being professional.”

It’s about giving a damn about the people you work with, sharing more than just your work self, and encouraging everyone who reports to you to do the same.

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 human being. It’s not just business; it is personal and deeply personal. We call this dimension of Radical Candor “**Care Personally.**”

Practicing Radical Candor also involves telling people when their work isn’t good enough — and when it is; when they are not going to get that new role they wanted, or when you’re going to hire a new boss “over” them; when the results don’t justify further investment in what they’re working on. Delivering hard feedback, making hard calls about who does what on a team, and holding a high bar for results — isn’t that obviously the job of any manager?

Of course, it is, but most people struggle with doing these things. Challenging people generally pisses them off, and at first, that doesn’t seem like a good way to build a relationship or to show that you “Care Personally.” And yet challenging people is often the best way to show them that you care when you’re the boss. This dimension is called “**Challenge Directly.**”



RADICAL CANDOR
IS WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU PUT
"CARE PERSONALLY" AND
"CHALLENGE DIRECTLY"
TOGETHER.

Radical Candor builds trust and opens the door for the kind of communication that helps you achieve the results you're aiming for.

In short, Radical Candor is Compassionate Candor. It engages the heart (Care Personally) and the mind (Challenge Directly). What makes it radical is that it's rare.

It turns out that when people trust you and feel like you care about them, they are much more likely to accept and act on your praise and criticism; tell you what they really think about what you are doing well and, more importantly, not doing so well; engage in this same behavior with one another, which means less pushing the rock up the hill again and again; embrace their role on the team; and focus on getting results.

If you're ready to introduce Radical Candor to your team, follow these six steps to roll it out like a boss.

STEP 1 Share Your Stories



Explain Radical Candor to your team so they understand what you're up to. Ask them to read [the book](#) and use our [chapter-by-chapter study guide](#) to deepen understanding.

You can also show them videos from the series we created with Amazon, [Day One: Insights for Entrepreneurs](#).

But it's best if you explain it in your own words. Tell your stories to your team. Show some vulnerability.

Your personal stories will explain, better than any management theory, what you really mean and show why you really mean it. That's why Kim tells all those personal stories in *Radical Candor*. Your stories will mean a lot more to your team than other people's stories do because they mean something to you.

Radical Candor Book Club

[Radical Candor: A Complete Discussion Guide](#)

Radical Candor Overview

- [Radical Candor In 6 Minutes](#)
 - [Day One: Insights for Entrepreneurs](#)
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Examples of Stories

- [A Story of Obnoxious Aggression](#)
- [Ruinous Empathy: The Bob Story](#)
- [A Story of Manipulative Insincerity](#)

STEP 2 Solicit Feedback: Prove You Can Take It Before Dishing It

While some bosses consider themselves beyond reproach, this kind of one-way-street thinking won't help you build trust with your direct reports. The best way to make your team more [receptive to receiving feedback](#) is to ask them to give it to you first.

Being the boss doesn't mean you automatically get respect from people, but the authority does have an automatic impact on what people will say to you. Unfortunately, people are primed to mistrust you based on all the preconceived notions against bosses.

Your direct reports may be reluctant to give you honest feedback at first, but if you lead by example, eventually you'll see results. As the boss, you'll tend to get more flattery, and it may be false flattery. You'll need to hone your BS meter to know when to dig deeper to get candid feedback.

Remember, it is crucially important for you to get feedback and find out what people really think. Getting people to challenge you directly can be the difference between success and failure, which means you need to make a concerted effort to get feedback.

Start by asking your team to criticize you because fishing for praise will just thicken the bank of BS flattery that's likely to come rolling at you as the boss like a dangerous fog.



Use these **two guidelines** for how to get others to give you honest feedback:



Convince your team you really do want to hear what they really think. Show them that your requests for criticism are genuine and that you sincerely appreciate it when they say what they think.

Keep asking for criticism regularly. Try different approaches, venues, and situations. Whatever you do, don't accept an environment where you aren't getting the feedback you need to be successful.



It's not enough to appreciate critique from your team, or not to get defensive. You have to reward the candor. People need to see and feel that there is a benefit to criticizing you. While it may take time for people to build up enough courage to give difficult feedback, reward small wins along the way.

More On Soliciting Feedback

■ [How to Solicit Radical Candid Feedback as a Manager](#)

🔗 [The Go-To Question](#)

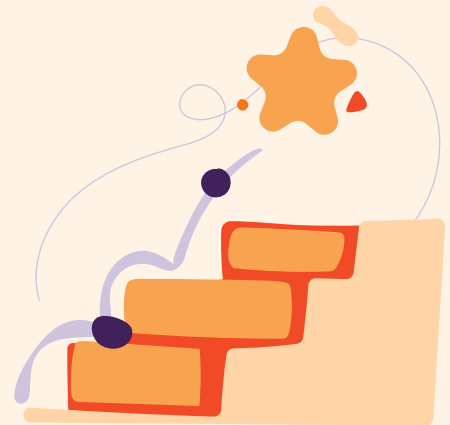
■ [11 Ways to Get Feedback From Others](#)

STEP 3 Growth Management: Career Conversations

To build a great team, you need to understand what motivates each team member, and how each person's job fits into their life goals. A leader at Apple had a good way to think about different types of ambition: those in **rock star mode** are solid as a rock, and a force for stability at work (think Rock of Gibraltar, not Bruce Springsteen), while people in **superstar mode** are highly-ambitious change agents, constantly seeking new opportunities.

The most important thing you can do for your team collectively is to understand what growth trajectory each team member wants to be on at a given time, and whether that matches the needs and opportunities of the overall team.

To be successful at growth management, we recommend a series of three Career Conversations you'll have with each team member. Begin with people you've been working with the longest. When done well, these conversations should connect a person's past — gaining a detailed understanding of who they are and what motivates them at work through their life story — with their future — the wildest dreams they have for themselves at the pinnacle of their career.



Start with the Past — Life Story

The first step is understanding people's motivations and values, the things that drive them. It's amazing what you can learn from a person's life story if you pay close attention to, and ask about, their major pivots and transitions. Why did they make those choices? What did those transitions teach them about what they love and hate about their work?

Talk about the Future — Dreams

Step two is understanding where people want to be at the pinnacle of their careers. While some bosses are skeptical that younger workers know what they want to be when they grow up, everyone has dreams, and you just have to help people make them a little more tangible. Other managers worry about asking their reports to hone in on a single vision too early in their careers.

Don't use these concerns as excuses to avoid having career conversations. People change, and their dreams can change. This is why it's important to have regular career conversations. Just like [soliciting criticism from your team](#), it's not a one-and-done practice.

Plan for the Present — Career Action Plan

With an understanding of the past and the future, you can now create a relevant and thoughtful action plan with clear owners and clear timelines.

Like getting criticism from your team, Career Conversations are not something you do once and check off the list. Remember, people change, their growth trajectory changes, and you need to change with them! That's why it's a good idea to do one round of Career Conversations a year with each of your direct reports during your 1:1 time.

More on Career Conversations

- [The Best Way to Have Career Conversations](#)
- [Superstar Mode Versus Rock Star Mode](#)
- 🔗 [Career Conversations](#)
- [The Problem with Career Conversations Today](#)

STEP 4 Perfect Your 1:1 Conversations

Make sure you are having regular, meaningful 1:1 conversations with your direct reports. First, make sure you actually have the meetings! We have to start at the beginning here because it's simply not the case that all managers are holding regular 1:1s.

1:1s are quiet, focused collaboration time for employees and bosses to connect. It's also the most important chance for you to hear from your employee, and it's their time, not yours.

It's equally important for you to figure out how to enjoy the conversations. If you feel like they are "calendar clutter," your approach is not going to work. Quit thinking of them as meetings and begin treating them as if you are having lunch or coffee with somebody you are genuinely eager to get to know better.

If scheduling them over a meal helps, make them periodic lunches. If you and your direct report like to walk and there's a good place to take a walk near the office, make them walking meetings. If you are a morning person, schedule them in the morning.

If you are a person who has an energy dip at 2 p.m., don't schedule them at 2 p.m. You have a lot of meetings, so you can optimize the 1:1 time and location for your energy. Just don't be a jerk about it. You may like to wake up at 5 a.m. and go to the gym. Don't expect the people who work for you to meet you there.



More On 1:1 Meetings

- [🔊 Meet Like A Boss — The 411 On 1:1s](#)
- [📖 How to Have Effective 1:1s](#)
- [📖 Direct Reports and Radical Candor: 5 Tips for Giving Guidance and Feedback](#)
- [📖 Why You Can't Skimp On Radically Candid Performance Development Conversations](#)

STEP 5 Give Guidance & Feedback

To make sure you're not praising or criticizing someone's personality when delivering criticism, follow the **CORE framework**

CONTEXT

Cite the specific situation

OBSERVATION

Describe what was said or done

RESULT

What is the most meaningful consequence to you and to them?

NEXT STEPS

What are the expected next steps?

Here's some helpful criticism that Kim Scott received from her boss:

"After the meeting when I told you that you said 'um' a lot and recommended a speech coach," (**context**), "you made a brush-off gesture" (**observation**). "This makes me feel like you weren't hearing me and won't go to the speech coach I'm recommending, which would be a shame because if you stop saying um so much you'll be more effective" (**result**). "Go to the speech coach!" (**nExt**).

Praise, like criticism, includes caring and a challenge. For example, CORE praise that includes both caring and a challenge looks like this:

"I asked you to help us be more efficient (**context**), you went above and beyond by implementing Slack (**observation**), the team is spending less time on email but more time communicating, which allows us to get more done in less time (**result**). We'd love for you to explore other tools that can help streamline communication in the office. (**nExt steps**)."



5 THINGS TO REMEMBER

1. **Just like criticism, praise can be awkward;** but it's important to know what we do well and should continue doing.

2. **We need to push through our discomfort with praise,** especially when praising others requires us to recognize our own failures.

3. **Being specific and sincere is a real relationship-building opportunity.** It helps people feel seen and appreciated while also getting a new perspective on their work. These moments act like deposits into the relationship bank.

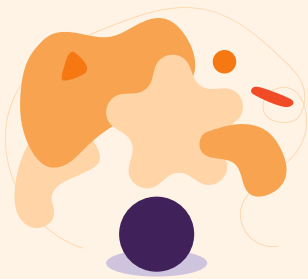
4. **Praise includes a challenge as well as caring;** the challenge for praise can be simply for that person to continue doing what they did well, or it could be to take that experience to a new project. Or teach what they did to others!

5. **Finally, praise in public.** Public praise allows not only the recipient to know what to do more of, but also the rest of the team. There are a small number of people who are not comfortable with public praise. Honor that when it emerges.

Radically Candid criticism *IS HIP*

Humble, Helpful, Immediate, In person, Public praise/Private criticism, not Personalized.

Easy to say, hard to do. Being kind means caring about what's best for the person long term, not just what feels easiest right now. Being clear means leaving no room for interpretation about what you really think — while also being open to the possibility that your opinion is wrong.



BE HUMBLE

Your ego is in check; you are always open to learning that what you think is dead wrong. You're not just open to being wrong, you're happy to be proven wrong. What you care about is helping others do the best work of their careers, and getting to the best answer.



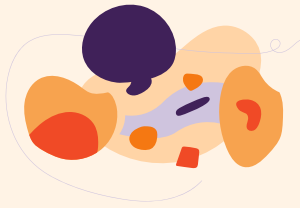
BE HELPFUL

When you are really clear about what's wrong and why you help the person fix the problem. Offer criticism in a spirit of helpfulness, even if you don't have actual help to offer.



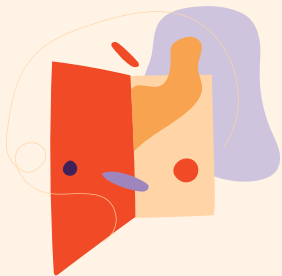
GIVE CRITICISM IMMEDIATELY

If somebody makes a mistake, you tell them right away. That's more kind because pointing it out right away allows the person to fix it faster, and it's more clear because the details are fresh.



DELIVER CRITICISM IN PERSON OR ON VIDEO

Remember, Radical Candor gets measured at the listener's ear, not the talker's mouth. Since 90% of communication is non-verbal, it's really hard to know if your criticism is Radically Candid — or not — if you can't see how it lands. The only way to know if you've been kind and clear is to see how the other person is reacting.



GIVE CRITICISM IN PRIVATE

Debates can happen in public, but if you're criticizing a person, it's much kinder to do it in private. It will also be more clear because private criticism is much less likely to trigger a person's defense mechanisms.



IT'S NOT ABOUT PERSONALITY

It's not about personality: It's saying, "I don't think that's true," rather than, "You're a liar!" People can't alter their personality, so saying things like "You're a jerk" or "You are sloppy" is neither kind nor helpful. And it's almost always a flawed analysis of the situation.

More On Giving Guidance & Feedback

- ▣ [Direct Reports and Radical Candor: 5 Tips for Giving Guidance and Feedback](#)
- ▣ [How to Give Humble Feedback](#)
- ▣ [6 Tips for Giving Helpful Feedback](#)

STEP 6 Gauge Feedback

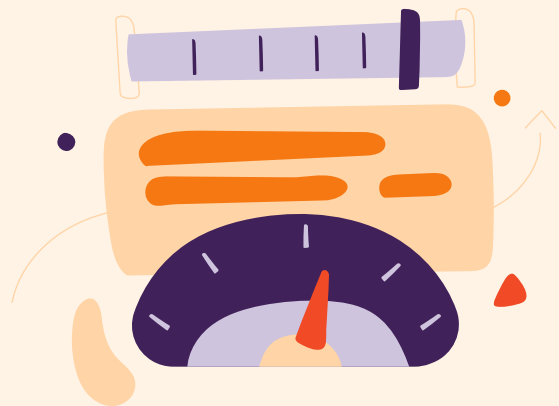
Gauge the other person's response by listening to what they say, observing their body language, look them in the eye, and asking yourself, "How do they seem to be feeling?" If you're not sure, you can always ask how what you said landed.

If the person you're talking to seems sad, this is your cue to take a moment to show you Care Personally.

This is hard because when confronted with someone who seems upset, it's our natural inclination to back off what we were saying — to move the wrong direction on the Challenge Directly dimension of Radical Candor (increasing the challenge). Instead, now is your time to show that you care — increase the care.

Similarly, when you get an angry response from the person you're talking to, it's your cue to move up on the Care Personally dimension.

This is hard because when the other person is angry, it's natural for you to get angry, too. But remember, nothing will move you down on the Care Personally axis faster than anger.



One great way to show you care when confronted with negative emotions from another person is to acknowledge the emotion, for example:

“I’m noticing some strong emotion, what’s coming up for you?”

“My goal was to be helpful; seems I’ve missed the mark.”

“How can I help?”

“What can I do to help get our conversation back on track?”

Often, simply acknowledging the emotion can help someone feel more understood. This is more difficult than it sounds because most people tend to pretend emotions aren’t happening.

You might misunderstand the emotion you are seeing; be humble when naming the emotion. And whatever you do, don’t judge the emotion or tell the person they “shouldn’t” be feeling it.

More On Gauging Feedback

- 📖 [Emotional Reactions At Work Are Awkward: Here’s How To Deal](#)
- 🔊 [Navigating Emotional Reactions At Work](#)
- 📖 [Gauge Your Feedback](#)
- 📖 [5 Ways to Encourage Feedback Between Others](#)

Need more help practicing Radical Candor?

WE'VE GOT YOUR BACK



You need ***The Feedback Loop*** (think *Groundhog Day* meets *The Office*), a 5-episode workplace comedy series starring David Alan Grier that brings to life Radical Candor's simple framework for navigating candid conversations.

You'll get an hour of hilarious content about a team whose feedback fails are costing them business; improv-inspired exercises to teach everyone the skills they need to work better together, and after-episode action plans you can put into practice immediately to up your helpful feedback EQ.

We're offering Radical Candor friendlies 10% off the self-paced e-course.

[Follow this link](#) and enter the promo code **FEEDBACK** at checkout

Have questions about Radical Candor?

Send us a message at contact@radicalcandor.com or visit us at radicalcandor.com.

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