

March 2025 Medical Leaders Breakfast Recap

Facilitated Discussions Takeaways

Top actionable ideas for overcoming the greatest challenges to holding Performance Conversations

Challenge #1 Lack of Accountability: despite numerous discussions, no accountability or progress on agreed-upon areas for professional development

1. Cultivate a strong organizational culture

- **Onboarding new staff:** Encourage new staff to attend an orientation session to welcome them and help them understand the culture, governance structures and available resources. This facilitates integration and shows them how they fit into the bigger 'we' of the organization.
- **Modeling desired behaviors:** Departmental leaders and staff should actively model the behaviors they wish to encourage. Leading by example to promote the cultivation of culture.
- **Co-creating a shared team purpose:** During recruitment, look for candidates who demonstrate traits that align with the organization's core values. Engaging in co-creation of a shared team purpose will help strengthen this alignment and promote a sense of collective responsibility.



2. Set expectations early and clearly

- **Define deliverables upfront:** Set clear expectations early on regarding the deliverables related to communication, interprofessional dynamics, and clinical work. This ensures medical staff have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities, setting them up for success.
- **Performance conversations:** Once foundational expectations are established, performance conversations should be used to ensure alignment and continuous improvement.
- **Culture of feedback:** Younger generations of medical staff are eager to receive feedback. Establish a culture of consistent, constructive feedback to foster growth and development.

3. Implement robust departmental structures

- **Embed accountability tools:** Integrate tools such as the MultiSource Feedback (360° reviews) into annual departmental conversations to ensure ongoing accountability. This provides medical staff with valuable operational feedback and supports continuous improvement.
- **Create departmental governance documents:** Co-create governance documents that outline agreed-upon policies, approaches, and escalation processes. These documents will serve as transparent guidelines for addressing issues and holding team members accountable.
- **Action plans and follow-up:** After performance conversations, provide a summary of key discussions, action plans, and a follow-up strategy. Ensures accountability and clarity around next steps.



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More Takeaways & Resources

Challenge #2 Handling reactions and emotional responses: managing stress and conflict, navigating confrontational situations, and emotional intelligence

1. Proactive work

- **Invest in relationships early:** Build social capital by investing time and effort into relationships early on. Establishing respect and trust beforehand makes it easier to approach difficult conversations with a positive mindset and openness.
- **Build self-awareness:** It's crucial for leaders to develop awareness of their own biases, positions, and interests. These factors may influence your approach to conversations and understanding them ensures you're entering discussions with a balanced perspective.
- **Create the right environment:** Ensure meetings are held at appropriate times and in the right spaces—settings that are welcoming, non-threatening, and conducive to open dialogue.

2. Feedback tools and techniques

- **Experience Cube:** Familiarize yourself with tools like the Experience Cube, which can help check your emotions, encourage active listening, and ensure you fully understand another person's perspective. This tool helps bring clarity to complex emotional dynamics.
- **Focus on the bigger picture:** Always keep the ultimate goal of the conversation in mind. Aim for win-win outcomes by seeking mutual understanding and collaboration, rather than focusing solely on immediate emotional responses.
- **Lead with curiosity and humility:** Approach difficult conversations with a mindset of curiosity and humility. Recognize that others' experiences, backgrounds, and upbringings may be different from your own, and this will influence their perceptions and actions.
- **Trauma-informed approach:** Consider adopting a trauma-informed approach in conversations. This fosters a deeper understanding of emotional reactions and helps manage sensitive conversations with care and empathy.

Speaker Dr. Finn Austin's simple rules for performance conversations:

- Assume that everyone is doing their best and that they desire the best possible things from the program/service.
- Treat everyone with dignity and expect it in return.
- Accept new information from individuals and take it as a gift in understanding the person.
- Incorporate new information and remember the purpose for holding the conversation.
- Develop a small repertoire of frameworks to structure your conversation.
- Commit to something at the end of the conversation and ask the other person what they can commit to. Follow up!

Resources

Access the session table handouts: [Medical Leadership Development Supports](#)