

The Values Conversation Guide

Most leaders can tell you what their team members are doing. Very few can tell you what those people actually care about. These five questions go beneath the surface, surfacing what drives performance, loyalty, and meaning at work. Use them one-on-one, or as the basis for a team conversation.

Security

"What would need to be true about your role for you to feel genuinely settled here — not just comfortable, but secure?"

Listen for what this person needs to feel stable. Answers often reveal whether they're worried about their future, their relationships, or their sense of belonging.

Self-direction

"Where in your work do you feel most in control of how you do things? Where do you feel least?"

People who value autonomy disengage when over-managed. This question surfaces where they feel constrained and where they thrive.

Benevolence

"When do you feel like your work is actually helping someone? How often does that happen?"

For people who value contribution, disconnection from impact is a slow drain on motivation. Listen for frequency and whether they feel their effort lands.

Achievement

"What would you need to accomplish this year to feel like it mattered?"

This reveals what success actually looks like for this person, which is often different from what's in their job description.

Universalism

"Is there a bigger purpose behind what we do here that resonates with you personally — or does that feel disconnected from your day-to-day?"

An honest answer to this tells you whether your organisational purpose is alive for this person, or just a poster on the wall.

Based on Schwartz's theory of basic human values¹

Want to go deeper?

Book a conversation at squarecirclecollective.com.au

¹Schwartz, S.H. (2012). An overview of the Schwartz theory of basic values. *Online Readings in Psychology and Culture*, 2(1)