

Performance Manifesto

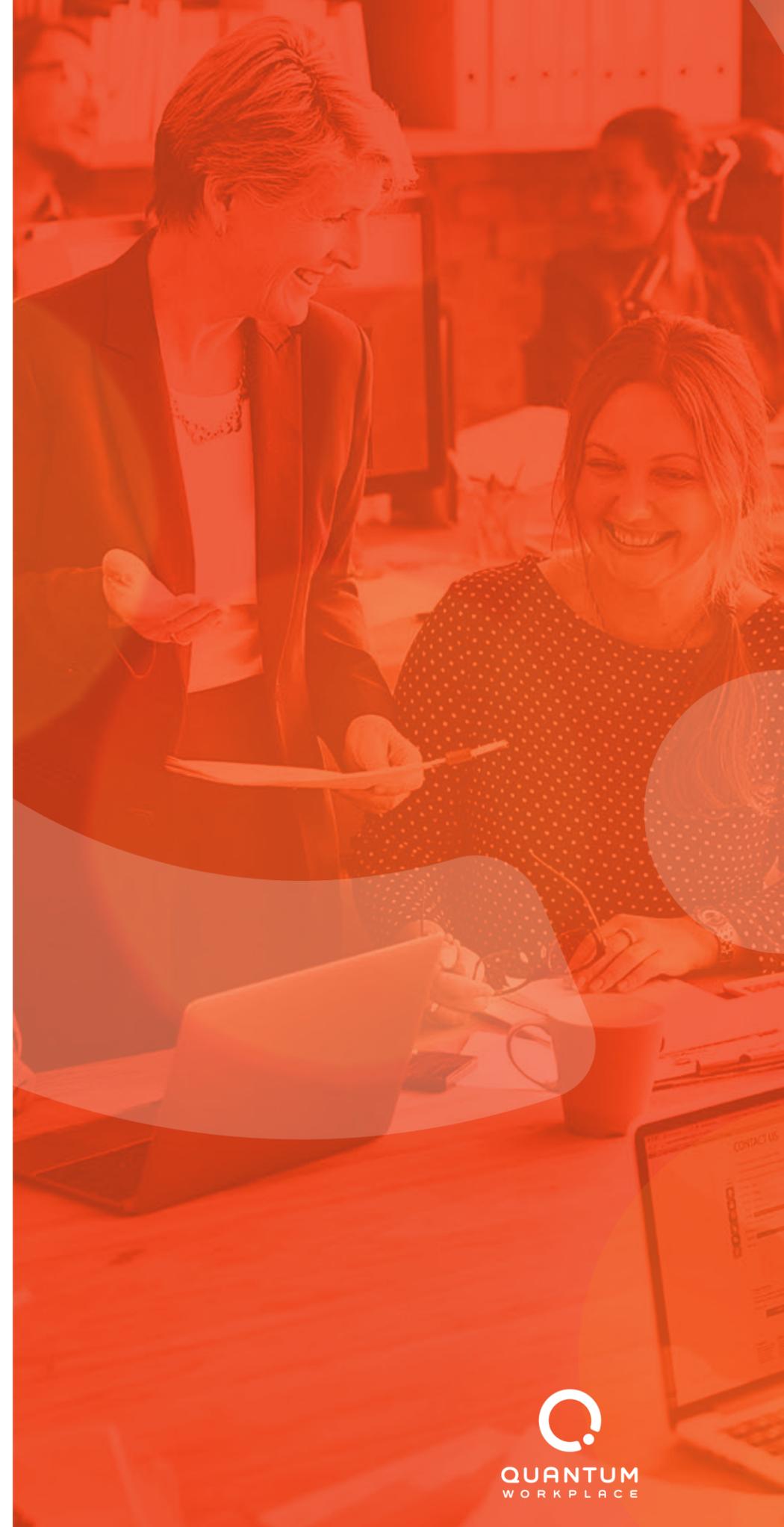
**5 Manager Lessons for
Engaging Performance
Conversations**



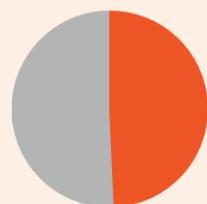
You feel a tension in your organization around performance management. You know it's helpful, but it's also a mess, right?

The tension is between increasing the productivity of human beings and increasing the performance of your organization, like you would a machine. However, this tension exists precisely because they can be at odds with one another. Your company is made of humans, and humans are not machines.

How do we resolve this tension?



Create a culture of performance **conversations**, rather than performance **management**.



46 PERCENT of HR tech buyers believe performance management is a waste of time.



ONLY 29 PERCENT of employees believe HR helps them perform better.

What do we do instead?

Coach and develop the people that coach and develop *your* people. In today's workplace, employee productivity and effectiveness heavily relies on people leaders' ability to coach employees for high performance — and that's done through conversation.

But not every manager feels equipped to coach employees (as the data on the right clearly shows). It's likely that managers were promoted because they were great at their job — not because they were great at managing people. Odds are that no one ever showed them how to be a great manager and have these developmental conversations with their people. This resource can help.



ONE-THIRD of managers don't know how to help people change.



LESS THAN 10 PERCENT know how to make behavioral change sustainable.

Source: MIT Sloan Management Review

In this e-book, we'll guide your managers through five lessons of effective conversations in an effort to re-energize your culture to compete in the new world of work.

Through performance conversations, your managers can help you create an engaging, motivating, and thriving culture — **what we call a Quantum Culture.**

5 LESSONS FOR ENGAGING PERFORMANCE CONVERSATIONS

LESSON 1

The Invitation

There are three important things to remember with the invitation: time, setting, and expectations.



Make Time

To have a performance conversation, you first have to start a **conversation**. To do that, you need to find the time. However, it's not just about finding an open slot on your calendars. Performance conversations are usually a little more tense than just a quick chat.

The minute you say, "Do you have a minute?" adrenaline shoots through your employee's body with an instinctive reaction of, "Oh no, I'm in trouble." Their brains react like they would in a conflict. So, think about when would be a good time to talk from their perspective. Is it a tough week for them already? What do they have going on at home?

Do they have the **calendar** time and **emotional** time to have a productive one-on-one with you?



Pick a Setting

Where you meet for your one-on-one is more important than you think. The location notification of your meeting is actually the beginning of the discussion – it sets the tone. Public locations are more casual and open, while private settings suggest more serious or personal topics are going to be discussed.

Carefully consider where you're going to have your performance conversation as you craft your invitation. Your employee will begin making assumptions once the email hits their inbox.

- **Your Office:** private, serious topics might be discussed
- **Common Area:** casual, conversation won't be too personal
- **Conference Room:** collaborative, other parties are probably involved



Got remote employees? Check out our blog that includes [4 Proactive Performance Management Strategies for Remote Workers.](#)

Set Expectations

When scheduling a performance conversation with your employees, it's important to set expectations with a clear agenda. When your direct reports know what to expect, it'll ease their nerves, help them prepare, and make for a more productive conversation.

We suggest discussing goals, obstacles, opportunities, and decisions in every regular scheduled performance conversation.

Congratulations! You got a conversation on the books. Now what?



For a free, printable agenda to use in your next performance conversation, download our [GOOD One-on-One Meeting Template](#).



LESSON 2

The Preparation

You've scheduled your one-on-one, but you're not done yet. Here's what you should do to prepare for an effective performance conversation.

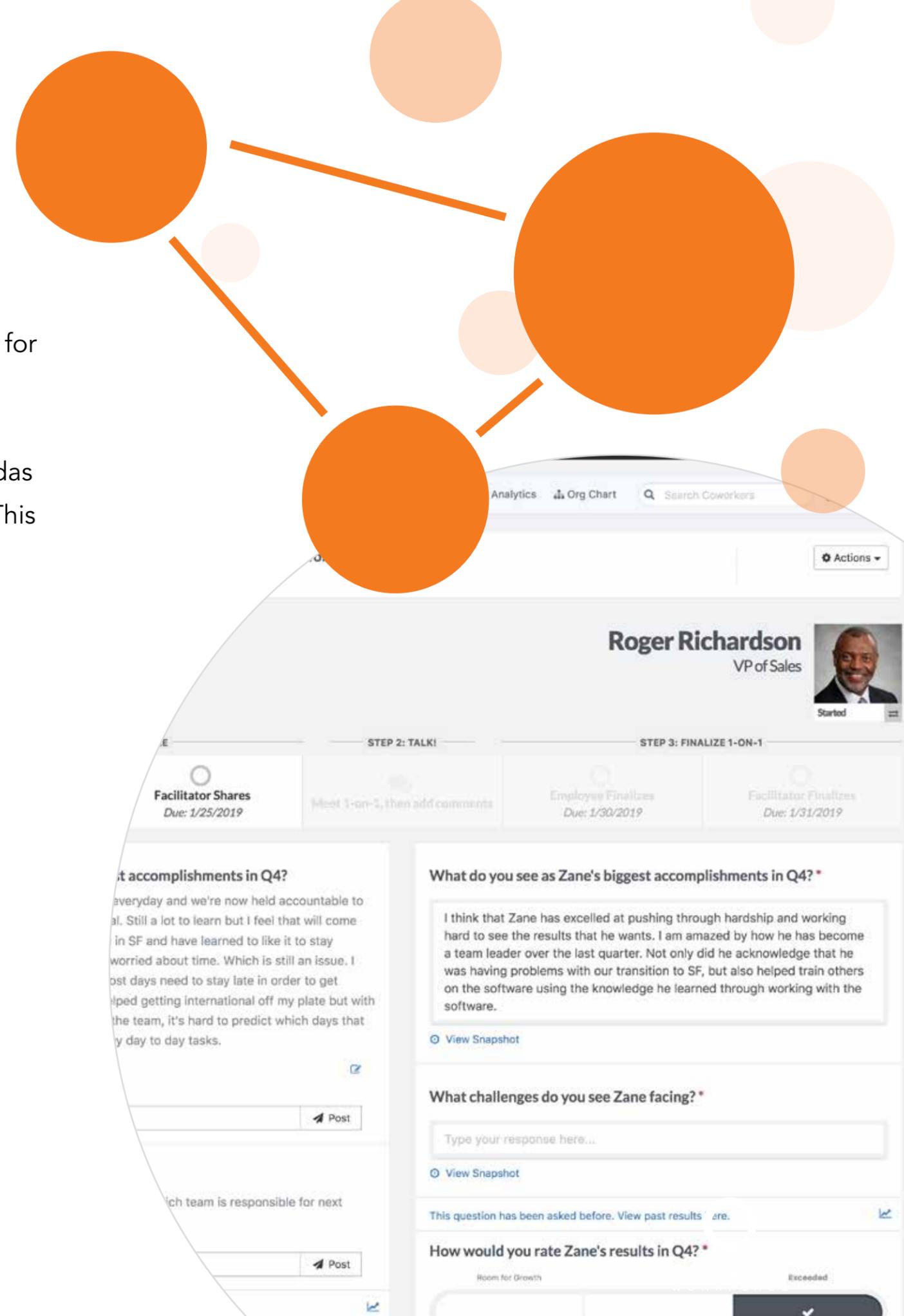
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Share Notes Ahead of Time

While sharing performance conversation agendas might seem a bit progressive for some organizations, others consider it the tip of the transparency iceberg.

At Quantum Workplace, we encourage managers and employees to take agendas one step further and share detailed notes before a performance conversation. This additional transparency allows for more thoughtful preparation and a more in-depth, honest conversation.

Sharing notes ahead of time ensures nothing – no matter how awkward or uncomfortable – gets left unsaid.



Anticipate Negative Responses

Giving critical performance feedback is not easy. Receiving it is even harder. Here are three key factors that might prevent your direct reports from responding positively to performance feedback:

- **Their Ego:** It's not easy for employees to face the reality of their own performance. According to executive coach and author Marshall Goldsmith, 70 percent of us believe we're in the top 10 percent of our peer group.
- **Their Brain:** Feedback is threatening, and external threats trigger a fight-or-flight response. In a conversation with you (their boss), this response might cause employees to get defensive or shut down completely.
- **Their Fear:** The idea of receiving feedback from a boss tends to evoke fear. Reducing this fear can drastically impact your employee's willingness to receive corrective feedback, according to Jack Zenger and Joe Folkman, authors of "Feedback: The Leadership Conundrum."



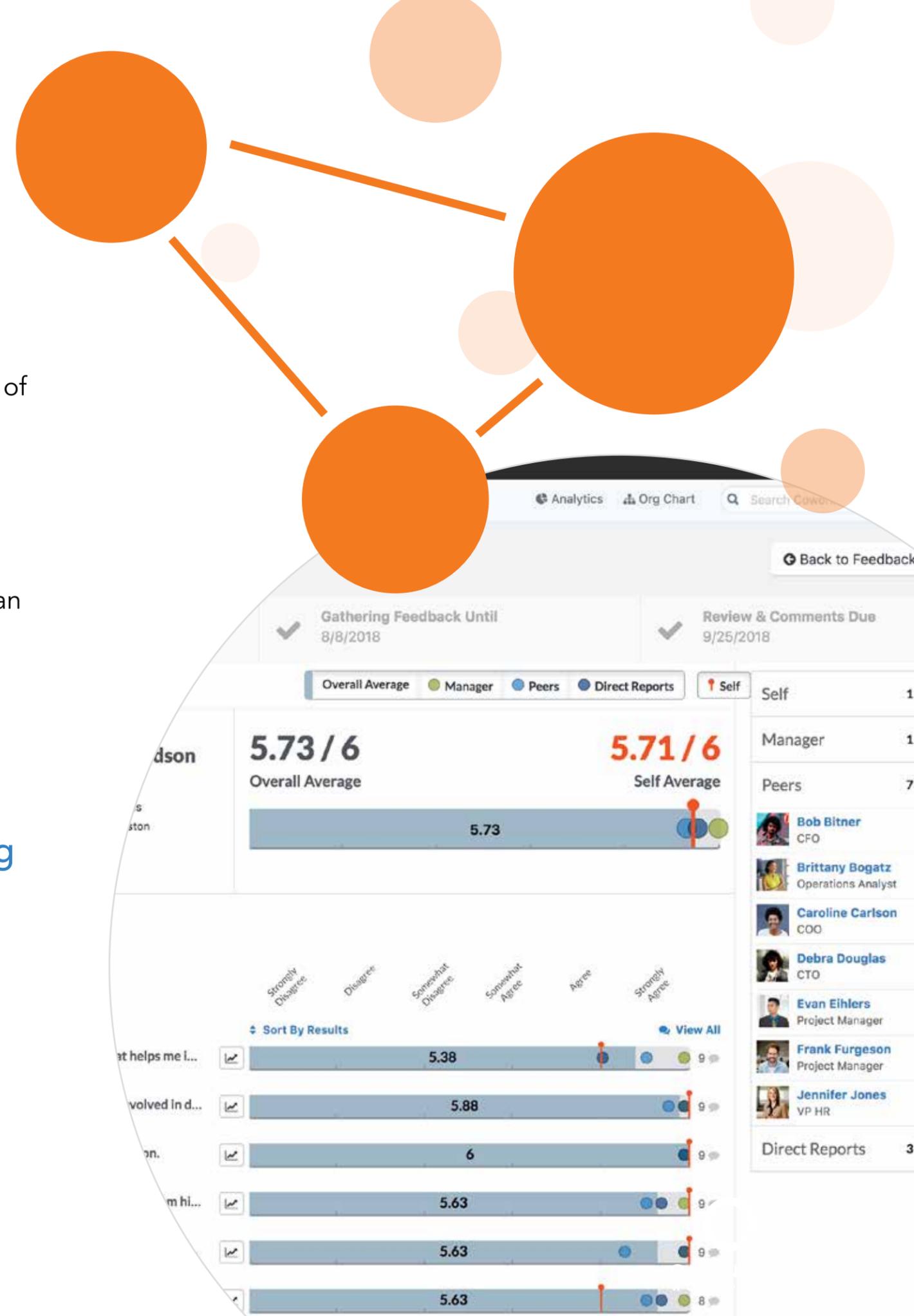
To better understand and uncover tips for navigating these obstacles, download our e-book [A Practical Guide to Giving and Receiving Feedback.](#)

Do Your Research

Why do employees often think performance conversations are unfair? Because only *your* opinion is taken into account. While you might have a top-down view of your employees' performance, you're only seeing one piece of the puzzle.

Employees' teammates can give you better insight into their collaboration skills and willingness to go the extra mile; their direct reports will tell you if they're coaching effectively and communicating well; and the employees themselves can provide context and a unique perspective you might not have considered.

Collect feedback from your employees' peers, direct reports, and the employees themselves before entering a performance conversation.



LESSON 3

The Conversation

Now that you're in the room together, in person or digitally, it's important to remember these four things.



Start Off on the Right Foot

To set the right tone and get good energy flowing into your meeting, it's important to start off with good news. Take five minutes to ask your employee about some good news they have in their life right now, either personal or professional.

This is called a segue. It comes from the Entrepreneurial Operating System, and it's used by thousands of companies to lead world-class meetings.

A good segue can help an employee remember the bigger picture — yes, your employees care about more than their work. Think about this: The bigger picture **might not include you.** Your employee's dreams for what they want in life might not be **working at your company.** And that's OK.



For more on how great conversations can impact engagement, see our e-book [The State of Miscommunication.](#)

Focus Your Attention

The word *attention* means to attend to something, to be present, to be really there. In the digital age, this is very difficult to do. We're always on nowadays, and there's always that tempting Slack message to answer or notification to check. Don't let any of that creep into this meeting.

Attending and being present also means more than just silencing your device.

Studies show that having your phone on the table during conversations, even if it's off, leads to reduced feelings of empathy.

— Sherry Turkle, MIT researcher and author of *Alone Together* and *Reclaiming Conversation*

However, there is a good use of technology in a conversation like this, but that's lesson five — hang tight.



Listen as Much as You Talk

“What? But I’m facilitating the performance conversation!”

We know. But listening to what your employees say – and don’t say – is just as important. The conversation is about them, after all. This is easier said than done, especially when critical feedback is given or conflict arises. Here are a few tips for getting your employees more involved in the conversation:

- **Ask Questions:** Thought-provoking questions like *“What could you do to accomplish that?”* or *“How might you avoid that in the future?”* help employees reflect, self-evaluate, and come to conclusions on their own.
- **Pause:** Natural pauses in conversation allow you and your employees to think calmly and react confidently. Pauses also give employees time to digest your feedback and respond if they feel compelled to do so.
- **Build Trust:** If your employees don’t trust you, they’re not likely to receive your feedback well or respond honestly. Fostering a relationship of trust should be a priority before you enter any employee performance conversation.



For more on how to be an engaging manager, see our e-book [The Manager Jackpot.](#)

Remain Objective

It can be easy, especially during a critical performance conversation, to allow emotions to influence the discussion especially if your employees respond negatively by getting defensive or shutting down.

Difficult as it may be, you need to stay calm and even-keeled. If you follow all three suggestions in the preparation lesson, you should be equipped to navigate the situation. Remain calm, keep an open mind, and keep the conversation focused on improvement.



Understand how to best approach conflict in a performance conversation with our e-book, [How to Handle Conflict in the Workplace](#).

LESSON 4

The Follow-Up

Your meeting will eventually reach its conclusion, but the conversation shouldn't stop. Here's what you should do next.

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Stay on the Same Page

It's crucial that both parties leave a performance conversation on the same page. It's even more important that you *stay* on the same page. The last thing you want is you and your employee to disagree on what was said or decided upon in your last one-on-one. Avoid any misinterpretation by formally documenting your conversation.

Record your notes immediately after your performance conversation and ask your employee to do the same, preferably in the same document **or software**. Allow a few days for you both to comment on each other's entries or make any necessary clarifications. Once you both agree on a recap, "close out" your conversation and refer back to it before your next one-on-one.



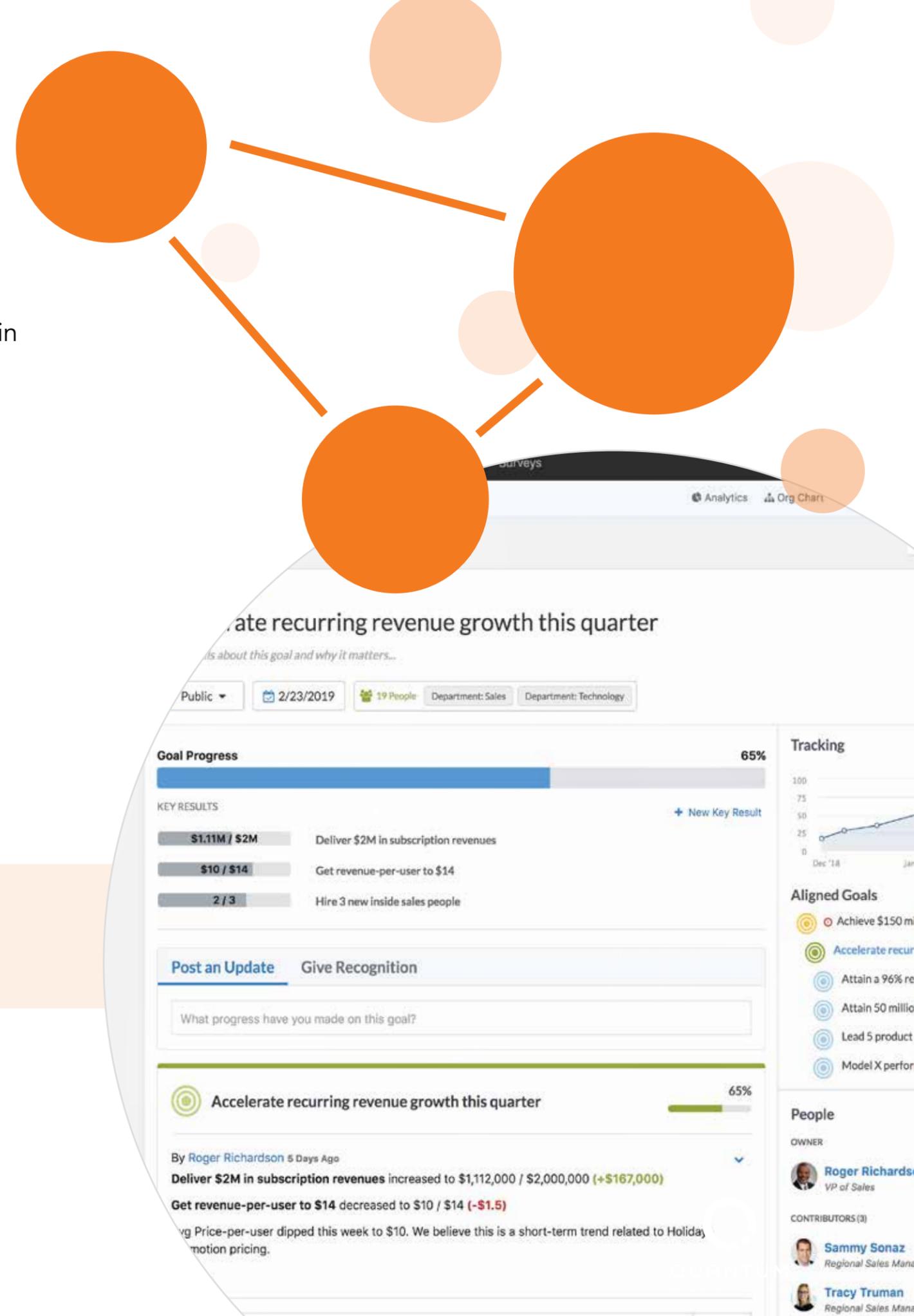
Check In on Progress

A performance conversation is only effective if there's actually an improvement in your employees' performance. Get progress updates on determined next steps and goals in your more frequent check-ins.

Keep any new goals private between you and your employees, or give visibility to the entire team or organization. Transparent goals help establish a culture of feedback and continuous improvement and increase accountability for your employees.



For goal setting tips and templates check out our post, [Goal Setting Worksheets for Productive Teams.](#)

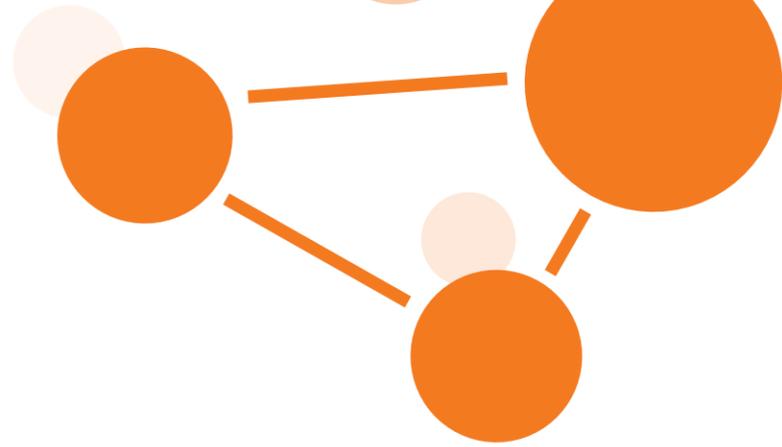


LESSON 5

The Technology

Technology is making our world more efficient, productive, and connected – the same is true with the workplace. This lesson is for HR.

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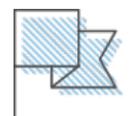


Power your conversations with Quantum Workplace.

From employee surveys and 360-degree feedback to one-on-one meetings and recognition, Quantum Workplace's engagement and performance management software can help you create a Quantum culture by:



Using **surveys** to get data on your people



Setting **goals** to create a clear career trajectory



Inspiring **recognition** between peers and managers



Generating **feedback** to hear where employees stand



Enhancing **one-on-one conversations**



Providing **ideas and alerts** that help coach managers



Reporting **analytics** on all the above

WITH TECHNOLOGY LIKE THIS, YOU CAN MAKE WORK BETTER **EVERY DAY** AND CREATE A **QUANTUM CULTURE.**

[Schedule a Meeting](#)