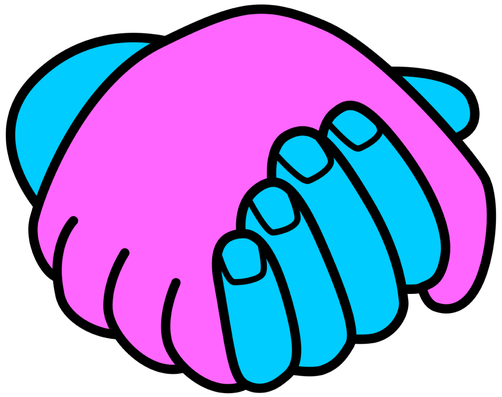
Life Factory

Supporting your team through a Job Evaluation process

A 3-minute guide for
Managers & Team Leaders

Introduction



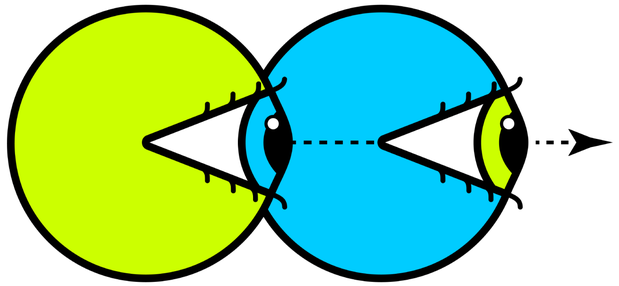
When an organisation undergoes a review such as a Job Evaluation or restructuring, human nature takes over. People naturally try to protect themselves when things feel uncertain.

This is true in the weeks and months leading up to a job evaluation, during the process itself and even in the period after the results are announced.

This guide focuses on supporting conversations and wellbeing before and during the process.

Further support may be required once outcomes are communicated.

Reading the Room



During any kind of evaluation or grading review, you might notice a few distinct changes in how your team behaves:

- A team member who is usually highly vocal might suddenly pull back or go quiet in meetings.
- Someone might start obsessively analysing minor emails or structural updates.
- People may check out early or show classic signs of being stressed.

This is unlikely to be a bad attitude or a performance failure. It is simply how people often process anxiety. If you notice things feel a bit flat or tense, you can open up a conversation naturally without making it a heavy, formal meeting.

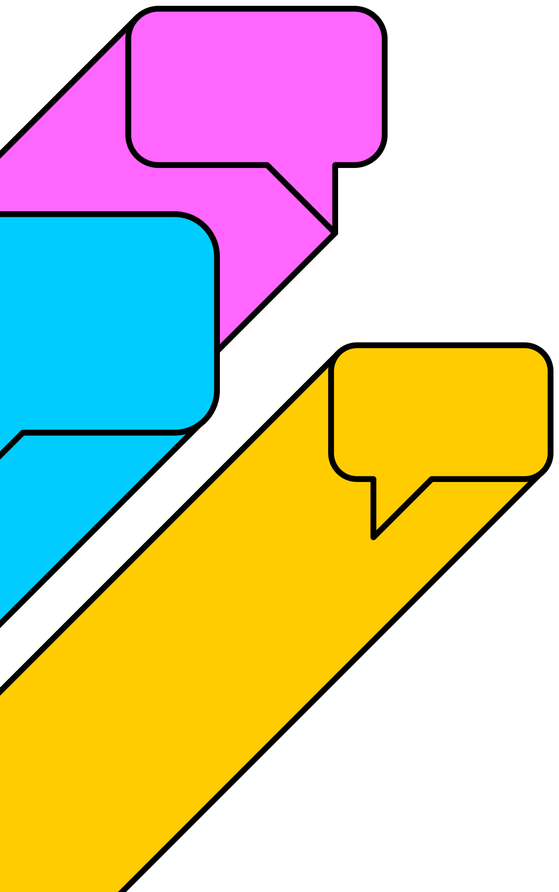
When you do open a conversation, asking a broad question like *“how are you holding up?”* or *“are you okay?”* often triggers an automatic response: *“Yeah, fine thanks.”*

To bypass that *“I’m fine”* wall, it helps to anchor your question to their actual work rather than their general mood.

> **A phrase to open a casual check-in:**
> *“Things feel a bit quiet at the moment, which is completely understandable with the grading process ongoing. I just wanted to check how the background noise is affecting your day-to-day focus.”*

If you find yourself feeling a bit protective, a bit more fatigued or overthinking things, that is also completely normal. You are navigating the exact same loop as your team. You don’t have to pretend that everything is business as usual. Acknowledging that the situation is a bit distracting right now is often the fastest way to lower the pressure for everyone.

Three Conversation Traps to Avoid

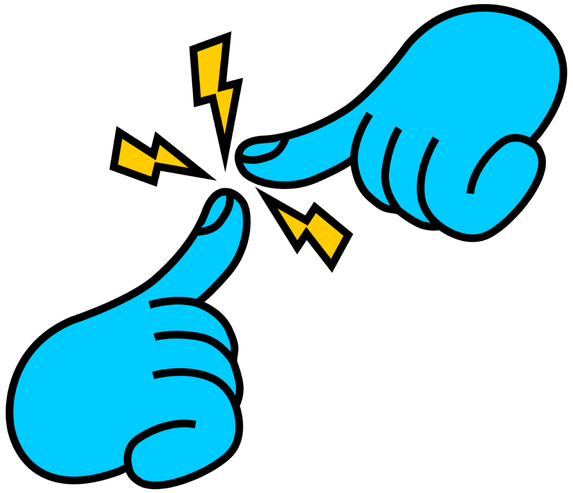


When your team starts asking difficult questions about the review, it is completely natural to want to ease the tension in the room or protect yourself from being stuck in the middle.

However, it is incredibly easy to fall into conversational habits that accidentally backfire. Try to steer clear of these three common traps:

- **Burying the anxiety:**
  This happens when we try to brush past someone's worry with quick reassurances. When a process impacts someone's professional identity or livelihood, it never feels routine. Whilst it might feel tempting and low risk, using a quick brush-off remark to lower the tension will instantly signal that you are dismissing their concern and not willing to communicate further.
  - What to avoid saying:
    "Don't worry, I am sure it will all be fine. It is just a routine benchmarking exercise."
  - Instead, try this:
    "I know a review like this can feel unsettling because it affects people's actual roles. It doesn't feel routine to me either and my main priority is to make sure you are supported through it."
- **Passing the buck:**
  This occurs when we want to avoid being the bearer of bad news, so we distance ourselves from the project entirely. Hiding behind a corporate barrier might feel safe in the moment, but it breaks trust and signals to your team that you aren't in this with them.
  - *What to avoid saying:*
    "Don't look at me for answers. This is completely an HR job and I am just following corporate orders."
  - Instead, try this:
    "I don't have the answers, but my main role right now is to protect our team's energy and look after your day-to-day focus and wellbeing while this plays out."
- **Getting stuck in the weeds:**
  This involves getting dragged into interpreting complex technical metrics, factor points or panel logistics. Trying to provide structural answers that are completely outside your direct control will almost certainly lead to mixed messages and escalate team anxiety.
  - What to avoid saying:
    "Well, they look at various factors under the technical scoring metrics and evaluate the job profile like this..."
  - Instead, try this:
    "I don't want to guess how the panels make their decisions and give you the wrong information. Let us focus entirely on what we can actually control here, which is our immediate project list and daily workload."

The Rumour Circuit-Breaker



Even with regular project updates, the natural gaps in a long review can easily get filled with guesswork and grapevine rumours.

You don't need to have all the corporate answers to be an effective leader, but you do need to provide a bit of structure.

When a team member brings you a rumour or asks a tough question you can't answer, don't guess just to try and be helpful. Instead, use this simple three-part response to stop the uncertainty spiral instantly:

- **What we know for sure right now:** Share the concrete, verified facts you currently have.
  - For example: *"The evaluation panels are reviewing role profiles over the next month to make sure the grading structure is consistent."*
- What we don't know yet: Explicitly state what is still undecided, open or outside your control.
  - For example: *"The final structures and grading outcomes haven't been decided yet, so anything you hear on the grapevine right now is just guesswork."*

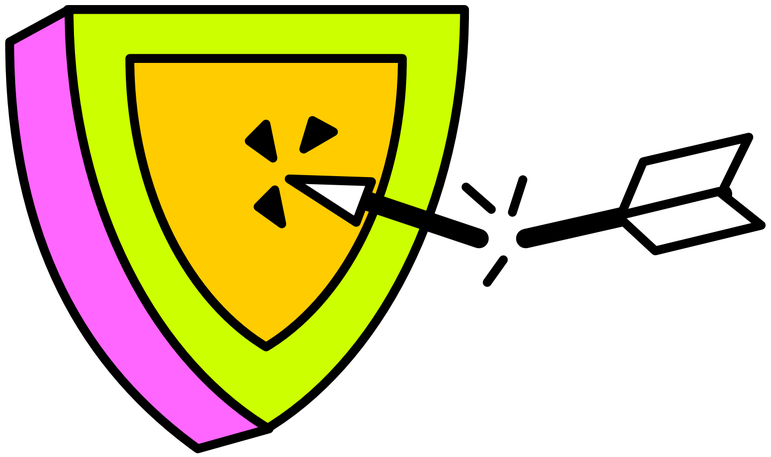
When the next official update is coming: Give them a definitive time or date for the next message.

- For example: *"HR will send out the next project update on Friday 19th June and I'll bring it straight to our next meeting so we can talk through it."*

Using this quick framework takes the pressure off you, stops you from accidentally over-committing and keeps the team narrative completely stable.

Handling High Emotion

Most conversations about the review will likely be completely straightforward. However, because it may involve people's roles, there is always a chance a team member might occasionally get a bit overwhelmed.



If a conversation does get a bit emotional, your natural instinct might be to try and fix the problem immediately or defend the organisation. Neither works.

If someone does get anxious or upset, you don't need to fix the evaluation framework and you don't need to agree with their complaints. Your only job in that moment is to lower the temperature and pivot to something you can actually control.

Instead of trying to debate the process, use this direct three-step approach:

- **Step 1:**
  Acknowledge the pressure. Don't brush the feeling away.
- **Step 2:**
  Set the boundary. Remind them calmly what is in your power and what isn't.
- **Step 3:**
  Pivot to immediate support. Bring the focus back to their current wellbeing.

Here is what that sounds like in practice:

"I can hear how much pressure you're under and it's completely understandable that this review is causing a lot of worry. I can't change the evaluation process or influence the grading panels, but I can make sure you're supported here. Let's look at what we can actually control today. Is there any immediate pressure on your workload we can ease to clear some space for you this week?"

If they are too upset to focus on workload, don't force the conversation. Give them an immediate out and point them toward the proper support channels:

"There's no pressure to get this all sorted right this second. Why don't you take twenty minutes away from your desk, get some air and we can catch up later when things feel a bit less intense? I can also share the details for the internal support we have in place if you want a confidential space to talk this through."

Taking this approach keeps you completely safe. It stops you from making promises you can't keep, protects the employee's dignity and ensures they leave the interaction feeling supported rather than managed away.

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