

FIELD GUIDE TOOL #16

The Capability Builder Conversation Guide

Chapter 16: Growth Infrastructure: Development by Design

DATE _____ COMPLETED BY _____

SITUATION _____

Use this guide to structure development conversations with each team member. The guide covers three distinct conversation types: the stretch assignment conversation, the feedback conversation, and the debrief. Each has a specific structure and purpose.

When to use it. Best used as a standing reference for every significant development conversation.

Conversation Type 1: The Stretch Assignment Conversation

Use this structure when identifying and assigning a stretch opportunity. Hold before the assignment begins.

Element	Leader's prompt and notes
Capability gap: What specific capability is this assignment designed to develop?	
Challenge level: Why is this genuinely difficult for this person at this moment?	
Stakes: What makes the outcome real, with visible consequences?	
Support available: What will you provide, and what will you withhold to preserve the productive struggle?	
Feedback mechanism: When and how will they receive feedback during the assignment?	

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Element	Leader's prompt and notes
Success definition: What does a good outcome look like for this developmental purpose?	

Conversation Type 2: The Feedback Conversation

Use this structure when delivering developmental feedback after a significant piece of work. Hold within forty-eight hours where possible.

Step	Leader's action and language
1. Observe: Name the specific behavior you observed, without evaluation.	
2. Connect: Explain the outcome that behavior produced, and why.	
3. Define different: Describe specifically what a different approach would look like.	
4. Invite self-assessment: Ask for their view before concluding. "How did you see it?"	
5. Commit: Agree on one specific thing they will do differently in the next similar situation.	

Conversation Type 3: The Debrief

Use this structure after every significant assignment, client engagement, or stretch situation. Hold within 48 hours.

Debrief question	Notes from this debrief
What was the central challenge in this situation?	
What choices did you make, and why?	
What did those choices produce?	
What would you do differently, and why?	
What generalizable principle does this experience point to?	
Where else does that principle apply?	

The Stretch Assignment Map

Maintain this map for each team member in the Clarify or Guide quadrant. Review quarterly.

Team member	Capability gap to address	Next stretch assignment type
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		

Before moving to Chapter 17, confirm:

- ☐ You have identified the specific capability gap for each team member in the Clarify or Guide quadrant.
- ☐ You have defined the next stretch assignment type for each of those team members.
- ☐ You have a standing debrief practice or have committed to building one.
- ☐ You have restructured at least one one-on-one to protect time for development conversation before operational discussion.