

FIRE Conversation Guide

For supervisors

Purpose

The FIRE conversation is a weekly check-in designed to surface what's actually happening — not what we wish were happening. Your job is to ask good questions, listen carefully, and help your leader land on an honest status for each priority.

This is not a performance review. Red is not failure — it's honesty. A leader who consistently marks everything green is either not being candid or not working on hard enough things.

Before the conversation

- Review last week's status and brief note for each priority
 - Note anything that has shifted in the broader context since last week
 - Run through each priority one at a time — after all four dimensions, confirm the status together
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F — Fidelity

Are we executing as designed, or have we drifted?

Ask:

- "Walk me through how you're executing this right now. Is it playing out the way we planned?"
- "What's different from what we originally intended — and was that a deliberate choice, or did it just happen?"
- "If the approach has changed, do we need to update the plan to reflect that?"

Listen for:

- Unmanaged drift vs. intentional pivots — both are fine to name, only one is fine to leave unaddressed
 - Vague or uncertain answers may signal the leader doesn't have full visibility into their own execution
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I — Impact

Is it working, and how do we know?

Ask:

- "What are you measuring to know this is working?"
- "What's the target, and where are you against it right now?"
- "If you won't know the outcome for a while, what leading indicator tells you you're on track?"
- "What does the trend look like?"

Listen for:

- Leaders who can't name a measure — this is a gap to address directly
 - Leaders with only lagging measures — push for a leading indicator
 - Measures moving in the wrong direction — this is likely Yellow territory
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R — Remarks

What's worth knowing that the numbers don't show?

Ask:

- "What's going well that we should protect or amplify?"
- "What's your biggest concern about this right now?"
- "Is anything outside your control affecting this — other teams, other leaders, external factors?"

Listen for:

- Dependencies on other areas that may need to surface higher up
 - Concerns the leader is downplaying — follow up if something sounds bigger than they're letting on
 - Early signals of emerging problems before they become blockers
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E — Extent

Are we doing enough of this work?

Ask:


- "Give me the numbers — how many [students / dollars / etc.] are we actually reaching right now?"
- "Is that volume where it needs to be to drive the results we're after?"
- "If the scale is lower than expected, is that by design, or is something limiting it?"


Listen for:


- Low extent with no clear plan to scale — this is a concern
 - Low extent that's planned and intentional — acceptable, but worth tracking
 - High extent paired with low impact — this is a more serious conversation (return to Impact)
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Landing on a status

After all four dimensions, confirm the status together:

 **Green** — All four dimensions at or above expectations.

 **Yellow** — Meaningful deviation in one or more dimensions. Work continues but needs attention, a decision, or course correction.

 **Red** — Progress is materially blocked or at serious risk. Significant focus or intervention required — whether from this leader, peers, or above.

If you and your leader disagree on status, that's worth working out before recording. Supervisors sometimes see patterns the leader can't — leaders sometimes have context the supervisor lacks. Resolve it in the room.

A note on green

A dashboard that is completely green is not an honest dashboard. If a leader's entire list is green week after week, have a direct conversation: are these priorities ambitious enough? Are we being fully candid about our challenges?