

The background of the image shows two white ceramic coffee cups filled with a frothy beverage, likely latte or cappuccino, resting on matching saucers. They are placed on a dark brown wooden table with a visible grain. The lighting is soft, creating a warm and inviting atmosphere.

**The Top 10**  
**Conversations**  
**Every Leader Should Have**  
**with Every Employee**

## Have we met? I'm Halelly Azulay. I'm an author, speaker, facilitator, & leadership development strategist and an expert in communication skills & emotional intelligence.

In 2006, I founded [TalentGrow LLC](#), a consulting company focused on developing leaders and teams, especially for enterprises experiencing explosive growth or expansion. TalentGrow specializes in people leadership skills, which include communication skills, teambuilding, coaching and emotional intelligence. TalentGrow works with all organizational levels, including C-level leaders, frontline managers, and individual contributors.

I'm the **author of two books**, [Employee Development on a Shoestring](#) (ATD Press) and [Strength to Strength: How Working from Your Strengths Can Help You Lead a More Fulfilling Life](#). My books and workshops build on my **20+ years of professional experience** in communication and leadership development in corporate, government, nonprofit and academic organizations.

I work with organizations such as PricewaterhouseCoopers, Booz Allen Hamilton, the World Bank, the Food and Drug Administration, Office of Naval Research, Deluxe Corp., FINRA, and the University of Maryland among others. I **speak** at conferences and meetings for various organizations and non-profit association meetings, such as ATD International Conference, The Training Magazine Conference, Turkey's HR Dergi Training Conference, the Human Resource Leadership Forum, the International Coaches Federation, The Training Officers' Conference, and ATD Leadership Conference.

I am an **active leader in my professional community**: I recently was selected to serve on several key volunteer committees for ATD (formerly ASTD), the world's largest professional association in the Talent Development profession: The 2017 Awards Committee, the 2014-2015 ATD International Conference & Expo Program Advisory Committee (ICE PAC), Chair of the 2014 ATD Chapter Leaders Conference PAC, and the 2014 ATD National Advisors for Chapters (NAC) Committee. I'm a field editor for ATD's LINKS member newsletter. I am Past President of the Board of Directors of the award-winning Metro DC chapter of ATD where I served in various Board leadership roles for six years. I was selected to judge the 2009 and 2010 Apollo Awards for excellence in employee development.

I am a **contributing author to numerous books** such as *The ATD Handbook (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.)*, *The ATD Trainer's Toolkit App*, *The Insider's Guide to Supervising Government Employees*, *The Pfeiffer Annual: Training*, *The Pfeiffer Annual: Consulting*, and *The Trainer's Warehouse Book of Games*, as well as articles and blogs. I was recently described as a "[Leadership Development Guru](#)" by the leading magazine in the field of Talent Development, "TD". **Please check out my blog at [www.talentgrow.com/blog](http://www.talentgrow.com/blog), my podcast about leadership at [The TalentGrow Show](#), and sign up for my popular free weekly subscription newsletter at [www.tinyurl.com/talentgrow](http://www.tinyurl.com/talentgrow). Connect with me on [LinkedIn](#) and [Twitter](#) or [email me](#).**



# THE TOP 10 CONVERSATIONS EVERY LEADER SHOULD HAVE WITH EVERY EMPLOYEE

## 1. Strengths conversations

Every person has a set of core strengths (defined as “Talent + Knowledge + Skills”). We should be encouraged to use our strengths at work every day to be at our best. When we work from our strengths, we contribute our full potential and are at our most satisfied and engaged. Engage your employees in conversations about their strengths – what are they, do they get to use them daily, and how to leverage them more. [Check out my book, [Strength to Strength: How Working from Your Strengths Can Help You Lead a More Fulfilling Life](#), to learn more.)

## 2. Goal planning conversations

Every employee should have some key performance and development goals for both the long-term and the short-term. While it’s becoming increasingly more difficult to plan because the rate of change is so high, it’s still really important to begin with some goals in mind. You can always tweak and modify them as things change. Eisenhower once said, “[Plans are worthless; Planning is everything.](#)” I agree and believe planning and goal-setting is a super important conversation to have a few times each year.

## 3. Day-to-day performance conversations

One of the biggest mistakes I see leaders making is failing to talk to their employees frequently and regularly enough. They see things they want to change. Or they notice points of feedback they’d like to give. But they withhold these comments for some later time. Maybe for when they have more time. There will never be more time! The time is now. Talk to your people every day, and especially when you see something and have something to say. It doesn’t have to take long. It doesn’t need to be scheduled. But talk to them, all the time.

## 4. Weekly check-in conversations

Make. Them. Mandatory! This practice is one that Deloitte is implementing throughout its 65,000 employee organization as it [reinvents performance management](#). You should implement a 5-15 minute check-in 1:1 conversation with your employees every week. It’s not extra work. It *is* your work. In these conversations you can chat about goals, performance, feedback, career, or simply continue to [build trust](#) by getting to know them better as a person.

## 5. Positive feedback conversations

Another big mistake many leaders make is not giving enough positive feedback. Unfortunately, we are on the lookout for what’s wrong five times more than we seek out what’s right. We leaders need to offset this tendency by infusing our workplace interactions with more of the positive stuff. [Check out my [STS Formula for positive feedback](#) to learn how to do it right.]

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## 6. Developmental feedback conversations

Although I do suggest separating and outnumbering the positive feedback conversations vs. the developmental (aka constructive) feedback conversations, you should definitely provide your employees with specific insights on what they can improve and why. Just be sure to [do it in a way that doesn't trigger the fight, flight, or freeze response](#) in them.

## 7. Career conversations

Do you know what your employees' career aspirations and plans are? Do they even know what they are? Hold short career-focused conversations at least once or twice per year with each employee. Help them sort out where they'd like to go down the road and map a plan to get there. Let's face it – they won't stay with you forever. But you will get their best while they're with you when you support their growth rather than ignoring it or worse, trying to squash it.

## 8. “Stay Interview” conversations

I love this idea from career development expert Dr. Beverly Kaye. She described it in her recent conversation with me on [episode 2 of my podcast, The TalentGrow Show](#). It's a twist on the exit interview we all know so well. Why wait until they leave you to ask them how you might have kept them? Ask them NOW how you can keep them engaged, growing, and top-performing. It will pay dividends.

## 9. Impact conversations

When employees know how their daily work impacts the mission of the organization, they perform better. When they feel like a mere cog in the wheel and are unsure of how any of what they're doing makes a difference and is not just 'busy-work', they struggle. Talk to your employees about their important connection to the ultimate goals of the team, department, unit, and organization as a whole. Give them updates on the organization's performance and continue to help them see the connection back to their job.

## 10. Development and training planning conversations

It's amazing how many leaders don't realize this, but today's [workforce wants to grow and develop MORE than they want money](#). In order to help your employees continue to learn and grow, you need to have regular conversations with them about their learning goals and planning conversations to help them craft a solid development plan. By the way: [employee development doesn't have to be expensive](#).

*Listen to me describe these 10 conversations on my podcast [here](#) or watch my vlog (video blog) about them [here](#)!*

Learn while on the go:  
Listen to my leadership podcast,  
**The TalentGrow Show!**

Are you a leader who is always looking to take your game to the next level? Maybe you're new to leadership or aspiring to become a leader? This podcast is for self-motivated and growth-oriented current and future leaders who want actionable, results-oriented insight and advice on how to take their leadership, communication, and people skills to the next level and **become the kind of leader people \*want\* to follow.**

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# THE talentgrow SHOW



*with*

**HALELLY AZULAY**

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*from the foreword by "The Trainer's Trainer,"* **Elaine Biech**  
author of *The Business of Consulting* and dozens of other books

"**Halelly Azulay gets the importance** of keeping employees up to speed in a constantly changing workplace, and doing so in ways that are respectful of their individuality and your company's values."

**Daniel H. Pink**

best-selling author of *To Sell Is Human*, *A Whole New Mind* and *Drive*

"Halelly Azulay has written a **book that will help supervisors and professionals** develop their staff within the limits that most organizations now face—time and budget!"

**Marshall Goldsmith**

million-selling author of New York Times bestsellers, *Mojo* and *What Got You Here Won't Get You There*

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SPEAKING



WORKSHOPS



FACILITATION



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## SPEAKING

Need an expert to engage, educate, and inspire your leaders to greatness? Bring leadership and communication expert and author Halelly Azulay to speak at your next event, conference, or company meeting. Halelly is a dynamic and energetic speaker who shared her research-based expertise in a way that is fun, interactive, and interesting. Frequent audience comments include words like, "engaging!", "knowledgeable!", "inspiring," and "enthusiastic!".

Halelly speaks to audiences large and small at industry conferences, corporate events, and association meetings. As a curious and voracious life-long learner, thought leader and author, she is always on the cutting edge of industry research and publications and shares the latest findings with audiences of leaders, managers, and high-performers around the U.S. They walk away with specific tools and techniques that they can implement right away, on the job, to increase their effectiveness and engagement.

## WORKSHOPS

We design and develop learning and training workshops that are geared toward how adults like to learn: hands-on, interactive, and rich with thought-provoking large and small group discussions, experiential learning activities, and self-reflection assessments and exercises. We combine the latest theoretical concepts and thought leadership with practical, concrete examples to allow learners to walk away with fresh insights, improved skills, and new tools and techniques they can begin implementing immediately.

Popular Workshop Topics include Employee Development on a Shoestring, Strength to Strength (both based on Halelly Azulay's books), The 3 Keys to Communication Success, Becoming an Engaging Leader, Harnessing the Power of Emotional Intelligence, Influencing with Integrity (Even Without Authority), and Feedback: Success!.

## FACILITATION

**Team-Building:** We help teams of all sizes identify successes and areas that present challenges. Each team-building effort is different. At TalentGrow, there is no one-size-fits-all solution. Each solution is customized to the specifics of the organization, the team, and the situation at hand. We listen and observe carefully and craft an approach that is targeted specifically to help your team foster the work environment and productivity it seeks.

**Retreat Facilitation:** When a team or organization has an important problem to solve or decision to reach, they often need an objective, external facilitator to help them succeed. Our professional facilitation skills allow your team to identify objectives and desired outcomes, develop a strong and effective agenda, and then fully focus on engaging with the subject-matter at hand and with each other and let us take care of the rest.