



Empathy for leaders means seeing the world from others' perspectives to better support our teams. Use this guide to spark your thinking about what you can ask during an empathy interview. Remember to ask open-ended questions and follow up when needed!

## Who should you have empathy interviews with?

**Your team:** This could be a great tool in between larger career development conversations during 1:1s.

**Your business partners:** Invest in building relationships with teams you work with outside of meetings and projects. Visit your business partners to understand how their work, their culture and values, and their priorities beyond working together. Ask exploratory questions like "What's a typical day for your team?" and "What keeps y'all up at night?"

**Bigger picture:** Learn more about bigger company strategies by scheduling time with a senior leader. What are they thinking about, what's something that your team can help with? If your work has sales or customer service, sit with them and ask about what they're hearing. What's important to move forward?

### Ask open-ended questions

Begin conversation with questions like "Can you tell me about..." or "How has \_\_\_\_ been going?"

### Follow up

Ask for details (Why? Examples? How did that make you feel? What was meant by...); don't make assumptions!

### Be curious

When something surprises you, follow up and ask questions! Be curious, and try not rush to judgment.

### Allow for pauses

Empathy interviewing requires reflection—allow pauses to encourage them to continue their thoughts.

### Listen 90% Talk 10%

Even though it will be a conversation, try to deflect talking about yourself and don't interject with a story.

## Intro

Sets expectations and ensures confidentiality

- Thanks for taking the time to chat! Is now still a good time?
- I'm trying to understand more about [your team, your experience, your role, how we can work best together, etc.], so I'm hoping you'll let me ask you a few questions.
- I'm here to learn more about you and your needs so I can offer the best support. Please feel free to be open and honest, as I'll be with you, so that we can best work together and understand each other.

## Openers

Lay out the landscape of what's important to share; follow up!

- Tell me more about [your team, your experience, your role, how we can work best together, etc.]
- What is the vision you're trying to achieve? How can our team help you get there?
- What's working for you? What's not working for you?
- What's an example of something that has inspired you at work?
- Can you share an example of something that is a demotivator for you?
- How do you feel about working with me/my team?

## Specifics

Following up on stories they've shared or topics you'd like to cover

- How has it been going with [past topic discussed]?
- How do you think we can improve this situation?
- What's working for you in your current role? How could your current role evolve?
- What has surprised you about working here?

## Wrap-up

Prioritize what they've shared, thank them for their time; follow up!

- What do you need from me for you/your team to be successful?
- How else can I help you?
- Is there anything else you'd like to share today?
- Thanks for sharing with me. I look forward to our next conversation!