If the University of Notre Dame’s performance review process had been an employee, it would have gotten a poor evaluation. Leaders in Human Resources had implemented performance evaluation software to reduce paperwork, and although the software was almost universally used, few liked it, or the annual review process. In addition, employee surveys indicated that many people didn’t receive regular feedback from managers — a real problem, because employees who receive frequent, constructive feedback are more engaged at work. Performance management remained the lowest-ranking item on employee engagement surveys — a quantitative validation of anecdotal experience.

After some research, HR leaders concluded a new review process or different software wouldn’t fix these problems. What they really needed was a culture shift surrounding the type and frequency of performance and development conversations.

“If you don’t fix the conversations, then it doesn’t matter what the process looks like,” says Tamara Freeman, the university’s director of HR strategy and effectiveness.

Notre Dame started by hiring several organizations to teach various conversation skills courses, but nothing seemed to have lasting effects. The first significant breakthrough occurred when the university engaged CCL.
The Center for Creative Leadership (CCL)® is a top-ranked, global, nonprofit provider of leadership development. Over the past 50 years, we’ve worked with more than 2/3 of the world’s Fortune 500 companies. Our cutting-edge solutions are steeped in extensive research and our work with hundreds of thousands of leaders at all levels.

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After going through the training, I started to relate differently... The crew is more responsive in a positive way, including with each other. ... With this class, you learn to communicate better, stop micromanaging, lead with a nurturing manner, yet with a vision. And, most importantly, you will grow.

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