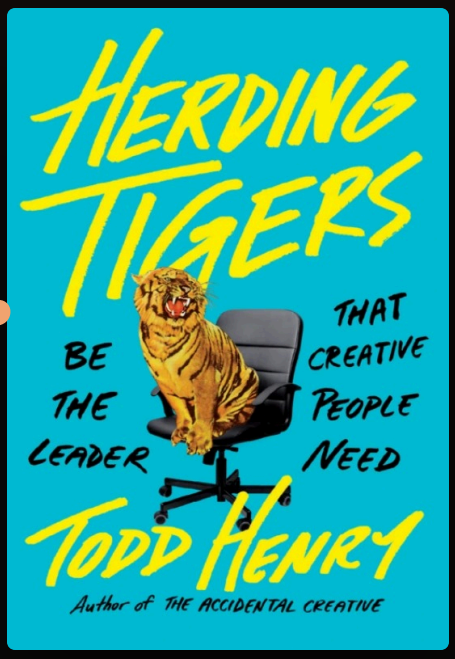
Todd Henry

HERDING TIGERS

The 5 *conversations.*

The conversations every leader of talented people needs to have, again and again.

QUESTIONS, LISTENING CUES, AND A TEAM TRACKER



AT A GLANCE

Five conversations, *asked again and again.*

Most problems on creative teams don’t come from a lack of talent. They come from conversations that never happen. These five keep your team clear, aligned, brave, engaged, and honest. None of them are one-time talks. The best leaders return to them over and over.

1	**The Clarity conversation**	Do they know where we’re going?
2	**The Expectations conversation**	Do we each know what the other needs?
3	**The Fear conversation**	What is holding us back?
4	**The Engagement conversation**	Is the fire still burning?
5	**The Final 10% conversation**	What can’t I see?

CONVERSATION 1

1 The Clarity *conversation.*

Do they know where we're going?

ASK

Do you understand why?

Do you understand the objectives?

When to have it

At the start of every project, and any time priorities shift.

Listen for

Hesitation, rework, or people optimizing for different goals.

Who needs this conversation from me right now?

What I heard, and what I'll do:

CONVERSATION 2

2 The Expectations *conversation.*

Do we each know what the other needs?

ASK

Do you know what's expected of you?

What do you expect from me?

Am I falling short?

When to have it

In regular one-on-ones, and whenever someone takes on a new role.

Listen for

Surprise at feedback, or frustration that seems out of proportion.

Who needs this conversation from me right now?

What I heard, and what I'll do:

CONVERSATION 3

3 The Fear *conversation.*

What is holding us back?

ASK

What are we afraid might happen, and why?

Do you feel free to take strategic risks?

What was the last risk you took?

When to have it

Before big bets, and when the work starts to feel safe and predictable.

Listen for

Safe ideas, endless polishing, or waiting for permission.

Who needs this conversation from me right now?

What I heard, and what I'll do:

CONVERSATION 4

4 The Engagement *conversation.*

Is the fire still burning?

ASK

How's your energy level and enthusiasm?

What's inspiring you?

What's the best thing we're doing, and why?

When to have it

Monthly, and whenever energy on the team seems to dip.

Listen for

Flat responses, missed details, or a drop in ideas.

Who needs this conversation from me right now?

What I heard, and what I'll do:

CONVERSATION 5

5 The Final 10% *conversation.*

What can't I see?

ASK

What's the dumbest thing I or we are doing?

What's something obvious I don't see?

When to have it

Quarterly, and once trust is strong enough for honest answers.

Listen for

Nervous laughter followed by a real answer. That's the gold.

Who needs this conversation from me right now?

What I heard, and what I'll do:

TRACKER

Who, and *when?*

List your team, and write the date each time you have one of the five conversations with someone. Gaps show you where to go next.

TEAM MEMBER	CLARITY	EXPECTATIONS	FEAR	ENGAGEMENT	FINAL 10%