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COMPANY BUILDERS

COACHING + SOFTWARE + SYSTEMS

ARTICLES & ESSAYS

POWERED BY NINETY

STRATICOS
21 S. Rangeline Road, Suite #200 Carmel, Indiana 46032

Alignment

Greetings & Salutations! I hope all is good in business, work & life?

To help us get acquainted, three questions for you and your leadership team: 1) Do you want to optimize your company's focus, strategy, and performance? 2) Would you like to maximize your time, talent, and teamwork? 3) Are you passionate about leadership, growth, and prosperity?

Hopefully, your answers are all yes.

If they're not, best of luck to you

If they are, let's see if we can help.

For starters: we're passionate about helping purpose-driven, team-centric, results-oriented business owners and leadership teams build, operate and grow successful, resilient companies.

We do this through:

1) **Company Building Solutions**

Helping you effectively learn, develop, implement, and benefit from a custom-tailored, software-based, **Business Building Solution** built exclusively for and with, you.

2) **Business & Executive Coaching**

Teaching you the best skills, strategies, mechanics, and principles that it takes for great **Leadership, Management, Teamwork** and **Accountability**.

Both are delivered in a concurrent, programmatic, solution-centric process over 12-to-24 months.

Now, what about you and your company? If you're like most organizations, chances are looking to grow from good to great (or stay great) with care and confidence, and can utilize/leverage a trusted **Company Building Solution**, along with experienced **Business & Executive Coaching**, to help you:

- + clarify and achieve your goals/plans
- + minimize challenges and frustrations
- + maximize focus, productivity & growth

If you are genuinely committed to optimizing your performance in business, work and life ... and as important, be the leaders and leadership team that your company, families and community deserves ... then connect with us today, and let's see if we're a great fit, for working together.

The logo for Scott Abbott, featuring his name in a large, elegant, black cursive script. Below the name, the words "BUSINESS BUILDER" and "EXECUTIVE COACH" are stacked in a smaller, black, sans-serif font.

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What is a Business Strategy? [5 Steps for Creating a Strong Strategy]

Written by [Team Ninety](#) • 17 Minute Read

What is a business strategy and how do you create one? In this guide, you'll find real-world tactics and business strategy examples to help you get growing.

17 Actionable Business Strategy Tips You Can Actually Use

A business strategy clearly defines how a company will compete in the marketplace. With a strategy based on goal-setting, planning and taking the right action, companies make a mark on their industries with high-quality, imaginative products and services that benefit their customers and create value for the organizations.

Research shows companies that create and execute a sound business strategy have a [30% greater chance of achieving growth](#). They also have a chance to [double their ability to create value](#) in the marketplace.

In today's economy, business strategies need to be flexible, based on the latest research, and better able to adapt to change. A company business strategy [should answer](#) these questions:

- Why are we in business?
- What is our core strength?

- Which products and services speak to that strength and our purpose?
- Who are the people we should serve and how should we attract, inspire and retain them?
- What's the reason for taking these strategic directions?

"What is a business strategy (with examples)?"

A business strategy is the overall action plan that a company uses to create a mission and achieve its vision. The business strategy guides a company's decision-making processes to improve the way they create value for their customers and achieve a competitive advantage in the marketplace.

While the business strategy drives overall goals and the way to reach them, business tactics are the specific actions aligned with the strategy that will achieve overall goals.

Examples of a business strategy include:

Product or Service Differentiation

- Elevating your product or service in the industry by highlighting its superior qualities.
- Differentiated products and services answer consumer questions and solve their challenges better than the rest.
- Differentiating features could include ease of use, attractive price points, modern styling, unique design, innovative technology, etc.

Competitive Pricing

- Pricing that attracts more customers to sell a higher volume. Usually, the cost is lower than competitors' pricing without affecting the company's ability to create value.
- Pricing that's perceived as aspirational value, which means the cost creates a level of exclusivity with buyers. It renders the product or service out of reach for ordinary customers without affecting the company's ability to create value.

Capturing Niche Markets

- Acquiring a new company to gain a stronger presence with target consumers while retaining current market share.

- Merging with a competitor to attract a new audience or growth market.

Technological Superiority

- Investing in research and development to create proprietary software.
- Hiring team members with unique skills and expert industry knowledge to improve productivity.
- Acquiring another company's technology to achieve market domination.

Outstanding Sustainability

- Offering remote and/or hybrid work.
- Making energy-efficient upgrades and "reduce, reuse, recycle."
- Partnering with green companies.

Quality Customer Service and Retention

- Running an efficient call center with trained expert team members.
- Upgrading online and virtual support for customers.
- Seizing opportunities to retain loyal customers with special offers and rewards.

Innovation for a Better World

- Updating current products and services to keep up with market and consumer trends.
- Introducing new products and services on a set schedule that solve more consumer challenges and help them live great lives.

The Importance of a Company Business Strategy

Understanding what is a business strategy and having a comprehensive plan helps organizations in the following ways.

- Planning, to determine the key steps for reaching company goals.
- Allocating resources, to plan efficiently, communicate roles and responsibilities effectively and stay on track of project goals.

- Responding to opportunities, by identifying strengths and weaknesses, using strengths to build the company and knowing how to compensate for (or eliminate) weak areas of the organization.
- Competing with an edge, to help build an extraordinarily productive, humane and resilient organization.
- Enabling better outcomes, to choose the actions that directly help with reaching goals.

For a company to benefit from its business strategy, both leaders and teams must be held accountable for getting strategic actions done and get rewarded for them. Harvard Business Review studies show 70% of leaders and more than 90% of team members do not have any value incentives linked to strategic execution or success.

For people to actively contribute to strategic initiatives, companies should develop a culture of accountability and execution. Here are the first (and most important) steps you can take to develop an accountable company culture right now:

- Make the company vision accessible to all.
- Clearly communicate roles, responsibilities and how performance is measured.
- Set clear goals.
- Conduct efficient meetings.
- Stay up-to-date on to-dos.
- Prioritize issues.
- Track relevant performance metrics.
- Be consistent about giving and getting feedback.
- Document core processes, so everyone knows how to do it and how to do it correctly.

"What is a business strategy (and what does it include)?"

A business strategy typically includes six elements:

1. **Company Vision**

Your company strategy outlines the direction of the company with clear instructions for how to get there and who is responsible for completing each step.

2. **Core Values**

A good business strategy uses the organization's [core values](#) to guide the actions of leaders and team members so they're motivated by the same goals and stay on the same page.

3. SWOT Analysis

Your strategy identifies strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats ([SWOT](#)) for the company. While leaders and team members [need to be aware](#) of weaknesses and threats and how to mitigate them, they use their strengths as an advantage when competing in their industry.

4. Key Tactics for Success

A well-defined strategy plans the specific operational activities that align with the strategy to help achieve overall goals efficiently and effectively.

5. Resource Requirements

An effective business strategy explains how to allocate and use required resources, who is responsible for doing so and how to include or replenish resources when needed.

6. Results Measurement

A clear business strategy includes a way to [track progress and evaluate performance](#), which helps companies stay focused on targeted goals and create new ones, if applicable.

5 Steps For Creating A Business Strategy

Step 1: Define company vision

To define company vision:

- Review your company's core values for insight into what matters.
- Determine where you see the company moving in the future.
- Review your product and service offerings and the value proposition, why people should buy them. This helps define how your company is different, how to create demand and effectively compete in the market.
- Identify the type of prospects your company wants to serve, either consumers (B2C) or other companies and organizations (B2B). Then,

determine your target market. Make sure you address each group's different motivations and specific needs. The B2C market can be defined by demographic and socio-economic factors like gender, age, occupation, education, income, wealth and location. Whereas a B2B market can be defined by industry, type of business and sales model of targeted customer groups.

Step 2: Set goals for creating value

Decide how your company can compete with these specific goals in mind:

- To grow revenue.
- To improve your financial position within the market.
- To increase the company's economic value for owners or shareholders.

Step 3: Analyze company and market attributes

This is where [SWOT analysis](#) comes in (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats). SWOT analysis ensures that the company's strengths are utilized in making the most of market opportunities. Potential weaknesses and threats can also be addressed so they won't limit long-term success.

Step 4: Identify competitive advantage

To identify competitive advantage:

- Define how company leaders and teams want to compete in the market.
- Create demand for your company's unique products and services.
- Improve how your company creates value to increase sales margins.

Step 5: Build a business strategy framework

A strategy framework involves elements that support the overall business strategy and contribute to its success. These include:

- **Company culture:** A key driver to implementing a successful business strategy.
- **Strategic marketing:** A clear plan to build a brand, promote products and services and support sales initiatives.

- **Leadership:** A team that includes all stakeholders who believe in and are ready to execute every element of the business strategy.
- **Resources:** A workforce that includes all the people and materials to lead, prioritize and set expectations for the work outlined in the business strategy.
- **Strategy implementation:** A set of documented operational processes and procedures to help implement your business strategy successfully.

For most companies, **strategy implementation** is a big deal. The majority of leaders (98%) think strategy implementation takes more time than creating the strategy. In fact, 61% say their companies “struggle to bridge the gap between strategy formulation and its day-to-day implementation.” What’s more, experts say 4.5% of a business strategy’s “potential” is not actualized due to poor action planning.

"What are the 4 types of business strategies?"

When people refer to the four types of business strategies, they’re usually talking about strategies that are determined based on the kind of decisions a company needs to make to achieve predetermined goals. The four types of business strategies are:

- **Cost leadership strategy** — offering a better price for products and services in the market.
- **Differentiation strategy** — offering products and services unique to the industry.
- **Focused cost leadership strategy** — offering a better price for products and services to a specific audience or niche customer group.
- **Focused differentiation strategy** — offering unique products and services that appeal to a specific audience or niche customer group.

8 Actionable Business Strategy Tips You Can Actually Use

1. Set realistic objectives

Think long-term when creating a business strategy that clearly addresses realistic goals. Be practical when developing or identifying solutions for:

- The types of products and services you want to build.
- The customers and markets you want to serve.
- The actions you want to take that will help you make the strategy a success.

2. Get real about opportunities and threats

- Carefully analyze your company's current opportunities in the market and how they might evolve over time.
- Anticipate the risks and challenges of reaching for opportunities with the benefit of clear thinking.
- Gather concrete data, check sources and confirm information before finalizing decisions and action plans.
- Devise a plan to mitigate potential roadblocks from achieving goals.

3. Lean toward differentiation

In recent years, companies like Apple, Amazon and others have not only been successful at bringing quality products and unique services to market. They've also been outrageously successful in creating whole new ways of living, working and finding happiness for consumers. This can only happen with timely dedication to building clearly differentiated products and services that align with their brands.

4. Stay competitive

- Make sure your business strategy stays focused on competition.
- Choose a market with little competition or one that's not served at all.
- Get there first.
- Get busy capturing market share and building your brand.
- Position your company so it's more difficult for others to enter the market.

5. Do more with economies of scale

- In today's market, it's not enough to lower the cost of products and services through economies of scale.
- Always be imaginative with unique product features and new updates.
- Offer high-quality customer service (read: agile, proven, trusted).

6. Share strategy both internally and externally

- Sharing your company's business strategy with leaders and teams at all levels of the organization helps to solidify its guidance on strategic initiatives. Explain how the strategy and its implements relates to each employee and how it relates back to the company.
- Share the plan with stakeholders like investors, partners, suppliers, industry analysts and your customers.
- When you let everyone know what you're doing, why you're doing it and how it creates value for everyone, you build trust.

7. Focus on strategy execution

Over half of leaders ([61%](#)) think they're not doing a good job implementing their company's business strategy, and only [40% of team members](#) think leaders understand their company's strategy or goals. For your business strategy to succeed, it's critical to align the entire organization. [Cascading](#) the business strategy to people at all levels will provide great clarity on what actions need to happen at their level and how those to-dos relate to the overall success of the strategy.

8. Be diligent about tracking progress and measuring success

- [92%](#) of organizations report they do not track how well they are competing in the marketplace.
- [85%](#) of leaders spend less than one hour per month on business strategy.
- [50%](#) of leaders spend no time at all on business strategy.
- [25%](#) say measuring implementation is a tough challenge.

However, in companies that consistently meet their strategic goals, leaders [meet at least once a month](#) for four to eight hours. There, they review and measure strategy success and know what's working, what's not and where to focus.

One way to evaluate the success of a business strategy is to track [Key Performance Indicators](#) (KPIs), but there are plenty of formalized tracking processes you can (and should) try. [70%](#) of companies that say they use a formal process to track and review strategy also out-performed their competitors.

"What is meant by business strategy?"

Companies use strategy to refine their mission, goals and operation to deliver better value to their customers. When they use their resources to gain a better advantage in the market, companies create a competitive edge over other organizations and perform at a higher level. Companies use these approaches to achieve success to write a better strategic plan for their business.

In 1985, [Michael E. Porter](#), a Harvard Business School professor known for his theories on economics, business strategy and social causes, developed three highly-effective business strategies for gaining competitive advantage that are still used today. Porter's Generic Strategies were first published in his book, [Competitive Advantage: Creating and Sustaining Superior Performance](#). They are:

Cost Leadership – producing products and services at a lower cost than industry competitors while charging industry-average prices. Companies create a cost benefit through proprietary technologies and economies of scale, meaning they gain a cost saving by increasing production levels.

Differentiation – offering unique products and services that are more highly valued by customers than other products and services in the industry. Companies are able to get higher prices for differentiated products and services.

Focus – having either a cost focus or a differentiation focus strategy to attract specific, or niche, segments of the market. To gain a cost advantage, companies offer low-cost alternatives to leading products and services in the industry that appeal to a target audience of buyers. To gain a differentiation advantage, companies offer unique products and services that are highly valued by niche audiences and fulfill their specific needs.

How to Build a Business Operating System for Your Company

Written by [Team Ninety](#) • Published: April 5, 2022 • 16 Minute Read

People often wonder whether their small business or startup really needs a business operating system. Short answer? All companies need one! We'll show you how to build a business operating system that works and why it transforms organizations.

The Business Operating System Action Plan for Small Businesses

If you want to:

- Understand the reasons for needing a business operating system,
- Benefit from a strong small business operating system,
- And learn more about great business operating software solutions,

... then you'll love this guide. Let's get started.

What's Covered in This Guide

Click on each link to jump to that section.

- [What is a Business Operating System?](#)
- [Why Your Organization Needs a Small Business Operating System](#)
- [Five Telltale Signs You Need a Business Operating System](#)
- [The 6 Benefits of a Small Business Operating System](#)

- [The 5 Components of a Business Operating System](#)
- [How to Build a Business Operating System for Your Organization \[8 Steps\]](#)
- [Using Business Operating Software to Manage Your BOS](#)
- [Create and Implement Your Business Operating System on Ninety](#)

What is a Business Operating System?

A business operating system (BOS) is a comprehensive outline of how your business operates, which is clearly documented and shared with the entire organization. Think of a BOS as the playbook for running your company. It defines the structure of your operations, how and why you do the work that you do, and the successes you expect to achieve.

As far as business operating system examples go, some experts call a company's BOS its [common language](#) for explaining the roles and responsibilities of every stakeholder in the organization and what's expected of them. Others believe that every effective BOS stays that way with company-wide discipline, [the x-factor for sustaining growth and scaling a business](#). Most agree that [the right BOS for any company](#) must be customized to the organization's exact specifications and unique needs.

Leaders and teams must commit to collaboration and teamwork to make it run smoothly because BOSs can't run themselves. A well-established BOS will not function properly without the right people in the right seats. A fully engaged and qualified workforce will not be able to implement a poorly designed BOS.

Many companies look to platforms that help them create, execute, and adhere to a business operating system. An [integrated collection of tools like Ninety](#) is actually a business operating software solution that keeps all processes in one place, which helps keep everyone aligned and accountable for getting things done in the same way every time.

"Some business owners are just lucky in achieving the success they want. That could fall apart pretty easily. The smart owner who's in the right place at the right time? It doesn't mean they'll be running their company forever. Establishing a clear, comprehensive business operating system is critical to gain a level of confidence that the journey's going to keep going. No matter what, we already have a great game plan; we know how to move forward."

-[Zack Swire](#), Founder & Coach, Top Teams

Why Your Organization Needs a Small Business Operating System

The purpose of establishing a custom BOS for your company is to drive momentum through clear objectives, improved efficiency, and agreed-upon goals. This is especially beneficial when building a business operating system for startups. The goals are to:

- [Get everything under control.](#)
- Streamline operations so [that performance continually improves.](#)
- Align people and resources with a shared vision and [mission for work.](#)
- [Define roles and responsibilities](#) that people can expect, plan, and be accountable for.
- Create a company culture where people feel appreciated and respected while achieving [measurable results.](#)
- Maintain a level of excellence where [everyone can thrive](#), and the business can scale.

Five Telltale Signs You Need a Business Operating System

Building a BOS for your company is satisfying work that also takes a lot of effort. So it's easy to put off the process, especially if yours is a startup company. You've got too many other things to get done.

Every company has a system for how it works. But that doesn't mean it's a good or holistic approach that enables your leaders and teams to work together on common goals using agreed-upon processes that everyone knows and supports.

Here's how you can tell if your organization needs a BOS (business operating system):

1. Your workday always feels like it's out of control.

If you're constantly distracted by unexpected issues that get in the way of accomplishing to-dos or goals, you need a better BOS. With business operating software like [Ninety](#), you can keep track of everything – [meetings, priorities, issues, to-dos](#), and more – all in one place.

2. People feel like they don't know what's going on.

Great organizations know how to communicate effectively. They use a core communication process that is familiar to everyone. It explains how, when, and what to communicate to key stakeholders. They feel more productive, confident, and happier when they know what's what. A suite of tools like [Ninety](#) can integrate data, opportunities, issues, processes and people, so they're always in the loop.

3. People feel uncommitted to and not responsible for outcomes.

It shows when a worker doesn't follow through, has no respect for accountability, or simply doesn't know what's on her plate. Platforms like [Ninety](#) allow you to see who's responsible for what and when it's due. If there's a question, it can quickly be addressed. Big picture? People who know [where they fit in their organization](#) don't let anything fall through the cracks.

4. HR feels the sting of high turnover.

If people feel unproductive and don't know what's expected of them, they'll leave to find more fulfilling work elsewhere. With the [Accountability Chart](#) in Ninety, people get clear expectations on a personal-, team-, and company level that are documented in one place and accessible 24/7. They'll not only see *what* they're doing, but they'll also know *how* they're doing, too.

5. Leaders and teams feel like they're not creating value.

Whenever revenue decreases despite increasing sales, it's a sign you need a better BOS. You need a clear idea of what the company is working on and that it aligns with a shared vision of the future. That's where the [Vision/Traction Organizer](#) in Ninety can help. By creating a clear vision for each of your teams and detailing their goals one to three years out, everyone can make those goals a reality.

"When organizations don't run meetings consistently, when they operate in silos, or when they come to accept that this is just how they've been running things, you can feel the pain. There's a better way, and tools like [Ninety](#) will help you get there."

-[Zack Swire](#), Founder & Coach, Top Teams

The 6 Benefits of a Small Business Operating System

Creating and executing a business operating system at your company:

1. Strengthens what your company is known for.

A well-designed BOS will identify and support the key functions of your business that drive success. It helps communicate a shared vision of success with the goal of unifying the entire workforce. It explains why the company's unique work matters, the steps to achieve it, how to create a customer experience that satisfies, and what great results look like.

2. Builds unique processes.

Your BOS gives you step-by-step instructions for how your company does business. No second-guessing. When everyone does things the same way, operations are smoother and more effective.

3. Eliminates wasted effort.

A BOS is efficient in that people don't need to waste work time on unnecessary tasks that don't contribute to the intended achievement. It helps leaders and teams run the company predictably, efficiently, and effectively.

4. Tracks performance.

Your BOS outlines clear goals with concrete expectations for success and ways to measure performance. It ensures that people understand their roles and work toward the same goals.

5. Individualizes company contributions.

A well-implemented BOS shows everyone how each person's work contributes to company-wide goals. People are less likely to slack off and more likely to stay engaged in achieving them.

6. Takes your company to the next level.

If you're tired of running into the same problems and never gaining real traction, a business operating system can get your organization on the right track. Business operating platforms like Ninety can help you do it.

The 5 Components of a Business Operating System

The five components of a BOS listed are interdependent — so remember that each affects the other in your organization.

1. Processes

The steps for how a company finishes a task.

2. Systems

The elements of how a company finishes a task.

3. Roles

The detailed descriptions for every seat in your company.

4. Skills

The abilities and expertise required to execute a role properly.

5. Structure

The framework of how the BOS supports its processes, systems, roles, and skills.

How To Build a Business Operating System for Your Organization [8 Steps]

Ninety recommends that you create your BOS in the following order:

1. Develop your processes.

For daily processes to be effective, they should be:

- Well-defined and comprehensive.
- Consistent and repeatable.
- Straightforward and clear.
- Efficient and streamlined.
- Accessible in a universally shared location.
- Trackable so that people can identify inefficiencies.
- Automated using tools and technology wherever possible.

2. Establish your systems.

Successful systems are:

- Specific to a task.
- Applied to achieve overall goals.
- Reproducible for people at every level in the organization.
- Open to negotiation, adjustments, and improvements.

Well-designed and properly implemented systems create:

- Predictable employee experiences.
- Enhanced customer experiences.
- Improved operational efficiency.

3. Define your roles.

Effective roles are:

- Aligned with the company culture.
- Clearly distinguishable from other roles.
- Written in easy-to-understand language.
- Planned to accommodate growth and scale.

Roles are defined based on what's required to achieve the company's vision and accomplish the mission. When creating roles in your BOS:

- Focus on the roles themselves rather than the people in roles.
- Avoid thinking about how roles relate to each other.
- Realize that one person could have multiple roles within the company.

4. Identify the skills that align with each role.

List the necessary skills for each defined role in the organization. A person is matched with a role by the required skills they possess.

Skill types include:

- **Hard skills:** Professional knowledge or proficiencies, like familiarity with software or the ability to speak multiple languages.
- **Soft skills:** Personal qualities, like being well-organized, creative, intuitive, or collaborative.

5. Build your structure.

For an organizational structure to be effective, it should:

- Reflect a company's vision and values.
- Reinforce daily processes.
- Run on company systems.

- Support all workers, no matter their role.
- Be built to expand.

6. Make your comprehensive communication plan.

Include a protocol for keeping people informed at every level of the organization. Make sure the plan supports the objectives of your BOS. Include:

- Different types of [meetings](#) like weekly meetings, one-on-ones, [skip-level meetings](#), leadership townhalls, etc.
- Different types of required [communication](#).
- Different [ways to communicate](#) based on the type.
- Informal ways to communicate that are acceptable at work.

7. Perform a SWOT Analysis.

“[SWOT](#)” stands for “Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats.” A [SWOT analysis](#) looks at the following:

- **Strengths:** The capabilities that give you a competitive advantage in your industry.
- **Weaknesses:** The gaps in your organization that can limit your success.
- **Opportunities:** The market circumstances that your organization can benefit from currently.
- **Threats:** Changes in the market and other things you can’t control but can impact your success.

A [SWOT analysis](#) is a powerful tool that helps leaders plan an effective BOS that will generate better results.

8. Establish a BOS Timeframe.

Many companies’ operating systems run as a four-part repeating cycle. For [example](#):

- Cycle 1: Define Targets
- Cycle 2: Execute Plans
- Cycle 3: Evaluate Results
- Cycle 4: Develop and Execute Improvement

Many companies prefer an annual BOS because they find that 12 months is an ideal length of time for strategic objectives to come to fruition, yet short enough to accommodate adjustments along the way.

Using Business Operating Software to Manage Your BOS

Ninety's [cloud-based business operating software](#) can help you implement your BOS smoothly and effectively. The intuitive tools help streamline processes and integrate your vision into priorities, roles, responsibilities, metrics, and goals.

In-person, hybrid, and remote teams can organize to-do lists instantly, solve issues faster, and create opportunities better with features like:

- **Meetings:** Enable leaders to run efficient meetings with well-organized agendas. Teams can focus on priorities, identify opportunities, and hold people accountable for solutions that create value. Team members stay on task and on time.
- **Accountability Chart:** Show a detailed picture of roles and responsibilities and helps everyone understand how their performance is measured.
- **Scorecard, Rocks, To-Dos, and Issues:** Make it easier to track data, goals, projects, and tasks. These digital tools for working remotely help you organize projects, evaluate roadblocks faster, and visualize improvements. Leaders can become coaches for team efficiency by setting the example, creating goals, clarifying expectations, and giving people room to grow.
- **Process Documentation:** Enable operational automation, so people spend less time on repetitive tasks and more time on processes that create value
- **Text Integration:** Keep the entire organization connected, whether working remotely or in a hybrid office.

Why Communication in the Workplace Is Critical for Success

Written by [Team Ninety](#) • 13 Minute Read

[Why is communication important in the workplace?](#) How can you communicate better? Below are the seven most important questions you need to ask when determining how communication affects your company's ability to succeed. (Bonus: 5 actionable steps that can immediately improve your workplace communication.)

[Ninety](#)'s comprehensive platform of tools helps companies learn to communicate better. But how does effective communication translate to success? What can you do right now to improve workplace communication? Let's start here:

"Why is communication at work important?"

The importance of communication in the workplace cannot be understated. Communication enables better collaboration among a diversified workforce. When people share knowledge and ideas robustly, no matter where they work, they can harness the power of essential information and [take control of a project's integrity](#) with satisfying results.

Despite the obvious need for communication at work, most people report that ineffective communication causes serious issues. The surveys are pretty shocking:

- More than half of companies ([60%](#)) do not have a communication strategy that defines a complete process for idea creation that will drive their futures.
- Ineffective communication is cited as the main cause of failure across industries for [86% of companies](#).

- [Three out of four companies](#) rate teamwork and collaboration as "very important," but 39% of [workers worldwide](#) say people at work don't collaborate enough.

[Why is communication important in the workplace?](#) To follow the road to success, companies need to consider both the quality and the quantity of communication and develop a platform that enriches the experience of everyone involved. Great leaders and teams love:

- Collaborating more
- Being more productive
- Improving creativity
- Having a better understanding of expectations
- Enjoying greater work-life balance
- Having better mental health
- Building better relationships across an organization

"What are the benefits of good communication at the workplace?"

If a company's internal communication strategy is strong and the personal communication skills of leaders and team members are good, the advantages include:

Enabling the free exchange of ideas.

Established [best practices for good communication](#) give everyone a voice at every level and the assurance that they'll be understood no matter the message.

Attracting and creating powerful leaders.

Effective communicators make great leaders. Great leaders know how to motivate, delegate, build relationships, control conflict and enable others to communicate well.

Building great teams.

When people communicate and collaborate well, they build effective teams that *Get Smart Stuff Done™*. This fosters greater [trust and transparency](#), personal engagement, improves morale and keeps everyone satisfied.

Fostering and sustaining growth.

The growth of a company relies on connected communication among all stakeholders so they know what's working, what's not and where to focus. When everyone is on the same page, it generates exponential growth.

Catalyzing new ideas and solutions.

People who know they can openly communicate ideas are much more likely to share original solutions for creating value. This helps a company make a difference instead of just staying afloat.

"Why does communication matter in the workplace?"

Communication matters to all companies, big or small, because it forms the foundation for exceptional growth and scale if it's effective.

However, most people have difficulty communicating effectively in the workplace. A recent Harris Poll [featured in the Harvard Business Review](#) reveals that 69% of leaders are uncomfortable communicating with their team members for any reason.

- 37% are uncomfortable giving direct feedback about performance
- 20% are uncomfortable sharing lessons learned and other vulnerabilities
- 20% are uncomfortable recognizing team members for their achievements
- 19% are uncomfortable giving clear directions
- 16% are uncomfortable giving others credit for good ideas
- 16% are uncomfortable speaking face to face with team members and would rather use email

Consider the possibilities if 69% of leaders were confident communicating with their team members. What could happen?

The entire workforce could have a shared understanding of their goals, values, processes and best practices. They would be clear on what creates value and how to measure performance. They can build extraordinarily productive, humane and resilient organizations.

"What are the 7 qualities of effective communication in the workplace?"

Make sure your messages meet the seven criteria of effective communication:

1. Concise
2. Complete
3. Coherent
4. Clear
5. Courteous
6. Concrete
7. Correct

The [Seven C's of Communication checklist](#) is a great way to remember these qualities for anyone who wants to make sure they're relaying exactly what they mean and their messages are easy to understand.

Here's a little detail about each.

1. Concise

Statements focused on brief detail are easier for people to remember.

- Imagine the message is always new information for the audience.
- Use simple sentences that focus only on important or meaningful information.
- Be as precise as possible, eliminating any unnecessary embellishments.

2. Complete

If the message is complex and there's a chance the audience may misunderstand the main points, you should:

- Include more detail if the audience won't fully grasp the meaning when omitted.
- Include context, which can help in making concise messaging easier to understand.

3. Coherent

Structured messages that flow from one idea to the next are easier to follow.

- Organize sentences to build intuitively from an introduction to a conclusion.
- Tailor messaging to the audience and their general level of comprehension.
- Keep the audience's experience and lifestyle in mind when choosing words and speech.

4. Clear

Simple statements expressed in a relaxed, confident manner put people at ease.

- Avoid unnecessary or confusing vocabulary, phrasing and terminology.
- Limit idioms, technical terms and jargon unless appropriate for the audience.
- Avoid slang and limit contractions.
- Use active voice and present tense.

5. Courteous

Courteous communicators are considerate of the audience. They show respect for people's time and appreciation for their attention.

- Make eye contact while talking.
- Speak in a conversational tone so the audience can listen actively.
- Show interest in the subject matter.

6. Concrete

Effective communicators use words that convey what they really mean.

- Use an authoritative choice of words.
- Command the audience's attention with calls to action.
- Avoid adjectives and adverbs when specific words can convey meaning directly.

7. Correct

Communication can only convey the intended message if it's correct and has been proofread for errors.

- Make sure the information is accurate, and facts are vetted.
- Make sure everything is spelled correctly.
- Make sure written communication is grammatically correct.

"What are examples of effective communication in the workplace?"

There are nine ways effective communication in the workplace is demonstrated. When people:

1. **Show respect for other people's time and keep mindful of another's space.** It's in the way people talk and listen to others, usually on equal footing as human beings.
2. **Listen first**, so they can understand the message, directive, or objective before they run off and get something done.
3. **Display relaxed body language** like making eye contact, using a positive tone of voice, and remaining friendly during an exchange. These people put others at ease, making the receivers more receptive to messages.
4. **Ask questions** that are relevant to the communication. Asking questions helps clarify information. Ask a question instead of dictating directions to help [guide someone to a better conclusion](#).
5. **Stay open-minded** about anything related to beliefs, company vision or culture, new ways of doing things, novel ideas, research data, questions and more.
6. **Give and receive feedback** gracefully, with thoughtfulness, specificity, and relevance.
7. **Display confidence and empathy** at the same time. Confidence shows people you believe in your ideas, and you'll follow through on them. Empathy shows people you respect them and are willing to listen to their point of view.
8. **Think about what they want to say** before they say it. This enables clear, concise messaging that is easier to follow and comprehend.
9. **Choose a method that's appropriate** to the communication. Knowing when to use in-person meetings versus a quick message goes a long way in helping the receiver appreciate the message and respond favorably.

"Why is communication important in the workplace (with examples)?"

Good communication is important for having more engaged employees.

Providing a variety of ways to communicate such as video conferencing, messaging apps, texting, chat, phone, collaboration technology and other ways to exchange information and ideas is critical for getting work done efficiently and effectively.

Good communication helps to alleviate conflict.

If someone thinks they're misunderstood or don't fully understand directives, tools that identify communication patterns can help. These tools determine the structure of communication within teams for efficiency. With them, people can make adjustments in the way they communicate so that their messages are clearer and more easily understood. Then, the people receiving the messages will be better equipped to act.

Good communication helps to build better relationships with customers.

When people are trained to communicate more effectively, they can better understand a customer's needs and make them feel understood. Effective communicators will likely offer solutions that customers can be more receptive to.

Good communication creates more capable and productive teams.

When leaders understand their teams' breadth of skills, they're better able to spark their initiative and get buy-in from each team member.

"What makes effective communication?"

Troubling statistics show that people might not know what is meant by effective communication:

- Less than half of the emails sent (only 38%) contain relevant or actionable information
- Workers spend more than five hours a day dealing with issues caused by ineffectively communicated emails
- Today's mid-sized companies spend about 17 hours a week clarifying unclear messages

What makes for effective communication? Context and channel. Here's how to put this into action:

- **Establish a context for the communication** that fully explains the reason for the message, idea or question being shared. Explain it so the person who receives it can comprehend the context and respond intelligently.
- **Establish the channel of how the communication is sent**, i.e., written, verbal, digital. Today's technological advances have multiplied and improved communication channels, such as social communication, messaging apps, even phone functionality. The channel choice defines the way messages are composed, so they are better received. Now, communication channels enable people to receive messages quicker and stay better connected.

5 Tips for Improving How Your Company Communicates

1. Always define goals, roles and responsibilities.

Make goals achievable. Outline clearly what each team member is responsible for in carrying out projects. Define how performance is measured and what is considered a success.

2. Always listen.

It's amazing what a person can learn through respectful listening. Then, when the time is right, encourage friendly dialogue that helps to clarify the communication.

3. Always enable open communication for everyone.

It's easy to work in a silo and not even know it. No matter where people work, either [in-office or remotely](#), keep everyone involved and engaged.

4. Always self-edit communication.

Be thoughtful about your word choice and actions, whether it's a message, a directive or non-verbal communication. Make your message accessible to your intended audience. Strive to use a communication channel that's appropriate for the message.

5. Always use the right technology to improve communication.

Find out how Ninety can help you easily improve communication in the workplace right now with [a comprehensive system of tools](#).

What is Business Communication? Why It's Important & How to Do It

Written by [Team Ninety](#) • 17 Minute Read

Get answers to your business communication questions, real insight into strategies that deliver, and actionable tips for building highly effective business communication now.

Goal-forward communication is an essential driver of growth for your organization, from core processes and greater efficiency to company culture and creating value. Yet [60% of companies](#) have not prioritized creating an effective strategy to define what is business communication – in a way that leaders and team members understand or support.

In this article, learn what business communication is, why it's important for your company's success and how to build a highly effective business communication strategy that delivers right now.

People Often Ask: What is business communication and its types?

Business communication is the way leaders and teams interact with each other to share information. Good communication helps them:

- Align with core company values,
- Improve core processes and reduce errors,
- Keep people informed inside and outside the company,
- And reach organizational goals.

The four main types of business communication include:

1. **Communicating with company leaders.** Leaders often enable this flow of information through meetings, internal surveys, forms and reports. Team members can provide feedback for a better understanding of company operations.
2. **Communicating with team members.** Leaders can enable this flow of information through meetings, internal memos, letters and other written messages or verbal directives. They provide team members with clear, actionable communication.
3. **Communicating among team members.** Team members will enable this flow of information through informal meetings, chats, messaging, email and communication software solutions. It supports worker engagement and improves productivity.
4. **Communicating with people outside the company.** Leaders and team members enable this flow of information with their partners, vendors, prospects and customers to strengthen and nurture new and ongoing relationships.

9 Ways Business Communication Gets Done

Leaders and teams strive to be proficient and even masterful at verbal and written communication. Through technology, speaking in-person and the pen-and-paper written word have been elevated to include talking on-camera and digital messaging.

Recently, visual communication has become increasingly important for communicating effectively. For instance, people are **75% more likely** to watch a video message than read a word-only message. Adding visualizations to business communication can make it **Almost Easy™** to explain complex ideas and processes in a scannable, easy-to-understand, memorable way. Think infographics, process diagrams, flow charts, cartoon characterizations, animations and video elements.

In today's **Work From Anywhere World™**, leaders and teams are conducting business communication not only in an in-person, face-to-face setting, but the virtual, remote setting is fast becoming equally important.

Here are some ways business communication gets done, both internally and publicly.

1. Mobile Communication

Mobile business communication is on the rise, partly because it is the preference of **Millennials (Gen Y), Gen X and Gen Z**. Millennials are projected to represent **75% of the workforce by 2025** while Gen X and Gen Z make up 46% of today's workforce.

Mobile-first business communication refreshes the standard email and company intranet options with social solutions that are more like the ones they choose on their own time. For instance, only [13% of team members](#) use company intranets every day, while [77%](#) keep their phones within reach at work. Roughly [87%](#) use their mobile phone to communicate at work at least once per week. Mobile communication also addresses the shift to remote work, offering more streamlined, faster, and easier messaging that helps keep the entire organization aligned.

2. Video Communication

Improved live video conferencing software like Zoom and Microsoft Meetings enables people who *Work From Anywhere™* to [run meetings](#), conduct brainstorming sessions and have informal chats that get the same results as in-person conferencing. [Proven](#) to increase worker productivity while creating value, video communication also includes events like webinars, podcasts, online classroom courses and presentations, as well as video productions like animated explainers and corporate branding videos.

3. Asynchronous Communication

Unlike live video conferencing and in-person meetings, [asynchronous communication](#) through email, texts and messaging on apps like Slack and Hangouts gives people time to receive and comprehend information before responding. This web-based communication can enable privacy among coworkers in an office setting. It allows folks to better accommodate different work schedules, document conversations, share ideas when they are ready and include remote workers more easily.

4. Face-to-Face Communication

[Advanced software for conducting highly-efficient meetings](#) can keep leaders and teams engaged, especially when in-person. Research shows companies that know how to keep their workforce connected see productivity increases of [20 to 25%](#). Because [psychologists report](#) they can foster higher-quality and satisfying interaction among leaders and teams, companies schedule face-to-face meetings regularly.

5. Phone Communication

Telephone conversations can provide a quick exchange of ideas, information and Q&As for fast-moving leaders and teams. A caller's tone of voice can signal urgency as a priority. Although making phone calls can take a lot of time, people continue to value "talking to a real person."

6. Social Media Communication

Communication on social media is targeted to groups of people with something in common. The messages also benefit them in specific ways. Communicating on social media involves most other types of interchanges: written, visual, audio, music, video, and more.

7. Feedback Communication

Leaders and teams can [gather feedback and ratings](#) on various directives through surveys. They are familiar and available to everyone within an organization and a great way to engage customers. The survey information can help facilitate improvements to processes, products, and productivity.

8. Reference Communication

Forum boards and frequently asked questions (FAQ) documentation are excellent reference sources for leaders, teams and customers. They can stay up-to-date on various topics that are important to them and get their questions answered while keeping productivity or relationship building top of mind.

9. Document Communication

Reports, presentations and other written forms of communication are great ways to [document processes](#), important data and sales trends that affect the entire organization. Leaders and teams can explain new ideas, refer back to the information to get clarity and avoid confusion or disagreement on an outcome.

The Stuff of Business Communication

Here's a partial list of the types of things people exchange through business communication:

1. Getting work assignments
2. Delegating projects and tasks
3. Sharing and discussing information that's important for a project's success
4. Sharing decision-making processes throughout an organization
5. Sharing problem-solving ideas throughout an organization
6. Giving actionable feedback to leaders and team members
7. Getting actionable feedback from leaders and team members
8. Sharing knowledge and explaining the tools needed to do a task better
9. Receiving technical instructions for performing a task

10. Awarding kudos for great work
11. Sharing personal information that supports relationship-building

People Often Ask: What does business communication mean?

Understanding the nature of good business communication starts with what it means to communicate effectively. The objectives, scope and meaning of communication are clearly explained by CommunicationTheory.org here:

“Communication is giving, receiving and exchanging ideas, information, signals or messages through appropriate methods, enabling individuals or groups to persuade, to seek information, to give information or to express emotions.”

Communication is always a two-way street: a communicator sends a message to a recipient, who responds. Inherent in effective communication is the notion that people are willing to participate in the sharing of information. Information sharing is done through skills such as speaking and writing, subtle cues revealed through body language and attentive listening.

The Effects of Extraordinary Business Communication

Leaders and team members stay connected and are really engaged.

[Research on employee engagement](#) points to great business communication as the top reason why leaders and teams stay connected. Simple as that.

No one is complaining about overloaded email boxes.

There was a time when leaders and team members spent at least [25% of the workday on email-related tasks](#) where [62% of the emails](#) they received were not even important. No more. Alternative employee engagement options for sharing communication, feedback, status reports, task assignments, meeting invites, and more are even more effective than email. Now, those [two out of five employees](#) who say they used to ignore emails at work don't have to anymore. And email can return to being the personal, relevant, asynchronous communication vehicle that it is.

Information doesn't get lost.

When leaders and team members receive too much unnecessary communication that doesn't answer their questions, [silos](#) can occur. That's when communication that is critical or relevant to a person's work can get lost. Study after study indicates that people have to spend too much of their time searching for the information they need to do their work – [at least 25%](#) of their workdays. Teams will be able to

communicate and collaborate more easily because they're on the same page. Their performance will be elevated, too.

Team members working from anywhere won't be as remote.

According to the [2021 State of Remote Work](#) report, 97.6% of respondents say they prefer to work remotely at least part of the time for the rest of their careers. So working from anywhere [is here to stay](#). Effective business communication provides great solutions to remote workers' biggest challenges when it comes to feeling part of the team: unplugging (27%), collaborating (16%), staying motivated (12%) and coordinating across time zones (7%).

Your incredible talent will be happy to stay.

Companies are [50% more likely](#) to report below-average employee turnover levels when they keep their leaders and teams engaged through business communication. It keeps everyone caught up on what's important to their performance and to their company's success, which keeps them less stressed, less frustrated and less ready to bolt.

You can benchmark knowledge sharing.

Organizational knowledge is one of your company's greatest assets. Knowledge sharing enhances current organizational processes that are working now while contributing insight to solutions for the future. Your effective business communication strategy is one of the ways to improve best practices for knowledge sharing at your organization.

Team members become brand ambassadors.

[Experts say](#) employee interactions set the tone for a good or bad customer experience. Once they know and love the good stuff about the company, employee brand ambassadors will improve brand awareness, attract high-quality customers as well as top talent and create more value for the organization.

People Often Ask: What are silos?

The term silo in an organization refers to leaders and their teams who operate independently, isolating themselves from other members of the workforce. Employees in a silo often develop a "[silo mentality](#)" that contributes to an unwillingness to collaborate with others instead of working together as a whole. They avoid sharing data and knowledge, which can lower employee morale, stymie efficient workflows and make it more difficult to enable the free flow of information across the entire company.

One study shows that siloed communication tools can also adversely affect collaboration. While 48% of organizations say ineffective communication among team members is the top reason why their collaboration efforts are ineffective, they also report the use of six different approaches and at least four different communication tools to support project collaboration. If these tools aren't enabled to work together, they operate as silos. One result: The average team wastes more than 20 hours per month due to poor collaboration and communication, adding up to six workweeks per year that teams may be less productive.

6 Easy Tips for Improving Business Communication

To improve the way information is shared within your organization and with the public, start here.

1. Check the status of your current business communication strategy.

If —

- you notice workers are less satisfied lately or the company is experiencing a high turnover rate,
- remote workers feel they're missing out on important conversations that keep them connected,
- you're always looking for important information and can't seem to find it,
- the customer experience is suffering for lack of relationship-building,
- outcomes are lower than expected throughout the company,

— then some glitch in your business communication strategy is likely contributing to these issues.

Identify the hiccup and set communication goals to mitigate poor outcomes and strengthen communication transparency.

2. Decide on methods of communication that work for the company.

The business communication methods you use should align with your goals for effective communication across the organization. Review the nine ways business communication gets done. Choose the ones that make the most sense or invent a new one.

3. Invest in the right technology.

The most effective tools for effective business communication are the ones that make sense for your specific company goals and that work for your diversified workforce. Here are some thoughts:

- Company operating system software can help with running highly-efficient meetings.
 - Cloud storage is great for protecting important documents and other data.
 - Single platforms that combine email and calendars are efficient.
 - Just one tool for messaging is probably sufficient.
 - A phone system that's reliable and easy to use is the one you want.
4. **Make a plan to unify business communication messaging.**

Develop editorial guidelines that include mission or vision statements, brand messages, taglines, voice and tone of writing, use of visuals, and more. Your established communication guidelines will go a long way toward clear, concise, understandable and stylistically on-point business communication for your organization.

5. **Document your business communication process and update it periodically.**

Creating a shared document for your business communication strategy is essential for successful implementation. When it's available for the entire organization, everyone can refer to it when questions arise.

Your business communication strategy is a living document. Create a plan to review it on a schedule, such as every half year or once a quarter. Then document any updates.

6. **Maintain a robust collection of documentation.**

Building and maintaining a company knowledge base will help make business communication easier. It's a highly organized grouping of resources, process documentation, tutorials, frequently asked question answers and more that leaders and team members can always refer to when a need reveals itself. Which is a huge benefit for companies both big and small.

People Often Ask: What is the importance of business communication?

These statistics offer clues to the importance of business communication:

74% of employees have the feeling they are missing out on company news. That's way too much of a workforce.

60% of employees face a crisis at work at least once a month due to communication issues with their organization.

Companies with effective business communication are 3.5 times more likely to outperform their competitors.

Companies with a well-defined business communication flow can adjust quickly and strategically in a crisis like a pandemic, smoothly realigning their direction and implementing tactical decisions.

THOUGHTS & NOTES

16 Ways to Improve Communication in the Workplace

Written by [Team Ninety](#) • 16 Minute Read

For nearly 95% of company leaders [recently surveyed](#), effective communication is the single biggest influencer of employee commitment at work. But only 22% think their companies are getting effective communication done. So how do you do it? Here's a clue: how to improve communication in the workplace starts with you.

How to Improve Communication in the Workplace [5 Key Questions]

These are the five most important questions you need to ask yourself and the 16 things that will show you how to improve communication in the workplace:

“Why is communication important in the workplace?”

Most companies will say that communication is the glue that connects all of the moving parts of their organization. It's the cornerstone of their operational strategy for creating value, scaling their growth and achieving success.

[At least 86%](#) of leaders and employees acknowledge that the main reason why failure happens in the workplace is due to a lack of effective, collaborative communication. For a project to be handled properly, [94% of people](#) say it's absolutely necessary to be kept up to date on the exact status of all associated deliverables all the time.

It's no secret that improved communication **influences productivity** levels:

- 97% of workers believe communication affects their ability to get work done every day.
- People who work with company strategies that minimize communication silos and make information, knowledge and data available to all are 3.5 times more likely to outperform their peers.
- “Improved communication and collaboration through social technologies could raise the productivity of teams by 20 to 25%,” says the McKinsey Global Institute.

Improved communication **keeps the right people in the right seats:**

- 96% of workers believe empathetic communication is important for retaining a great workforce.
- Top priorities for leaders include effectively communicating company strategy, values, and purpose to their employees (64%) and enhancing leadership communication (46%).

Improved communication **boosts engagement:**

- According to Gallup, organizational elements that rely on clear communication like understanding roles and responsibilities, the right tools for the job and working towards common goals with a common vision are determining factors in elevated employee engagement.
- 92% of employees feel their performance would improve if they received corrective feedback delivered positively. While 43% of highly engaged workers receive feedback at least once per week, only 18% of low-engaged workers do.

Improved communication **enables trust** among leaders and teams:

- 63% of leaders and teams think that trust at work must be earned.
- More than 80% of workers in the U.S. say a key factor in developing trust with employers is company communication skills.
- Trusted companies see 106% more “energy” at work, have a 50% higher employee productivity level and outperform companies with low trust levels by 186%.

Communication is the essential solution for creating a culture of transparency and trust, dissolving confusion, resolving internal conflicts and ensuring everyone knows what’s expected of them. It keeps everyone engaged and creates an effective and enjoyable workplace.

“How can communication be improved?”

1. Develop your own communication skills first.

At work, we accomplish things like leading teams, delegating responsibilities, explaining concepts and building relationships through messages that convey information. This knowledge-share is only effective when your necessary soft skills are refined for better understanding and thoughtful response.

Every day, we communicate in four ways:

Verbally, which can be immediate and efficient (when done thoughtfully). Here’s how to hone your verbal communication skills:

- Speak slowly with a confident, even voice so people can easily hear you.
- Get to the point with succinct, simple sentences, so your ideas are easily understood.
- Prioritize **active listening**, so you can genuinely understand the meaning and intent of the speaker’s message before you respond appropriately and empathetically.

Written, which provides a record of each interaction for reference. Here’s how you can refine your writing skills:

- Craft simple messaging with detailed information or descriptions, so your ideas are concise and easy to understand.
- Proof your written messages to identify typos, mistakes and confusing wording.
- Check your written tone of voice to ensure you sound positive and encouraging because you won’t have body language to help convey your intentions.

Nonverbally, which helps to convey emotion and feelings. Here’s how you can improve your nonverbal communication:

- Notice how your emotions affect your body and how others’ body language affects you. Observe your posture, facial expressions, breathing patterns, muscle tension, and your limbs’ positions when speaking and listening.
- Practice body language that makes people feel at ease and shows that you’re receptive to what they’re saying. Uncrossed arms and legs, shoulders back, steady and relaxed eye contact.

- Take a deep breath and adjust your body language whenever you notice yourself expressing defensive and unreceptive body language, like crossing your arms or avoiding eye contact.

Visually, which helps with different learning styles and a person’s ability to comprehend ideas. Here’s how to improve visual communication skills:

- Choose visuals that help people identify and understand the knowledge and information you’re communicating. This could include graphs, charts, photos, illustrations, or videos — get creative.
- Consider where you can add visuals to what you’re expressing verbally and on a page. This is a proven technique to help improve understanding of an idea or concept.
- Provide context to visuals, like a key or legend, to help people translate visual data.

“How can we fix poor communication in the workplace?”

2. Review and refine your communication process.

Consider [how good communication benefits the workplace](#) and assess whether your organization is enjoying all those advantages. According to [Gallup](#), improving workplace communication begins with three essential elements of a core process: accuracy, openness and timeliness. Ask yourself if your [communication process](#):

- **Enables employee engagement.** Once you have a greater understanding of team members’ skills and needs, you’ll have a more satisfying work environment.
- **Provides a customized experience for workers.** People expect personalized communications from their home lives, so they expect the same from their employers.
- **Helps build a positive culture.** Once you mitigate misunderstandings, any conflicts and possible feelings of disrespect, you’ll have a workforce that performs better.
- **Allows for well-timed messages.** Information should be communicated appropriately when required.
- **Improves customer relationships.** Once you provide great solutions for customers’ needs, you’ll have happy customers.

[SIDEBAR TITLE]

[Sidebars are great for calling out important points from your text or adding additional info for quick reference, such as a schedule.

They are typically placed on the left, right, top or bottom of the page. But you can easily drag them to any position you prefer.

When you’re ready to add your content, just click here and start typing.]

- **Is strategy-based.** Unclear communication that confuses more than it explains won't help keep employees engaged or connected.
- **Boosts performance and productivity.** Once you have workers who feel good about expressing their ideas at work, you'll have workers who take ownership and problem-solve creatively.
- **Values openness and trust.** Once you have a communication process that acts as a dialogue for the entire workforce, you'll enable clear messaging and active listening among all members of an organization, whether in-office or remote.

People Also Read:

[“How to Communicate with Remote Teams \[3 Methods to Try Now\]”](#)

“How can I improve communication at work?”

3. Show you're trustworthy by communicating with compassion.

Research shows that at least one-quarter [of employees don't trust their employer](#). Express genuine interest in the conversation, show empathy for the communicator's point of view and their dilemmas, and follow through on your offer to work together and find a solution.

4. Approach workplace communication as the free flow of information.

Emphasize [transparency](#), adaptable processes and ways to practice open communication and continuous improvement of both communication skills and technology.

Create a [culture of accountability](#) where:

- Team members take ownership of their roles and responsibilities and answer for their actions.
- Leaders value initiative, self-direction, personal responsibility and integrity.
- Team members use their work time efficiently.
- Leaders allocate resources appropriately.
- Companies recognize that taking responsibility creates a more open communication channel for honest feedback and thorough understanding.

5. Start with understanding before assumption.

Some people make up their minds first about what a message means before absorbing and comprehending the communication. This can cause inappropriate reactions and confusion. Strengthen this practice by ensuring you have all the information before deciding. Ask questions that allow the communicator to clarify their message and give them the benefit of the doubt when it comes to positive intent.

6. Become a better listener.

Good communicators are always active listeners. They take time to consider what a message means before responding with care. Start by observing your listening habits. When are you not listening? What draws your attention away the most? Work on your listening skills every time you're talking with someone. It's the first step toward how to improve communication in the workplace.

7. Use your company's preferred communication tools.

Leaders and team members have many options to connect with others at work, such as in-person meetings, live video conferences, chat, phone, email, [productivity software](#) and more. Each communication channel has its benefits and drawbacks to effective messaging. Different types of communication require different types of channels for success. And most companies need to use a variety of them for communicating effectively. Take time to learn the technology, and become a proficient user.

8. Make feedback a positive experience.

Whether giving it or getting it, feedback is the stuff that enables people to better understand and respond to communication of all kinds. Pay attention to [how you offer feedback](#). The words and the methods you use are part of what makes for actionable feedback. Also, use care in your response to feedback. A good rule of thumb is to focus on the work and leave judgment out of it. Offer suggestions and alternatives rather than opinions of the work or the communicator.

As an organization, provide ways for employees to offer feedback, confidentially and company-wide. When leaders and team members feel comfortable freely sharing their thoughts and ideas, voicing their concerns and fears and asking questions, it creates a more trusting culture that they want to invest in.

9. Change your approach to meetings.

All companies use [meetings](#) as an integral element of their communication strategies. Make sure yours are great. And there's great technology out there that can help. As Mark Abbott, founder of [Ninety.io](#), explains [in this article](#), "Now more than ever, our employees want to feel connected; they want to feel heard and understood; they want to feel like they know what's going on and what's working and/or could be better."

"What are the ways to improve communication at work?"

10. Make workflows transparent.

By integrating your data, opportunities, issues, processes and people, you can improve communication and transparency. There are [extraordinarily simple tech tools](#) out there that can help you:

- Create clear agreements, measurable results, and confident decisions
- Share a vision of the future based on what needs to happen now
- Enable leaders and teams to see their roles and how performance is measured
- Create clarity and connection
- Document core processes
- And more

11. Respect the importance of accountability.

When people clearly understand their roles and responsibilities as part of a team and the work to be done, it makes it Almost Easy™ for them to be [accountable for it](#).

Establish a framework for communication around accountability through:

- **A common purpose.** Explain what your team is accountable for and why they're doing it.
- **Clear expectations.** That way, everyone knows who's doing what and how performance is measured.
- **A pathway for achievement.** Establish how you and your team will get the result.

- **Collaboration.** Work together to identify challenges, answer questions, recognize when help is required and when it's time to step away to let work progress.
- **The possible results.** Discuss both positive and negative outcomes and how they might set the stage for future successes.

12. Streamline operational processes and document them.

When communication does break down (and it can), take the opportunity to improve the process, so it's less likely to happen again. [Document the new procedure](#) and make it available to all stakeholders. Then take it one step further: Ask for feedback on what's working so it can inform future processes.

13. Explain how tasks and projects fit together when delegating.

Making sure leaders and team members understand the importance of [what they're being asked to accomplish](#) – in a positive, informative way – helps them see [how their work will directly affect company goals](#) and [create value](#).

14. Observe others' preferred communication styles.

Notice how people communicate with others. Get to know the strengths and weaknesses of their [communication skills](#). Pay attention to the platforms they like to use. Ask them about the ones they like least. This way, it's easier to have purposeful conversations in places where people can respond in a positive, helpful, energized way.

15. Follow up on expectations.

Regular check-ins on [how projects are proceeding](#) are a great way to maintain improved workplace communication. People will have a convenient time and place to ask questions. They'll remain clear about deadlines and what's expected for the finished project.

16. Talk it out, one-on-one.

Sometimes just talking about it is the most efficient way to gain alignment. [Set up quarterly conversations and recurring meetings](#) where you touch base with people to find out how projects are going, their opinions on operational processes, constructive feedback or criticism – whatever's on their minds. It's also an opportunity for you to get to know them, ask questions and show you care.

Get a System that Encourages Better Communication

It takes a consistent effort to improve communication in the workplace. But the extra time and attention will pay off.

- You'll see greater alignment and faster agreements,
- Spend less time clarifying and unwinding miscommunication,
- Experience fewer missed deadlines,
- Avoid frustrations caused by miscommunication and confusion regarding assignments and measurables,
- And enjoy stronger working relationships with genuine, thoughtful and empathetic interactions.

Leaders who invest time and energy in clear communication work with team members who communicate clearly with colleagues and customers. Improved communication builds trust, elevates engagement, increases productivity for every employee at all levels of an organization and drives growth.

THOUGHTS
& NOTES

How to Run an Effective Meeting and Get Work Done [10 Tips]

Written by [Team Ninety](#) • 25 Minute Read

“I just love sitting through dull meetings that waste my time,” said nobody ever. We’ll show you how to run an effective meeting — because you and your team want to work smarter and save time.

How to Run an Effective Business Meeting [and Why It Matters]

A good meeting can inspire ideas that individual team members may not consider on their own. [Structured meetings](#) create fruitful team collaborations by focusing on brainstorming opportunities, solving challenges, and creating value.

When a company doesn’t spend time and effort on improving the way they run meetings, experts calculate [only half of the meeting time is used effectively](#). Participants can lose even more quality work time after a bad meeting just because it’s bad.

Ineffective meetings decrease productivity and waste resources. They could also lower motivation and job satisfaction.

The benefits of improving your meetings highlight just the opposite. Running a great meeting:

- Ignites ideas.

- Creates opportunities.
- Builds teamwork.
- Improves [productivity](#).
- Boosts job satisfaction and retention rates.
- Helps [Get Smart Stuff Done™](#).

How to Run an Effective Team Meeting [The 3 Things You Need]

According to the [New York Times](#), effective meetings must have these three things:

1. An agenda.
2. A time limit.
3. An endgame action plan.

If your meetings fail to have those three criteria, your meeting participants:

1. Won't know why they're even there.
2. Will think there's no reason to meet.
3. Probably won't want to stay or participate.

If you have a clear agenda and a time limit, you'll be on your way to creating an endgame action plan and running a great meeting the smart way. Here are some quick tips for a successful agenda, time limit, and action plan:

The Agenda

The agenda should outline the topics that need to be discussed. It should explain the reason for the meeting and what participants will be discussing.

The agenda tells the specific purpose for meeting with specific people for a specific outcome.

Meeting participants should receive the agenda before the meeting begins. We recommend including it within the meeting invitation.

The Time Limit

The key to nailing the meeting time is straightforward:

- Set a reasonable length.

- Don't wait for latecomers.
- Start on time and end on time.

Setting a time limit for meetings is a respectful way to honor people's work schedules and get them back to their work as promptly as possible.

Experts suggest [different time limits for different types of meetings](#):

- **Standard team meetings:** 15-30 minutes
- **Project retrospective meetings:** 30 minutes for every week spent on the project
- **Brainstorming meetings:** 40-60 minutes
- **Strategy meetings:** 60-90 minutes
- **Decision-making meetings:** 2 hours to a full day
- **One-on-one meetings:** 30-60 minutes

The Action Plan

The action plan lays out the next steps for achieving the goal, including who is responsible for what and the deadlines. Assigning those next steps helps people take ownership of making sure things get done.

“What makes for an effective meeting?”

Companies that conduct efficient meetings have some important things in common:

- They start at the intended time.
- They stick to the time allotted for each agenda item.
- They include only the people involved in the project.
- They end on time with a plan to achieve the stated objective.

This is just a start. Leaders can turn an efficient meeting into a truly effective one by adding context to the process. For example:

1. **Make sure you really need to meet.**

Meetings [aren't the only way to collaborate](#). There's also email, chat, company intranets and other [asynchronously sophisticated ways](#) to “get together” and discuss.

These are all alternatives to meetings for sharing information and even brainstorming and one-on-one conversations. When it comes to making a decision, project planning, creating buyer journeys, setting goals, solving challenges or something else, determine whether a meeting is the better way to get that specific thing done.

2. Invite team members who can make distinctive contributions.

You want a variety of participants who bring diverse perspectives, advanced knowledge or accomplished experience to the meeting. Then, invite the people who will benefit from these perspectives.

3. Keep people completely focused on what's happening in the moment.

Avoid multitasking. But if a participant has an urgent and time-sensitive task that needs to be completed, permit them to get that task done first. Then, they can rejoin the meeting or find out what happened once they can fully focus on it.

4. Be thoughtful about meeting times.

Schedule get-togethers so participants will stay engaged rather than inconvenienced, especially in the age of the remote workforce. When it can't be avoided, connect in advance with those who may need to re-arrange their schedules to participate. It can go a long way toward [building trust](#).

The meeting time can make a difference in people's ability to contribute, too. [Studies have shown](#) that scheduling problem-solving sessions at the end of the day can spark a tired mind to see more opportunities or solutions without distraction. Meanwhile, you should schedule brainstorming sessions first thing in the morning to take advantage of a heightened capacity for creative thinking right after sleep.

5. Encourage open discussion.

It's important for participants to feel like the meeting is a safe place to explore divergent ideas. They want to feel comfortable expressing their opinions and creative thoughts.

High-performing teams need this assurance that their contributions, however unusual or off-the-wall, are valued. Leaders can [build that trust](#) by:

- Setting a nonjudgmental tone for the rest of the group.
- Letting curiosity rule the day.
- Facilitating deeper discussion with open-ended questions.

- Including everyone in the discussion.
 - Re-directing those dominating the meeting into another role, such as taking notes.
6. **Produce shareable results.**

A good meeting will produce tangible achievements that can be documented and easily shared throughout the organization. What are sharable results? The decision, the action plan, the list of ideas, [to-dos](#) or [goals](#), the roles and responsibilities, the next steps.

6 Steps for How To Write A Meeting Agenda

Whether you want to learn how to run an effective business meeting, create a brainstorming session for your team or figure out how to run a successful online meeting, they all start with writing an agenda.

These six steps outline how to write an effective meeting agenda:

1. Determine the reason for the meeting.

Starting with an achievable goal allows participants to understand why they will meet. Agenda items are focused on the stated objective.

2. Get ideas from participants.

Engage your team members even before the meeting takes place by asking them for input on the agenda. Asking them for topics they'd like to discuss or questions they'd like answers to will help to ensure the time is spent fulfilling their needs.

It also allows them to decide whether they should be participants. Be sure to include all relevant feedback in the agenda.

3. Clarify the purpose of each agenda item.

To encourage discussion, try phrasing each agenda item as a question. Then, identify the purpose of each item, such as sharing information or getting input or making a decision. By making a note of each item's purpose on the agenda, participants will better understand what's expected of them for each discussion.

4. Estimate how much time to spend on each agenda item.

Divide the total meeting time among all agenda items, giving weight to items that need more time. This helps streamline communication and keeps the meeting on schedule.

5. Identify participant roles for the meeting.

In addition to the meeting leader, give other people a chance to lead the discussion. Decide who will handle what agenda items and who will take meeting notes.

6. Leave time at the end for next steps.

At the end of the meeting, reserve time to review discussions, conclusions and decisions. This helps participants better understand the next steps after the meeting. For example, when running a meeting in Ninety, the program automatically sends participants a recap email detailing what was discussed and the action items that need to be addressed before the next meeting.

“What are the five key elements of effective meetings?”

The five elements of effective meetings are also referred to as the Five C's:

1. Compelling

Engage meeting participants by telling them a story about the topic. Studies show that storytelling helps increase message retention by activating areas of the brain that process language and experience events.

2. Clarity

Focus shared information for clarity rather than including the breadth of knowledge, so participants are not overwhelmed.

3. Consistency

Throughout the meeting, present accurate information that conforms to fairness and logic.

4. Conversation

Make dialogue a key ingredient of meetings. Real dialogue encourages questions, clarifications and ultimately, greater buy-in from participants.

5. Close

End the meeting by including a direct request, next steps, a plan of action, etc. Ninety's software can help you assign those next steps, and will archive everything that was discussed.

For Ninety, understanding how to run an effective meeting comes down to five things:

- Staying healthily connected.
- Making sure we're on top of the things that matter.
- Sharing good news with the rest of the company.
- Creating a consistent time and place for addressing issues and opportunities.
- Scoring the meeting (from a 1 to a 10) at the end, so we know whether it was a good use of our time.

“How do you run effective meetings?” [10 Top Tips]

1. Realize the true power of an effective meeting.

Meetings get a bad rap, with good reason. Learning how to run a good meeting isn't usually a course you take in college.

But while you might not have formal training in running a great meeting, anyone can learn.

The biggest thing to remember? **Scheduling a meeting just to share information is the real reason why people dislike meetings.**

Having a meeting just to share information is like using a screwdriver to hammer a nail. The modern workforce has better (and faster) ways to share information, like message apps, chat, email, or company intranets.

When used correctly, meetings have the power to do more than simply share information. They can help with determining [strategy](#), making decisions, devising action plans, clarifying roles and responsibilities, inspiring collaboration and so much more.

Once you realize the true power of the meeting, you can use it as the right tool for helping you achieve specific goals.

2. Make meetings *Work From Anywhere*TM-friendly.

Effective meetings are those that are accessible and valuable for all participants, no matter where they are working. It's critical that you coordinate the "when" and "how" of any meeting to accommodate the [hybrid workplace](#).

Advances in video conferencing allow everyone involved to be seen and heard on equal footing. Everyone is able to participate with equal measure.

3. Establish roles for each meeting.

People are more likely to contribute to a meeting when they know what their role is in expediting the agenda. First, you need to clearly communicate the purpose of the meeting to all participants and tell them what you want them to do to achieve it.

For instance, in meetings at Ninety, one person runs the meeting and another runs the [Meetings](#) tool. A leader doesn't need to be the person who runs the technology. Letting others handle the details can free up leaders to focus on thinking through [issues](#). They can also ensure everyone is being seen and appropriately involved.

4. Change the typical meeting mindset.

When people have to wait for meetings to start, they're already annoyed before they begin. Do you know that [nearly 40% of meetings start late](#) at most mid-sized companies? That's a lot of potentially uncomfortable participants who've lost their ability to contribute in a meaningful way, all due to waiting around.

Do yourself a favor. Always start meetings on time. You don't need to wait for, acknowledge, or catch any latecomers up — they don't need to waste everyone else's time.

5. Use "average attention span" to an advantage.

According to New York Times bestselling author [John Medina](#), people can only pay attention to one thing for 10 minutes before they start getting antsy about moving on to the next thing. Medina's advice? Keep that 10-minute time frame in mind when crafting an effective meeting agenda.

Aim to complete each item on the agenda within ten minutes, and assign any action items before moving on to the next item on the agenda. If you're still discussing an

agenda item after ten minutes, table the discussion and move on to the next. You can finish your original discussion after the meeting, with only the necessary parties.

6. Encourage active listening.

Active listening is a [powerful communication skill](#) that makes it *Almost Easy*[™] to enable better comprehension and meaningful contributions from participants. When people listen actively, they're more engaged and focused on what's going on in the moment.

Here are three ways to prepare people for active listening:

- **Create a comfortable environment.** Pay attention to room temperature, extraneous sounds like ringing phones, lighting, and provide things like water or candy.
- **Reduce distractions.** Research shows people cannot stop themselves from [checking their phones](#). It's a great reason to keep phones out of reach and laptops closed during a meeting, if possible.
- **Ask questions.** If you're leading a meeting, asking the participants for their input or advice can help them stay engaged, find different perspectives, and more effectively problem solve.

7. Use smaller participant groups to tackle agenda items.

There are a few reasons why this works:

- Dividing agenda items among smaller groups of people helps them take ownership of the result.
- Changing things up with different leaders for each group helps keep everyone more engaged.
- With multiple groups working on multiple agenda items simultaneously, it saves time.
- Sharing their findings with the entire group facilitates even more collaboration, not to mention refreshed engagement.
- It's also a good way to [strengthen remote working relationships](#) and encourage proactive problem-solving.

8. Always leave meetings with clarity.

What's the point of meeting if you don't come away with an actionable way to move forward? It's easy to misstep on this.

Always flesh out an action plan with next steps, roles and responsibilities, check-ins on progress, deadlines for results and anything else that will keep them focused on success. Ninety allows you to do this organically throughout the meeting, so everyone feels empowered to return to their day with a clear vision of what needs to be done next.

9. Ask participants about meeting effectiveness.

After every meeting, give participants a chance to provide feedback:

- How would they [rate the meeting](#), on a scale from 1 to 10?
- Was it a valuable use of their time?
- Did it inspire them? Energize them to action?
- How would they improve it?
- Then, record those responses at the end of each meeting in Ninety.

It doesn't take much time and offers valuable information, a huge benefit for planning effective meetings in the future.

10. Stop scheduling meetings altogether.

If you're wondering if your teams even need meetings to build an extraordinarily productive, humane and resilient organization, just cancel them all. Seriously.

Once you've canceled all your meetings, you can better determine which ones might have been really worthwhile, fulfilling, and necessary. Then, add only those truly meaningful meetings back to your calendar.

How to Run a Successful Online Meeting

It helps to realize that online meetings are still meetings, with one distinction. Online meetings are dependent on technology to facilitate them. Most notably, video conferencing. To [run a productive meeting online](#), follow all the tips in the post, plus the following:

- **Iron out any technical difficulties** with the video conference software before the meeting begins. Check that the audio and video are working and the internet connection is reliable.
- **Make sure all phones and other devices are silenced.** Even the sound of an incoming text or phone call notification can [disrupt a person's cognitive](#)

performance. Or consider banning them altogether. People will have an opportunity to check them during a break.

- **Meeting size matters.** Researchers have concluded that group size can influence the quality of a person's response during any meeting, especially video conferences. It acts like the bystander effect. The most productive meetings contain only five to eight people, according to Harvard Business Review research.
- **Consider asking participants to enable video** in addition to audio so they're more likely to stay actively engaged.
- **Consider recording online meetings** to make them more accessible for everyone, including those with disabilities. The recording can be used to review the meeting afterward, to transcribe notes and as source material for company media presentations.

“How do you effectively manage a meeting?”

We have two key tips for effectively managing a meeting:

1. Ask for feedback.

You may be committed to running a great meeting, but everyone in attendance has a say in whether the meeting was effective. Ask participants these kinds of questions:

- “Did you understand this meeting's purpose?”
- “Was the agenda clear enough?”
- “How comfortable were you with contributing to the discussion?”
- “Did we include the appropriate team members?”
- “Who should be included in the future, if anyone?”
- “Is there anyone whose time would be better spent elsewhere?”
- “Were you clear on next steps and your role in accomplishing them?”
- “Did this meeting result in creating value for the company?”

This feedback can provide helpful information for continuous improvement in planning future meetings.

2. Use the right technology (like Ninety's meeting tool).

The right platform will enable meetings where leaders and team members can devote time to identifying challenges that the company is facing and hold each

other accountable for finding solutions that create value. It should also establish the flow of a well-run meeting.

Meeting-improvement platforms like Ninety allow you to set the total meeting time and divide the time for each agenda item, such as:

- **Call to order** – a [segue](#) into the meeting where everyone can share something personal, like a professional accomplishment from the past week. Think of it as a quick gratitude session. The idea is to stay connected as humans.
- **Metrics recap** – a chance to look over everyone’s [most important measurables](#) and conduct a quick analysis of the findings. If something is off-track, there’s a place in the software to make note of it.
- **Goals status** – find out whether participants are on track or off track with their major goals.
- **Water cooler moment** – a general sharing of company news, client or employee feedback and other [headlines](#) that keeps participants engaged.
- **To-do review** – participants share the status of their tasks and report on their progress.
- **Main session** – quality time to prioritize issues, discuss the root of the challenges, convert them into specific actionable items or resolve them.
- **Conclusion** – a moment to recap what just happened, i.e., identify next steps, recap tasks, confirm a timeline for action and decide what information is worthy of [cascading](#) to other levels of the company.

How Ninety Makes Running a Great Meeting Easier

Ninety provides [intuitive tools](#) for running effective meetings. The functionalities listed below are true game-changers that help everything run seamlessly:

- **Using the in-app timer** – Ninety has enhanced automation that allows you to track the overall duration of your meeting as well as each agenda item.
- **“Multiple people in a meeting” functionality** – It’s the ability to have [multiple people contributing during a meeting](#) to make the experience more productive. Instead of pausing the entire meeting so the leader can do an immediate capture of information, one person can capture the thought while the rest of the team moves forward. Right-click on the issue that contains the information you’d like to combine with another and select “Merge with another issue.”
- **Easily making something an issue** - The easiest method that works with just about every item in a meeting is to right-click and select “Make it an issue.”

The “Create” button in the top right corner for issues that don’t originate from a pre-existing item in the meeting.

- **Instant note-taking** - Take notes throughout the meeting and see all of your meeting details on each past meeting. Add notes to Goals and [Scorecards](#) for future reference.
- **Quickly combining issues** – During a meeting, participants often find multiple issues that contain similarities. [Merging those similar issues](#) allows you to save time and better prioritize the rest of the conversations
- **Adjusting goals on the fly** – Quickly make adjustments individually from the primary Scorecard view or adjust multiple Goals and Measurables using the [Goal Forecasting](#) tool.
- **Seeing next steps in a recap email** – A meeting recap email is sent to all team members post-meeting and includes issues solved, to-dos created, headlines discussed, cascading messages sent and anything else that’s tracked during the meeting.
- **Getting instant feedback** – At its conclusion, all participants can rate the meeting on a scale of one to 10 to address efficiency, topics covered, preparedness or anything else.

THOUGHTS & NOTES

15 Actionable Tips to Increase Employee Productivity

Written by [Team Ninety](#) • 20 Minute Read

This is Ninety's guide on how to improve employee productivity in the workplace. We'll walk you through five steps and break them down into 15 easy, actionable tips that will transform your team.

The Step-by-Step Guide of How to Improve Employee Productivity

In this article, we lay out five logical steps for how to increase employee productivity at work, complete with 15 of our easy, actionable tips that can transform your team.

We used our imaginations on this. We hope you will, too. Here we go.

Step 1: Challenge Your Existing Ideas About Productivity

Whether people work remotely or from an in-person environment, recent survey research finds at least [89% of them prefer to work alone](#). Why do you think that is? [Survey respondents](#) give a few clues:

They experience fewer distractions in their work environment when they can separate themselves from others. For instance, [61%](#) think loud colleagues are the biggest office distraction and [40%](#) get distracted by coworkers stopping by their workspace for a chat or an impromptu meeting.

They would rather not have to rely on someone else to do their part of a collaborative project, even if working alone means they work harder.

They can focus entirely on their work and are less pressured to behave in ways that could hinder their productivity.

Their [productivity can increase up to 77%](#) when working remotely at least a few times per month, with 30% of them doing more work in less time and 24% doing more work in the same time.

People Often Ask: What is employee productivity?

A general definition of productivity is the amount of work a person can produce within a specific time frame. But let's put this notion in perspective. At the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, productivity was measured by the number of hours people were actually at work. High productivity meant that they went to work as much as 80 to 100 hours a week.

The [eight-hour workday](#) changed all of that, as did the [40-hour workweek](#), developed by the automotive leader and industrial genius Henry Ford after he realized his employees who worked too many hours didn't necessarily contribute to greater productivity.

Nowadays, people think of productivity as a measurement of efficiency when completing a task. When combined with the notion of high total output, this definition perhaps tells more of the story.

For productivity to be a measure of worker performance in *The New Age of Work™*, the quality of completed work is just as important as the hours it takes to finish it and how much work is completed. Especially if employees are working on creative, high-value tasks and projects.

Ninety Tip #1: Determine What Productivity Means for You

If you want to know what success looks like for your organization, benchmark productivity. Once you have a standard point of reference for defining and measuring performance, it becomes more meaningful to leaders and teams. You'll be able to compare current processes and levels to know whether you're improving employee productivity and when you're falling short of the big picture. As you watch your company's growth, you'll likely adjust your productivity benchmark over time.

For example, Microsoft wanted to test Japan's long-held benchmark for increasing productivity: working excessive hours. So in the summer of 2019, Microsoft Japan offered their employees a three-day weekend each week, with the hope of

improving work-life balance. But they also found one of the ways to increase employee productivity: the four-day workweek. Decreasing worker hours in a week actually [increased productivity by almost 40%](#). Plus, nearly 93% of their employees loved it.

Ninety Tip #2: Identify Hurdles to Productivity at Your Company

For leaders and teams, workplace obstacles that impede productivity are handicaps to improving efficiency. These barriers are either 1) organizational (unclear objectives, ineffective goal-setting, lack of flexibility, multitasking or obsolete tools); 2) environmental (noise, visual interference or coworker interruptions); and 3) psychological (not enough communication, negativity or lack of trust and respect) – or a combination. Each one contributes to why an overwhelming number of employees would rather leave collaboration on the proverbial table and work alone.

[Studies show](#) that, during one workday, the average employee is productive 60% of the time or less. However, the average office worker is only productive for two hours and 23 minutes each day. Once you identify the specific hurdles your employees face to their productivity, you can prioritize the solutions that need the most attention in your organization.

Ninety Tip #3: Set Achievable Goals That Align with Performance

Employees are more likely to improve productivity if they work toward achievable goals. This helps boost their confidence in their ability to succeed and ignites their motivation to do so. It also encourages collaboration and inspires them to work together as a team.

Taking ownership or [accountability and improving employee productivity](#) are directly linked. Those who are accountable for their work answer for their actions, honor the positive culture, vision and ethics of their organizations and contribute to increasing overall performance.

Ninety Tip #4: Find Ways To Encourage Collaboration

One of the ways for leaders to help employees increase productivity is to appeal to their human side. Humans enjoy being part of a group and often appreciate a little competition among group members.

[Studies on workplace competition](#) do show that 50% of employees thrive on it, but 25% languish in response to it, and another 25% remain neutral toward it. So it's better to evaluate workplace competition against the composition of specific teams. However, when paired with suitable rewards, friendly competition can help less

productive members of the group step up their game, which adds to an overall improvement in productivity.

Ninety Tip #5: Create Places to Collaborate With All Team Members

If your workspace isn't set up for hybrid collaboration, [it's now considered a wasted space](#) and won't help the process. Since only [38% of employers](#) have upgraded video technology to improve collaboration, there's room for them to improve the odds.

Step 2: Create A Work Environment Where People Can Accomplish More

Ninety Tip #6: Provide Employees With the Right Tools For the Job

A recent [Gallup poll](#) finds that less than half of U.S. employees believe that their companies provide them with the technology they need to effectively perform their roles. Giving your employees tools that make it *Almost Easy™* for them to thrive at their jobs is one of the better ways to increase employee productivity.

These days, the right tools for the job include mobile devices, [cloud-based business operating systems](#), collaboration and productivity software and communication channels that are high-quality, reliable and easy to use. In addition, [social technologies](#) — wikis, blogs, social networks, web conferencing, podcasting and others that enable social interactions — improve knowledge worker productivity by 20 to 25%, according to [McKinsey research](#).

Ninety Tip #7: Get Everyone Communicating Better

Strengthening your company's [communication processes](#) among leaders and their teams is essential for how to increase employee productivity at work. Leaders who can effectively communicate expectations and responsibilities to their teams help team members feel directly connected to the organization's mission and goals. Clear communication also supports overall efficiency within your company, which can contribute to increased job satisfaction, as well.

Ninety Tip #8: Value Learning and Training

One of the most effective strategies for [improving employee productivity](#) is to offer them more opportunities to learn. According to the [National Center for Education Statistics](#), there's a direct correlation between access to continuing education and

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increased employee productivity. Can you say tuition assistance? Expanding offerings in online learning? Bring them on!

Ninety Tip #9: Create A Company Culture of Trust

Researchers at Harvard Business Review [have often reported](#) that trust helps employees focus more intensely on their work without the constant fear of being fired, reprimanded or ridiculed by peers. In a work environment where people can accomplish more, clear deadlines and expectations will be set. Trust will be one of the key components of your company culture in determining vision, ethics, goals, relationship building and teamwork rewards. If trust enables improved productivity, untrusting leadership impedes productivity by negatively impacting employee morale and engagement.

Ninety Tip #10: Limit Interruptions and Repetitive Tasks

It's well-known that interruptions, distractions and unnecessary processes contribute increasingly to a less productive workforce.

Not only is the average employee interrupted [every three minutes and five seconds](#), but it takes them an average of 23 minutes to refocus on their work after the interruption. Distractions are taking away from productive work time, too. Research on browsing time on social media shows employees spend [about 32% of their workdays on Facebook](#).

Especially with hybrid work models, encourage employees to use office meeting rooms or lounge areas for impromptu meetings instead of lingering at a colleague's workspace to talk. Designate areas where employees can make phone calls without disturbing others. Identify space for deep work and collaboration as well as socializing. Automate office processes, so teams spend less time on repetitive tasks and more time on processes that create value.

Ninety Tip #11: Say Thank You to People, Whenever You're Grateful

In 2019, [Deloitte conducted a study](#) on "the practical magic of the thank you" and found that a straightforward verbal 'thank you' given to an employee can boost morale, foster trust and make that employee work better for more of them. The acknowledgment is also what employees appreciate the most.

Rather than delaying rewards and recognition for evaluations and reviews, celebrate successes when they occur. Make sure employees know consistent feedback and clear rewards for a job well done are always on the table. Set up employee engagement and rewards programs and approve time off and work breaks to refresh and recharge workers while strengthening trust, job satisfaction, and continuing to work better and smarter.

People Often Ask: How do you determine employee productivity?

In today's *Work From Anywhere World™*, productivity is determined by measuring leaders', teams' and team members' efficiency to create value. This can be achieved by:

1. [Setting measurable goals](#) for employees and monitoring their progress. Feedback can be given at [weekly team meetings](#) and [one-on-one reviews](#).
2. Considering quality of work in addition to quantity.
3. Tallying the amount of work completed in a set amount of time. A simple equation for this measurement is: [productivity = output \(the volume created\) ÷ input \(labor hours and resources\)](#).

Step 3: Find A Better Way To Conduct Meetings

It's no secret that leaders and teams consider traditional meetings as one of the most unproductive requirements of work. [These statistics](#) on wasting time at work tell it all:

91% of employees daydream in meetings

39% of employees have slept in meetings

96% of employees have missed at least one "mandatory" meeting

73% of employees worked on other work while in a meeting

50% of employees consider meetings wasted time

89% of employees complain about "ineffective or poorly organized meetings"

Ninety Tip #12: Get Great Ratings On Your Meetings

Whether your teams are working from anywhere, navigating a hybrid work environment or commuting to an office each day, it's a good bet that a meeting is in their future. Why not find a way to make that meeting productive?

In [one report](#) on *Work From Anywhere™*, 26% of people report meeting more than usual after transitioning to remote work, and 80% support a one-day-a-week schedule with no meetings at all. They also confirm that ["Zoom fatigue" is real](#).

Using the [right meeting software](#), leaders can add a well-organized structure to meeting agendas so participants can focus on priorities that require further discussion, stay on task, create actions to identify opportunities and hold people accountable for solutions. Leaders can run meetings more efficiently with less administrative time afterward. Plus, allowing participants to rate a meeting can help leaders understand what's going great in meetings, what isn't and whether they're making good use of everybody's time.

Step 4: Elevate Personal Productivity

Ninety Tip #13: Forget Multitasking, Try Chunking

Is multitasking the better strategy for boosting productivity? Here's what research says:

Doing two or more tasks at once can lead to a [drop in performance](#) in at least one of the tasks.

Even the brief mental blocks created by shifting between tasks can cost as [much as 40 percent](#) of your productive time.

If you increase the number of tasks you focus on at the same time, you'll experience information [bottlenecks that disrupt](#) your ability to make decisions.

Humans are [sequential processors of information](#), so switching between complex tasks like writing, coding, designing, and visioning can decrease efficiency, effectiveness and productivity.

Working amid a relentless influx of message notifications can reduce your [IQ by 10 points](#) and decrease your ability to focus as much as losing one night's sleep.

No matter where you're working, you shouldn't have to endure a constant flow of interruptions that break down productivity. That's why you should try chunking. With it, you can achieve the uninterrupted flow you need to produce more incredible, creative work and meet your goals.

[Chunking](#) is an approach to planning your work that focuses on completing single tasks one at a time rather than reacting to constant multiple interruptions all at once. You start by chunking up your time into segments you can devote to specific single tasks. You will be able to focus on a single task at hand, and you will likely do it better.

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By breaking up your time into dedicated chunks, you'll find that you get much more accomplished throughout the day. This even works for smaller, less cognitively demanding tasks, such as responding to emails or scheduling meetings. Simply batch these all together into a chunk of time dedicated to these kinds of miscellaneous tasks.

To get started with chunking, pick a single task you already do, set aside the amount of time you know it will take to complete it and get to work completing the task. Ignore the phone. Don't check your email. Just work on the task in the amount of time you chunked out.

Eventually, you can apply the chunking concept to your entire work schedule as follows:

1. Make a list of your tasks from the most important and urgent to the least.
2. Chunk your time into segments for specific tasks.
3. Do one task at a time in the chunk of time you've set aside for it and focus on it until it's done.
4. Stick to your chunking plan. Give yourself a deadline for each task so you can track your progress.
5. Assess your progress and review the results. You should notice an increase in productivity, more free time, more focus, less stress and pressure and a feeling for achievement.

Step 5: Consider Work As An Integral Part of Whole Life Balance

Today's modern employee values work/life balance, and so should you. It's [a top reason](#) why workers gravitate to remote and hybrid workplace models — even though those who prefer remote work still need to balance other parts of their lives to elevate their productivity. Nevertheless, 90% of employees say they are more productive working remotely than commuting to an office.

When companies allow employees [just one day to work remotely](#), 24% of them say they are happier at work. Increased job satisfaction is also directly linked to improving employee productivity, so it's worth consideration.

People Often Ask: What is the importance of employee productivity?

Productivity is important to the purpose of work. When people are engaged in an activity to achieve a desired result, that's productivity in action. It's often the reason why people work. Productivity can also give meaning to work.

Within organizations, productivity leads to desirable benefits like a motivated workforce, healthy working environments, satisfying collaborations and great customer service. When people are less productive, it can be a sign of disengagement, discontent or diseased operational processes.

Ninety Tip #14: Champion “Non-Linear” Workdays

Non-linear workdays are what file hosting service Dropbox calls flexible work schedules for their employees. The company has a growing distributed workforce that requires a balance between collaboration and individual employee focus. To increase employee productivity, they prioritize impact and results instead of hours worked. They set specific collaboration hours where everyone is expected to participate and encourage setting hours individually whenever an employee is ready and wants to work.

Ninety Tip #15: Keep An Eye on Employee Engagement

High productivity can often be attributed to equally high engaged employees. Engaged employees have an emotional commitment to the culture and goals of their organizations and work on behalf of them. [Forbes says](#), “When employees care ... they use discretionary effort.”

People who are engaged in their work [show up more often, stay longer and are more productive overall](#). Although the percentage of actively disengaged U.S. employees is up to 15% through June 2021, 36% are engaged in their work and their companies. The ratio is 2.4 to one, according to a recent [Gallup poll](#).

[A study](#) on the impact of employee participation on job satisfaction, employee commitment and productivity indicates that companies can keep their employees highly productive by encouraging employee involvement. In this kind of company culture, employees are more willing to invest time and effort in goal-setting, decision-making and problem solving, which results in higher performance.

How to Set Employee Performance Goals [A Guide for Remote Leaders]

Written by [Team Ninety](#) • 10 Minute Read

As remote leaders start planning for the next year, they can face certain pitfalls when their teams Work From Anywhere™ (WFA). This is a step-by-step guide on how to set employee performance goals that also addresses six of the most common challenges of writing good employee goals for WFA teams and the tools that will help overcome them.

The end of any year is a signal for remote leaders to [start planning for the year to come](#). Within these exciting few weeks of gaining perspective on your company's growth, you're also thinking about employee performance goals.

Employee performance goals are well-defined objectives that relate to a person's accountability, productivity and job satisfaction. They can motivate people to perform better and achieve faster in support of overall company goals. When you think with purpose about how to write employee goals, especially for remote teams, you can create a measurable way to access accomplishments that are agreed upon by everyone.

Your system for evaluating performance success can also be the basis for employee recognition and a reward program. [Research shows](#) companies that value employee recognition and rewards see an almost 50% rise in employee engagement.

What Are Good Employee Goals?

Finding the right goal for your employees involves a few key considerations. Good employee goals often include both performance and professional development goals that align with your company's overall organizational goals. Professional development goals can evolve from a team member's performance goals. Once they understand their objectives, they can identify areas to develop for personal growth and career advancement.

The [SMART model](#) is a well-known and popular approach for how to write employee performance goals. The acronym is shorthand for the criteria used to write them: **specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and timely**. Leaders have used this method for the [last 40 years](#) to develop a clearly defined list of possible employee goals that describe:

1. What a team member works to achieve every day, given their job responsibilities.
2. The important results they are working to accomplish.
3. Agreed-upon performance levels for each team member and how performance is measured.
4. The specific time frame for achievement.
5. What professional development might look like for each person.

Writing SMART goals is a straightforward way to get those goal details defined. It's easy to understand for both you and your team. Each SMART goal helps each team member focus their attention and resources on what's most important for achievement. They'll be more likely to accomplish priorities on their own and accelerate the company vision.

The SMART Way To Set Employee Performance Goals [5 Easy Steps]

There's no need to overcomplicate the process. Work one-on-one with your team members and encourage their contributions to develop a list of possible employee goals using the five steps for writing SMART goals.

1. Make It Specific

Write simple goals that clearly define what will be accomplished and how.

2. Make It Measurable

Clearly defining how you will measure specific goals can help your team member see what's working, what's not and where to focus. Performance metrics help team

members stay on track and accountable. When they know what they've achieved, it can motivate them to accomplish even more.

3. Make It Achievable

Specific, measurable goals are ambitious yet still energize team members. If the goal is unrealistic or out-of-reach, they may get frustrated or lose the motivation to improve. Here's where established benchmarks for achievable goals can help. Break the goal down into manageable steps set at specific deadlines, so they're not overwhelmed by the end goal itself. Make sure your team member has the necessary skills and resources to achieve the goal, such as experience, training and time in their schedule. Incorporate any limitations by including a developmental aspect to the goal.

4. Make It Relevant

Align each specific, measurable and achievable goal with your company's main objectives. Once your team member understands why it's important to the big picture goals of the entire company, it becomes results-based and much more worthwhile to accomplish for them. If the proposed goal doesn't seem relevant to the larger picture, it may not be the right goal at this point in time.

5. Make It Timely

Setting a specific timeframe, deadline or target date for meeting a SMART employee performance goal adds a certain urgency to get it done. Explaining why a deadline is important to you and the company is also a great motivator for your team members. The timeframe could be as short as one week or one month and as long as six months, one year or five years, depending on realistic achievements for this team member.

Big Extra Step: Reward, Recognize or Rework

When companies recognize and reward employees for achieving (or exceeding) their performance goals, [research shows](#) 69% will work harder because they know their work is valued and appreciated. Eighty-three percent of them will be happier in their seats.

When a team member falls short of attaining a SMART performance goal, work closely with them to determine what went wrong. Rework the goal and encourage them to try again.

6 Goal-Setting Challenges For Remote Leaders [and How to Overcome Them]

When setting employee performance goals, remote leaders can face certain pitfalls when their teams Work From Anywhere™ (WFA). Here are six of the most common challenges you might face and the tools that will help you overcome them.

1. Maintaining Good Communication

Understanding [how to communicate with remote employees](#) is a skill that remote leaders have quickly added to their repertoire and with good reason. Certainly, good communication is integral for you to work together with team members on how to set employee performance goals.

[Tech tools](#) like video conferencing software, work communication platforms like Slack and cloud-based services are helping remote leaders and teams stay connected and productive.

[Ninety.io](#) has a [Meetings](#) feature that helps remote leaders run well-organized, efficient agendas that focus on priorities. Team members can stay on task and be accountable for solutions that create value.

2. Scheduling One-on-One Meetings

One-on-one meetings help remote workers feel valued and connected with you and the company. Scheduling a meeting with every one of your remote team members may seem like a hassle, but it doesn't have to be. It's an opportunity to connect on performance goals and give valuable two-way feedback.

Ninety's [Feedback](#) feature makes scheduling one-on-one meetings Almost Easy™. You can integrate your conversations and priorities into a team member's Rocks, roles, metrics and the company vision.

3. Goal Forecasting Remotely

Metrics are a big deal for making data work for attaining employee performance goals. You want to forecast goals weekly, monthly, quarterly and annually. There are tools that can make this easier and less time-consuming.

With Ninety's newest [Goal Forecasting](#) tool, you can now forecast goals for an entire year. Other [new tools on Scorecard](#) let you calculate weekly metrics in real-time to show changes month over month and quarter over quarter.

4. Keeping Track of Performance

Remote leaders need to keep track of the work that's accomplished and the deadlines met while clarifying expectations and giving people room to grow.

Tracking projects and tasks are much easier when using digital tools for remote workers.

The [Scorecard](#), [Rocks](#), [To-Dos](#) and [Issues](#) features on Ninety.io are digital tools that help you efficiently organize projects, evaluate roadblocks much faster, visualize improvements and keep track of individual performance goals.

5. Incorporating Company Culture into Goals

For remote leaders and teams, company culture must be shaped intentionally to make a difference in their WFA days. It requires having a plan to keep the focus on the bigger picture.

Ninety's [Vision/Traction Organizer \(V/TO\)](#) feature allows you to have a clear shared vision of the future with detailed three- and one-year goals while keeping track of immediate tasks and priorities. Utilize the V/TO archive for past inspiration or keep team-specific V/TOs private.

6. Building Trust

Maybe you're not sure you can trust your remote team members. [You can build trust](#) by being transparent about concerns such as working hours, performance expectations and accountability, compensation, the status of projects and more.

Ninety.io has an [Accountability](#) feature that helps remote leaders create a clear way for team members to see the details of roles and responsibilities and understand how their performance is measured. This can help everyone communicate effectively, work together harmoniously and build trust.

Finding and setting the right employee performance goals takes two-way communication, clear and simple ways to track measurables using tools like Ninety, and the support that your employees need to achieve and exceed their goals.

Lack of Accountability in Remote and Hybrid Workplaces [How to Fix It]

Written by [Team Ninety](#) • Published: May 3, 2022 • 16 Minute Read

Seeing signs of a lack of accountability in your workplace? Whether you're running in-person, hybrid, or remote teams, everyone's vulnerable. Here's how to define lack of accountability, what causes it, and how the [Accountability Chart](#) in Ninety can help you improve accountability within and across teams.

How to Identify and Fix Lack of Accountability in Workplaces

This is an in-depth guide to help in-person, hybrid, and remote team leaders identify and fix a lack of accountability at work.

If you want to know:

- What causes a lack of accountability and how to spot it,
- How to improve team accountability,
- And how to build a culture of accountability in your organization,

...then you'll love this guide. Let's get started.

What's Covered in This Guide

Click on each link to jump to that section.

- [What is Lack of Accountability?](#)

- [What Does Lack of Accountability at Work Look Like? \[Examples\]](#)
- [What Are the Business Impacts of a Lack of Accountability?](#)
- [How to Boost Accountability in the Workplace](#)
- [4 Ways Leaders Can Improve Team Accountability](#)
- [How to Fix a Lack of Accountability in a Hybrid and Remote Work Model](#)
- [How To Build a Culture of Accountability](#)

What is Lack of Accountability?

A lack of accountability at work is when someone does not take ownership of an unproductive situation that results from their own actions and subsequent choices.

When a team member:

- Isn't doing what they're supposed to be doing when they're supposed to be doing it,
- Acts as if the bad results are not their responsibility,
- Plays the blame game whenever stuff doesn't get done,
- Makes excuses for not finishing a task or hitting a goal,
- Doesn't live up to organizational expectations,

...it defines a lack of accountability.

Some experts think lack of accountability is a condition that occurs when an organization does not clearly communicate, reinforce, and build trust around the value of accountability.

People who take responsibility for their roles at work are answerable and amenable to owning up to their obligations. Accountable people also take ownership of results, helping to increase overall performance. They are liable for any consequences when things go wrong, so they don't break that trust.

Especially in hybrid and remote workplaces, leaders want to know how they can hold people accountable at work even if they can't see them working. Understanding accountability (and spotting a lack of accountability) is key for both employees and leaders.

What Does Lack of Accountability at Work Look Like? [Examples]

What causes a lack of accountability? These signs of lack of accountability illustrate what it can look like at work.

1. Issues are intensifying.

When teams start dealing with issues that snowball, it's a sign that accountability is weak. Things that stay unresolved for too long could delay entire projects. If one person doesn't complete their task, others will be impacted.

2. Frustration is showing.

If team members are affected by a lack of accountability within the organization, they could get irritated and lash out. They could lose confidence in their coworkers, leaders, and company. Especially if someone else is not being held accountable.

3. Expectations are not met.

It's a red light when people stop meeting objectives effectively. Something as simple as showing up for work late all the time becomes accepted behavior. Ignored to-dos pile up. Discipline wanes, and chaos could ensue.

4. Morale seems low.

Low morale in the workforce can result when people:

- Are not clear on what their organization wants to achieve overall.
- Aren't sure if they're making the right contribution or making any headway in achieving team goals.
- Are constantly making revisions to their projects due to changing or unclear priorities.

It's more difficult for leaders to hold people accountable for results if they haven't clearly communicated what roles and responsibilities look like or how results are measured.

5. People are no longer engaged.

When team members seem disconnected and not invested in their work anymore, they've likely lost that sense of purpose inspired by aligning daily work with the organizational goals. They may be experiencing a lack of consistent feedback and a lack of accountability, which is draining their engagement.

6. Trust is diminishing.

If relationships among coworkers or between a leader and a team member are suffering, it can contribute to bad attitudes and unproductivity. Trust is lost when people don't deliver as promised, where a lack of accountability is to blame.

More Lack of Accountability Examples

- Company leaders are not personally accountable.
- Leaders just don't care how their actions and decisions affect the rest of the company.
- Leaders fail to prioritize accountability for their teams.
- Organizational expectations are not defined.
- Poor work practices become the norm because standards are unimportant.
- Unprofessional or bad behavior is tolerated.
- Companies reward team members for being less than accountable.
- Team members are punished for being accountable.
- The company does not have a culture of accountability.

What Are the Business Impacts of a Lack of Accountability?

Here's how the consequences of lack of accountability can cost you strategically:

1. Time gets wasted.

It's difficult to move your company forward when people are allowed to ignore strategic decisions meant to accomplish the important stuff. In addition to wasted time, a lack of accountability could also cause a lack of:

- Focus
- Productivity
- Performance
- Value

2. Credibility gets lost.

Experts say as much as 80% of internal challenges an organization faces are due to strained relationships among leaders and teams caused by accountability issues:

- Teams lose respect for their leaders.

- Collaborative problem-solving gets harder.
- Decisions are put off.
- The company's reputation gets damaged.
- No one is working better.

3. Culture gets crippled.

No accountability means people can develop a victim mentality. Transparency shrinks. People shove others under the bus when things don't go well. It becomes "us" versus "them" instead of something aligned and productive.

4. Work gets missed.

People will take more time off to recharge from working in a culture that supports "less than accountable" as the standard. This could mean a huge interruption in company growth over time.

5. Quality gets lowered.

Why bother producing superior products or services when there are no clearly defined standards for excellence?

6. Turnover gets higher.

Unclear expectations that no one takes ownership of drive great performers elsewhere.

How to Boost Accountability in the Workplace

Change always starts with leaders. Here are four tactics that'll help increase workplace accountability:

1. Hold yourself accountable.

A great way to advocate for taking ownership of results in any type of workplace is to **develop and strengthen your own personal accountability.**

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, many people were unfamiliar with remote or hybrid operations. At first, you may have realized that your understanding of being accountable was informed by compliance. To other people's wishes. To operational demands. To someone else's idea of what you're supposed to be doing. It could have felt liberating in remote or hybrid environments, making decisions on your

own that affected when you worked, your workload, and how you communicated with leaders and fellow team members.

You may have been introduced to [initiative-based work](#), which enables accountability to yourself. You research what you need to know. You act without being told. You answer for your own actions. You're able to see opportunities and create value from them. When things get difficult, you take ownership of results and find a way to move forward.

After having this experience, it's probably easier to see how a lack of accountability at work is the opposite of taking the initiative. It creates a way of thinking that can limit you. Your energy. Your positive attitude. Your follow-through. Your optimism for work well done. Your trust in yourself and others.

According to a definitive source, [The Oz Principle](#), accountability is "a personal choice to rise above one's circumstances and demonstrate the ownership necessary for achieving key results."

You can improve your personal accountability by:

- Updating your thinking.

Shift your perspective to nurturing integrity rather than chasing rewards or consequences for your decisions.

- Setting your limits.

Avoid overloading yourself with things you can't achieve. Get clear on your priorities, so you're spending your time and energy on them.

- Practicing follow-through.

Ready yourself to keep the promises you make. Use facilitators like calendars, reminders, and other tools, or find a like-minded colleague to collaborate with.

- Using deadlines.

Never underestimate the influence self-implemented limits can have on your behavior. It's a way for you to visualize your timeline that's meaningful only to you when it comes to staying on track.

- Learning from outcomes.

Many people [use failure as a change agent](#) to improve their decision process, why they act, and how they hold themselves accountable.

2. Always set clear, measurable goals.

It's easier and more effective for people to take ownership of results when they clearly understand goals and their roles in achieving them. If everyone knows the overall goals and their role in achieving them, it will be easier to hold them accountable.

3. Give feedback regularly.

Regular [one-on-one meetings](#) for mutual feedback are the platform for two people to build a stronger working relationship. The feedback should be comprehensive. Use clear, concise words for expressing constructive criticism as well as encouragement. Base feedback on agreed-upon goals, priorities, to-dos, metrics, roles, and responsibilities.

4. Practice team accountability.

Everyone on your team should hold you and everyone else accountable. When leaders have regular meetings with their teams, action items are assigned and discussed. Everyone knows who's accountable for what, which helps drive personal accountability for their specific responsibilities.

4 Ways Leaders Can Improve Team Accountability

These four accountability-boosting tips may surprise you, but:

1. Realize that accountability doesn't rely on control.

When leaders push rules on teams to measure accountability, it could backfire badly. Imposing things like mandatory work hours, strict production requirements, and tight key performance indicators (KPIs) won't necessarily influence people to take ownership of results.

Mostly, accountability is a personal choice. It's something leaders want to nurture rather than control.

When people lead by example, they can influence others by being accountable to themselves and their teams. In turn, they can encourage others to be accountable to each other.

2. Enable everyone to take ownership.

Instead of focusing accountability at work on those individuals who are not getting things done short term, involve everyone in an accountable approach to productivity and performance.

The entire [business operating system](#) matters when it comes to team accountability. Take a look at core goals, processes, and priorities, metrics tracking, task assignment, which people are in what seats, and the technology you use to enable better performance. Any one of these elements can cause people to be less than accountable for results.

3. Revisit what it means to be clear.

It's more effective to communicate expectations directly with clarity. But what does that mean?

Clarity means simple, lucid, clear, comprehensible, and free of ambiguity. Clarity also enables transparency, a critical factor in [building trust](#). This is what happens when leaders set clear goals and expectations for their teams. Clear communication considers the differences people have in processing and responding to information. There's no mystery about what directives mean. It makes it easier for people to be accountable for outcomes.

4. Let emotional intelligence be your guide.

People don't always realize how their behavior affects others, especially when accountability is in question. A person's [ability to know](#) when to be kind, empathize with others, and communicate effectively goes a long way when defusing conflicts and coming to mutual understanding.

How to Fix a Lack of Accountability in a Hybrid and Remote Work Model

Even though nearly [90%](#) of people say their productivity stays constant or improves due to working on their own, leaders are still concerned. Considering how a lack of transparency and accountability can affect relationship-building in an organization, the fix is simple:

The quality of hybrid and remote working is elevated by cultivating trust, transparency, and accountability.

It's the combination of trust, transparency, and accountability that's the sweet spot:

When leaders:

- Are transparent,
- Provide teams with clear expectations for achievement,
- Give consistent feedback on performance,
- Create a safe environment,

...people can freely share their ideas and opinions and ask questions without fear. They feel supported by the clear direction they need to thrive in a culture of accountability.

Leaders who trust people to work effectively as hybrid and remote workers can benefit greatly. [Research](#) says that in comparison to workplaces with a low-trust, low-accountability culture:

- **Trustworthy leaders** achieve lower turnover, improved levels of accountability, and greater team member satisfaction.
- **Trusted team members** are 76% more engaged, 50% more productive, take 13% fewer sick days, and experience 40% less burnout.

“Accountability and culture go hand-in-hand. If you need to build accountability into your small business, you may be surprised by how much it improves the culture of your organization.”

-Certified EOS Implementer™ [Mike Kotsis](#)

How to Build a Culture of Accountability

The [Accountability Chart](#) on Ninety is an effective tool to help you build a culture of accountability with ease. It’s designed to improve how people hold themselves and others accountable within teams and across the organization.

When roles and responsibilities [are clearly defined](#) and agreed to by all, it’s easier to:

- Communicate a purpose for company-wide accountability as a culture-builder.
- Remove questions and confusion and replace them with transparency and trust.
- Hire the right person who wants to be held accountable for the right seat.
- Focus on solving issues when an expectation is not met, instead of trying to fix the team member.

- Be kind, empathize with emotions, and make a plan to move forward rather than handing out penalties for unmet goals.
- Avoid sending the message that unaccountable behavior is okay.
- Develop a healthy culture of accountability that leaders and teams will be grateful for.

Create a Culture of Accountability on Ninety

Now that you've learned how to fix a lack of accountability, it's time to put your knowledge into practice: [Create clear roles and responsibilities for your team now on Ninety.](#)

Ninety helps leaders build clear accountability, so you don't have to worry that your teams aren't doing what they're supposed to be. [Sign up for a free trial](#) with access to all Ninety.io functions, features, and support.

18 Ways to Practice Business Transparency [and Build Trust]

Written by [Team Ninety](#) • 16 Minute Read

Why is business transparency important and how does it enable trust in your organization? Learn how (and why) to practice transparency in your organization right now.

Business transparency is all about being fair and truthful in your dealings with others while possessing a quality that helps make the stuff of business easy to understand. It's a philosophy that values the free flow of knowledge for the benefit of a company and the people who run it.

How can a business create transparency? By operating in a way that strengthens open communication and information-sharing among leaders and team members at all levels of the organization.

Experts say transparency:

1. [Creates trust](#) among leaders and team members.
2. Helps to [improve morale](#) in an organization.
3. [Lowers job-related stress](#) for employees at all levels.
4. [Increases employee happiness](#) and [improves their performance](#).

In order to reap these benefits, a collective effort from everyone is required. A company culture of transparency doesn't hurt, either.

The Connection Between Accountability and Transparency in Business

Company leaders and teams can learn a lot about the connection between accountability and transparency from the [Transparency and Accountability Initiative](#) (TAI). According to TAI, transparency and accountability must work together to help people:

1. Speak out on things that matter to them.
2. Influence decision-makers and affect outcomes.
3. Hold decision-making entities accountable.

TAI's work as a [non-governmental organization](#) (NGO) focuses on expanding "the impact and scale of transparency, accountability and participation" in our society so "citizens are informed and empowered, governments (and companies) are open and responsive, and collective action advances the public good."

The organization uses specific [definitions of transparency and accountability](#) that help illuminate the connection between them:

Transparency is the duty of company leaders, public officials and civil servants "to act visibly, predictably and understandably," which encourages accountability and helps activate each person's participation in society.

Transparency in communication happens when information is not only available publicly — it also needs to be accessible in a variety of ways to reach different audiences. It should be relevant, accurate, complete and obtainable in a timely manner so that others can comprehend and evaluate its worth.

Accountability is when decision-makers and other officials are answerable for their actions, and "there is [redress](#) when duties and commitments are not met."

TAI describes accountability as "an arena of challenge, contestation and transformation." It's a four-stage process that starts with setting standards for transparent behavior and then moves on to determine if the behavior is meeting those expectations. If there are questions, people usually answer them, explain their thinking or defend their actions based on whether they've received critical or positive feedback. Finally, people are recognized, rewarded or sanctioned for behavior that achieves, exceeds or falls short of expectations for transparency.

Transparency is the goal, and accountability is the checkpoint for its success.

Number One Benefit of Transparency for Companies

Transparency builds trust – among your leaders and teams, your customers, partners, vendors, investors and other stakeholders of your organization. Survey after survey confirms it.

Companies enjoy increased advocacy, loyalty, engagement and commitment when their employees trust them.

80% of workers want to know more about how decisions are being made by their employers.

94% of all consumers are more likely to be loyal to a brand that commits to full transparency.

Have you been wondering how to increase levels of trust within your company?
Your answer: Transparency.

Top Three Focal Points of Earning Trust Through Transparency

1. Focus on authenticity.

Be clear about who you really are. Always stay true to yourself. Be accountable for your actions. When you make commitments to customers, employees, partners, investors and other stakeholders, they will hold you to a higher standard, especially in today's leadership environment. You want them to focus on the real you and connect with that strength — every time they take to social media, review sites, discussion forums and industry stages to share their opinions of your organization.

2. Focus on thought leadership.

When you share your knowledge, insight and expertise to benefit others, you can contribute to transformative conversations, improve credibility of your brand, build influence among your peers and earn the trust of others. Thought leaders are masters at guiding their audiences with messaging that wins their admiration.

3. Focus on sharing knowledge.

You can create real value for others when you focus on educating them rather than selling to them. Your knowledge share enables people to make better choices when it comes to partnering, investing, buying from or championing your organization or your causes. This will help you create better opportunities for relationship-building and earning trust.

More Ways to Practice Transparency in Business

4. Believe transparency is valuable.

When leaders convince their employees that transparency is valued and expected across the entire organization, it demonstrates trust, respect and value for the whole workforce in return. Quite the motivator!

5. Revealing some company secrets could be a superpower.

Some experts say [transparency is the gold standard](#) in The New Age of Work™. That means companies have a lot to gain from sharing information, like how diverse their workforce is to where they source materials. It enables employees who want more happiness and consumers who make decisions based on it.

6. Let open communication be your mantra.

Open, communicative and inclusive leadership inspires other team members to share information, too. That information may include anything from:

- Innovative ideas,
- Finding gaps in the process,
- Asking questions like, “Why do we do it this way?”
- New processes to improve workflows,
- Or feedback during performance reviews.

When people trust that they can express their thoughts safely among leaders and other team members, your company will thrive.

7. Aim for smart transparency.

Be careful not to jeopardize your intellectual property, proprietary information, trade secrets and anything else that makes your company unique in the name of transparency. Consider implementing confidentiality agreements to discourage too much transparency.

8. Tell the whole story about your business experiences.

Be candid about the ups and downs of your work. Use those experiences to paint a complete picture of your company, warts and all. Every mistake, setback, failure, triumph, closed deal, happy customer, industry award, excellent review — and the story behind them — helps humanize your company and makes it easier for your customers to connect to your greatness.

9. Keep the good and the bad in perspective.

Whether the information is favorable or not, don't hesitate to share it all. Keeping people up to date with the latest company news will crush the rumor mill and keep a culture of gossip at bay. Plus, your open evaluation of where the company stands at all times can win over employees and customers alike, especially when it comes to building trust.

10. Apply open-book leadership practices.

An open approach and a willingness to explore new ideas no matter where they come from can create a culture where team members think and plan for the company in the same way that leaders do. This enables true collaborative relationship-building, meaningful discussion and more honest communication.

11. Use your company's core values as your guide.

Creating and following a set of core company values that include concepts like openness and integrity will guide all decision-making and keep transparency top of mind. Documenting core values and making them accessible to the entire workforce makes it Almost Easy™ for everyone to understand and follow them. There are even software systems that can [help you do that](#).

12. Define the intent behind transparency policies.

Be aware that the unsavoriness of a toxic work environment like political maneuvering, backstabbing, offensive behavior and harassment can live under the auspices of "just being honest." To alleviate this pain, introduce company values early and reinforce them constantly through internal communications and activities.

Make sure workers understand what constructive communication means, the exact limits and boundaries and what to expect from others in the company. Present core values within a value framework; this helps people see each value's relationship to the next. This discourages restless minds from thinking they have free reign with the intent of transparency in your workplace.

13. Get everyone to care about company performance.

Being fair and truthful with your employees contributes to better experiences for your customer. Why? Because they will care how they're able to create better customer relations and help the company succeed and grow.

14. Use surveys to measure openness.

Surveys are a great way to gauge the perception of business transparency, whether you're surveying employees, customers or other stakeholders. Ask questions about company integrity and goodwill, types of communication, what transparency means to people, information disclosure and overall [trust](#). From the compiled data, you can see trends that shed light on goal-setting options, areas of improvement, policy changes or whether you're headed in the right direction.

15. Attract the right people for the right seats.

[Recent survey research](#) reveals that 87% of workers hope their next job will be transparent. People want to work for ethical companies, now more than ever. That elevates transparency as an aspect of [company culture](#) to a new level.

16. Inspire better performance.

Transparent companies are more open to decentralizing strategies for decision-making to include team members along with leaders. That means more and more employees are encouraged to act on new ideas without waiting for approval from leadership. It could be a game-changer for creating extraordinary value and elevated outcomes.

17. Recognize people's hard work.

When successes are recognized, leaders and team members are [always happier and more engaged](#) with their hard work. They feel more valued and trusted.

18. Make pricing a way to highlight your company's value.

Not only should you try to disclose the truth about your pricing, but you should also present it in an understandable way, so it's easy to see how you're creating value for the customer.

Frequently Asked Questions About Business Transparency

"What does transparency in business mean?"

"Being transparent" means being open and honest about sharing information that relates to your organization's mission, [core values](#), processes, sourcing, pricing and performance. Transparent companies communicate clearly with all stakeholders about all their operations, no matter their status. They're upfront about the challenges as well as successes and rewards.

Companies must extend these policies to all their employees and stakeholders for true business transparency (and to [build a culture of trust](#)).

“Why is transparency important in business?”

Business transparency is essential for establishing and nurturing trust and goodwill among various stakeholders, including leaders and teams, customers, partners and investors. It’s a way to build recognition for your company as one that values openness and honesty in communication, operations and creating value.

“What does transparency mean in the workplace?”

Creating an open and inclusive environment at work encourages everyone to share information about direction, strategies, values and performance. In turn, leaders and team members will be happy to work for a company that helps to improve relationships and enable more trust among all stakeholders. When you create a culture of transparency, everyone knows what they are working toward, and they can find suitable opportunities, create value and deliver results.

“How is transparency practiced in business?”

Leaders practice transparency with four different groups of collaborators:

1. Employees

Transparency is practiced through open communication among workers at all levels. This can include honest, two-way discussions with team members and peers about company mission, strategy and objectives, potential challenges, individual and companywide performance and how to create value for stakeholders.

2. Customers

Companies make available to customers relevant and accurate information about their brands, products and services. They respond to customer questions, reviews and other feedback quickly and honestly. They acknowledge customer concerns and company mistakes, working fairly to alleviate pain points. This can result in an improved experience and more brand loyalty from customers, as well as increased employee satisfaction.

3. Vendors

Transparency among organizations and their suppliers is enabled by clear communication about sources of materials or labor. This promotes productive [working relationships](#) and ensures ethical supply chains that are constantly audited by consumers, government entities and NGOs.

4. Investors and shareholders

Transparency is practiced when companies make informative, accurate and independently audited financial information accessible to investors, like pricing, performance levels and financial reports.

“How do you show transparency in a business?”

What does transparency look like in your organization? Here are a few clues.

1. Using best practices for recruiting and hiring

Provide detailed job descriptions that include an accurate salary range, often [the most important part](#) for candidates. During the interview process, have open discussions and clear answers to candidates’ questions. Afterward, seek out timely and honest communication from recruiters.

2. Prioritizing performance reviews for career development

Evaluating performance more frequently enables leaders and team members to include [timely goals](#), current projects and peer evaluations in the discussion. This can provide a clearer and more accurate picture of an employee’s performance multiple times throughout the year. It can also support and improve their engagement.

There are even tools that can help facilitate two-way feedback between employees and leaders, like Ninety’s [Feedback](#) tool.

3. Opening up about company performance and future plans

Support your employees’ trust in the company by being open with them about organizational performance and plans for the future. Rather than anxious speculation, workers will take on a sense of pride and ownership and will likely feel more engaged.

Tracking this data and making it accessible to everyone in the organization through something like Ninety’s [Scorecards](#) can encourage company-wide accountability toward hitting future goals.

4. Implementing good processes for group projects

Transparency in group projects is seen when leaders provide [documented processes](#) for working together. These include effective collaboration methods, setting [measurable goals and expectations](#), working towards achievable outcomes

and providing accessible outlets for feedback for leaders, teams, service providers and other stakeholders.

Transparency and mutual trust go hand-in-hand. So to create a culture of genuine trust and goodwill in your organization, improving transparency will be the first and most important step you take. Find out how Ninety can help you immediately and easily improve company-wide communication and transparency with [a comprehensive system of tools](#).

THOUGHTS & NOTES

One-on-One Meeting Guide for Small Businesses [Remote]

Written by [Team Ninety](#) | Apr 19, 2022 5:57:13 PM

What is a one-on-one meeting, how do you run one, and why is it important for growth and trust? Here's everything you need to know about one-on-one meetings – including how [Ninety's Feedback tool](#) makes it easy to run one-on-ones, even remotely.

What is a One-on-One Meeting for Managers and Remote Teams?

This is a comprehensive action plan for small businesses on how to run a good one-on-one meeting.

If you want to:

- Establish two-way trust between a leader and each member of their team,
- Act on potential challenges faster,
- And build better teams...

Then you'll love this guide, whether you work in a hybrid environment, in-person, or as a remote team. Let's get started.

What's Covered in This Guide

Click on each link to jump to that section.

- [What is a One-on-One Meeting?](#)
- [What Do You Talk About in a 1-on-1 Meeting?](#)
- [How Often Should You Have 1-on-1s?](#)
- [What is the Purpose of a One-on-One Meeting? Why Have Them?](#)
- [How One-on-One Meetings Work](#)
- [How to Use Ninety to Run Your One-on-One Meetings](#)
- [How to Prepare for a One-on-One Meeting](#)
- [1:1 Meeting Agenda Checklist](#)

- [8 Ways to Make 1-on-1s More Meaningful](#)

What is a One-on-One Meeting?

A 1-on-1 meeting is when two people in an organization meet regularly for mutual feedback and updates. Broad topics that are typically discussed can include work, performance, what motivates them, development opportunities, career growth, and more. It's a platform for two people to build a stronger working relationship.

People refer to this type of meeting in different ways. You'll hear people call it:

- "One-on-one"
- "1-on-1 meeting"
- "One-on-one meeting"
- "Face-to-face"
- "1:1 meeting"
- And other similar variations of the term

No matter your preference, they all mean the same thing.

One-on-ones are most often scheduled between a team leader and a team member as a way to connect and stay engaged with one another. They can also occur between a teammate and a mentor, a team member and an executive leader (called a "[skip-level 1:1](#)"), or a teammate and an intern.

A one-on-one meeting is unlike any other type of meeting. That's because it's a time dedicated to open-ended conversations, coaching, discussing, offering opinions, mentoring, and other communication that helps to keep each person informed, resolve issues, and give feedback that helps them grow in their roles.

"A [one-on-one in Ninety](#) is purely a performance conversation, not a pay conversation," says [Kris Snyder](#), [Ninety coach](#) and founder of [Impact Architects](#). "We separate the two so leaders and direct reports can give and get better feedback on performance without being distracted by talk about compensation. This is critical for mutual growth."

With Ninety's [Feedback](#) tool, build face-to-face conversations that also integrate with that employee's goals, roles and responsibilities, and more — all inside one platform. [Try it for free now](#).

What Do You Talk About in a 1-on-1 Meeting?

According to a [recent survey](#) on one-on-one meeting topics:

- 75% of leaders and team members talk about **growth and development**
- 73% discuss the status of **specific projects**

- 70% want to **understand and eliminate roadblocks**
- 61% get a **pulse check** on how they're feeling about work right now
- 56% discuss **employee performance**
- 49% talk about the level and strength of their **motivation**
- 47% explore their **connection** to work and other people in the company
- 45% talk about things related to **accountability** and autonomy
- 23% want to know how they relate to the company's **vision and mission**

Understanding how to run a good one-on-one meeting starts with laying the groundwork for [trust](#) between two people and forging a productive [work relationship](#) together. Rather than using a standardized formal approach, one-on-one conversations are personalized for the people having the meeting. [Creating a custom agenda](#) is the way to go.

These simple guidelines can help:

1. Set a goal for every one-on-one meeting.

By collaborating on [a goal](#) that's relevant to your relationship, both of you will get more value out of the meeting. A goal can be broad, like career growth. It can be personal, like a pulse check on how you're feeling about things. Or it can be a check-in on work in general. Or a share session about what motivates you to pursue your passions. Once you determine the thing you're going to talk about, you can create the meeting structure with agenda items around your goal.

2. Use conversation starters (called "[Segues](#)" in [Ninety Meetings](#)).

Start a 1:1 meeting in a way that keeps you both relaxed and receptive. It could start by asking a question about a mutual pastime, a new hobby, a long-held interest, anything that helps create a [psychologically safe environment](#). It means people can feel free to share meaningful personal information without fear of bad consequences to their self-image, [role, or responsibilities](#).

A conversation starter does not mean "small-talk" about the weather or the weekend. What works better to [break the ice](#) are discussions that help you learn more about each other and segue smoothly into the main goal of the meeting.

3. Avoid too much status update talk.

When updates on specific projects dominate a one-on-one meeting, there's no time to develop a rapport that builds lasting trust. [Use consistent feedback](#) instead.

[Recent research by Gallup](#) on the global work environment finds that when people receive consistent feedback, it helps them connect emotionally and psychologically to their work and to their place of work. So including performance feedback as part

of 1-on-1 agendas can inspire higher levels of productivity and higher quality outcomes.

“Meeting one-on-one helps establish a really good connection between a leader and a team member that simply can’t evolve during the course of daily work. You need that opportunity to be able to see how a team member is doing, a platform for them to bring any issues to the surface that they may not discuss otherwise. [Ninety](#) helps you do this.”

-Zack Swire, Founder & Coach, [Top Teams](#)

How Often Should You Have 1-on-1s?

How often to have a one-on-one meeting depends on what will work for both people on a regular basis. The frequency and length are really up to you, based on the relationship. The important thing is to get accustomed to meeting regularly for this purpose.

Another consideration for scheduling is the number of people one leader needs to meet one-on-one. Everyone needs to be accommodated within a schedule you can live with.

[Ninety](#) recommends that a leader and a direct report schedule a one-on-one meeting [at least once a quarter](#), frequent enough without losing a connection with someone. If monthly is a better frequency, make it a once-a-month occurrence. Increase the number of meet-ups if you need more.

Research from [Google](#) reveals that the frequency of 1-on-1 meetings can make a difference in performance. The more frequent one-on-ones are, the better the outcome. [Leaders who were surveyed](#) report that their sweet spot for 1:1 meeting frequency is every week. The preferred meeting length is 30 minutes.

Other things to consider when deciding on a 1:1 meeting schedule:

- Nurture a new relationship with more meetings and adjust the schedule when needed.
- Determine the number of topics you cover consistently during each meeting and how much time it takes to get through them. If the meetings run long or you stop them without getting through all agenda items, adjust the meeting schedule to accommodate meaningful discussion.
- Schedule one-on-ones at a frequency and length that allows you to discuss things that come up between meetings.

What is the Purpose of a One-on-One Meeting? Why Have Them?

The number one reason for one-on-one meetings is to build better relationships at work.

One-on-ones are an opportunity to get to know all of your team members personally. Setting aside a specific time to talk face-to-face gives insight into what motivates them to pursue their aspirations for a career and how the two of you can work together to achieve them.

Leaders can make a difference in their team members' lives, which affects the health of the entire organization. Even though [at least half of employees](#) say they have left their seats because of toxic relationships with team leaders, a leader can affect an employee's engagement by an advantage of 70%, according to [Gallup](#). Leaders who meet regularly with their direct reports inspire them to be [three times more engaged](#) than those who don't. Having consistent one-on-ones is one of the keys to making work better.

In [a massive study](#) on how to improve workplace happiness and loyalty, survey participants at all company levels say they are much more satisfied and happy at work – and in life; when the relationship they have with the person they report to is more like a partnership.

Good partnerships are one of the results of consistent 1:1 meetings. Partnerships can help:

- [Create trust between two people](#).
- Resolve issues before they fester into problems.
- Identify expectations relating to [roles and responsibilities](#).
- Guide a person's career development.
- Coach someone with improving their personal skills.
- [Keep productivity high](#).
- Improve [team member retention](#).
- Learn how to improve in your own role.
- Keep people happy and satisfied at work.

Other reasons for conducting consistent one-on-one meetings include:

- **Discovering potential problems faster.**

There are bound to be issues that arise when working as a team. When people feel free to discuss them in a regular private conversation with no fear of retribution, team members can monitor situations and act quickly to shut down any negative consequences.

- **Freely discussing and analyzing performance.**

One-on-one meetings allow you to keep an eye on [a team member's performance](#) in the context of daily responsibilities and their role in creating value for the company. When people meet weekly for 1-on-1 meetings, questions about performance are top-of-mind. Also, the information can fuel better [annual](#) performance reviews later on.

- **Expressing thanks more often.**

Regular one-on-ones allow people to easily [recognize great work](#) right when it's happening. Common feedback among team members is that they don't hear positive feedback often enough. One-on-one meetings are an ideal place to do more than pointing out places where a person could correct behavior or performance.

When people engage in regular one-on-one meetings, it benefits the company. Overall success and creating value are built on solid collaborative effort among leaders and team members. It [builds a culture of trust](#), [improves productivity](#), and keeps everyone invested in achieving growth for the organization.

"Making trust easier to see, understand, measure, and build is one of our primary objectives."

-[Mark Abbott](#), Founder and CEO of Ninety.io

How One-on-One Meetings Work

How do you conduct a one-on-one meeting? Here are six common attributes of a good 1:1 meeting:

1. They're scheduled regularly.

They should appear as a recurring meeting on your calendar. Weekly, monthly, quarterly – the two of you decide.

2. There's a 1:1 with everyone on a team.

Each member gets face time with the leader, which improves trust, accountability, engagement, and outcomes.

3. Typically they're 30 minutes long.

Any shorter and there won't be time for feedback. Any longer and they may become cumbersome, which is something no one looks forward to. But it's not a hard length. Again, the two of you decide.

4. Their agendas are personalized.

They're based on the relationship of the two people who meet. This allows for open discussions and honest feedback, every time.

5. They're a place to ask questions, listen, and coach.

Each participant gets to absorb information like feedback so they can improve performance, be more productive, and grow within their roles.

6. There's always time to take notes.

Documenting what gets discussed – including any solutions – and making it available 24/7 lets the participants review, remember, and retain action items that are critical to success.

How to Use Ninety to Run Your One-on-One Meetings

The [Ninety](#) platform helps users think of a 1:1 meeting as hour-long conversations rather than typical reviews. This is how Ninety walks small business leaders and team members through the 1:1 meeting process. “It opens the door for thoughtful comments around the context of work,” Kris Snyder says. “You can talk about it openly, honestly, and discuss the ‘whys’ in a more meaningful way.”

During [1:1 conversations in Ninety's software](#), each participant selects their initial assessment from a multiple-choice menu. Then the two have time to comment more deeply on each response. A leader can explain their responses while a direct report can speak to their own behavior. Kris says, “This is one of the key ways Ninety helps leaders and team members give and get better feedback, which is critical for mutual growth.”

Participants have several types of conversations:

- About the company's core values. Participants have instant access to [core values](#) within [Feedback](#) via the [Vision / Traction Organizer™ \(V/TO\)](#).
- About employee performance. This is based on goal completion over the quarter. Participants can review any type of priority or goal associated with the direct report's seat in [Rocks](#), available within [Feedback](#).
- **About leadership performance.** This is a 360 approach to solicit feedback from a direct report on a leader's performance, based on five questions in two categories.

Compared to other 1-on-1 meeting template options, [Ninety's Feedback](#) tool not only saves time. “Having a predictable structure already built inside the operating system that both participants understand and anticipate, definitely frees up time,” Kris says. “It also allows each person to focus more energy on the comment section

of each conversation, which is where they find the most value in terms of accountability and trust.”

Keep all your one-on-one meeting notes accessible – and private – in the secure [Ninety platform](#). [Sign up for a 30-day trial now](#).

How to Prepare for a One-on-One Meeting

How should leaders conduct 1-on-1 meetings? How should team members view them?_

[Research shows](#) that nearly half of leaders agree that the responsibility of creating the meeting agenda should be shared between participants. However, 26% of leaders polled are solely responsible for how a one-on-one is conducted while about 20% of direct reports create the agenda on their own.

With [one-on-one meetings in Ninety](#), a direct report is in the driver’s seat, setting the stage for the 1:1. They choose the timing and the data of the conversation and then offer their feedback first during the meeting.

Leaders and team members should prepare for different responsibilities during a 1:1 meeting.

The leader should make sure the meeting atmosphere is psychologically safe. Open communication is the goal. Thoughts, opinions, and feedback can be shared freely and without judgment. This should be the expectation of both participants.

- Set the tone for the conversation by sharing your own views honestly in a relaxed, relatable manner.
- Realize there’s a limit to challenging people with too much feedback, good and bad. Use your meeting agenda to focus on one or two aspects of the person’s role or responsibilities.
- Come to an agreement with your direct report by acknowledging feedback and committing to act on it in a way that leaves things better than they were before.

The team member should make the most of 1:1s by using the time to get to know their leader. Since you have their undivided attention, take charge of the conversation.

- Get to know your leader’s [communication style](#) and what they expect of you.
- Express how you’re feeling about work, team dynamics, what you’re passionate about, and how you’d like to move forward within the organization.
- Tell leaders how and when they are helpful and effective.

- Identify the obstacles you're facing and how you can collaborate to overcome them.

1-on-1 Meeting Agenda Checklist

Ninety's [Feedback](#) tool is a great 1-on-1 meeting template that walks you through the entire process. It provides:

- A detailed meeting agenda.
- A meeting checklist.
- Intuitive ways to give and get mutual feedback.
- A record of everything discussed during the meeting so both people can refer back to it, quarter-over-quarter and year-over-year.

Ninety's Feedback tool initiates [Quarterly Conversations](#), which are one-hour, one-on-one meetings that occur every 90 days. They are an informal opportunity to share a conversation about what's working and what's not.

By keeping 1:1s purely performance conversations, Ninety's Feedback tool helps foster growth – for the leader, the direct report, the team, and the company overall.

Running a one-on-one within Ninety, leaders and their direct reports can easily analyze the data from the [Roles and Responsibilities Chart](#) every single meeting with an eye toward the future. "When people are crystal clear on expectations and conduct their work based on the right agreements, [accountability increases](#)," Kris says.

Ninety's quarterly conversations are a way to improve trust within an organization. "We regularly talk about the components of trust," Kris says. "Like character, which we explore through our core values conversation. Another is the depth, frequency, and duration of our connection. How deep do we go? How much are we interacting? Are we spending enough time talking about everything we need to talk about to achieve great outcomes? It's a discipline we are developing that the Ninety software supports."

Participants can document meeting notes for any one-on-one meeting with the Feedback tool and have them available to review during the meeting. People can also prepare thoughts for this conversation by filling out forms and then bringing these notes to the meeting.

Another Way to Have a One-on-One Meeting in Ninety

When two people require a private setting to conduct a meeting one-on-one, they can set up [Private Teams](#) on Ninety. Having a 1:1 meeting through private teams ensures the privacy people need and still have access to the [full suite](#) of Ninety tools to help facilitate and support the discussion.

Private teams can access the same functionality within Ninety as other teams. The private team members can create [Rocks](#), schedule [Meetings](#), add [Issues](#), and assign [To-Dos](#) that are not accessible to anyone else. This makes these one-on-one tool capabilities so desirable and effective for meetings meant to be private. Private teams also have access to public data and functionality within Ninety, such as [Scorecard](#) trends.

8 Ways to Make 1-on-1s More Meaningful

No matter what role you have in your company, you can get more from one-on-one meetings by doing these eight things:

1. Prepare before the meeting.

Help everyone understand the context of one-on-one meetings. Explain what they are and why they're scheduled. Do it in a [weekly meeting](#). Write a follow-up email or message to each team member that includes:

- A meeting invite.
- Schedule details moving forward.
- A review of the process.
- General meeting goals, such as a list of broad topics to collaborate on.
- How to personalize agenda items.
- Shared expectations. This can include starting on time, avoiding canceling or rescheduling, coming prepared to talk, etc.

2. Agree to be [transparent](#).

Be open and honest as you communicate. People can usually tell if you're holding something back. You both can learn from standard details and positive ideas as well as information that may be uncomfortable to hear. Think before you react. Show you're open to criticism.

3. Prepare and share every agenda before each meeting.

Get three to five questions down as agenda items. Let people know what they are before they come to the meeting. This gives people time to think about solutions so they're ready to discuss answers at meeting time. It also helps make the time you have together efficient and effective.

4. Choose the preferred way to meet.

People like to meet in person. But if this isn't always possible, such as with [remote teams](#) or in [hybrid work environments](#), have a dedicated tool for meeting face-to-face with each team member. Consider video conferencing, phone calls, and other ways to have a private conversation where you can see and hear the other person.

5. Be ready, willing, and able to listen, most of the time.

[Active listening](#) is critical for [communication that drives success](#) in your workplace. Embrace moments of silence. They're great for thinking. Experts say talking less than 50% of one on one meeting time is a good gauge. Ask questions that require more than a yes or no answer. Before answering yourself, wait for a response.

6. Ask questions on the fly.

New thoughts and insights are rarely scripted. When a question comes up naturally in the conversation, ask it! There's no better time than during one-on-ones.

7. Make sure feedback is part of every meeting.

Learn something you didn't know every time you meet. Make it a regular agenda item. Ask for and give thoughts, opinions, knowledge, or subject matter expertise. This supports the safe space you're creating to [build the trust and transparency](#) necessary to make work better.

8. Keep everything in one place.

Use a cloud-based, integrated platform like [Ninety](#) to keep all agendas, notes, next steps, and summaries in one place and accessible only to the one-on-one participants. Not only will this help with the prep work, but it will also make your meeting that much more effective. This not only makes it easy to keep track of conversations and stay organized, but it's also a snap to make notes of your decisions during the meeting and send them to each other later. Being able to look back and pull up details anytime holds each person accountable and keeps the conversation going until the next 1:1.

Now that you've learned about what a one-on-one meeting is and how scheduling regular 1:1s helps small businesses build better teams, it's time to put your knowledge into practice:

- Use Ninety's [Feedback](#) tool to set 1:1 agendas, provide mutual feedback, and document everything so that both participants can refer back to it, quarter-over-quarter and year-over-year.
- [Have one on one meetings with Private Teams](#) by navigating to "Teams" from "Settings," creating a "Private" team, and adding your members.

Want more step-by-step guides and actionable tips on how to run one-on-one meetings and why they're so important for enabling good communication? Subscribe below to the [Work from Anywhere](#) blog!

THOUGHTS
& NOTES