

How to Conduct a One-on-One Meeting

A Guide for Supervisors

Purpose: One-on-one meetings provide a consistent space to understand how your employee is doing, explore progress on key priorities, follow up on past conversations, and acknowledge contributions—all in service of forward momentum and deeper engagement.



Guiding Principles for One-on-One Meetings

One-on-ones are a simple but powerful leadership practice. These meetings are the employee's dedicated time with you, their supervisor, to connect, solve problems, celebrate accomplishments, and maintain a working partnership. They should be *consistent*, even if brief. When held regularly, one-on-ones can prevent small issues from becoming big problems—ultimately saving everyone's time by enabling early course corrections.



Mindset First: This Is *Their* Meeting

One-on-ones are led *with* the employee, not *at* them. It's a space for what matters most to them—not just what's top of mind for you. Your role: show up, tune in, and follow through.



Be Fully Present

Along those lines, show up for your One-on-One meetings ready to focus and fully engage. Demonstrate through your actions that this time with this employee is your number 2 priority for the allotted scheduled time. Mute your phone and limit any other distractions so you can be fully present.



Prepare, Don't Wing It

Your One-on-One meetings will benefit from some degree of preparation. Review notes from the previous meeting, come prepared to discuss any recent accomplishments (or challenges), and capture items for discussion will ensure the time is focused and meaningful for both of you.



Don't Cancel—Consistency Builds Trust and Momentum

It can be tempting to cancel or reschedule a one-on-one when things get busy—but resist the urge. Even a brief check-in has value. These meetings are often the only dedicated space where employees feel truly heard. Canceling sends the message that other priorities matter more than the person in front of you.

Remember: – A short meeting is better than none. – Small issues surface early when there's space to talk. – Skipping breaks the rhythm—and rebuilding trust takes longer. If you absolutely must reschedule, do so promptly and with care. Protecting this time shows your team they matter.

*Employees who meet regularly with their immediate supervisor
are 3 times more engaged than employees who don't!*



INNOVATIONS IN TRAINING

BUILDING STRONG LEADERS, TEAMS, AND ORGANIZATIONS

Sample Meeting Format

1. Personal Check-In (5 minutes)

Why it matters: Begin with connection before conversation. Asking how someone is doing sets the tone for a relationship that supports—not just oversees—their work.

Ask: – “How are things going—anything on your mind this week?” – “How’s life outside of work?” – “What’s been a recent win or challenge?”

Tip: Resist the urge to jump into status updates. This moment is relational, not transactional.

2. Progress Updates & Priorities (10–15 minutes)

Why it matters: This is your shared reality check. Are key projects on track? Are expectations clear? Are blockers identified?

Ask: – “What’s going well right now?” – “Any areas where you’re feeling stuck?” – “What are your priorities for the next week or two?”

Tip: Stay curious. Focus more on uncovering insights than giving directives.

Add additional topics customized to each employee. I recommend you include a sincere “thank you” as part of each One-on-One meeting.

3. Employee Input (5–10 minutes)

Why it matters: Growth follows voice. When employees guide part of the conversation, you’ll learn what truly drives (or drains) them.

Ask: – “What’s on your mind?” – “What would you like to talk about today?” – “Anything you’d like more support, clarity, or visibility on?” – “Where could we be working better—together?”

4. Closing the Meeting: Confirm & Capture

Before wrapping up, take a moment to confirm action items, decisions, and next steps. Confirm that the employee understands important details, such as budgetary constraints, timelines, or regulations. This last step ensures shared understanding and limits misperceptions or false assumptions that can later derail progress.

Say: – “Let’s recap next steps—what are you taking on, and what support do you need from me?” – “What’s your timeline for that?” – “I’ll make a note to check in on this next time.”

Why it matters: Documenting assignments, agreements, and key discussion points creates a reliable thread from one meeting to the next. It supports follow-through, reinforces accountability, and shows your employee that their time and input are valued.

Tip: *Keep a running log, notebook, or shared doc for each employee’s one-on-ones. It becomes a powerful tool for coaching, recognition, and performance conversations over time.*

Other Conversation Starters

If you'd like, you can rotate some of these additional topics into your One-on-One meetings to deepen your conversations. Allow the flow of your discussions to guide the areas you touch upon.

Follow-Up from Previous Conversations: Check in on ongoing assignments. Confirm or clarify follow-through on commitments. Ensure continuity of timelines and deadlines. "Last time you mentioned [X]—how's that going?" "What is the status of [Y]?"

Professional Development: Discuss the employee's professional goals and aspirations. Encourage the employee to identify training and development opportunities. Share growth and development opportunities that align with the employee's ambitions, strengths, and interests. "What skills would you like to grow in the next 6 months?" "Anything you'd love to get exposure to or learn?"

Feedback from Supervisor: Provide feedback on exceptional work performance and behaviors that positively contribute to the team environment. Offer insights into skills, talents, or strengths that help the employee succeed. Offer constructive input on areas that are lacking. You can also ask the employee: "Is there anything you'd like feedback on?" "How can I give feedback in a way that works best for you?"

Recognition & Appreciation: Offer a genuine "thank you" for exceptional work performance; identify any unique characteristics of this employee (attention to detail, patience, creativity). Demonstrate your appreciation for their contributions. Share any accolades you've received about the employee. You can also ask the employee: "What's something you've been proud of lately?" "Has anything gone unrecognized that I should know about?"

Energy & Engagement: Check-in on the employee's energy level. "How's your energy level this week?" "What's been energizing or draining lately?"

Team Collaboration & Dynamics: Check-in on relationships with other team members and the employee's sense of the culture and environment. "How are your relationships with others on the team?" "How's collaboration going with others?" "Any friction points or communication gaps I should know about?"

Upward Feedback: Demonstrate a growth mindset by seeking feedback from your employee. "Is there anything I could be doing differently to support you better?" "What's something I might not be seeing from where I sit?"

One-on-One Meeting Template

Supervisor Name: _____ **Employee Name:** _____
Date: _____ **Next Meeting:** _____

 **Reminder:** *This is the employee's meeting—your role is to listen, support, and coach with intention.*

Personal

Check-in

- Touch base with the person

Work

Progress Updates, Projects & Priorities

- Check-in on projects, tasks, & key priorities

Additional Discussions

Feedback, Kudos, Training, Team Dynamics

- Let additional topics emerge organically from your conversation

Employee Input

"What's on your mind?"

- Items to discuss, revisit, or explore further

Clarify and Capture

Recap next steps to ensure clarity

- Make sure you've documented relevant items for continuity and follow-up