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One-on-one meetings:

DRIVING A POSITIVE WORKPLACE CULTURE





What's the clearest sign of a healthy workplace culture? In one word:
communication.

Open, honest, and constructive communication within and between teams is the glue that connects people to your company's mission, objectives, and values and builds strong relationships that drive productivity.

It helps your people feel trusted and valued, motivated and engaged. And in today's competitive recruitment landscape, a healthy workplace culture and **flexible environment** have become key elements in attracting and retaining top talent. Professionals want to work for employers who listen to them, empower them, develop their skills, and support a healthy life-work balance.

So how can you improve your communication?

It's simple: with one-on-one meetings. They remain one of the most powerful tools for promoting and protecting a positive culture at your workplace. They provide managers with clear mentoring opportunities to develop their people's skills, give and receive feedback, motivate team members, get to know them on a personal level, and understand the challenges or barriers they face.

With those insights, managers can then work to respond to their team's needs and build a happier, healthier, and more productive environment.

In this guide, we'll explore how to shape effective one-on-one meetings that feed directly into positive **workplace values**.

What are one-on-one meetings?

One-on-one employee meetings are regular and scheduled check-ins or catch-ups between a team member and their manager, coach, or mentor.

While it can feel like we have more than enough meetings in our weekly calendars, one-on-ones remain the cornerstone of a strong relationship between a manager and their direct reports. By giving people a voice, a space to share, and the complete attention of a mentor, you empower them to develop their professional skills, share experiences and insights, and build a stronger relationship that drives productive and effective teams.





What is the purpose of one-on-one meetings?

There are many reasons to schedule regular one-on-one meetings across your organization. Chief among these is to maintain open and honest communication between professionals and within teams so that challenges can be resolved, projects delivered on time, and companies can maintain a **healthy workplace culture**.

1. **For most teams**, one-on-one meetings focus around one of three main purposes:
A status update, that looks at specific projects, how they are progressing, and the timeline for the work that lies ahead.
2. A **'temperature check'**, that reveals how engaged, happy, and fulfilled the team member is feeling, where the causes or triggers may lie, and how things could be improved.
3. A **challenges check-in**, which gives the employee a forum to share specific challenges with their manager in the hope that they can help resolve them.

Each of these purposes for one-on-ones are equally important, and it's not uncommon for feedback and discussion points to originate from either side of the conversation.

In fact, a meeting that starts down a certain path will often move in a different direction, as the space created gives people the freedom to talk about what really matters to them. A regular one-on-one can mean that a simple progress update uncovers **personal or work challenges** which may otherwise have remained unshared, affecting the individual and their team.

The benefits of one-on-one meetings

One-on-one meetings with managers can provide valuable insights into your **people's experiences at the company**. They can also help you identify professional development opportunities or spot team members who are ready to move upwards or sideways in the organization.

Crucially, they reinforce a positive culture of open, honest communication that encourages problems to be shared before they get worse, and helps your people to feel trusted, listened to, and cared about.

There are benefits for everyone involved: the company, the manager, and the individual.

- **For the organization**
One-on-one meetings can help to build connections between day-to-day work and your company's wider values. Regular meetings reveal insights from different parts of your business that can feed into more effective strategic planning. They also build a network of trust within your teams, supporting stronger relationships that improve output and contribute valuable findings to the business.
- **For managers**
a one-on-one is an ideal opportunity to hone leadership, coaching and listening skills. By actively listening to their team members and providing guidance and feedback, managers will learn how to support them better and boost productivity and job satisfaction. This develops people on both sides of the discussion, improving the skills profile of your workforce.



- **For team members**

One-on-ones make a tangible difference to their performance, as increased engagement at work is directly linked to productivity. By providing an opportunity for them to feel seen and considered for career development opportunities or promotions, they will feel a stronger sense of connection and loyalty to your business

Creating an agenda for one-on-one meetings with employees

How do you start a one-on-one meeting?

Once you're in the swing of things with an employee, one-on-ones begin fairly seamlessly as a natural conversation. However, to start with, it can be useful to plan how you'll open the discussion, break the ice, and encourage the team member to open up about how they're feeling.

An effective opening is simpler than you might think—the key is to use an open question (like 'How' or 'What' that gives the employee a prompt to respond honestly. In turn, this will help you to steer the conversation towards what's important to them at that time, so that both parties leave satisfied that the meeting was useful, productive, and valuable.

Here are some examples of powerful opening questions for one-on-one meetings:

- What's on your mind at the moment?
- How are you getting on?
- How are things?
- How has this week been for you?

What should you talk about?

One-on-one meetings can cover wide-ranging topics, from specific work issues to stories from people's personal lives to more informal conversations that build a connection.

Here are some examples of powerful opening questions for one-on-one meetings:

- Have dedicated time to go through items on the person's to-do list and identify key priorities.
- Give and receive relevant feedback—in both directions.
- Support your people to help improve their development and performance at work by identifying relevant training or support they can benefit from.
- Discuss career progression or job transitions that the professional may be interested in.
- Motivate people to perform better at work by underlining their importance and value to the company.
- Connect on a personal level.
- Get a read on their job satisfaction and identify any specific areas of discomfort.
- Reduce barriers they may be facing, whether on particular projects, within the team, or regarding their working environment.
- Recap key meetings, discussion points, or timelines.
- Link their day-to-day work to the larger goals of your business.

Effective tips when preparing for one-on-one meetings

There are three main things to consider to **optimize remote one-on-one meetings** or in-person meetings.

#1 Stay flexible

The most important part of preparing for one-on-one meetings is to remain flexible. An effective meeting contains a clear structure but revolves around the key things that the employee wants to talk about whether or not they are aware of it.

The focus should be on the team member throughout, so maintain enough flexibility to cover topics that you both wish to discuss. Consider creating a **shared list** to track areas of discussion at upcoming meetings.

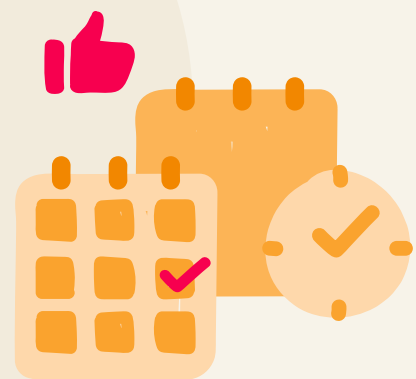
#2 Keep it informal

One-on-one meetings are all about building a strong, healthy interpersonal relationship, and people are most open when they're relaxed. So, consider a walking meeting or one that takes place over breakfast, lunch, or coffee. Encourage open discussion about the setting for your one-on-ones and experiment to find an informal dynamic that works for everyone.

#3 Create a regular schedule

Rather than relying on spontaneous meetings, it's important to maintain a regular calendar of updates. Depending on the nature of your business and working relationship, that might mean weekly, biweekly or monthly meetings.

Schedule these in and try your best to avoid canceling, as this can make the team member feel neglected.





Sample questions for one-on-one meetings

There are many **one-on-one meeting templates** out there, and they are a great resource for getting started on planning your next meeting.

Here are a few examples of topics for discussion and opening questions for your one-on-one meetings:

1. Check-in

- a. What's on your mind at the moment?
- b. How are you feeling?
- c. Is there anything specific impacting your happiness this week?

2. Work habits and employee performance

- a. How productive do you feel at the moment?
- b. What blockages are impacting your work?
- c. What time of day are you most productive?

3. Team collaboration

- a. Who inspires you in the team?
- b. Do you feel you receive enough feedback?
- c. Do you feel comfortable giving feedback to the team?
- d. Is there anything you wish you'd dealt with differently?
- e. How can we improve our collaboration?

4. Feedback

- a. Do you have any feedback for me?
- b. How can I better support you?

5. Engagement

- a. What in particular do you enjoy about working here?
- b. What do you wish you could improve to help you stay inspired?
- c. What projects have you enjoyed working on recently?
- d. Which has been your least favorite project?

6. The future

- a. Are you concerned about your role or career opportunities?
- b. What part of your job is most relevant to your long-term goals?
- c. What skills would you like to develop?
- d. Do you feel supported in your career development?

One-on-one meetings: The cornerstone of healthy communication

One-on-one meetings remain at the heart of a positive and productive relationship between managers and their direct reports. They are a key communication channel that builds **engagement**, trust, and loyalty, enhancing your people's commitment and supporting retention.

They are also a great way of gathering powerful insights into your **company culture** and the day-to-day running of your teams so that you can continue to build a happy, healthy environment that helps you achieve your strategic goals. So don't delay, start initiating one-on-ones today.



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For HR

it delivers automation of many common processes, allows greater oversight and visibility of the business, and centralizes all people data in a secure, user-friendly environment.



For managers

It provides access to data and insights to help them lead more effectively and streamline processes.



For employees

It's the tools and information they need to connect, develop, and grow throughout their journey.