



Get the most out of your one-to-ones



YOUR ESSENTIAL GUIDE

Learn how to ensure your meetings boost engagement, increase productivity and support employee wellbeing.

To help make your meetings run smoothly and ensure you're covering all the essentials, we've put together a helpful guide for what to do before, during and after your one-to-one meetings.



- ✓ **Prepare your meetings in advance**
- ✓ **Focus on the positives**
- ✓ **Be specific with your feedback**
- ✓ **Give your full attention**
- ✓ **Set goals with your employees**
- ✓ **Follow up and take action**

Before your one-to-one

If you're introducing one-to-one meetings to your team, or updating your processes to make your individual meetings more structured or frequent, you need to start by letting your employees know the purpose of these meetings, what they'll entail and why they are important.

Introducing a series of meetings to discuss performance without explanation will leave your employees feeling anxious and concerned. Make sure to explain the purpose of these meetings is to be able to talk about how things are going and how they are feeling so that you can provide support, instead of being anything negative.

Before your team's first meetings, discuss what they should expect, what to prepare and how it'll benefit not only them, but their manager too. By knowing what's coming and being able to prepare, employees will feel more comfortable and more open to the discussion.

Put a recurring meeting in both of your calendars. By having your one-to-ones scheduled in, the meeting will never come as a surprise. This way you'll both be able to get the most out of these meetings since your employees will always be able to think about what they would like to discuss in advance.

What to prepare in advance:

Both managers and employees should come prepared for one-to-ones.

For managers:

- ▶ Think about personal goals which the individual could be working towards, but which also align with wider team and company goals

- ▶ Think of ways the employee could get more involved with other teams or team members for further development
- ▶ Prepare ideas to boost engagement – for example: goals or objectives
- ▶ Draw up some ideas for training that could be beneficial for your employee

For employees:

- ▶ Ask employees to think about their future goals, both personally and professionally, and what they feel could help them to reach these goals
- ▶ Ask employees to think about what has gone well for them recently, and how they may be able to better collaborate with team mates
- ▶ Ask employees to think about any blockers and anything you as the manager may be able to do to better support them



During your one-to-ones

In your first meeting, it's important to start by asking what would make these meetings most useful for your employee. One-to-ones are there to help the employee after all, so you want to make sure that these meetings work for them.

Everyone works best in different ways so find what they would like to get out of the meeting and what would be most helpful for them. This way you can tailor the structure of your

one-to-ones to each employee and make them as useful as possible.

You also need to make sure your employee feels comfortable. It's possible they could be nervous during their first meeting, particularly if you don't already have a strong relationship. If this is the case, come prepared with some questions that will help you get to know your employee a little better and help to put them at ease.

One-to-one question ideas for managers:

Of course, one-to-ones can be just as daunting for managers as they can be for employees.

To help, we've put together some questions ideas to help you find out more about how your employee is doing:



- ▶ How have you been feeling lately?
- ▶ What are your current priorities?
- ▶ Is anything blocking you from achieving your short term goals?
- ▶ Have you faced any challenges recently – either from within the business or externally?
- ▶ Is there anything I could do to support you more?
- ▶ Is there any training you feel could help you to develop?
- ▶ How do you find the team culture?
- ▶ Do you feel that you are able to collaborate well with your teammates?
- ▶ How do you find the company culture?
- ▶ What are the next goals you would like to reach?
- ▶ What are you most interested in?
- ▶ Is there any feedback that you would like to give on the wider business?
- ▶ What motivates you?
- ▶ What demotivates you?
- ▶ What are you excited about working on?
- ▶ How are your projects going?
- ▶ What are your career goals? (Both short and long term)

During your one-to-ones

Tips for successful meetings

One-to-ones should be a place of positivity, not criticism.

It's important that these meetings help to drive future performance – rather than a place to focus on anything negative that may have happened in the past. At the end of the day, nothing can change the past, so dwelling on this will be a waste of both your time, and theirs.

It sounds simple, but don't forget 'how are you?'

It can be easy to get carried away in discussing projects and objectives – but it is crucial that these meetings also look beyond this.

Find out about your employee's wellbeing – and if anything within work is affecting this. If people feel that their workload is unmanageable or deadlines feel unachievable, it can greatly affect emotional wellbeing. As a manager, being aware of wellbeing can help to understand any issues with performance and you can work together to find a solution.

If there are ways your employee could improve, phrase these as pointers for future growth, rather than criticism.



Ask for feedback on your performance too

One-to-ones can be just as beneficial for a manager's growth as they are for their employees. By asking your employee how they think you are doing, you show that you value their opinion and want to improve. It also puts you in the same vulnerable position that they are being put in – which will be appreciated by your team.

Be sure to ask follow up questions

Listening is key to successful one-to-one meetings. By asking for more detail you can ensure you fully understand their response, but it also shows your employee that you're interested and want to hear more.

Follow up questions mean that you don't assume anything – and you come away from the meeting with a really clear understanding of how your employee feels.

Switch up your questions between meetings

It can be easy to fall into the trap of speaking about the same things each time, so it's important to ask different questions. By asking different questions you can uncover new challenges, issues or interests that may not be faced otherwise.

Be specific with your feedback

When giving feedback, the more specific you can be, the more you'll drive motivation. Praise – such as “The detail you put into your report last week was extremely insightful and helpful” – drives motivation to perform in the same way again. As opposed to “you're doing great” which despite being nice to hear, comes across vague and less meaningful.

Actively listen

This isn't just about speaking, it's about listening too. Don't be distracted with your laptop/phone – give your employees your full attention. Show it with your body language too – turn to face them and have eye contact. This is your employee's time, so make it clear you're invested.



Setting goals

One of the aims of one-to-ones is to drive and maintain high performance, so setting goals within these meetings is important.

During the meeting, come up with actions together that will be followed up on in the next meeting. They don't have to be short term goals that must be completed before the next meeting – instead, they can be actions for the long term, where progress can be measured over time.

Agree on the goals together, you want to ensure they are achievable so as to not become a demotivator. Focusing on goals with learning opportunities is best – these goals will help to boost performance, rather than simply putting their existing skills to the test.

Be sure to record the goals and share them with your employee after the meeting.

Remember to explain the purpose of these goals: they're here to help employees to grow, not cause your employees undue stress. Explain that goals are 'goals', which means sometimes they might not succeed in getting the results over the line. Discuss what that means too. Talking about potential failure can remove some of the stress and allow your employees to simply focus on doing their best.



After the meeting



Take note

It's important that you come out of this meeting with notes of any challenges your employee is facing, and how they would like to receive support.

If you have one-to-ones on a less regular basis, send over a quick recap including any action items for next time.

Follow up

Most importantly of all, you need to act on the things you discussed during the meeting. If no action is taken on the back of these meetings, they quickly become pointless. If you said that you would set up training for your employee, arrange it. If they asked for recommendations on further reading materials, send a list over as soon as possible.

By quickly following up on your discussions, you show your employees you were listening and what they said was important to you. It also shows your employees that one-to-ones are valuable for them.



Finally, use these meetings to build stronger relationships

Don't make your one-to-ones the only time you catch up with your team members. One-to-ones should help to build stronger relationships so try to build these further and let your employees know that they can come to you whenever a problem arises, rather than having to save everything for the one-to-one.



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