

THE IMPORTANCE OF ONE-ON-ONES

One-on-ones are usually considered a bit of a waste of time and many, employees and managers alike, have bad experiences to share. But that is not because the basic concept of one-on-ones is somehow flawed, but rather because most managers don't know how to build a successful one-on-one.

These little meetings are at their best a team building exercise and something that can save the team from a lot of hassle later. This is because the short meetings can help the team to solve and focus on these key things:

STREAMLINE PERFORMANCE

One-on-ones make it easier to correct performance. They guarantee you catch the minor errors in the work and the meetings allow correction of these errors before the problems turn into bigger issues. They also make it easier to reward the employee, which in itself will help boost team morale.

ENSURES THE TEAM IS ON THE SAME PAGE

In a hectic work environment it is easy to lose sight of the big goal sometimes. One-on-ones make it easier to ensure people are always aware of the priorities and goals, guaranteeing the whole team is working towards the same goal.

BUILDS RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THE TEAM

A good work team requires good relationships within the team. Building a relationship is much easier with regular contact with the team members. Successful meetings increase trust and can instantly make it easier to solve difficult situation.



Working in a team requires much more than pure focus on the job at hand. As the work environment entails people, it is crucial to ensure each individual is appreciated and noticed. By investing in the wellbeing of the team members, as well as the efficiency of the project, managers make it more likely the employee also wants to guarantee the company succeeds.

THE ELEMENTS TO MAKE ONE-ON-ONES A SUCCESS

Since one-on-ones are crucial for the success of the company, how can you guarantee you are doing them the right way? Firstly, understanding the importance of these meetings is already an important step to building a great one-on-one.

Secondly, you want to focus on the elements that create a culture of good one-on-ones at the workplace. The below is a collection of these elements and they are a great guideline for any manager looking to add more meaning to one-on-ones.

Prepare in advance

Don't treat one-on-ones as a meeting that just happens. Although the conversation should be relaxed and open to new directions, it doesn't mean you don't need to prepare for it.

You need to have a list of the most important things you'd like to go through and it's a good idea to prepare feedback for the employee.

Plan enough time for the one-on-one meeting

The meeting should ideally last at least 30 minutes. This ensures the conversation doesn't feel rushed, but you also don't want it to be longer than needed.

Make sure you organise the one-on-ones when you have enough time at hand. If you or, indeed, the employee feels too stressed with other tasks, it might hinder the effectiveness of the meeting.

Let your employee run the one-on-one meeting

The meeting should never be about the manager, but about the employee! Even though you need to prepare for the meeting, you need to ensure the meeting's focus is on the employee.

This highlights to the employee that you, as a manager, truly value their opinion and it ensures the employee also comes prepared for the meeting. So, always tell the employee you want them to run the meeting beforehand!

Ask questions and listen to your employee

You must listen to your employee – do not get into a meeting with pre-set mind. Be open to their ideas and ask questions about their experience.

This helps you understand the person better and helps build a stronger relationship.

Keep the meetings regular

One-on-ones shouldn't be an occasional meeting that mostly happens when things aren't going well in the company. The more regular the meeting, the better the team's work ethic will be.

Hold your meetings regularly and don't get into the habit of cancelling them! You don't want the employees to feel the meetings aren't important.

Total dedication and presence during meeting

Today's workplace can be quite hectic, but the dangers of multitasking are becoming more evident. When you are holding a one-on-one, make sure you dedicate all of your time and focus to the meeting. Don't answer the phone or check your e-mails while you are at the meeting!

Don't forget notes or follow-throughs

Remember to use the one-on-one as an opportunity to improve the company and the team spirit. Always take notes of what the employee is telling you to ensure you can check if the ideas are worth implementing.

In addition, don't forget to send an e-mail or other such note about the meeting to your employee. This can be a compilation of the points discussed at the meeting and ideas for the next meeting.

Make the employee the priority of the meeting

Above all, the employee needs to be the priority of the meeting. The one-on-one isn't about your company or the goal at hand, it is about helping the employee to succeed. If your employee succeeds, your company will succeed.

SAMPLE QUESTIONS A MANAGER SHOULD BE ASKING AT ONE-ON-ONES

What would you like to focus on at this meeting?

As mentioned above, you want the employee to lead the conversation and so it is a good idea to ask the above question. It helps to kick start the conversation and you can focus your own follow-up questions accordingly.

How did last week go? What did you learn during last week?

You want to ask about the employee's workweek to make sure you see how well they are doing. Their answer can tell you a lot about the way they prepare for the work and point out any problems they might have.

You also want your employees to be constantly improving their skills and asking about what new they have learned can help you streamline your management style as well to support their development.

How are your preparing for the week ahead?

As well as asking about what the employee has done, you also want to focus on the future. Ask about their plans and give tips if they seem lost.

What has inspired and motivated you in the past week?

Keep asking about the employee's inspiration and motivation. This can help you ensure your employees feel motivated and rewarded.

What are your biggest concerns now? How would you solve them?

Make sure you also focus on the problematic areas of the work or the specific project. You also want to find out what your employee would do to solve the situation.

If you could change one thing, what would it be?

This doesn't necessarily even need to be about the workplace or the project. The answer can give you great insight into the employee's personality and focus.

What would you like me to help you with the most?

With this question, you can make your employee feel more appreciated. It tells them you have not let them to their own devices and the question can help you ensure your team members stay motivated.

Does the work you do meet your expectations? If not, why?

Your employee had a reason to seek employment with your company and you want to make sure you know what drove them to the position. Continue to keep asking whether they are satisfied with the position and the career and how you can ensure they stay happy.

How are you doing outside work?

Naturally, you need to also ask about their personal life. Once you get to know the person more, you can ask more direct questions like “How are the kids?” and “What did you do with your partner during the weekend?” Just ensure you don’t sound intrusive and don’t push the employee to talk about things they don’t want.

WHAT SHOULD THE EMPLOYEE BE ASKING?



But the manager shouldn’t be the only one asking questions. To make the most of the meetings, it’s crucial the employee also asks the tough questions.

Give the employee the below page a day before the scheduled meeting.

What are the key goals for you as a manager/business owner?

By understanding your manager’s goals, you can better focus on the right aspects in your own work. It is important that you are both aware of each other’s goals and dreams in the workplace.

How would you like me to improve my work?

As well as giving your own insight into improving your work, you also want to know what your manager thinks. Your manager might be able to point out things to you that you wouldn’t necessarily pick up yourself.

Do I continue to meet the company’s expectations?

You were most likely picked as the preferred candidate from a group of other people seeking employment and you want to know what made the company hire you. Keep asking questions that tell you whether you are still meeting these expectations and what the company would want from you in the future.

What can I be accountable for the next time we talk?

You want your manager to provide you tasks and goals. Take the initiative to ask about these instead of just assuming to know what they are.

How could I help the team this week?

You also want to make sure to ask about your role and responsibilities within the bigger team. It's a good idea to let your manager know you can help him or her deal with tricky situations and to help ensure every member in the team is doing their job correctly.

What challenge could I take to better my career?

You should also be aware of the career path your manager has taken and ask his or her insight into how you can improve yours. Your manager might be able to help you find challenges that give your career more focus and perhaps even help you find a position that better suits your ambitions.

How could you help me solve this problem?

If you have a problem at work, instead of just blurting it out, ask your manager for insights. This will make the issue seem like an obstacle you want to overcome rather than just a whine about the situation.

How are you doing?

Finally, you should also be interested in your manager's personal life. Don't forget to ask about his or her personal activities and goals, as this makes you both feel more at ease together.