

# 5 Simple Tips for Having a Successful One on One Conversation



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It's no secret that communication is key to good management. But good communication isn't always easy.

One-on-one conversations are a simple but effective way to improve communication with your employees and increase engagement.

In fact, **86% of highly engaged organizations** conduct one-on-one meetings between managers and employees.

However, just holding a **one-on-one meeting** isn't enough. In order to be effective, your meetings must add value and build the manager-employee relationship. Otherwise, they're just another meeting.

In this article, we will cover how effective one on one conversations can help your employees, teams, and business succeed by understanding:

- Why one-on-one conversations are important
- 5 simple tips for effective one-on-one conversations



## Why one-on-one conversations are important

One-on-one conversations are a crucial part of a manager's communication toolbox. Effective one-on-one conversations with employees can help you build a foundation of trust and collaboration with your team members as you work towards common goals. One-on-one conversations give managers the opportunity to:

- Discover employee goals and challenges
- Understand employee and team morale
- Identify opportunities to develop and train employees
- Provide and receive valuable feedback
- Create actionable roadmaps for improvement
- Share information about the organization and offer needed context for decisions
- Coach and mentor employees

In other words, having good meetings is not just about reviewing performance—it's about cultivating a relationship. One-on-one conversations are an important part of building those relationships so you can not only develop great talent but retain it.

Meeting with your employees regularly helps you understand how each person is motivated, what their strengths and weaknesses are, and their potential within your team and the overall organization. This allows you to lead your team more effectively as you personalize and customize your management style and decisions based on your unique team dynamics.

Managers that listen to, understand, and respect each team member can successfully empower their employees and leverage each individual's strengths to lift the entire team.

## 5 tips for successful one-on-one conversations

While holding one-on-one conversations is a good start, you also need to ensure they are actually effective. No one needs another meeting clogging up their schedule if it isn't adding value.

Follow these one-on-one conversation tips to stay on track and make the most of you and your employees' time.

### 1. Create a regular meeting schedule.

How often you hold one-on-one conversations will depend on the needs and workflow of your team. However, we found that 55% of highly engaged organizations hold 1:1s *at least once per quarter*.

Keep in mind that one-on-ones should extend beyond performance reviews. They are an opportunity to touch base with your employees individually and personally to understand what is working well, what you can do to support their success, and to provide needed context around decisions you or other company leaders make. Whatever cadence you choose, be consistent.

Add the meetings to your calendar on a regular schedule so they are routine and predictable. This will help your employees prepare for their one-on-ones and streamline the communication process.

**Pro Tip: Make your employees a priority.** Do not cancel one-on-ones unless absolutely necessary, and always reschedule as soon as possible. Actions speak louder than words, so failure to respect your employees' time shows you don't value them—no matter what you may say otherwise.

### 2. Listen to your employees.

Employees value a manager who respects them and listens to their ideas. Don't turn your one-on-ones into a lecture or presentation (or strictly a performance review). Instead, use this time to have an open dialogue with your team members. Give your employees time to share, report, and brainstorm with you.

A report by Salesforce found that employees who feel their voice is heard at work are **4.6 times more likely to feel empowered** to perform their best work.

Practice active listening by:

- Asking open-ended questions
- Seeking clarification
- Demonstrating concern
- Listening without mentally formulating your response while they are speaking
- Making eye contact and avoiding multitasking (hint: close your laptop and get off your phone)

When leaders practice listening and encourage true dialogue, they can build authentic relationships with their employees and discover crucial insights they might otherwise have missed.

### **3. Come prepared.**

One-on-ones are the perfect opportunity to check in with each employee and see how they're doing, what challenges they're facing, and what you can do to support them.

Familiarize yourself with the projects they're currently working on and the progress they've made already. Not only will this save time, but it will demonstrate you know and value their contribution from the start.

If you **have a specific agenda** or goal for your one-on-ones, prepare questions you want to cover in advance and gather any data or materials you'll need to reference. Communicate with your employees on what to expect for the meetings.

Don't forget that this is time for your employees to bring their ideas, concerns, and feedback to you as well. Ask them ahead of time what specific topics they want to discuss in your one-on-one.

When each person knows what to expect and comes prepared, the conversation will be more productive and less likely to veer off track.

### **4. Set and track goals.**

Only **20% of U.S. employees** strongly agree that they've had a conversation with their manager in the last six months about achieving goals.

That's a lot of potential left on the table. As a manager, you can use one-on-ones to bridge that gap and help your team members:

- Understand the company goals and vision
- Set achievable professional goals
- Align their goals with the organization
- Create a strategic plan to meet those objectives

One-on-one conversations can help you gain visibility into how your employees are progressing, identify roadblocks to their success, and create strategies to overcome or remove those challenges.

They are also a great time to share the company's overarching goals to provide context for the work your team is doing and help your employees develop goals that align with the organization's direction.

By focusing on your employees' goals and putting their work into context, you can empower them to succeed.

## 5. Focus on growth opportunities.

No one wants to feel stagnant in their job or career. Yet too often that is exactly what happens. In fact, a whopping **43% of employees feel unsatisfied** with their career path. And only **21% of employees** see opportunities for personal career growth at their organization.

Luckily, **managers can make a big difference**. Managers are in the perfect position to empower employees and create paths for growth and advancement. And one-on-ones are a chance to get to know your team members individually and work with each employee to set customized goals and development plans.

When you meet, don't focus solely on current performance metrics and short-term goals. Talk to your employees about the future.

- Where do they see themselves in a few years?
- What roles are they interested in?

Work together to identify opportunities to grow within the team and the overall organization and then create a plan for success.

As you practice listening and communicating with your employees through regular one-on-ones, you will build stronger relationships with your employees, leverage their unique talents effectively within the team, and empower them to succeed now and in the future.

Holding effective one-on-one conversations takes work, but the reward is worth it. Download our **Big Book of 350 One-on-One Meeting Questions** to drive effective manager-employee conversations.

