

Maximize Your One-to-One Meetings

Set a Regular Schedule

A regularly scheduled meeting sets the expectation for both you and the employee to make the time for your discussion. Be present and focused. Nothing will discourage employees more than a distracted manager who seems disinterested. If you're overloaded, reschedule rather than rushing through it to check it off your list.

Keep it Informal

Having an informal approach and setting encourages a more open dialog. Consider taking a walk, sitting outside, or even going out for lunch occasionally, rather than having the meeting across your desk.

Prepare Ahead of Time

Routine one-on-one meetings allow you to collect and prepare feedback on a regular basis. Although your discussions are informal, they have a purpose: to coach, mentor, and to manage performance problems. Your employees need your input and want to talk about things that matter to them (their careers, concerns, etc.).

Questions to Drive Employee Coaching and Professional Development

- **What are Some Positives Since Our Last Meeting?**

This is a great way to start the conversation. It gives employees a chance to highlight some of their recent successes and share any good news since you last met, giving insight into the employee's recent activities.

Even if you're having performance or behavioral issues with a given employee, beginning on the topic of success starts things off on a positive note.

- **Where Have You Struggled Since We Last Met?**

An important objective of one-on-ones is to identify roadblocks and to find ways to help your employee overcome them. Explore problems affecting your employee's ability to find success and take the time to identify steps to resolution.

Examples follow up questions:

- Do you clearly understand your priorities?
- Do you have enough support from your team/ coworkers / me?
- Has something changed that led to this challenge?
- Is there something you don't feel prepared for?

Asking your employee about the challenges they are experiencing is not just about productivity but also about identifying development opportunities. They may be struggling due to inexperience or lack of knowledge and understanding – use the discussion to discover potential training needs, mentoring opportunities, or development plans.

- **Have You Learned Anything New?**

Learning and development is crucial in building a sustainable organization that continues to grow. Take time to review your employee's learning opportunities and discuss what they've discovered in recent weeks or months.

By asking the employee what they have learned, you may open doors for their future development, encourage professional growth and reveal career interests that may not have been previously considered.

It should be a “red flag” if your employee is unable to identify examples of growth or says they don’t feel they are gaining new skills. An emphasis should be placed on employee learning – both for personal development as well as their engagement at work. If employees feel they are not learning or do not feel challenged, they may look elsewhere to fulfill their interests.

- **What Opportunities for Improvement Do You See for the Team? For You?**

Your employees may be the best source of fresh ideas for improving your organization. They’re the ones on the front lines, following the processes put in place, and who must find workarounds for problems you can’t see from your point of view. Involving your employees in these discussions boosts morale and creates ownership, as employees will feel their opinions matter and that they are part of the process.

In addition, asking your employee for ways in which they might be able to improve is an excellent coaching technique since the question forces them to think critically about his or her own performance. This isn’t intended to criticize your team member, rather an excellent way to promote a culture of continuous improvement and transparency.

- **How Can I Help?**

This might be the most important thing you can raise during a one-on-one meeting with employees.

Employees will often refrain from asking for help or support as they don’t want to tell their boss they’re struggling or can’t do something. However, just because an employee doesn’t ask doesn’t mean he or she has everything under control. Always include asking employees if they need assistance in your one-on-ones.

Example follow up questions:

- Are you clear on communication?
- Can I communicate more/less/differently?
- Is there something you need from me that I’m not providing?

- **How are Things Otherwise? How Are Things Outside Work?**

Great leaders are mentors to their employees, at work and in life. Whether or not your employee is open about their personal life is not important. What is important is that they recognize you as an outlet and confidant who cares about their wellbeing, should they ever want to talk.

Get the Most Out of Your Time

Go in prepared. Let the employee do the talking and use these questions to guide you to a well-balanced, open-ended dialog. Ultimately, these one-on-one sessions will develop your employees and keep you connected with how things are *really* going with your team.