

CONDUCTING
EFFECTIVE

1-ON-1 DISCUSSIONS



BENEFITS OF 1-ON-1 DISCUSSION

Regular 1-on-1 discussions between managers and team members not only strengthen relationships, but they also foster employee engagement, improve team productivity, and increase morale. Taking the time to have a purposeful check-in discussion shows that you care, and they're even more critical as many members of the workforce are returning to the office and during times of change. At the same time, it provides an opportunity to discuss progress toward work and career goals, personal/professional development, engagement, barriers/obstacles to performance, etc.

1-on-1 discussions do not replace the day-to-day discussions that take place between managers and team members.



FREQUENCY AND DURATION OF 1-ON-1s

There is no perfect solution regarding the best frequency for conducting these discussions. For roles in which there is a very high level of interaction between manager/supervisor and employee on a daily basis, a monthly 1-on-1 might be the right frequency. For other roles, weekly or every two weeks works best. During times of change, consider meeting more frequently.

Similarly, there is no single answer regarding the duration of the meeting. Depending upon the role and the meeting frequency, 20–30 minutes may be appropriate, but for others 45–60 minutes works best.



LOCATION MATTERS

Not all 1-on-1s need to take place in your office. Consider using a conference room, conducting the meeting over coffee, walking & talking, etc. It is important that you pick a location that will help direct reports feel comfortable discussing certain topics. As employees are returning to the workplace, seek opportunities to meet in-person rather than virtually.

TIPS AND CONSIDERATIONS FOR CONDUCTING EFFECTIVE 1-ON-1 DISCUSSIONS

1 PICK A TIME AND STICK TO IT.

If you must cancel a meeting, do your best to reschedule the meeting promptly. Frequent canceling sends the message that you do not value the meeting.

2 BUILD THE AGENDA TOGETHER.

While you may have suggestions for recurring topics, it is important for your direct reports to contribute to building the agenda so that they also have ownership in the conversation. In other words, the agenda needs to include topics that are important for them to discuss. Remember, that while it is important to have an agenda, you need to be flexible when unplanned topics come up. These unplanned topics often end up being very important. Potential agenda topics include:

Reconnect/Check-In: Take a minute or two to simply see how the other person is doing and for you to share how you are doing. Also, check in on things like well-being, work/life balance, psychological safety in the workplace, etc.

Action Item/Commitments Follow-Up: Following up on action items/commitments from previous 1-on-1s ensures accountability for you and your direct report.

Review Individual Performance: Discuss trends and patterns in both behavior and results. Have your direct reports share behaviors and results/outcomes that they are proud of. As appropriate, provide positive and/or constructive feedback. Ideally, feedback was also provided prior to the 1-on-1. During the performance review, spend time discussing future performance. Discuss how your direct report can maintain high levels of performance or what actions can they take to improve results. Finally, identify barriers/obstacles to performance.

Career plans/personal development: Take time to discuss both short-term and long-term growth plans and follow up to discuss how the plans are progressing. Depending upon the role, you might not discuss this topic during every 1-on-1, but review it frequently enough that it doesn't become an afterthought.

Potential questions to ask include:

- What are some skills you would like to develop?
- What other strengths or skills do you have that you feel are not being utilized?
- What are some experiences you would like to gain?
- What do you enjoy most and least about your job?
- What projects would you enjoy working on, and why?
- If you were in charge of our next team project, what would you do differently?

Upward Feedback: Use this opportunity to solicit feedback to help you and the organization improve. Potential questions include:

- How can I better support you and the team?
- What can I do to improve communications?
- How can I help you feel empowered in your role?
- What changes can be made to help you optimize your day?
- What concerns do you have about returning to the office?
- What do you need to feel safe in the office?
- What do you need to do your best work in the office or when working remotely?

Wrap-Up: Spend a few minutes reviewing action items/commitments. It creates ownership and buy-in if each person shares their individual action items/commitments.

3 FOLLOW-UP.

In between 1-on-1s, address action items/commitments and share updates with your direct report.