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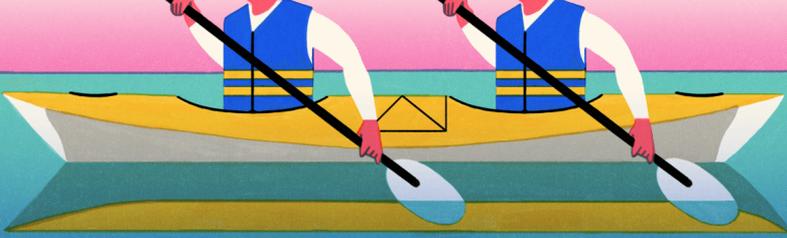
One-on-one meetings: a manager's complete guide



Methods for saving time, creating continuity, and driving action in every 1-on-1 conversation.

Meeting with your team members in 1-on-1s is a key way to maintain your high-level view of your team's work and dynamics and drive employees' individual professional development. These conversations are a moment for you to connect with employees on a human level and build foundations of trust and understanding. Ongoing communication between managers and employees helps boost team engagement and keep everyone aligned and motivated towards common goals. Here, we cover everything you need to know about making 1-on-1s as impactful and efficient as you can.

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What's in the guide:

- Why are one-on-one meetings important?
- Different topics of one-on-ones: key conversations
- Useful one-on-one meeting questions
- Keeping remote 1-on-1s impactful
- Addressing team affairs in one-on-one

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Why are one-on-one meetings important?

It's essential that managers maintain visibility on the overall functioning of their team and how each member leverages their unique skill set towards collective outcomes. 1-on-1 meetings help you get the information you need directly from each employee on your team so you can put the puzzle pieces together to form that bigger picture.

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On the flip side, 1-on-1s are a time for employees to raise any questions or issues they have and seek out your support when they need it. This is your time to get a status update on how they're progressing towards their individual goals, offer honest feedback (and ask for it), and open up conversations around the team's workload, functions, and priorities.

Having regular, recurring moments for direct communication with employees benefits you as much as it benefits them, and ultimately plays an essential role in the healthy functioning of your team. Let's take a look...

Benefits of one-on-ones done right:

Maintain team alignment:

Getting employee updates helps you keep track of all the moving parts of your team and ensure everyone is focusing on what matters most week to week.

Boost employee engagement:

Connecting employees' individual work with greater team objectives and recognizing their wins one-on-one drives their sense of purpose and motivation.

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Increase employee productivity:

Setting a concrete action item at the end of your meeting sets people up for success in accomplishing their tasks and staying focused from one week to the next.

Create clarity of roles and responsibilities:

One-on-ones offer an opportunity to clarify priorities and expectations, removing ambiguity and promoting accountability.

Have constructive feedback exchanges:

Frequent communication on everything from deliverables to interpersonal dynamics opens up space to offer feedback in real-time, and apply it just as quickly.

Coach for professional development:

Discussing performance on an ongoing basis makes it easier to break employee goals into smaller action items, so growth happens naturally.

Strengthen manager-employee relationships:

The more connected you are with employees' realities, the stronger your foundations of trust and respect will be.

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Boost confidence for employees and managers:

Having discussed all agenda items and set clear action items, both participants leave with the conviction they're going in the right direction.

Tips to make 1-on-1s more effective

As a team leader you know that 1-on-1s are an important part of any happy, high-performing team's functions. The tricky part can be making the time to check in, picking up where you left off last time, engaging your people, and ensuring your one-on-ones lead to actions once they're over. You want your team members to leave the meeting feeling motivated, and having clarity on what they need to accomplish. These pro tips will help you make the most of your 1-on-1 meetings.

Schedule a recurring meeting

Schedule 1-on-1s

You will both receive a reminder 3 days before the 1-on-1s are scheduled on the agenda.

Starts at: 9:30 AM

Ends at: 10:30 AM

Save

Collaborative agenda

Alexy Hachey
Account specialist

1-on-1s | Action items | Goals

General check-in

Sharing with Alexy

Add a talking point

What are you working on? Do you need help?

Can we talk about my responsibilities?

Wrap-up and notes

Our next 1-on-1

Do you think the team will be able to achieve? Boost web traffic by 50% this year? Why?

Wrap-up & notes

Your next steps: Get us rolling on webinars and work on your public speaking.
My next steps: Create clearer swim lanes for you and Ryan.

Complete 1-on-1

Schedule a recurring meeting

The best way to ensure you communicate regularly with your team members is to schedule 1-on-1 meetings on a recurring basis in your calendar. Depending on your industry, team objectives, and the professional goals of each direct report, the right frequency may vary, but you want to be sure to have a 1-on-1 with each person on your team at least once a month. Start with an hour every two weeks, and adjust as needed as you speak with each of your team members and get to know their preferences.

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Make the agenda collaborative

When you set 1-on-1 agendas collaboratively with your team members, it gives them a sense of agency in driving their own development. This is crucial because according to our [employee survey](#) data, **1 in 3 employees don't feel appropriately involved in decisions that affect their work.** Plus, a shared agenda helps take the burden off of you to have all the right things to say. Have employees set agenda items ahead of time so you can prepare as needed and add in anything additional you'd like to cover.

Use a one-on-one meeting software

Using a software is a great way to prepare 1-on-1 meetings faster, make sure your conversation starters are relevant, and track follow-through on next steps from your previous meeting.

Officevibe's 1-on-1 tool helps you create shared meeting agendas with each employee and prompts you with suggested questions and talking points to add. Your stored notes are displayed so you can easily pick up where you left off and see the progress on the action items you set after your last conversation. And, it makes your people feel supported: 82% of employees using Officevibe believe their direct manager cares about their opinion—give it a try.

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Different topics of one-on-ones: key conversations

Like any conversation, there are a lot of different topics you can cover in 1-on-1s with employees. The important thing is to show people you're listening. To do that, you need to keep notes of what was said and agreed to at each conversation, so you can more easily pick up where you left off and ensure each 1-on-1 moves your team member in the right direction. These meetings can serve many purposes, so we've broken down four main types of conversations you're bound to have in your 1-on-1 meetings.

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Touch base and check in

The most classic type of 1-on-1, these are your regular coaching touchpoints with employees to check in and help with whatever they might currently need support on. These conversations play a big part in building authentic relationships with your team members and showing that you care about their wellbeing as well as their performance and growth. Having a regular meeting schedule with each employee is pure gold for maintaining visibility and nurturing trust.

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Not sure how to approach these conversations? You can try structuring one-on-ones with an agenda template to help guide the discussion. Try the following template for a flexible meeting agenda that will still ensure you cover the most important talking points:

1. Informal check-in (5 minutes): Ask your team member what their highlight of the week is, and share your own.

2. Recent work recap (10 min): Have your direct report share what they've been working on, and what their wins have been.

3. Upcoming work preparation (20 min): Look forward to what's coming up for your employee, and where they might need help.

4. Open discussion (15 min): Open up the space for your employee to bring up whatever they'd like to discuss with you.

5. Wrap-up and set action items (10 min): Have your team member summarize the conversation, and set 2-3 action items together.

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Set goals to drive engagement

Clear and attainable goals that align with both team objectives and employees' professional aspirations are a key driver of employee performance. At least every 3 months, take the time to dedicate a one-on-one meeting to setting meaningful goals with each of your team members. This also ensures that their individual goals stay relevant and timely in relation to the business context.

Prompt the conversation around individual goals with a question:

- How have you contributed to reaching the team's objectives?
- What motivates you the most at work?
- What is something you find challenging, that you'd like to work on?
- How would you like to use your strengths in the future?

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Did you know? Employees involved in setting goals are 4x more likely to be engaged. That's why Officevibe's 1-on-1 tool gives you three ways to tackle goal-setting together with team members. Build Team Goals & Individual Goals that tie into each 1-on-1 agenda, then set and track one-off Action Items towards achieving them. Try it free!

Clarify roles and responsibilities

It's much easier for employees to perform at their best when they share an understanding with their manager of what they're responsible for and what is expected of them. Role clarity drives employee accountability, making your team more efficient and autonomous—not to mention motivated. Sit down with your employees every 6 months (or more frequently) to review their roles and responsibilities, and clarify or update where needed.

Approach these conversations as discussions about career development from a more long-term perspective. Ask your team members about their personal career goals and where they'd like to see themselves in a year's time, or longer than that. Explore what opportunities for upwards or lateral development are available to them, and what path they might wish to pursue based on their own strengths and ambitions as well as the team's and business' needs.

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Have a difficult conversation

Facing a difficult conversation with an employee can be stressful and uncomfortable, but much of the time they are necessary to move forward in a productive way. When you take the time to get clear on the intended outcome of the discussion, it helps you figure out what to say, and what questions to ask. Whatever the situation is that you need to address, 1-on-1s are a great moment for these conversations because you can set action items and follow up on them in your next meeting, bringing a sense of forward movement to the issue at hand.

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Here's how you can approach a difficult conversation in a one-on-one meeting:

1. Set the talking point: Add whatever needs to be discussed in your meeting agenda so your team member has visibility on it ahead of the discussion.

2. Prepare with facts: Show up with notes, documentation, resources, or anything else that can help you ground the conversation in facts rather than gut feelings.

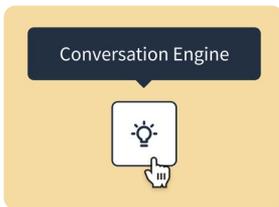
3. Aim for understanding: Approach the discussion with empathy and give your employee the space to share their own perspective.

4. Find a solution together: You may both come to the meeting with action items in mind, but take the time to discuss them, build on them, and decide on a path forward together.

Struggling to find the right words? Maybe technology can bring in the human touch.

Officevibe's 1-on-1 tool comes with pre-written questions and conversation topics, built with a team of neuroscientists who studied the science of tough talks. Next time you're struggling with how to word sensitive feedback or simply bring up an awkward issue, head to [Officevibe's Conversation Engine](#) for inspiration.

Useful one-on-one meeting questions

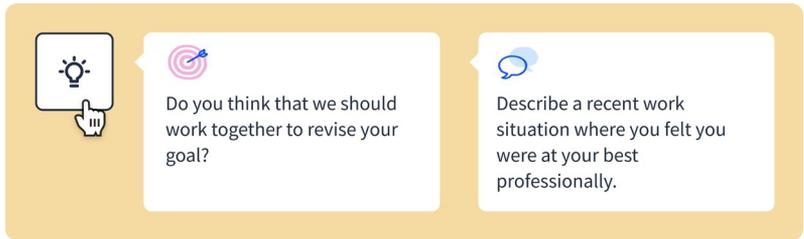


Whether you add them to your agenda or keep them in your meeting notes to bring up in the conversation, having questions prepared ahead of time helps

your 1-on-1s flow. These questions from [Officevibe's Conversation Engine](#) can help you open up discussions:

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- Is your workload reasonable? If it isn't, can you suggest solutions that we could implement together to address the problem?
- Are you able to ask colleagues with more experience than yourself for help, support or input when it comes to achieving your goals?
- As things stand, do you think the team will be able to achieve [name a collective team goal]? Why?



Since one-on-one meetings are a moment for coaching, you also want to ask the right questions to help employees work through challenges and grow from week to week. Try questions that align with the GROW (Goals, Reality, Options, What's next) coaching model to support employee development:

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1. Determine the goals of the conversation: What do we want to get out of this meeting? Why is it important to resolve this situation?

2. Understand the reality or context of the situation: What is working well right now? What do you think is blocking you?

3. Discuss options for moving forward: What have you already tried? What else could you try? What have you not tried yet?

4. Figure out what's next: What do you choose to do in relation to the situation? When? Why?

Keeping remote 1-on-1s impactful

When you're working on a remote or dispersed team, it can be challenging to keep meetings efficient and impactful, but it's important you don't let your 1-on-1s fall to the wayside. Your virtual one-on-one meetings are still key to driving employee engagement, so keeping these conversations fresh and energizing is as important as ever.

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Focus on employee purpose

Remote employees can start to feel disconnected from their work and the greater purpose they're contributing to. Try the following techniques to highlight employees' individual impact during one-on-ones:

- Discuss company values, and find examples of how your team member has embodied them in their recent work or team interactions. You can share examples, or ask them to reflect and share their own.
- Ask your direct report where they feel they've made the greatest impact on the business in the last month, and discuss how their work has contributed to team and company objectives.

- Share positive feedback and recognition with your employee. Offer your own observations and opinions, and relay the appreciation you've heard from colleagues, clients, or other outside sources.
- Discuss what excites your team member most about their upcoming work, and dig a little deeper into why. What's motivating them? What's giving them confidence?

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Addressing team affairs in one-on-ones

Your one-on-one meetings with employees are a time for you to focus on their individual work, growth, concerns, and ideas—but they're also a moment to check in on team working dynamics and collaboration among peers. Feelings of trust and support among colleagues are so important to employee engagement and the health of your team. When people feel they can speak honestly and openly and count on one another for support, they're more likely to raise flags and ask for help when they need it.

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However, when there's conflict on your team or a lack of role clarity among collaborators, tensions can rise and productivity can be halted. one-on-ones offer a private moment between you and your team members to discuss these dynamics openly and brainstorm solutions together. You can keep a pulse on your team's engagement with employee surveys and feedback, so you can spot issues and address them before they turn into problems.

Turn team engagement into talking points.

Officevibe tracks team dynamics and feedback for you through Pulse Surveys, so you always know what to bring up at one-on-ones. Open up space for communication with your team members in a safe and private setting: discover [Officevibe's complete team engagement solution](#)—from clear reports on where your team is shining and where they need support, to an all-in-one 1-on-1 software.

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Making time for meaningful one-on-one conversations with employees impacts everything from team productivity to individual development. With a little bit of preparation and the tips and tools outlined here, you should be perfectly primed for making every one-on-one meeting count.

