

How to Conduct One-on-One Meetings: Quick Guide for Supervisors

What is the purpose of One-on-One meetings?

- Find out about the employee's current level of morale, stress, etc.
- Track the status of Performance and Development Goals
- Learn if there are obstacles to goal achievement that need to be removed
- Discuss specific issues - either the employee's, the supervisor's, or both
- Provide value-added feedback
- Provide coaching
- Share formal and informal information about the unit and organization

Why are One-on-One meetings important?

The supervisor-employee relationship is the fundamental organizational unit within the County structure. All teams, divisions and departments are built on those relationships. One-on-one meetings are a forum for communication from supervisor to employee, as well as from employee to supervisor. When employees are informed the feeling of involvement increases, along with the sense of ownership that results in job satisfaction and productivity. The employee's role is to take responsibility for what they need from you as their supervisor. Your responsibility is to provide support and add value that helps the employee perform well.

How often should One-on-One meetings be held?

It is recommended that one-on-one meetings be scheduled every two weeks. This allows for frequent, individualized communication. If a meeting needs to be cancelled due to an overriding commitment by either the supervisor or the employee, no more than about a month should go by between meetings.

What is the best length for One-on-One meetings?

Most meetings should typically last about 30 minutes. Longer or more frequent meetings can be scheduled as needed. A good rule of thumb is 10 minutes for their messages, 10 minutes for your messages, and 10 minutes for sharing information.

How should the employee prepare for One-on-One meetings?

You should send the employee questions or an outline in advance for the areas you would like to cover during the meeting. Better yet, consider having the employee use the "One-on-One Meeting Template" to prepare the specific content/agenda for each meeting. Have them bring two copies to the meeting – one for each of you to review and follow. This is an effective way to develop your employees by having them drive the one-on-one meetings by bringing the specific issues, challenges, opportunities, and ideas they want to discuss. You can always add your own topics for each meeting as the need arises. Both you and your employee should save copies of these meeting agendas to refer back to when necessary or helpful.

What topics should be covered?

Connection

You should start each meeting with the same opening question to allow the employee to share what's on their mind, etc. A question like, "How's it going?" asked at each meeting, will give you an indication of any positive or negative patterns that may be developing that you should pay attention to.

Performance and Development Goal Status/Updates

These should be brief, high-level status/updates for each goal that address:

- Is the goal on track? If not, why not?
- What are the challenges to the goal achievement?
- What's changed and why?
- Any new priorities that may affect the continued relevancy or achievement of the goal?
- What are the successes related to the goal?

Learn what you need to stay informed and offer help where needed.

Significant Action Items or Projects

If necessary, take time to drill down to discuss specifics. This includes any important information that you should know in order to be considered informed, including issues or changes that will, or may, impact completion. You should reinforce the rule "no surprises". This is another opportunity to offer help and support, resources, etc. If more time is needed, schedule another meeting.

Value-Added Feedback

Provide positive and/or negative feedback as needed to reinforce expectations. Use this time to help employees be aware of what they are good at and how their strengths can be leveraged to the benefit of the team and organization. If they need to make adjustments or changes to their behavior, they should know what they are and why they need to change so that they can take the steps necessary to be more successful.

Coaching Support

The meeting should also be used to facilitate the employee's learning. You should coach the employee to help develop any skills they, or you, have identified that would contribute to their success and/or job satisfaction. This is also a good opportunity to discuss or help them resolve other work-related problems, or identify any personal issues that may currently, or potentially, impact their job performance. When personal issues become part of the conversation, this is a good opportunity to remind the employee to consider the benefits of the Employee Assistance Program (EAP). The overall objective is to reinforce how you can help them, in words and in actions. For some coaching needs you may want to schedule a separate meeting.

Other Business

You and the employee should both share Unit, Departmental or Organizational information or updates. This information could include what's been heard informally through the "grapevine" and what's been communicated through formal channels like management meetings. Examples are rumors about upcoming changes and factual news about new policies, etc. Effective supervisors keep all lines of communication open – both the informal and formal.

Agreements/Next Steps

This is the point in the meeting when the employee should summarize what's been discussed and agreed to. This is a good developmental practice for the employee that will also let you know how effective the communication is between you. It should be clear who is responsible for doing what. The employee should know what they are expected to do and by when. You should also let the employee know what you will be following-up on and commit to doing so within a specific time frame.

What questions could you ask during the meeting?

The following are some questions that may be useful:

- Tell me about your week – what's it been like?
- Tell me about what you've been working on.
- Where do you think I can be most helpful?

- Are you on track to meet the deadline?
- What areas are ahead of schedule?
- What questions do you have about this area of responsibility, or project?
- How are you going to approach this?
- What have you learned about this area of responsibility, or project?
- What didn't go as you had hoped? Why?
- What can you/we do differently next time?
- What suggestions do you have?

How can you document the meeting?

Your employee could bring to each meeting two copies of an update using the agenda outline/template you provide – one for you, one for them. This could form the basis for your documentation of the meeting. You could use your copy to record notes, observations, next steps, etc. At the conclusion of the meeting, your copy could be saved, scanned and uploaded to "My Team", or referred to for selected notes that would be added to "My Team".