

# One on ones

Of all the meetings we can have in our working week, as a leader, your monthly/ fortnightly one-on-one with each of your direct reports is one of the most important. They are a chance to check in with your team one on one, without other distractions and influences. They are a chance to attend to the relationship, rather than just focus on the tasks that need to be completed. The sessions are about working on the 'how', not just the 'what'. And although at first your response to scheduling (and sticking to) regular one on ones may be that you don't have time for another meeting, one-on-ones can save you countless hours of time and agony in the long run, as they tend to provide a vehicle for communication and nipping problems in the bud before they become crises.

If you think of the analogy of a ship which heads off from port on a significant journey to a distant, but important destination (think vision for the department or company) the captain of the ship (you) is constantly checking the ship is heading in the right direction, as well as checking that all the components of the ship are working.

As a captain, you wouldn't set a course on the compass and only check in to see if you are heading in the right direction merely once or twice during the journey. Instead, you would check your bearings regularly to ensure that the winds have not blown the ship off course, checking the compass and equipment many times to ensure the ship is correctly headed for the desired destination. So it is with performance and one on ones. They are a way to check your bearings with each of your team.

A final word on one on ones; it is easy in the day to day busy-ness and demands on our time to defer these meetings, but this is almost worse than not having them at all. Give them the same importance and value as you would a meeting with an important customer – and reap the rewards as a result.

## 10 benefits of one-on-ones

1. To ascertain levels of motivation in each of your team members. How motivated are they? Is there anything that is going on in their private life which is having an impact on their work? What drives them to perform at their best? What, if anything, is hindering their motivation?
2. To address any performance issues before they become serious. Often, when we first notice an area for improvement with one of our direct reports, it may be minor. This is the time to talk about it, before it becomes a big issue for them and for you. One on ones are a great mechanism for feedback.
3. To give praise and highlight things your team member has done well in the last month. This is such a great motivator to catch people doing the right things.
4. To ensure their Performance Development Plan is a LIVE document and to ensure there are no surprises when you have the annual or six monthly performance appraisals.
5. To receive feedback from them as to what you are doing that is supporting or hindering their progress, to enable the flow of communication to go both ways within an organisation.
6. To reinforce important messages about change or company direction and to garner feedback from them about various initiatives (do they support the change or not, what are their ideas, how is it affecting them).
7. To brainstorm ideas and solutions for team problems or challenges. Remember you do not have all the answers and an issue that the team is having may be solved by them. This is especially the case if a team member is shy and less likely to pipe up in a team meeting.
8. To enable your team member to raise areas in their role they are struggling with and for you to coach them on it.
9. To strengthen the rapport and 'put money in the bank' for this vital working relationship.
10. To act as a litmus test for the mood of the team as a whole. If you were to meet with all of your team members individually in a month, you are bound to get a better read of how the team is going than if you did not.

## Sample Agenda for one-on-ones:

Monthly Review:

Name:

Month:

Highlights/Lowlights from Previous Month (direct report goes before leader)

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What did I learn from the above? What are we going to do moving forward as a result?

Key Priorities Agreed From Last Month:

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Key Achievements:

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Performance Development Plan/KPI's – how are we tracking?

List all KPI's or PDP goals and discuss how tracking and any support and action required.

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Anything else top of mind? (Company initiatives/change/feedback to leader etc)

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Key Priorities For Next Month:

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