

# 4 Reasons to Have 1-on-1 Meetings With Your Employees

There are a few keystone behaviors that once established as habits make a significant difference in your leadership effectiveness. One of these habits is to have regularly scheduled 1-on-1 meetings with your direct reports.

Managers consistently say, “But I talk to my staff all the time, why do I need a separate meeting?” In the course of a day or week you talk with your staff about the tasks they are working on – answering questions, solving problems, providing direction, dealing with immediate issues but your staff need something more – and so do you. You need time to talk!

Here are 4 reasons why you should have 1-on-1 meetings with your employees.

## **#1 – Creates Routine**

1-on-1 meetings give you the opportunity to better manage the work and develop staff. You can create a routine to discussing work progress – discuss updates, obstacles, next steps and what the employee is learning. Rather than having these conversations “on the fly,” managing work through regularly scheduled conversations increases efficiency, productivity, accountability and development.

## **#2 – Builds Relationship**

1-on-1 meetings build relationships. To lead well you need solid relationships. You need to understand the uniqueness and individual needs of each of your staff members. What do they like working on? Dislike working on? What’s important to them – at work and outside of work? What do they care about? What interests them?

Creating opportunities to talk with staff beyond the immediate tasks at hand is a critical part of leadership. An effective leader talks with staff members about broader topics and use this “data” as they focus on motivating and developing each person. Gaining insights into each person’s perspective on their work, the work environment and their personal drivers can be invaluable in leading and retaining staff.

## **#3 – Opportunities to Speak Privately**

1-on-1 meetings provide routine access to you. While you think your employees talk with you “all of the time” – chances are they have more to say. Without a regularly planned time to speak privately, it is likely that team members have things they’d like to share but can’t find the “right opportunity.” With routine 1-on-1 meetings, and a solidly built relationship, as you ask staff, “what else would you like to discuss” or “what else is on your mind,” you are much more likely to hear their ideas, their concerns and their get their feedback.

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Many managers are surprised when an employee suddenly gives their notice. If the manager had been “paying attention” and having more regular conversations, the likelihood of knowing an employee’s level of satisfaction and being able to address concerns or provide development opportunities increases significantly.

## #4 – More Efficient

“But I don’t have time.” This is the other obstacle most managers express when suggesting routine 1-on-1 meetings. Think about how you invest your time. Just imagine that your staff are working in the right direction, managing their work well, motivated, satisfied – that you have a solid relationship in which each person – confident that if they have an issue they will bring it to you, knowing you will regularly hear updates and discuss progress.

Think about this happening routinely, rather than spontaneously with interruptions throughout each day. Sounds more efficient? Good planning and structure in having these meetings can actually save you time and increase your own productivity.

## How to Organize a 1-to-1 Meeting

Managers often ask, “How often should I have these meetings?” The answer is “it depends.” It depends on the need of the position, the work and the person. Some jobs require more regular contact due to the pace of the work. You may also have an employee that needs a lot of guidance, or is new to the position and needing development. You may find these situations benefit from a weekly conversation.

More senior staff, and those with whom you have more established relationships can be less frequent. You and the employee should decide the frequency that works – knowing that it may change over time.

Consider this agenda template for your 1-on-1 meeting:

- Small talk for rapport building
- Project/work updates, next steps, learnings
- Open conversation – ask a different question each time.
  - What do you like most about your job? What do you like least?
  - If you could change one thing about your job what would it be?
  - What ideas do you have for me?
  - What do I do that works well for you? How do I hinder your progress?
  - How’s the family?
  - What did you do on vacation?

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- Ask about an interest or hobby they have.
- What do you like about working here?
- What would lure you away?
- If you didn't have this job, what job would you want?
- What do you find motivating? Demotivating?

It may surprise you, but it is OK to ask any of these questions. Studies have shown that employees want leaders who care. It may feel awkward at first, but engaging in different conversations – routinely – will increase your success as a leader.

Go ahead start implementing this successful habit. Make changes as you need to. I am sure that a few months into utilizing this successful tool, you will see the advantages.

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