



**Zimyo**



A Manager's Guide  
to Effective  
**One-on-Ones**



An employee's motivation is a direct result of the sum of interactions with his or her manager.

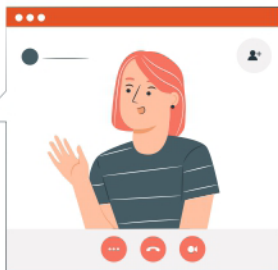
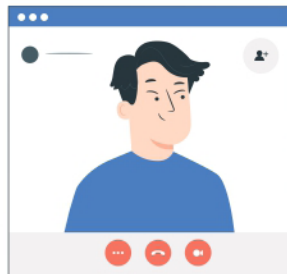
**-Bob Nelson,**  
*Leading Authority on Employee Recognition*

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A transparent and strong professional relationship between a manager and his direct report is the key to good engagement levels, better productivity and increased morale at work. Like they say, employees don't quit jobs, they quit their managers. Especially managers who do not contribute to the growth and learning of their direct reports.

To ensure a good relationship between employees and their managers, it is imperative to have a free flowing system of communication between them. A manager should be the one who guides his employees, coaches them to choose the best journeys for themselves and also occasionally checks up how they are doing.





Similarly, a direct report must feel comfortable enough to voice his opinion to his manager, and put forth his ideas without hesitation or fear. A great way to achieve this camaraderie between employees and managers is through effective 1-on-1s.

Before the pandemic hit us, it was not easy to conduct these face to face conversations. Communicating with people or starting a friendly conversation with them can be challenging. Cut short to today, where most employees are working from home, conducting these regular meetings can be even harder for managers and direct reports.

This guide will help you break that ice and give a structure to your one-on-one meetings in the current scenario.

Let's get into detail on what 1-on-1s really are.

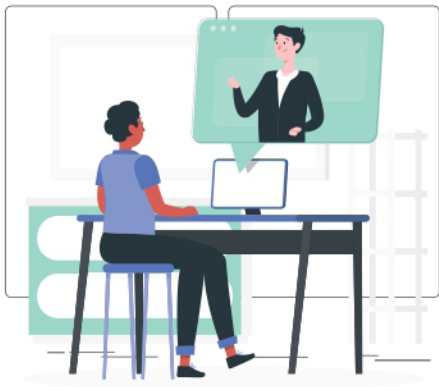


## What are 1-on-1s?

1-on-1s are recurring meetings between a manager and their direct reports. These meetings are a very crucial cog in the wheel of performance management. The way 1-on-1s are conducted can have a massive impact on the quality of an organisation's performance management process.

A 1-on-1 between a manager & his report is not just a status update or performance related conversation, it goes way beyond it. It should be an avenue where the manager and the report work together to create better alignment to goals, productivity, motivation and growth.

It should also be a space where managers offer the psychological safety to reports to voice their concerns and put forth their ideas with confidence. These conversations can also go beyond work, where the manager can help his report navigate any kind of problem he might be facing.





Some of the conversations that can be a part of 1-on-1s are:

- What are the current roadblocks that the employee is facing?
- What part of the job excites the employee the most?
- What is the state of the employee's well being?
- What are the employee's suggestions for making goal achievement more effective?
- Anything else the employee might like to share?

It can be challenging for managers to ask such open ended questions or provide adequate reflections on the responses received.





1-on-1s can be intimidating for managers and their reports alike if there is no certainty about the length, topics or frequency of the meetings. Very few HR teams actually approach 1-on-1s in a structured manner that can guide and improve the relationship between managers and their direct reports.

Most managers are already overloaded with a lot of tasks, and taking time out in a remote work arrangement can be daunting. But it is probably more important than anything else.

This guide will share strategies and be a starting point for managers to start having continuous and meaningful conversations with their direct reports.





## Benefits of 1-on-1s

Effective 1-on-1s can have several direct and indirect benefits. It lays a great foundation for managers to know their team on a professional and personal levels.

### **Builds better work relationships**

Good relationships between people at work is a prerequisite for setting the tone for a great culture. People need to like and respect each other to be able to work together and achieve goals. 1-on-1s are a way to uncover what motivates each employee, what are their career aspirations and how a manager can contribute in making them achieve the goals they want.

Seeing a manager take deep interest in the growth of an employee sets the tone for mutual trust, respect and commitment to the organisational goals. These are essential virtues to have for an overall increase in productivity levels, motivation and engagement.





## **Gives an overview of otherwise neglected issues**

There can be several reasons why an employee might not be performing to his best capacity. On a regular day, these small things might go unnoticed. And these tiny caveats can eventually snowball into larger issues, causing employees to feel burnt out or disengaged.

1-on-1 conversations help identify these issues at the very beginning, and an effective approach can help deal with them before they become bigger problems. With regular check ins, a manager has a bird eye's view of what's going on, and can address them regularly to keep them under control.







## Addresses performance issues

1-on-1s offer a great platform for discussing performance issues. Continuous feedback is a great way to help employees identify how they are doing and ask for tips to improve. 1-on-1s help achieve a 360 degree view of performance, instead of making it a once in a year event. Everyone stays on the same page and this helps in identifying issues faster, and also solving them together.





## **Creates a strong sense of belonging**

Employees thrive when they receive focused attention from their managers. They also feel like they are valued and their growth matters. This creates a sense of belonging in the workplace. Having a manager who is committed to the success of his direct reports can make an organisation the best place to work for. It also helps employees become more aware about themselves through the continuous feedback they receive.





## Makes great managers

1-on-1s makes great managers as they become better at coaching and honing their leadership skills. The ability to give clear guidance and feedback is a virtue every leader should develop and 1-on-1s are a great way to build these traits.

According to Google's Project Oxygen Study, higher scoring managers are more likely to have frequent 1-on-1s with their team members than lower scoring managers. This points to how 1-on-1s actually improve overall manager performance.



# How to Make 1-on-1 Meetings Work

Here are some building blocks to make 1-on-1 meetings truly work for managers as well as their direct report.

## Putting it on calendar

A 1-on-1 meeting needs to have a recurring schedule, perhaps once every week for a duration of about 30 minutes. Having ad-hoc 1-on-1s will make it look trivial and no one will be prepared for it. Setting a schedule makes it a part of a normal work week, where both the manager and the direct report are informed well in advance about the meeting. This helps them prepare for it mentally and also jot down things they can talk about.

Setting a recurring schedule also makes the possibility of opening up higher than usual eventually more likely. If there is a meeting every week and the right rapport is established, the quality of the conversations will definitely improve with time.





## Set a length

Set a timer to your weekly 1-on-1s. Do not make it more than 30 minutes. Set the agenda for the meeting for points you would like to cover in that time. With important topics there is a chance of an extension, and that's fine. But it should not eat away too much time of the people involved in the conversation.



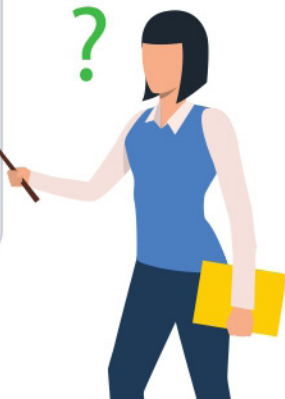


## Ask Questions

1-on-1s are meetings where a manager needs to ask probing questions to the employees. Typical way to kick-off these meetings is by asking **“How’s everything going?”** Open ended questions like these really set the tone and managers must make notes of what the employee is trying to communicate, collect feedback and do everything in their capacity to help the direct report get the answers he needs.

Some examples of check-in questions could be:

- How can I make this easier for you?
- How do you suggest we improve this project?
- If you were me, what would you do differently?
- What was the best part of this week?
- Who do you think made a difference?





## Listen

Listening is one of the most underrated communication skills and a must-have one for a manager. Employees dread 1-on-1 meetings which become one-sided with the manager talking throughout. In effective 1-on-1s, managers listen way more than they speak. They listen, understand and coach their reports on the basis of the responses they get. Managers must make notes of the discussions so that it sticks with them. Writing things down also make the reports feel valued.





## Have them for everyone

1-on-1s are not only meant for the top performers of your team, they are a democratic process and involve all team members. It is a chance to know everyone a manager is responsible for, and also sends out the message of equality. Giving some people preference over others will do more damage than good.







## Example Topics to Cover in 1-on-1s

### Productivity and Performance

- What time of the day do you feel most productive?
- How do you think you can make your day more optimised?
- What are your biggest distractions right now?
- Are you facing any challenges? If yes, what are they?
- Are you enjoying your current projects?





## Team Collaboration

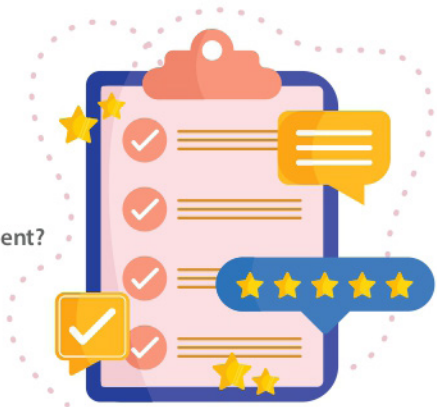
- Who do you enjoy working with the most? And why?
- Who has inspired you in the team to strive for better?
- Do you have any suggestions for us to work better as a team?
- Do you think the team interactions are helpful?
- Would you like to receive feedback from your team members?





## Manager Feedback

- Are you happy with your current management?
- How can I support you better?
- Do you find it easy to communicate with me?
- Am I clear enough in my communication with you?
- Do you feel I am supporting you in your career development?
- If you were me, what would you do differently?





## Professional goals

- How are you proceeding with the OKRs we discussed for the quarter?
- What are the skills you would like to develop?
- What has been the best and worst part about this project?
- What were the specific challenges you faced during the project?
- Did you receive the support you aspired for?
- Are you happy with the way your career is progressing here?





# The Manager's Checklist for Effective 1-on-1s - Getting Started

## Setting the Context

- Discuss the benefits of 1-on-1s with your team. Tell them why you are starting it and how it can help everyone work better together.
- Tell direct reports that they have to set the purpose and lead the meetings.
- Mutually discuss and set up a schedule every week for 30 minutes and put it on the calendar.
- Set up an overall agenda to every meeting, with room for flexibility.
- Set up where you will meet - Zoom can be the choice with the current remote work arrangements. But it can be anywhere once things open up.





## Prepare

- Set an agenda a week before and come prepared.
- Build a set of questions and share them in advance, and think about the content of the conversations.
- Do not skip or reschedule the meetings.





## Create the right environment

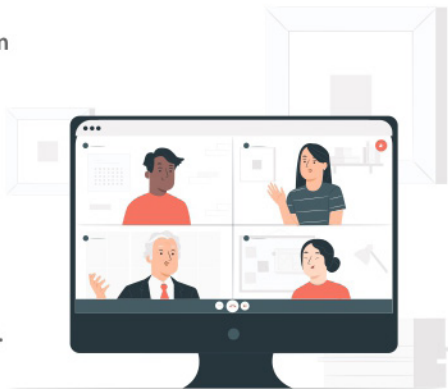
- Be punctual and dedicated to the meetings.
- Do not be too authoritative. Come with the right mindset and be warm in your approach.
- Do not fiddle with your phone or laptop as your report speaks. Give him your undivided attention by removing distractions.
- With time, offer them a safe space where they can communicate with you without hesitation.
- Ask open ended questions and take notes.
- Align feedback and information received and create better opportunities for the reports to thrive.





## The actual meeting

- Start the meeting with a smile and make the report feel comfortable.
- Ask them how they are doing work wise and personally (it's been a tough year).
- Listen to what they say, make notes and do not cut them off. Let them finish and then ask your questions.
- Follow the pre-set agenda. Ask about the highlights of the week, the challenges and the achievements.
- Critically analyse the challenges and also applaud the achievements.
- Check in on well being, work progress, productivity.
- Give feedback on anything that needs improvement.
- Create space for the direct report to add anything more.







## The wrap up

- Ask the report to give a quick recap of what needs to be done.
- Ask for feedback
- Agree for an agenda for the next meeting
- Reflect on how the meeting went and make improvements as deemed necessary.





## Conclusion

1-on-1s are crucial and they need to happen. They are the most high-impact meeting you can have as a manager. Use video calls to make them more meaningful, and do not skip them. Offer the safe space for your employees to confide in you if need be. Be empathetic as the pandemic has tested us all. Utilise this time to understand your employees better, connect with them and help them navigate their career and goals with your help.

Encourage innovation in the workplace by building engaged teams that perform at a higher level and bring passion and interest to their jobs.

Apart from that, you can also use tools like Slack to make communication & collaboration easier during the meeting.





As discussed above, remote working has made holding meetings or regular interactive sessions more challenging than ever before. However, this challenge can be overcome by the use of the right tools & technology.

In this digital era, having telephonic one-on-ones with your employees is no longer relevant. When employees are working remotely, it is imperative to exchange vibes, gauge their intent and communicate right. This is why we strongly recommend using a video conferencing tool like Zoom or Zimyo's Engage module to connect with your employees.

Over the past few years, Zimyo has secured a place in the HR tech industry as a future-ready, dynamic human experience platform that offers innovative and intuitive HR solutions.

Zimyo's employee engagement solutions are specifically designed to engage the workforce and better align it with the company's objectives. In doing so, managers and leaders can gain clear insights into workplace engagement levels and boost their human culture all while weaving employees into the company fabric.



**Organization Social Networking-** Enhance internal relationships by virtually networking with your team and organizing virtual fun activities.

**Employee Recognition & Rewards-** Recognize and reward the efforts of your employees by providing them with badges, coupons, and create a leaderboard

**Senti-Meter-** Take the pulse of your employee's moods by creating customized surveys or polls.

**Announcement-** Make company-wide announcements, share news and alerts, and celebrate milestones and create a company album.

**Discussion Room-** Participate in meaningful discussions related to company policies and hold appraisal meetings

**Breakroom-** Make remote working fun and engaging with our platform by hosting virtual fun activities, events, or meetings.



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