

The Art of Employee One-on-Ones

One-on-ones are often initiated by the manager, but it does not have to be this way. Encourage your employees to book one-on-one meetings with you as needed, in addition to the regular meeting you book with each person.

Here are some ways to make one-on-ones more fruitful, fun, and worthwhile

- **Meet as often as possible and as makes sense.** When one-on-ones are not held often enough, there is too much to cover and the conversation suffers.
- **Schedule one-on-ones for a regular time and day each week, and try to keep the schedule.** This regimen will ensure that more one-on-ones occur. Hold one-on-ones in a place with few distractions. A meeting room is often better than an office.
- **Establish a regular agenda with some time for ad hoc topics.**
- **Take notes and send a follow up email to confirm what was agreed to.** The email should focus on the assignments and agreements, not the nitty gritty of the conversation.
- **Come to the meeting prepared with the information you need to have a good discussion.** Bring reports and examples. Try to resolve as much as possible at the one-on-ones.
- **Both parties should ask lots of questions and be willing to share fully (as appropriate).** If all you do is go over project and task status, the one-on-one will lack oomph and impact. Managers should ask about barriers, challenges, and ideas. Employees should ask for feedback, relevant changes and news, goal performance, upcoming opportunities, and ideas. Both should ask about how they can help the other succeed. Peers should share challenges and ask about ideas, upcoming changes, barriers, and help the other succeed.
- **Periodically, the entire one-on-one should focus on development and career goals.** Although development may be discussed regularly, it is wise to dedicate some time each quarter to the discussion of career goals and development. This may seem most appropriate for the manager-employee one-on-ones, but it would be beneficial for peers to discuss their goals, as well. Peers can often help each other broaden their skills and experiences.
- **Take time to brainstorm new ideas.** Have fun with this! If sharing new ideas is a regular part of the agenda, both parties are more likely to come to the table with ideas to share.