

# How am I doing?

## Conducting effective 1:1 meetings

Never underestimate the impact of sitting down on regularly with each member of your team on a one to one basis.

They provide an opportunity to keep your team engaged and enthused towards their job by letting them know how they're doing.

Spending time with your team on a **regular basis**,

- not just you telling them how they doing,
- but allowing them the opportunity to tell you how they think they are doing.

Are you ever left assuming that no news is good news?

We all like to be reassured. And even if we make the assumption that no news is good news, we're still often left with that nagging doubt in case there might be anything wrong.

The same principle applies with your team. They need to know how they're doing, what's working well and what's not. And not just picking them up when you see them doing something wrong or giving them recognition when you spot them doing something right (which is still important of course).

Although most of us recognise the importance of review meetings and one-to-one discussions it's easy to let them slip.

- Your aim should be to motivate your team members to either continue or sustain good performance
- Feel confident that they have the ability and support to fill any gaps where they need development.
- It's an opportunity for them to have their contribution recognised – not just performance, but have their ideas heard.
- And finally it devotes time to set direction and goals for the coming weeks.
- The net result should be an enthused and motivated employee who knows what they should be focusing on, and how this will contribute to the business.

## Finding time

One of the common concerns I hear is that the process is time consuming, particularly when you have 8 – 10 people reporting to you.

Look at it another way - ask yourself how much time potentially will you need to spend rectifying things if you don't take that time out with them?

I often hear of managers spending literally hours preparing for the meetings, then finding themselves having to work twice as hard to get the employee to contribute their ideas and views to the meeting.

One to ones are as much for their benefit as yours, so ask them to take some responsibility too for the preparation.

## Team on board

Trust: If people's previous experience of one to one meetings up till now has been bad or at best just a waste of time, it can take time to build trust before these can be totally honest exchanges.

Avoid the fish bowl type of office or public areas. You want a free and open discussion, and you'll not get this when there's a fear they'll be over heard or others can see their reactions to any sensitive issues raised

## Ask them to prepare

One to ones should be a two way discussion.

There may be things they've done that are worthy of comment, which you are oblivious to; remember you don't see them every minute of every day they are at work. So ask them to plan what they would like to discuss.

Ask open questions to get their ideas on performance and how to move forward.

Use the AID\* model for feedback: They'll still want your view on performance

Ask for their views

Offer support: If shortfalls you need to understand why and then help bridge that gap

Over time your team will get used to you asking these and as time goes on hopefully they'll be more prepared for each question giving it some thought prior to your meeting.

\* 15 minute video on giving feedback <https://naturallyloyal.wistia.com/medias/vcq7sjt9ot>



## 3 core questions

As a minimum you may like to consider these 3 questions:

- Achievements
- Shortfalls
- Focus

### 1. Achievements

What successes or achievements have you had this month or what have you done this month that you're proud of?

- What have been your top 2/3 successes?
- What have you accomplished towards this year's goals?
- What has gone particular well for you this week/month/period?
- What have you been particularly pleased with?
- What have they achieved towards pre-determined goals, targets, KPIs, etc.

Start on a positive and is an opportunity for the employee to blow their own trumpet.

Of course if these are things you've spotted too this is your opportunity to give praise where it's due, and reinforce their success.

This is a time when you might discover other strengths or successes that you've been previously unaware of, so take note and ask for examples if you need to.

Ensure you build on their successes and discuss how they can do more of this or emulate this in future. (See the AID model)

Compliment them, tell them why you value their contribution, focus on strengths.

### 2. What's not gone so well?

What disappointments or frustrations?

- If you had a magic wand, what would you change or do differently?
- Where have you fallen short against this month's goals/KPIs?
- What hasn't gone to plan?
- What have you been disappointed with?
- What have you set out to do but it hasn't yet happened?

Sometimes people will be very hard on themselves, and even if people have not done everything you've asked of them, when they are identifying this for themselves it's a lot easier for both of you to have that conversation.

How have they gone about this? Something may have given a good result at first glance, but it's all very well achieving all their targets but not so good if they've upset colleagues or customers along the way.



Look at this as an opportunity to learn, so discuss what got in the way and how to overcome this in future. This might need some more support or training from you or additional resources.

### 3. Where's the next focus?

What do you feel needs to be your number 1 focus for the coming month?

Alternatives:

What needs to be the focus for the coming week/month/period?

This is your opportunity to look ahead and either set some goals for the forthcoming period or to summarise any development that has been identified as result of the previous 2 questions.

- What needs to be focused on or addressed, and what support or development do they need to do this

Allow time at the end of the meeting and ask if they have anything to add, and any questions or points they want to raise. This might have nothing to do with their own performance but it might be an ideal time to flush out anything that's on their mind, whilst they have your attention and you have privacy. If there isn't enough time to do this justice, set up a follow up meeting there and then, rather than letting it get forgotten.

Summarise theirs and your actions, record and confirm the next review date.

If there needs to be more commitment or input on their part ask them to do the summarising. This way you know there is at least an understanding of what's expected over the coming period, and an opportunity to set this straight if their interpretation is different from yours.

If you simply ask the 3 questions on a regular basis over time your team will get used to you asking these and as time goes on hopefully they'll be more prepared for each question giving it some thought prior to your meeting.

Their preparation obviously doesn't let you off the hook altogether, but if they are well prepared it will certainly reduce the amount of time needed in the meeting to achieve the same result.



## Getting started

If you aren't already conducting regular one to ones, now might be a good time to start. Use your first meeting to establish (jointly) their goals and KPIs if you don't already have these in place.

Identify what you want to achieve from the meetings.

The agenda doesn't need to be written in tablets of stone, but it's good to follow a basic structure so you both know what to expect and can plan accordingly. Linking back to your objectives there are some key elements to include, all of which can be structured around the questions.

It's far better to home in on one or two areas at each meeting so you can go into some depth, than covering everything superficially and covering the same ground each time.

One to ones should be scheduled so both of you can plan for them and around them, and fully prepare. And nothing smacks more of "I'm not valued" than one to one meetings being continually cancelled for the slightest reason.

I'm often asked how often and how long should they be. There is no hard and fast rule, but allow on average a minimum of an hour per month per person, longer for roles with more responsibility. So if you conduct them monthly then set aside at least an hour for each, plus preparation time. If logistics mean that you can only meet once every 2 months, then allow two hours.

Either way allow sufficient time so that neither of you are rushed or distracted by imposing deadlines e.g. during your busiest periods or prior to your critical deadlines in your business. Think also of their state of mind at the end of a very busy period or big project.

## Making them work

- Make a connection: show you're interested in them not just their work; ask about family and well-being.
- Pay attention: listen, show you are listening, ask questions, avoid office distractions.
- Keep it light: Yes, professional, but not overly formal if you want them to be open.

## In summary

Focus on asking the 3 questions on a regular basis and gaining agreement on actions moving forward, with some measurable goals and clear direction.

