



Best Practices for Great 1:1 Development Meetings

Glenn Newsom and Peter Hazelrigg

Have them regularly!

It is ideal to have development conversations at least monthly. Don't cancel or reschedule. Your consistency in having the 1:1 sends a very direct signal as to the importance of the meeting and the perceived value of the process. If you set a time, make the time work.

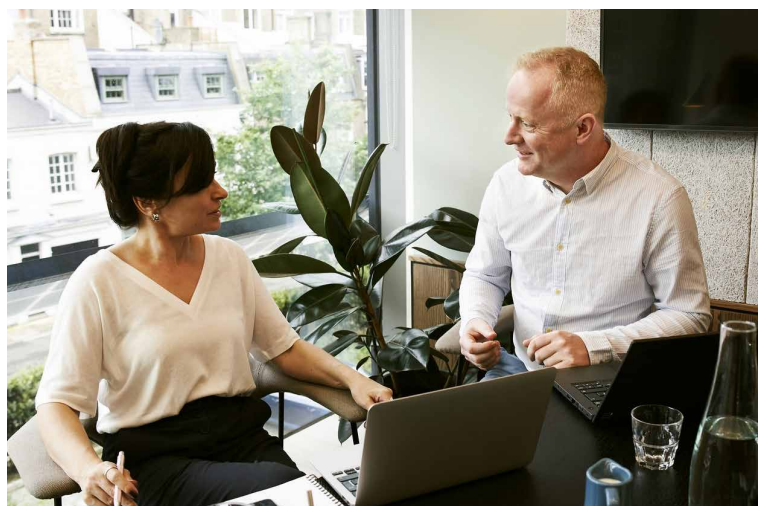
They own the agenda (mostly); you facilitate

Stay inquiry-based in your discussion. Your role is to listen actively and facilitate the conversation as needed. The key to a good discussion is good questions. Some of my favorites are the most simple and include:

- What's on your mind?
- How are you? (both personally and professionally)
- What are you struggling with?
- What's working well? What's not working so well?
- How can I be helpful?
- What feedback do you have for me?

Avoid Status Updates

While I don't recommend using a 1:1 for simple work status updates (those can easily be accomplished via email or other methods of communication), it is entirely appropriate to include "Progress toward goals" as a standing agenda item in a 1:1. Your team member should naturally have quarterly goals in the form of Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) or Objectives & Key Results (OKR's) that are closely tied to the goals of the team and the company, and so it's very productive to understand the results that your team member is achieving. In the spirit, though, of allowing the employee to own the agenda, give him or her the autonomy to tee up the discussion and prioritize the specific items to cover. Be there to support them in the achievement of their goals and enable them to determine how you do that.



Focus on Their Development Plan

Consider the SOAR model:

- **Strengths** - Their self-identified strengths; your observations of their strengths; celebrate and praise what's working well and what they are good at.
- **Opportunities** - Their self-identified opportunities for improvement; your observations of their opportunities for development.
- **Aspirations** - Their identified aspirations (goals) for the short-term and longer term; your thoughts about how those goals align with your perspective as their leader.
- **Results** - The results that they want to accomplish; what are the outcomes that they want to target; how can you help support those results? Are the results consistent with what is needed by the organization? Can they be measured?

Don't forget about Career Development

Making this a habit like brushing and flossing will mean that you are investing in your folks in a differentiated way. Research related to why employees quit suggests that leaders who do not regularly meet with their direct reports to discuss career development, learning, and promotion opportunities run a higher risk of employees leaving. Regular investment in growth and development helps everyone - helps your employee grow towards his or her dreams, helps the team and company improve, and it helps your relationship with your employee to connect relationally in our meetings to build cohesion and trust among members.

Feedback: Mainly Get It, Sometimes...Give it

The 1:1 is not always the best place for the leader to give feedback to the employee. Or, at least, don't start there. Instead think about the 1:1 as a chance to get feedback from your employees. If you want to build a culture of feedback ask for it. A great go-to question is "What do you need more from me or less from me?" Stay silent until your employee has the chance to answer, listen with the intent to understand not to cross-examine, and then reward the candor.

Consider a Shared Document

I like the idea of using a Google Doc, or other shared document as a resource to use for framing 1:1's, for a few reasons:

1. It's easily accessible pretty much everywhere - across devices, even without a network connection if you choose the "Available offline" option.
2. It's a great way to capture action items, what's said, what's decided, what's due, etc. to help you and your employee remember these important things amid the many other things to remember day-to-day.
3. A shared doc enables leader and employee preparation - just because your employee is driving the agenda, doesn't mean you need to be surprised. You could agree that the agenda is developed in advance and take time to see what's coming and prepare for the conversation.
4. It allows you to keep a running archive of 1:1 content that could come in handy down the line for any number of reasons.

Encourage & Reward

Affirmation is the strongest motivator. It costs nothing to offer congratulations on a job well-done or to reinforce positive behaviors, but the rewards can be exponential. People want to work in environments where they feel valued and successful, and so when things are going well don't forget to acknowledge the effort and attention that other's are giving to the work. Encouragement and positive comments are always helpful and provide the right example for others to follow.

