FREE GUIDE

FOR TEAM LEADS AND TEAM MEMBERS

Mastering performance management with 1:1 meetings

How to run 1:1s that keep goals on track, build trust, and help your people grow.

Your next 1:1 Weekly or bi-weekly · 30 min

1. Progress on tasks and goals
2. Challenges and roadblocks
3. Mutual feedback
4. Recap and action items

INTRODUCTION

Performance management only works when it's continuous

A solid performance management process is essential to running any team in any industry. But how can you be sure that the process you have in place is really beneficial? The key to performance management is that it must be done on a continuous basis.

Several factors fall under the umbrella of continuous performance management, one being frequent communication between team leads and team members.

The 1:1 meeting between team lead and team member is arguably the most important part of your management process. This meeting provides an opportunity for goal-oriented, honest communication that is ultimately beneficial to maintaining good habits, strengthening the bond within your team, and keeping your business on track to reach your goals.

Delve into strategic practices used by the world's top business teams and learn how a simple meeting can be a game changer that opens the door to effective communication and keeps your whole team in sync.

What is a 1:1 meeting?

A 1:1 meeting (also called a one-to-one or one-on-one meeting) is dedicated time on the calendar for open-ended communication between a team lead and an employee. The purpose of a 1:1 is to give and receive feedback, keep each other in the loop on current projects, and discuss challenges and opportunities.

1:1s are a simple strategy for helping businesses master a continuous performance management process across the board.

WHY IT MATTERS

Why are 1:1s important?

Whether it's a brand new hire or a veteran on the team, all employees should have a 1:1 on the calendar with their leads. The team lead's role is to help them feel like a valuable part of the team whose input is appreciated. When employees feel valued, they are more dedicated to their role and tend to perform better. It also helps establish an attractive culture of productivity and accountability.

The atmosphere of the meeting should be one of goal-oriented conversation and transparency. 1:1s give employees an opportunity to speak candidly about their role: what parts of the job are working, what parts are not, and where they need help.

Unlike daily team meetings, which involve the whole team, 1:1s open up more honest, in-depth conversations, laying a solid foundation for a trusting relationship between team lead and team member.

A good 1:1 leaves both participants feeling like they are on the same page and aware of everything that is currently top of focus.

Leaders who hold regular 1:1s see increased performance, better communication, and a more inclusive company culture. Not only do 1:1s spark critical conversations, they help team members improve their organization and communication skills and encourage them to think critically.

What a 1:1 covers

01
Project and goal discussions

02
Performance quality review

03
Skills and career development

04
Mutual feedback

05
Habit-building communication rhythms

1:1s are structured to benefit both people, and ultimately the whole organization. The team lead and the team member both get something out of these recurring, give-and-take conversations.

BENEFITS

What each side gets from a 1:1

For team leads

- Give and receive feedback regularly to help your team members meet their goals.
- Build a culture of transparent, effective communication across your organization.
- Build stronger relationships with team members through frequent, honest conversations.
- Pulse-check your organization often and gauge employee satisfaction.

For team members

- Ask questions and get clarity on any problems you're facing.
- Offer your own ideas and input, and play a larger role in your business and its strategy.
- Hear feedback on your performance and get advice on how to improve.
- Treat your team lead as a mentor, and use your 1:1 to get career advice and talk about your professional goals.

Before the meeting

Preparation is what makes a 1:1 useful

Team members: take 15–20 minutes

Review your goals and tasks, check your workload, note one win and one challenge, and add your topics to the shared agenda.

Team leads: read before you meet

Read their updates ahead of time, come with questions instead of answers, and bring feedback to give and to ask for.

HOW TO RUN A SUCCESSFUL 1:1

Four habits that make the time count

1

Create a recurring meeting, and stick to it

Don't fall into the trap of skipping your 1:1s because you feel you've talked enough during the week. Keep the habit to build an effective routine, give your team chances to be heard, and help you both stay on top of priorities.

2

Follow an agenda

There are a few key areas to focus on, but the agenda is up to you. The point is having an order to follow, so you talk about the right things and get done what that meeting needs.

3

Discuss what matters

- ✓ Progress on tasks and goals
- ✓ Challenges and roadblocks
- ✓ Mutual feedback

4

Follow up

Write one shared recap of the action items right away, while everything is fresh. Give each commitment an owner and a due date, the team lead's included, and review them at the start of the next 1:1.

PRO TIP

Hold the meeting for 25 minutes and use the last 5 minutes to recap.

Let the team member lead

Team leads are responsible for giving employees the tools and authority to lead the meeting themselves. To start a useful conversation, a team lead might ask:

- How are you feeling about your projects?
- What's new since our last meeting?
- What is your top priority this week?
- What career goals are you hoping to hit this year?
- What are you struggling with?
- How can I help you?

OR TRY Start / Stop / Keep: what should you start doing, stop doing, and keep doing?

Align CEO Doug Walner credits 1:1 meetings with keeping him up to date on what each team member is focused on, and with building productive communication habits across his team.



Doug Walner
CEO, Align

"1:1 meetings are the oil that keeps the engines greased. They help establish a structure that holds employees accountable, and I get the feedback that I need to lead the team successfully. Each employee is different: different roles, different ambitions, different ideas. That's why it's important to set aside equal time with each of them on a regular basis to help you gauge where your team is as a whole and where you can improve."

TEMPLATE

Standard 1:1 meeting

Print it, or fill it in before your first 1:1

Meeting name

Meeting link

Cadence (pick one)

- [ ] Weekly
- [ ] Every other week
- [ ] Monthly

Start time

End time

Time zone

Description

Participants

Team lead _____ Team member _____

Agenda

1 _____ 4 _____

2 _____ 5 _____

3 _____ 6 _____

Action items

WHO	WHAT	WHEN

AN EXPERT OPINION

What a coach learned about 1:1s



Herb Cogliano

Scaling Up Coach

Herb spent over 30 years building and running companies in technology staffing services and adult education before discovering Verne Harnish's book, Scaling Up. After 17 years of using the Scaling Up frameworks in his own business, he decided to spend the second half of his career helping other companies scale as a business coach.

"Realizing what 1:1s are really about was a huge epiphany for me. Earlier in my career, when I would hold a 1:1 meeting I would ask questions specifically about status updates and not much else. That structure was productive in getting me what I needed, but it wasn't very developmental for them. I realized that these meetings are really about my employees: teaching them to drive their own bus, how to have initiative, and not only to report on items but to drive their own agenda."

"A-Players don't want to be managed, they want to be led. So they don't need to be told what to do, but they need resources and they need support when they have a roadblock."

IN CONCLUSION

Your most influential meeting

1:1s are everywhere, especially in growing companies, as business leaders realize how important it is to set up a check-in routine with every employee. With the right framework and execution in place, a frequent 1:1 is arguably your most influential meeting, because it strengthens your business from every angle. Planning, communication, relationship-building, goal-setting and performance review all see benefits, in the short term and the long term.

> As Coach Herb says, 1:1s help build an effective structure that "creates the consistency and framework that architects the right communication, where people can collaborate and have the right decision-making frameworks as your company is scaling."
>
> Herb Cogliano, Scaling Up Coach

SET UP YOUR 1:1S IN ALIGN

A recurring 1:1, set up in seconds

Create a recurring 1:1 Huddle from the built-in template, similar to the one on page 7. Then everything in this guide has a place to live:

- ✓ **A shared agenda** you both add topics to before the meeting
- ✓ **What's Up** to note a course or goal and open the growth conversation
- ✓ **An AI recap** after the meeting, with the action items pulled together
- ✓ **Who What When** for every commitment, with an owner and a due date
- ✓ **Private Notes** for what you want to remember