

POWERFUL 1-ON-1s THAT WORK

1-on-1s are an employee's meeting rather than the manager's meeting. This is the free-form meeting for the pressing issues, brilliant ideas and chronic frustrations that do not fit neatly into status reports, email and other less personal and intimate mechanisms. Employees should set the agenda and send it to the manager in advance. An easy way to set the agenda is by utilizing [the 5:15 format on a weekly basis](#).

If you aren't using the 5:15 format on a weekly basis, these three simple prompts can cover a wide variety of topics. This can serve as the agenda and should be sent by the employee to the manager the business day before the 1-on-1.

1. Gut check - How's it going? 10 = Couldn't be better. 1 = I'm going to quit. Why?
2. Issues/Problems/Open Items
3. Notables (free-form with context)

Remember:

- This is your direct report's time. Not the supervisor's time.
- You should discover: What are they dealing with? What obstacles can I help them remove?
- This is an open forum, a time for venting (if needed).
- However, both manager and employee should go out with their "gameface" on, even if there is disagreement in the meeting.
- 1 on 1s are not about key metrics, but are an open dialogue
- The manager needs to push the employee for the agenda
- A direct report can cancel 1, but not 2 1-on-1s- this is very important. This emphasizes this is a priority for the business and not to be missed.

During the 1-on-1, the employee will highlight the most important points. It's the manager's job to draw out issues from the employee.

The 1-on-1s should be short, focused and happen on a regular basis. Typically 30 minutes long and every-other-week.

Other great questions to consider for the 1:1:

- If we could improve in any way, how would we do it?
- What's the No. 1 problem with our organization? Why?
- What's not fun about working here?
- Who is really kicking ass in the company? Who do you admire?
- If you were me, what changes would you make?
- What don't you like about the product?
- What's the biggest opportunity that we're missing out on?
- What are we not doing that we should be doing?
- Are you happy working here?