

How to Have Productive 1-on-1 Chats

Leaders need to connect with the person, not just the player.

You may have 4 or 40 people on your team, and this may seem like a lot of work. Well, when Captain D. Michael Abrashoff took over the USS Benfold, he met individually with over 400 sailors!

He still claims these meetings were one of the most important steps to transform the ship from one of the worst to **the** best ship in the US Navy!

Your 1-on-1 Chats should touch on three things – but for your FIRST talk, only focus on the FIRST TWO:

- 1. CONNECTION**
- 2. COMMUNICATION**
- 3. COACHING**

FOR THE CONNECTION PART OF YOUR CHAT:

Ask about their family, hobbies, background, travel, upcoming events...

FOR THE COMMUNICATION PART OF YOUR CHAT

Focus on their personal aspirations and challenges

FOR THE COACHING PART OF YOUR CHAT:

Ask questions to develop them and their decisions as a leader



In the connection part of your meeting, ask some form of these questions:

1. Tell me about your family?
2. What kinds of things are important to you outside the office?
3. How do you spend your weekends and time away?
4. What are you excited about?

In the communication part of your meeting, ask some form of these questions:

1. What are your career aspirations?
2. What roadblocks do you see we need to be aware of?
3. What makes you uncomfortable?
4. What are you focusing on doing to help the team?

The bottom line is this: You need to know their desires and their challenges, so you can best support and develop them as a leader!

In the coaching part of your meeting, (2nd meeting on) ask these questions:

1. What skills do you want to improve on to help the team?
2. How can I help you?
3. What actions do you plan to take next, and when?
4. What is the best time for us to follow up?

You should write down the information you collect during these conversations and keep a file on every team member, so you can refer to it and keep up with their circumstances for when you talk again (or when you need to have another conversation for different reasons in the future).

But don't stop there!

YOU are responsible for keeping these conversations going!



Even if the initial conversation is a little awkward at first, or even forced, don't let a bad date detour you from working on these relationships.

Just always remember these two key ideas:

1. Be Curious (Ask Questions)
2. Be Yourself (Keep it Casual)

Some Other Tips for Better 1-on-1s:

Change the environment: Try to get away from your office if at all possible.

Change your clothes: If you typically dress a certain way as a coach or boss, dress more casually. It helps them see you as more of a person.

Sit as equals: Don't sit behind a desk or looming over them. Try to sit beside them or in close physical proximity.

Keep it about them: While maintaining appropriate boundaries, learn about the person outside of their position and job.

Ask for help: Share a question or problem you have been struggling to solve.

Share a struggle they may find relatable: We cultivate real connections when we allow ourselves to be seen for who we are.

Ask for feedback: How does it feel to be coached/led by me? What does it feel like to be a member of this team?



1 on 1 Chats - Meeting Framework

Date _____ Team Member _____

Personal Notes: (spouse, children, hobbies, friends, background, etc.)

What do I know about the person (background, family, desires, or difficulties?)

Preferred Type of Reward / Recognition: (favorite things, personality type, etc.)

Notes on What He / She Needs From Me:

What is this person responsible for doing?

What does this person need to hear (not what I want to say)?

What can I do to be a resource or support for this person?

Notes on What I Need From Him / Her:

What does this person do well?

What does this person need to keep doing? Start doing? Stop doing?

Follow up and Future Focus:

When will I check back with this person?

What will I need to refer to before we speak next time?



1 on 1 Chats - QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

What things have you been working on?

What has your week been like? Why?

Tell me about your family...

Tell me about your hobbies and activities...

What is something you learned this week?

What is something that challenged you this week?

What is going on right now with (project x)?

What areas of the project are ahead of schedule?

What areas of the project may be an issue?

What suggestions do you have to fix that?

How can I be most helpful to you?

What are 3 things you think our company does well?

What is something our company needs to do better?

What are your personal goals for the next five years?

