

THE INSANELY PRACTICAL GUIDE ON

HOW TO LEAD A ONE-ON-ONE MEETING

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"The single most important thing you can do to help ensure your future success, according to the Gallup organization's study of more than 27 million employees worldwide, is to find someone who has an interest in your development."

James Kouzes & Barry Posner,
Learning Leadership

WHY ONE-ON-ONE'S ARE ESSENTIAL FOR YOUR TEAM

Several years ago, The Ken Blanchard Companies worked with a fast food chain in southern California. The chain was struggling with a common problem in the industry—high turnover. This particular chain's turnover was close to 100%.

But there was one exception. One store had a rate that was significantly lower than the other restaurants. Initially, the manager insisted he didn't do anything different than the other stores in the chain. But after closer observation, they discovered that this manager did one thing different. He did a one-on-one meeting with each team member for a few minutes each week.

The manager and his team members would talk about the restaurant, school, home—anything that was on their mind. When asked why he conducted these one-on-one meetings, the manager said, "I figure if my workers knows that I really care about them as individuals, they'll be less likely to go down the street for a new job just because it might pay a little more."[1]

What makes a one-on-one so powerful? It's an opportunity to help team members grow and succeed. Simply put, one-on-one's are a leadership incubator. And as author and leadership coach Shawn Lovejoy suggests, leadership development happens best when two things are in place: *proximity* and *consistency*.

In other words, when you do a meeting face-to-face, week-after-week, you create a powerful environment where you can invest in each team member's success and growth. That's the power of a one-on-one meeting.

Unfortunately, many leaders ignore these important meetings. They see one-on-one's as an unnecessary waste of time, or one more thing to do in a calendar that's already out of control. But nothing could be further from the truth. One-on-one's are essential to the long-term health of the individual, the team, and the organization.

8 REASONS ONE-ON-ONE'S ARE ESSENTIAL

1. RELATIONSHIPS

One-on-one's provide a built-in system to get to know your team members. Healthy teams require healthy relationships, and one-on-one's provide the space to invest time getting to know the people you work alongside. Furthermore, one-on-one's allow you to address and resolve conflict when it arises rather than letting it brew.

2. ENCOURAGEMENT

According to research by Dr. Gary Chapman and Paul White, one of the five languages of appreciation in the workplace is *words of affirmation*. A one-on-one gives you a place to personally encourage and affirm team members. Furthermore, they give you an opportunity to express to your team members the value and importance of their contribution to the organization.

3. COMMUNICATION

Teams cannot function without clear and consistent communication. A one-on-one helps you give and receive regular communication updates. This is especially helpful when you need to communicate things that are only relevant to a specific team member.

4. SUPPORT

The primary purpose of the one-on-one is to support each team member in the areas where they need it most. That's why a good portion of a healthy one-on-one revolves around the team member's agenda for the meeting. It provides space for you to support them by listening, discussing, and offering direction and support.

5. GOALS

One-on-one's allow you to stay up-to-date on a team member's goals, the progress they're making, and the areas where they're getting stuck. They serve as a time for you to give perspective, offer wisdom, and help them get unstuck.

6. COACHING

One-on-one's are an excellent time to provide coaching to your team members. In some cases, you will coach them in areas where you've observed a need for improvement. In other cases, you'll coach them when they express a desire to grow in a specific area of life or leadership.

7. FEEDBACK

Feedback is a two-way street. Sometimes you'll offer valuable feedback and other times you'll glean feedback from your team members. In either case, one-on-one's allow both of you to grow and receive fresh perspective on projects, programs, and performance.

8. ACCOUNTABILITY

Finally, one-on-one's are where you hold team member's accountable for reaching goals, closing performance gaps, and implementing next steps that were discussed in previous meetings.

HOW TO INTRODUCE ONE-ON-ONE'S TO YOUR TEAM

What do you do if you don't currently conduct one-on-one meetings with your direct reports? You'll need to introduce the idea to your team. This may feel awkward at first, but it can be introduced relatively easily by pulling your team together and saying something like this:

> *"One of my goals is to help our team thrive, and one key I've failed to implement that makes this possible is regular one-on-one meetings. So, beginning next week, I'd like to schedule a weekly one-on-one with each of you. This won't be a long meeting—just 30-45 minutes, but I believe it will be a great way for me to serve you better. So, let me share three things you deserve to know about our one-on-one meetings."*

Then, share the following three points with your team:

1. SAME DAY, SAME TIME

> *"Each team members one-on-one will happen on the same day and at the same time each week. This will help you build it into your normal work rhythm without you having to worry about it changing from week to week."*

2. FOR YOUR BENEFIT

> *"One-on-one meetings are an opportunity for each team member to get 30-45 minutes of my uninterrupted time and attention. We'll spend the majority of the time talking about whatever you need to discuss. You might want to share updates, discuss ideas, express concerns, or even receive coaching and support."*

3. MEETING PREPARATION

"Because the one-on-one is primarily for your benefit, I would encourage you to prepare for the meeting by reflecting on four simple questions before the meeting. The following chart offers a helpful overview."

One-On-One Meeting Planner	
Meeting Item	**Question**
Communication	**What updates do I need to provide?** • Updates on things my supervisor should be aware of • Updates on next steps from previous meetings
Clarification	**What questions do I need to ask?** • About decisions or direction for the future • About any issues, events, programs, or next steps
Challenges	**What problems, challenges, or ideas do I want to discuss?** • My life, goals, or department • Our team or the organization
Coaching	**In what areas do I need to learn or grow?** • Personally • Professionally

This outline provides a simple overview of how to introduce the idea of one-on-one's to your team. Most team members will be appreciative of the opportunity. After the first few meetings, they'll get to use to the process.

One the following page, you'll find the full "Team Member One-On-One Meeting Planner" that you can give to each member of your team to help them prepare for meetings.

TEAM MEMBER'S ONE-ON-ONE MEETING PLANNER

Each week you will have a one-on-one meeting with your supervisor. The purpose of this meeting is to provide you with support and coaching as you serve in your role. This worksheet is designed to help you maximize and prepare for your weekly meeting with your supervisor.

1. **Preparation –** Come prepared to the one-on-one meeting. Use the four areas in the framework below to help you prepare (communication, clarification, challenges, coaching).

2. **Goals –** For easy reference during the meeting, you should include each of your goals in the chart below. Your supervisor may ask about them from time to time.

3. **Timing –** The meeting will be 45-minutes, so ensure your agenda can be addressed within that timeframe.

My Goals		
#	**Goals**	**Deadline**
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		

One-On-One Meeting Planner	
Meeting Item	**Question**
Communication	**What updates do I need to provide?** • Updates on things my supervisor should be aware of • Updates on next steps from previous meetings
Clarification	**What questions do I need to ask?** • About decisions or direction for the future • About any issues, events, programs, or next steps
Challenges	**What problems, challenges, or ideas do I want to discuss?** • My life, goals, or ministry • Our team or church
Coaching	**In what areas do I need to learn or grow?** • Personally • Professionally

NOTES:

10 KEYS TO A SUCCESSFUL ONE-ON-ONE

Once you introduce the idea of one-on-one's to your team, you'll need to implement the meetings with excellence. A well-led meeting should cultivate psychological safety. This will give team members the security they need to open up, provide updates, share their ideas, and seek your perspective and feedback.

To conduct successful one-on-one meetings, it's important to keep the following helpful tips in focus.

1. CONSISTENCY

One-on-one meetings should happen once per week or once every other week. I generally recommend once every other week for part-time employees or employees with schedules that are limited due to the nature of their work. The typical length for the meeting will be 30-45 minutes. Even if you and/or your team member don't feel like you have anything to talk about, don't cancel the meeting. This is counter-intuitive, but meeting regularly will help you address a variety of important issues since no two meetings look identical.

2. PREPARE FOR THE MEETING

While the one-on-one is primarily for the team member's benefit, and while a large portion of the meeting will usually focus on *their* agenda, that doesn't mean the leader shouldn't prepare. Instead, the leader should follow a Meeting MAPP as a template for the meeting (which I'll share with you shortly).

3. BUILD RAPPORT

A one-on-one should be a safe place for team members. Therefore, leaders need to build rapport in the meeting by showing respect, kindness, and dignity. Leading with a posture of genuine care, empathy, and the heart of servant leadership makes all the difference. The greater the rapport the better the relationship.

4. BE FULLY PRESENT

One thing that communicates a high level of value to team members during a one-on-one is when their leader is fully present. This is not a time to reply to email, respond to texts, or be continually interrupted. Show value to each team member by giving them your undivided attention. Stay present and engaged.

5. FOCUS ON THEIR AGENDA

Give time to the things your team member wants to discuss. By focusing on their agenda first, you send a message that what matters to them is important to you. This ensures they're getting their questions answered and the help they need.

6. ASK QUESTIONS & LISTEN MORE

Asking questions and taking time to truly listen will help you navigate the meeting in a direction that provides the greatest value to the team member. I'll offer some helpful questions in a moment.

7. LIFT UP WITHOUT COMING DOWN

There will be times when you need to address performance gaps. During these times learn to *lift up without coming down*. In other words, rather than coming down on the team member in a condescending tone, lift them up with coaching that is helpful and lifegiving. In most cases, you only need to give 2-3 minutes of coaching or feedback. Then back off, let them process what you've said, and give them an opportunity to ask questions.

8. OFFER TO HELP

One of the best things you can do in a one-on-one is offer to help. This doesn't mean you do their job for them. Instead, you're looking for practical ways to provide meaningful support. You might share an idea, offer feedback, leverage your influence to help them thrive, secure resources for a project, or make an introduction to another leader.

9. STAY ON TIME

If the meeting is a regular part of your schedule (and their schedule), it should remain on time. This shows respect for them and you. Because the meeting happens regularly, you don't have to address every issue in every meeting.

10. SPAN OF CARE

Span of care is a term used to describe the number of people a leader is responsible to care for. Most leaders can't care for more than 4-7 direct reports. Therefore, every leader and manager throughout the organization needs to conduct one-on-one's with the team members who report to them.

THE MAPP: THE SUPERVISOR'S ONE-ON-ONE MEETING TEMPLATE

The Meeting MAPP is a template to guide you through the one-on-one with each of your direct reports. This isn't something you need to show your team members. Instead, it's a simple guide to help you facilitate the meeting in a focused yet flexible way. There are four ingredients in **The Meeting MAPP**:

M - Motivation

It's not your job to keep your team members self-motivated. But it is your job to create an environment that is motivating. Therefore, begin the one-on-one meeting by sharing something motivating—that is, something positive, affirming, and life giving.

For example, you might begin by saying, "You did a great job on…" And then praise them for a job well done on a recent project, event, or initiative. Or you might share something personal that shows you care about them, such as, "Last week your son wasn't feeling well. How's he been doing?" These simple comments show affirmation, appreciation, and compassion. They help team members feel *noticed* and *known.*

A - Agenda

This portion of the meeting is where you'll typically spend the majority of your time. This is the team member's opportunity to discuss the things on *their* agenda. These are the items they prepared in advance. To help them in this preparation process, they might chose to use the four questions you provided to them in the "Team Member One-On-One Meeting Planner":

- Communication: What updates do I need to provide?
- Clarification: What questions do I need to ask?
- Challenges: What problems, challenges, or ideas do I want to discuss?
- Coaching: In what areas do I need to learn and grow?

Again, you'll spend most of the time on their agenda, but this is also where you show tremendous support to the things that matter most to them.

P - Priorities

This part of the meeting is your opportunity to ask for updates on the team member's highest priorities, such as quarterly or annual goals.

This can lead to a great opportunity to offer perspective, feedback, and ideas, especially if they're feeling stuck in their progress toward a goal. Furthermore, it's an opportunity to hold them accountable for important next steps to see the goal reached.

Finally, if the team member is getting distracted by things that don't matter or they're requiring far too much of their time, the "Priority" part of the meeting gives you an opportunity to address those issues.

P - Potential

During the "Potential" part of the meeting, you're focusing on developing and maximizing the team member's potential. Potential is all about growth. In some cases, a team member will request coaching to develop a skill or learn something new. Other times you'll need to provide coaching to help them close a performance gap.

There may also be times when you need to give them a new opportunity or greater responsibility. Simply put, the best way to help team members reach their potential is to give them an opportunity for greater leadership. Whatever the case, the "Potential" part of the meeting is your opportunity to help them grow to their full potential.

The Meeting MAPP is a practical template to guide your one-on-one. During the one-on-one, you'll also want to keep these helpful tips in mind:

- **Be Flexibile –** While you'll always do the first two parts of the meeting (Motivation and Agenda), you may not always do the last two parts (Priorities and Potential). Be flexible not rigid. Focus on the things that will add the greatest value.

- **Keep Goals in Focus –** It's easy to become consumed by the day-to-day activities in any job. If one-on-one's get too consumed with these monotonous activities, be sure to bring up their "Priorities" by asking for an update on quarterly or annual goals. This should happen at least once per month.

- **Look for Growth Opportunities –** Team members will feel an increased measure of engagement when they have the opportunity to learn and grow. Therefore, prior to one-on-one's, give careful consideration to what you can do to help them grow. In addition, ask yourself, "What responsibility can I give this team member that would elevate their leadership capacity?" Growth happens when we empower others. Look for ways to continually challenge and invest in their growth.

- **Take Notes –** You'll want to take notes during each meeting. This will help you remember what you've discussed, allowing you to refer to it again at a later date. In addition, it will be a helpful reminder for you to do anything you committed to do during the meeting.

- **Follow-Up –** Be sure to follow-up on team members during your next one-on-one. For example, if the team member committed to take a next step toward a goal, follow-up by asking for an update. Furthermore, if they shared something that's concerning them (personally or professionally), be sure to follow up and ask how it's going and how you can help.

- **Watch Your Tone –** Finally, tone matters in the meeting. Again, this needs to be a safe environment, and your tone sets the attitude for the entire meeting.

On the following page, you will find the "One-On-One Supervisor Meeting MAPP." This template has four parts to it:

1. **Name –** Create a separate template for each team member who reports to you.

2. **Goals –** Add the team member's quarterly or annual goals to the template. This will allow you to quickly reference their goals during a meeting without having to look for them in a separate file.

3. **MAPP Questions –** The next part of the template provides prompts and questions you can ask in each of the four areas (Motivation, Agenda, Priorities, Potential). These questions are a natural way to guide you through the meeting.

4. **Notes –** The final section of the template provides a place for you to take notes during the meeting. This will be a helpful reminder of your conversation, next steps, and things to follow-up.

ONE-ON-ONE SUPERVISOR MEETING MAPP

Team Member's Name:	

Team Member's Goals		
#	**Goals**	**Deadline**
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		

One-On-One Meeting MAPP		
Meeting Item		**Sample Questions**
M	**Motivation**	• You did a great job with… • Congratulations on… • I appreciate how you… • Thank you for… • How's your family? • How are you doing?
A	**Agenda**	• What would you like to talk about today? • What questions do you have for me today? • What's on your mind today? • Last week we talked about…how are things going for you? • Last week we discussed…any new updates since we last talked? • How can I help you with…?
P	**Priorities**	• Can you update me on…? • Can you give me an update on (goal)? Where do you feel stuck? • What priorities are you working on this week? • How are you doing with your fellow team members? • What leader are you developing and investing in right now? • What next steps are you going to take between now and next week?
P	**Potential**	• Can I speak into your leadership about something? • Can I provide some coaching in an area of your work I've observed? • What are you currently learning? • Who is currently coaching you? • What new skill would you like to learn? How can I help you? • I'd like to give you a new opportunity to lead at a new level.

NOTES:

GET STARTED

One-on-one meetings can make a big difference for each team member, the health of the team, and the forward progress of the organization. To implement and maximize these essential meetings, get started with these steps:

- **Share the value of one-on-one meetings with your team**
- **Train your team how to use the one-on-one meeting planner**
- **Schedule recurring meetings with each direct report**
- **Facilitate each meeting with the MAPP**
- **Meet consistently with each direct report**
- **Have each leader in the organization do the same with his or her team**

It won't take long for you to see the value of the one-on-one Meeting MAPP, and it won't take long for your team members to see the value of the one-on-one Meeting Planner. These tools will equip you and your team to maximize the impact of healthy one-on-one's.

Make it happen by getting started today.



Stephen Blandino

Stephen Blandino helps motivated pastors, leaders, and non-profit executives maximize personal growth and build thriving churches and organizations.

He holds a Masters in Organizational Leadership and he coaches leaders in the areas of leadership, personal growth, organizational health, building effective teams, life purpose, and more.

Stephen is a church planter, leadership coach, host of the Leader Fluent Podcast, and the author of five books including *Stop Chasing Easy*, *Do Good Works*, and *Creating Your Church's Culture*. He has experience in small, mid-size, and large churches, and he currently pastors 7 City Church near downtown Fort Worth, Texas.

Stephen lives in the Fort Worth area with his wife Karen. They have one daughter, Ashley, son-in-law, Dylan, and two grandsons, Elijah and Wyatt.

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NOTES

[1] Blanchard LeaderChat, April 6, 2017, https://leaderchat.org/2017/04/06/reduce-turnover-with-one-simple-management-technique/