Effective 1-on-1s – seven top tips

1-on-1s are an extremely powerful management tool. A 1-on-1 is a regular meeting with each of your first reports or your manager that is just the two of you maintaining the relationship, staying aligned, understanding goals and removing obstacles. It is not a team meeting. It is not a surrogate for some other project meeting you wish you'd had. It is about continual and constructive engagement, collaboration and growth.

Communication is a fundamental part of both leadership and management and it needs to be open, frequent and, importantly, two-way. A 1-on-1 is the perfect forum for ensuring this is being done effectively.

The best way to approach 1-on-1s is with a few **simple ground-rules**, a **repeatable structure** (tailored to the individual) and an **honest and transparent coaching mind-set**. Here are <u>seven top tips</u> for having great 1-on-1s:

Scheduled – keeping to a regular pattern builds trust and facilitates adequate preparation. Pick a workable routine and stick to it. Weekly is recommended.

Structured – the meeting is short so it needs to be structured to be effective. Typically three 10 min blocks are all that's needed. These three blocks should focus firstly on them, then you get a shot and finally there should be time for collaborate problem solving related to matters arising.

Focused – don't try to cover too much. The 1-on-1 is intended to be a short, regular meeting that focuses on what matters most for both parties.

Attentive – avoid distractions (email / phones / interruptions etc). Try to pick a time and location that will best facilitate a full and uncompromised engagement so that the time is well spent and both parties are respected.

Positive – maintain a positive tone and ensure that feedback is objective and constructive. Openly review the past with a focus on the future.

Evolutionary – take some time to examine what's working and what's not. Continuous improvement is an important discipline and should be applied broadly and also to the 1-on-1 process itself.

Action oriented – end with an action plan. It is important to come away with a clear agreement on who will do what by when to ensure progress is made.

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All that's needed is 30 minutes per meeting each week. When done well, there will be a noticeable increase in engagement, productivity and decision-making. The benefits are huge. No confusion (well, at least a lot less). No surprises. No loss of momentum.

This is a forum for inspiration, alignment, coaching, collaborative problem solving and reinforcing accountabilities. It's a platform for learning. It's a platform for growth. It's a platform for building relationships.

What often happens though, is the 1-on-1 meeting is not given the priority it deserves and is either deferred, rushed or poorly aligned with the desired outcomes. Neglecting to hold them regularly, or at all, means that things pile up and attempts to cover a long list of concerns and issues in a single random meeting are ineffectual and potentially stressful for both parties.

Failure to encourage an open and constructive two-way discussion may trigger defensive behaviours and torpedo any hopes of a positive outcome. Leaving insufficient time to wrap-up and agree on the next steps and the parties responsible for them will undermine any progress made. The likely result being that you revisit the same issues again and again in subsequent meetings.

It doesn't have to be that way.

If you are not currently using 1-on-1s it's time that you to took a hard look at that decision. If you are already running them then why not review your approach against the tips presented here and see if there is any room for improvement.

One thing is for sure – however you choose to approach this topic there is one underlying principle that is non-negotiable:

"Seek first to understand." – Stephen Covey

*If you'd like some specific help with your leadership or management issues please drop us a line at **info@sigmarose.com** or simply call the number below.*

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