Your leadership guide to a year of one-on-one meetings

The CONNECTION Blueprint

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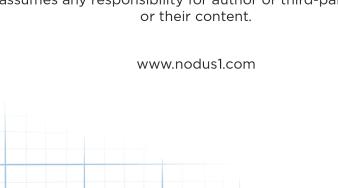
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For our children, Andy and Laura, who inspire me every day.

For my parents, who taught me everything.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	.4
How to read this book	.7
Chapter 1: Best Practices for One-on-One Meetings	.8
Chapter 2: New Employee One-on-Ones	.14
Chapter 3: Current Employee One-on-Ones	.29
Chapter 4: Virtual Employee One-on-Ones	.73
Chapter 5: Using One-on-Ones to Resolve Performance Issues	.75
Chapter 6: Troubleshooting One-on-Ones	.78
Chapter 7: Next Steps	.83
Index: Questions Organized by Session Goal	.85



INTRODUCTION

Over the past 25 years, I have provided leadership development to thousands of leaders. In leading a global talent development consulting business, I work directly with leaders at all levels who are striving to get better at developing high performing teams. Through training sessions, one-on-one coaching and talent development projects in start-ups to Fortune 100 companies and across a wide variety of industries, I've been privileged to support the success of many great leaders.

One day, I was working with a leader to identify good questions for her to use in one-on-one meetings to create strong engagement and openness. This leader was highly respected and had good rapport with her team, but she discovered that her employees weren't always open about concerns and requests. As I shared some important questions she could have been using in her one-on-ones, she said, "Can you just give me a list or a deck of questions? I don't have time to think of these each week!" From her request, the idea for this book was born.

The goal of writing this book is to provide an easy guide for leaders at all levels of the organization, from first-line supervisors to CEOs, to leverage effective one-on-one meetings with their employees. If you manage people, this book is for you.

I targeted one-on-one meetings because I have observed two key overlooked opportunities.

First, leaders often fail to leverage one of the best methods for leadership communication, the one-on-one meeting between a manager and an employee. For example, *The Ken Blanchard Companies & Training Magazine* surveyed over 700 training magazine subscribers in 2013. Key takeaways from this survey were that "89% of people want to meet with their manager on at least a monthly basis, with 44% of the people polled wanting to meet at least once per week. Only 73% of people actually do meet at least once a month. Only 34% of people actually meet at least once per week." You may be saying, "I talk to my employees every day; I don't need to have a scheduled one-on-one" or "I don't have time." Both may be true, but a one-on-one meeting is very different from daily interaction.

The one-on-one provides time for conversations that are more than just the problem of the day. It provides a focused time for you and your employee to get to know each other better, build a solid relationship, and discuss "how things are going" not just "what are you working on." And the time invested will pay off much more than many other activities such as responding to emails or attending another meeting.

In a recent *Harvard Business Review* article titled "How to Make Your One-on-Ones with Employees More Productive" by Rebecca Knight, there is a reference to Elizabeth Grace Saunders, the author of *How to Invest Your Time Like Money* and the founder of Real Life E Time Coaching & Training. She states:

"One-on-ones are one of the most important productivity tools you have as a manager. They are where you can ask strategic questions such as, are we focused on the right things? And from a rapport point of view, they are how you show employees that you value them and care about them."²

They also ensure a scheduled time for the employee to bring up issues that they may be reluctant to discuss. Regularly scheduled one-on-one meetings have been shown to increase trust, transparency and engagement. If you want less turnover, more engagement and increased innovation, invest time in one-on-one meetings. They are a powerful tool for leaders.

A second observation is that even for those leaders who do have regular one-on-one meetings, many fail to ask great questions that lead to employee engagement and growth. Asking effective questions to coach and develop employees is a valuable leadership skill.

There are so many powerful questions that set the stage for a leader to motivate, engage and develop employees. But instead, many leaders give direction, instructions and background information, then expect the employee to remember everything and act on it. In other words, leaders do all the talking and should be doing more listening. This often occurs due to lack of skill and lack of time to plan or prepare. Is this you?

According to Julie Zhuo, author of *The Making of a Manager*, (Zuho, 2019, p. 66):

"The ideal 1:1 leaves your report feeling that it was useful for her. Remember your job is to be a multiplier for your people. If you can remove a barrier, provide a valuable new perspective, or increase their confidence, then you're enabling them to be more successful."³

This book will enable you to seize these opportunities to connect and become a more effective leader. It includes a blueprint of sessions, questions and actions for an entire year. After you have read this book, you may be surprised to find that your preparation will only take an extra 5 minutes per week or an hour per month for each team member. Your time invested will also avoid many blow-ups, rework, conflicts and even turnover.

So, let's make it easy and practical for you to have great one-onone meetings.



INDEX

Questions Organized by Session Goal

Addressing challenges

Session 21 Page 39 (Challenging problems or situations)

Session 35 Page 54

Session 49 Page 70 (Assess challenge level)

Build trust

Session 1 Page 15

Session 2 Page 16

Session 3 Page 17

Session 9 Page 24

Session 44 Page 64

Career development/goals

Session 10 Page 25

Session 15 Page 32

Session 19 Page 37

Session 34 Page 53

Change management

Session 47 Page 68

Coaching to take on a new task

Session 22 Page 40

Communication

Session 6 Page 21 (employee and team) Session 25 Page 43 (methods and frequency) Session 33 Page 52 (meetings)

Company values

Session 32 Page 51

Competitor or industry insight

Session 39 Page 59

Conflict

Session 48 Page 69

Connect work to company strategy

Session 12 Page 27

Session 42 Page 62

Creativity and innovation

Session 23 Page 41

Decision-making

Session 24 Page 42

Feedback

Session 30 Page 49 Session 31 Page 50 (Feedback on your leadership) Session 40 Page 60 (One-on-one meeting feedback) Session 43 Page 63

Goal setting

Session 13 Page 30

Session 27 Page 46 (Progress on goals)

Improving efficiency

Session 18 Page 36

Leveraging strengths

Session 4 Page 18

Motivation

Session 37 Page 57

Prioritizing Session 38 Page 58

Session 46 Page 67

Project review

Session 50 Page 71

Quality of work

Session 20 Page 38 (Quality standards)

Session 41 Page 61

Recognition

Session 11 Page 26

Relationships with stakeholders

Session 14 Page 31

Role clarity and job satisfaction

Session 5 Page 20

Stress management

Session 8 Page 23

Session 28 Page 47

Team relationships

Session 7 Page 22

Session 17 Page 35

Session 26 Page 45

Session 29 Page 48

Time management

Session 16 Page 34

Session 36 Page 56

Tools and technology

Session 45 Page 65