

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



The  
**CONNECTION**  
Blueprint

DEBBIE WAGGONER

Nodus, Inc.  
Debbie Waggoner  
Decatur, TX

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Author: Debbie Waggoner  
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*For Robert, who always encouraged me to fly.*

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

*For my parents, who taught me everything.*



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# 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."<sup>1</sup>

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.”<sup>2</sup>*

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.”<sup>3</sup>*

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-on-one meetings.

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