Guide to Skip Level 1-1 Meetings

|| General tips ||

1. In skip-level 1-1s, the executive should have their attention on supporting the employee and also supporting the employee’s manager. The relationship between the employee and their manager should be strengthened through skip-level 1-1s.
2. A main theme of emphasis for skip level 1-1’s: learning. Seek to learn about: team member, team member’s work experience, customers, market, organizational systems, processes, team dynamics, culture, etc.
3. Skip level meetings are not about assessing the employee or the employee’s manager. This should be made clear to the team member; it is an informational, relationship building, culture building meeting.
4. Servant leadership is good guiding orientation to have for skip-level 1-1s. *How can we support you to be more successful?*
5. Coordinate with their manager (e.g., your direct report) in advance:
   1. Ask the supervisor if there are any topics they would recommend discussing.
   2. Emphasize that the purpose is to support the manager in inspiring the team member through the interaction; purpose is to make team members feel heard, and demonstrating senior leadership valuing all team member’s perspectives and experiences
6. Use active listening – eye contact, attentive body language, check for understanding.
7. Practice coaching: don’t just give answers and suggestions. Ask questions. Help develop problem solving mindsets.
8. Practice praise and recognition.
9. Use a shared document to keep notes on agenda, discussion points, and any action items for each recurring 1-1.
10. Use a timer for each agenda item if you regularly run out of time.
11. Be proactive and direct about difficult issues.
12. Use strategic focus: highlight company priorities where appropriate. Reference OKRs to calibrate the priorities.
13. Articulate any next steps and action items.
14. Circle back with manager and debrief where valuable. Keep the manager in the loop and support their effectiveness. Be thoughtful about not in any way undermining the manager.

|| Sample topics ||

1. Outcome and follow-up items from previous 1-1
2. Biggest challenge employee is currently facing and ways you can help them
3. Biggest opportunity employee currently sees, ideas about next steps, and ways you can help them
4. Things you should know but might not
5. Additional information employee needs to do their job
6. Other projects or tasks employee wants to talk about
7. Solicit feedback to help you become a stronger leader and them to get better support.

|| Sample Questions ||

1. What do you enjoy most about your work?
2. What do you enjoy most about working on this team?
3. How would you describe the team culture and dynamics?
4. Are there any areas where you feel the team could improve?
5. What challenges do you encounter in your day-to-day work?
6. How do you feel about the level of support and communication you’re receiving?
7. Are there any projects or initiatives you're particularly excited about?
8. What do you think the team does well, and what areas could we focus on for improvement?
9. How do you see your career progressing within the team or the company?
10. Are there any resources or tools you feel are lacking that could enhance your productivity or effectiveness?
11. How do you feel about the current level of recognition and feedback within the team? The organization?
12. What suggestions do you have for enhancing collaboration and teamwork?
13. Are there any concerns or issues you feel haven't been addressed effectively?
14. How do you think we could better support your professional growth and development?
15. What do you think sets this team apart from others you've worked on?
16. Is there anything else you'd like to discuss or share about your experience on the team?
17. How can I get better in my leadership role?
18. How can we get better as an organization?