



WHITEPAPER: ETW MANAGEMENT SERIES

# Conducting Valuable 1-to-1 Meetings

How to make them useful, productive and worth your time



## WHY INVEST IN 1-TO-1 MEETINGS?

These days managers are expected to produce better results and get more done in less time, with fewer resources. This trend is not likely to change anytime soon. Effective managers are able to do more with less by focusing their time on only the highest-value activities.

The single highest-value activity any manager can focus on is the 1-to-1 meeting. Empower your managers to become more effective coaches, and employees to become problem-solvers.

Even if you are thinking that you already meet with your team on a semi-regular basis, or that you just don't have the time, setting aside an hour each month to invest in developing each of your team members in a formal 1-to-1 meeting is highly impactful.

## Get The Facts

### BENEFITS OF STANDARDIZED CONTINUOUS PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT:

|                                   |                               |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 3X Increased employee engagement  | 22% Increase in profitability |
| 65% Decrease in employee turnover | 21% Increase in productivity  |

#### -GALLUP

Maybe there is some big crisis/project/merger/etc. going on and you can't possibly imagine taking your employees away from their work at a time like this. These meetings will actually help you manage the situation as effectively as possible because every member of your team will be on the same page with goals and objectives that are aligned to the strategy that's been put in place to tackle it.

The truth is that reducing variance in how managers effectively manage across an organization has a reward that far outweighs the time invested.



Benefits of holding regular 1-to-1 meetings:

- Stronger performing employees that think strategically
- Fewer “fires” to put out
- Forward looking and collaborative meetings
- Enables both positive and negative feedback to be received without defensiveness as it becomes part of a routine and habit
- Improved communication
- Increased employee and manager accountability
- Frames critique in the context of the positive results you want to accomplish rather than making it personal. This helps drive a performance based culture

**100%** of companies with higher performing employees have a formal linkage between corporate and individual goals

**HARVARD BUSINESS REVIEW**

## HOLDING SUCCESSFUL 1-TO-1 MEETINGS

A successful 1-to-1 meeting conducted between management and direct reports should identify coachable areas of improvement, share learning experiences and discuss individual and organizational goals. When conducted with a sense of purpose, 1-to-1 meetings can be invaluable to an organization. Managers become more engaged with the development of their employees, and employees feel aligned and motivated to the goals of the organization as a whole.

1-to-1 meetings are a critical practice for any organization looking to improve or optimize operations. Take a look at these best practices for conducting a successful 1-to-1 meeting, and try applying them in your own organization.



# #1 BEFORE THE MEETING

Like any successful practice, 1-to-1 meetings require proper preparation. You should ask all direct reports to be prepared to discuss their goals and related KPIs, as well as ask any questions or share concerns.

Utilizing a performance management platform to organize these discussion points provides an opportunity for you, as a manager, to review and prepare your own thoughts prior to the meeting. See below for an example of how these updates are shared in ETW.

Send a General Note

View All Employees

View the stream of: Search for an employee

**Note added to Objective by Clint Rogers**

2 weeks ago

**Increase email campaign "Open" rate to 30% in 2016 Sample Execution Plan G\***

I want to discuss the CRM research with you during our next 1-to-1, as I have some insight into which CRMs our biggest competitors are using. I do feel there are some "low hanging fruit" type improvement we can make immediately which I would like to see you and your team focus on in the short term rather than doing too much analysis and waiting a full 6 months for the result.

**Note added to Objective by Sidney Rice**

2 weeks ago

**Increase email campaign "Open" rate to 30% in 2016 Sample Execution Plan G\***

YTD Plan: 10% for August  
Actual: 8.5%

Improvement Efforts:

1. I have met with my team and am having them identify the top 3 opportunities for improvement in the email campaign value stream (e.g.- Better lists, AB Testing for subject lines etc.) and have given them 6 months to improve the top identified areas by 20% which should improve the open rate
2. I am researching new CRM providers to see which ones have a historic rate of fewer rejections based on servers being flagged as spam and determining an ROI for switching providers, will have to you by end of month
3. I am testing alternative ways to drive new and existing users to sign up for our monthly newsletter and attending a conference that showcases best practices in CRM for our industry

Regardless of the platform you choose to manage your company's strategy, goals and objectives, your direct reports should be sure to update their progress at least 3-5 days prior to the 1-to-1 meeting. As a manager, you should be diligent about catching up on updates prior to the meeting so that any potential issues, or coachable moments can be addressed.



## #2 DURING THE MEETING

### Create The Right Environment

Before you dive into discussion topics, take a moment to create an environment where your employee will be more receptive to an open discussion. If you are using an MOS to track these discussion topics, be sure to turn your screen so both you and your employee have full visibility.

### Start With The Good

The purpose of a 1-to-1 meeting is not only to improve areas where the employee may be struggling. It is also to discuss the “wins.” Your employee will no doubt welcome the praise, but discussing their “wins” serves an additional purpose. Talk about what they did to achieve the win. Is their process replicable in other teams, tasks or projects? Design your 1-to-1 as an opportunity to learn from each other and grow, rather than a one-sided critique.

### Give The Meeting And The Employee Top Priority

Once you set a time for your 1-to-1 meeting, it is extremely important to do everything in your power not to cancel or reschedule. You should also avoid outside distractions during the meeting; i.e. taking calls, answering emails, etc. Give the employee your full attention and spend that time the way it was intended. Lead by example to show your employees how important these meetings are. Having the discipline to make scheduled 1-to-1 meetings your top priority will compel your employees to follow suit.

### Ask Clarifying Questions

To ensure you have a full understanding of what your direct report is doing and why they are doing it, ask questions. The 1-to-1 is meant to be a two-way dialogue, so you need to find the balance between speaking and listening. If you are unsure of something that is said, do not simply make assumptions. Take the time to stop, ask, listen and learn from your employee so there is not any confusion.





"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."

ELIZABETH  
GRACE SAUNDERS

Author of *How to Invest  
Your Time Like Money*

## Focus On Solutions

People tend to spend the majority of their time during 1-to-1s describing why things are not working as planned as justification for their efforts not leading to results. While it is always critical to understand the root cause when solving any problem, be sure to get a sense of what specific actionable items that employee will focus on going forward that will help them get a better result.

One practice that can provide effective coaching opportunities and keep the conversation focused on getting results is to ask employees to identify the top 1 to 3 things they are or will be focusing on to get better results going forward. This provides insight into an employee's understanding of the root cause and their ability to identify and implement effective solutions without relying on the manager to provide all of the answers. Managers can understand the employees logic and thought process and question, coach and develop them with that valuable insight.

## Look Forward

While you will likely spend a fair amount of your time discussing past performance and goals, you should also be sure to take the time to address career advancement goals, plans or questions. By understanding where your direct report is looking to go with their career, you can better understand what they need from you as a manager to be fulfilled in their current role as well as how to help them reach potential advancement opportunities. This helps employees understand that their manager's role is to help them get better results and be more successful which improves trust and accountability. This ultimately will benefit the organization just as much as the employee.

## Provide Supportive And Developmental Feedback

Throughout the course of the discussion, be sure to offer guidance and identify new solutions or approaches. Stretch your direct report to grow and exceed expectations by sharing your experience, perspective and strategic thinking so he or she can learn and apply this over time.



## Show Gratitude

Always remember to congratulate or thank your direct report for results or progress. Be genuine with any praise, and close out the meeting on a note of positivity.

**Continue your 1-to-1 until you have reviewed all requirements, answered all questions, and are confident your direct report knows exactly what to focus on going forward to get results.**

In utilizing the 1-to-1 process, you will create value for your organization by improving employee communication, engagement, performance, teamwork and results. Help managers achieve the results they seek while developing the capabilities of their team.

## CLIENT RESULTS

1-TO-1s ARE A CRITICAL PART OF THE ETW MANAGEMENT CYCLE AND SHOULD BE CONDUCTED NO LESS THAN MONTHLY. CLIENTS WHO HAVE ENGAGED THE ETW PROCESS SPEAK TO ITS EFFECTIVENESS:

"Following the ETW platform and model, each key player meets regularly with their team to discuss results and goals. Team members now strive to meet their objectives in order to drive the entire business, which has definitely helped us receive better results in the end."

RAY COOK, CHMM—*Operations Manager, US Chemcare*

"I now have monthly meetings with my five direct reports. ETW has made us more productive because we focus on the key things that drive results for our company."

JOE GRYGIEL—*Senior Director of Operations, Air Evac Lifeteam*



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## About ETW

ETW provides a platform to track, evaluate and measure employee performance against the major objectives of the organization. Easily execute and translate long-term strategy into clear, actionable goals. With ETW you can effectively communicate the company's roadmap to success and engage everyone throughout the organization with that roadmap. Using ETW your organization can connect employees to strategy and culture to drive sustainable winning results.

If you would like to set up a demo with our leadership team, please email [info@etw.com](mailto:info@etw.com)



ETW

**EXECUTE TO WIN**

Business Operating System  
for the Modern Enterprise  
[www.etw.com](http://www.etw.com)