

Rethinking 1:1s: The Small Shift That Transforms Teams

How Better Conversations Fuel Performance and Engagement



THE ORGANIZATIONAL PAYOFF

When 1:1s are structured and consistent, they deliver measurable impact.

- ✓ **Stronger trust and engagement:** Employees feel supported, seen, and valued.
- ✓ **Better, faster decision-making:** Managers understand individual needs and motivators.
- ✓ **Improved execution:** Clear expectations and removed blockers keep work moving.
- ✓ **Higher retention:** Ongoing coaching tied to goals keeps people invested in their roles.

Ask any manager how they connect with their team, and 1:1s are at the top of the list. But when asked if those meetings deliver meaningful results, enthusiasm often fades. Even with the best intentions for growth, managers and their direct reports can lack the tools to turn intentions into lasting performance improvements.

The truth is, most 1:1s don't reach their potential. Instead of being a space for coaching, clarity, and growth, they too often slip into status updates and surface-level check-ins. Without a clear purpose or structure, the value gets lost—and so does the opportunity to strengthen performance, trust, and engagement.

That's why rethinking how these meetings are run and what they're meant to achieve is so important.

Why Structured 1:1s Matter

When done well, 1:1s are one of the simplest and most effective ways to strengthen engagement, performance, and retention. Regular, high-quality conversations between managers and employees create space for meaningful coaching, constructive feedback, and real problem-solving. With a clear purpose and structure, these meetings can boost productivity and connection. Without them, they risk slipping into status updates that leave both sides questioning their value.



Better 1:1s: Quick-Start Checklist for Managers

COMMON 1:1 PITFALLS

❌ **No agenda, no outcomes**
Meetings feel aimless and unproductive.

❌ **Manager-only ownership**
Employees leave disengaged and unheard.

❌ **Poor cadence**
Inconsistent timing disrupts trust and momentum.

❌ **Unclear wrap-up**
Conversations don't lead to progress.

WHAT TO DO INSTEAD

✅ **Start with intention**
Agree on the meeting's focus (coaching, growth, blockers, etc.).

✅ **Co-own the agenda**
Invite your employee to bring wins, challenges, and questions.

✅ **Lean into coaching**
Use open-ended prompts such as:

- What's one thing you're working to improve right now?
- Where do you feel stuck?
- How can I support your development this week?

✅ **Close with clarity**
End with clear next steps and carry them forward.

Wonderlic Can Help

Wonderlic Develop helps managers run more focused, high-impact 1:1s—without adding more to their plate.

- ✅ **Role-specific insights**
See exactly where each team member shines and where they need support, so every conversation is tailored and productive.
- ✅ **Action planners & behavior suggestions**
Turn insights into clear, practical steps that keep progress moving between meetings.
- ✅ **Team-level data**
Spot patterns across your group, address issues early, and coach individuals with the bigger picture in mind.

One Small Shift. Big Return.

If you want to improve engagement, retention, and performance—start with your 1:1s. They're already on the calendar. Make them count.

[Learn more about Wonderlic Develop →](#)

