

The One-on-One Study 2017

AT THE END OF 2016, WE ISSUED A SURVEY ABOUT ONE-ON-ONE PRACTICES, BELIEFS, AND THE PERCEIVED IMPACT THESE MEETINGS HAVE ON EMPLOYEE MOTIVATION AND PERFORMANCE. In total, we had just over 1,000 responses from managers and employees across the United States and Canada. This study summary includes the full set of results and analysis of the survey.

Introduction

From Brennan McEachran, Co-founder and CEO of SoapBox

Our company is now six years old. We've been doing one-on-ones for five of those years. Nobody taught us how to do them. As we learned in the survey, this is pretty normal. More than 75% of managers indicated they had received no training. We played with several ways to facilitate the meetings. We tried email templates, Google forms, and pen and paper.

While we felt we were doing decently well with them, we also thought that we could do better. Recently, a few things came together for us that prompted us to build our own tool for one-on-ones, which we've been using internally for the last year. This led us to do more research on the topic of these meetings.

We conducted several in person interviews and this survey involving more than 1,000 respondents across North America. In the end, the scope of the problem became increasingly clear. We learned that doing one-on-ones well vs. not doing them well comes down to small details practiced consistently over time. And while the study does not attempt to show the link between performance and one-on-ones, we instinctively know it's there. It's something that was confirmed by the majority of managers who responded to the survey. **72% of managers indicated that one-on-ones were the most, or one of the most important things they do to manage the performance of their teams.**

Outside our study, evidence is mounting around the importance of putting more focus on these small details. Various studies done by Gallup (and others) show that engagement levels are low and not getting better. And it's been like this for decades. Moreover, **only 12% of employees believe that their performance is being managed in a way that motivates them to improve***.

We hope you enjoy digging into the results of the survey as much as we did. And we hope reading through the results gives you cause to consider how you can incorporate some simple habits to improve your one-on-one meetings with your employees.

Table of Contents

1 Executive Summary

Why do you do one-on-ones?

- 3** What is the primary reason you do one-on-ones?

Attitudes towards one-on-ones

- 5** How important are one-on-ones to you?
- 5** How important do you believe one-on-ones are to the performance of your team?
- 7** Why do you believe one-on-ones are important (or not) to the performance of your team?

The positives and negatives of one-on-ones

- 9** Is there a particular reason you like one-on-ones?
- 11** Is there a particular reason you don't like one-on-ones?
- 13** What's the sign of a good one-on-one?
- 15** What's the sign of a bad one-on-one?
- 17** Do one-on-ones help motivate team members?
- 18** Why do one-on-ones leave your team more (or less) motivated?
- 23** Overall, how well do you think your organization does at managing one-on-ones
- 24** How could one-on-ones improve?

Typical frequency and duration of one-on-ones

- 25** Do you do one-on-ones?
- 25** How often?
- 25** For how long?
- 25** Does the primary reason for having one-on-ones or attitude about one-on-ones influence frequency and duration?

How are one-on-ones managed?

Did you get any training on how to do one-on-ones?	27
Do you share an agenda before the one-on-one?	27
If an agenda is shared, who owns developing the agenda?	27
What type of follow-up typically happens?	28
Ideally, what kind of follow-up should happen?	29
Do you use any software to manage one-on-ones?	31

Executive Summary

We asked a lot of open text questions in our survey. While this made it a lot more challenging to organize the information, it was a great way to capture less biased insights on people's thoughts and feelings about one-on-ones. After reading through thousands of responses, you appreciate certain things that categorizing data into graphs will not always tell you. Here are, what we believe, the most important things that we took away from all the responses.

While one-on-ones are a common practice in many organizations, people's expectations and feelings about one-on-ones vary considerably. One of the more interesting themes across all the responses was the difference between how managers and employees responded. There were definitely similarities in the responses, but they were also different enough to suggest that **one way to improve the effectiveness of one-on-ones is to ensure that managers and employees are aligned on why they're having them in the first place, how they should run, what level of preparation is needed, etc.**

However, becoming aligned isn't going to be a one time exercise. And this is perhaps the biggest insight into one-on-ones that the data doesn't immediately show. There's a lot going on in one-on-ones. Why they are done, how they should be done, what they should focus on, preparation, follow through, etc. There was so much variation in the responses from managers and employees that it's clear there is no one right way to conduct a one-on-one and not all of these meetings between a manager and his/her employee should be the same.

It starts to feel a little overwhelming thinking about how to ensure that one-on-ones cover everything that's important. As we read through the responses, we found ourselves saying, "That's quite smart, I should incorporate that into my own one-on-ones."

The problem with this of course is that a one-on-one in the grand scheme of everything we do at work is quite brief. Even meeting for an hour a week is less than 4% of our time. Cramming so much into such a brief time isn't possible. Keeping all these things top of mind just isn't realistic.

If you contrast this with the amount of planning, preparation, and training we put towards one-on-ones, it's not surprising that we all generally feel like one-on-ones are something we could be doing better.

What ultimately became clear is that without some way to simplify the process of how we incorporate best practices into one-on-ones, it's unlikely we'll do all the little things right consistently.

But we should. Gallup's most recent employee engagement survey once again shows that engagement levels are low (less than a third of employees

are actively engaged at work) and it's been this way for decades. We also know that the relationship between a manager and an employee is what causes the largest variations in levels of engagement within an organization. Gallup has also indicates that only 12% of employees feel like their performance is being managed in a way that motivates them to improve. **It's a relatively safe assumption that improving the quality of one-on-ones would have a big impact on engagement levels and performance.**

So what are the high level take-aways for improving the quality of one-on-ones?

- Reinforce that one-on-ones are a priority with your team. Regardless of how you feel personally about them, you can be assured that several people on your team find them important and see them as a motivating or demotivating experience. So make the commitment to make them great.
- Get aligned on what's going to be discussed and why. Do this well in advance of the meeting. This allows both parties to arrive prepared to have a meaningful conversation and make the best use of the time. This is perhaps the most important thing to do consistently.
- Create the right environment for the conversation. Especially the most crucial conversations. Find a place that minimizes distractions. Choose a time when you won't be stressed by other important deadlines or meetings. Block some time in advance of the meeting to compose yourself and get into the right mental and emotional state.
- Clearly document key points, outcomes, and action items. The best way to make sure you cover a lot of ground in one-on-ones is by not unnecessarily covering the same things over and over again. Make each one-on-one a continuation of the last.
- Don't leave all the communication to the one-on-one itself. A lot can be covered between meetings through various other forms of communication. However, do keep it all centralized. Per the point above, keeping track of information and action items can be a major asset.

If all of this sounds like a lot, it is. Not because any of it is rocket science, but because at work we are all time crunched and it's easy to let good habits slip. However, if you believe, like we do, that the modern workplace has changed and we need more engaged, empowered and accountable employees to face the challenges we face today, then making an investment in how you manage the relationship with your employees makes sense.

Change is hard at first, but we also believe that these best practices can become healthy habits. The rewards are so high personally and performance wise that the right habits will naturally be reinforced.

Why do you do one-on-ones?

What's the primary reason you do one-on-ones?

When forced to select only one, primary reason for having a one-on-one, managers and employees most popular responses differed.

- Multiple choice question
- Number of manager responses = 278
- Number of employee responses = 271

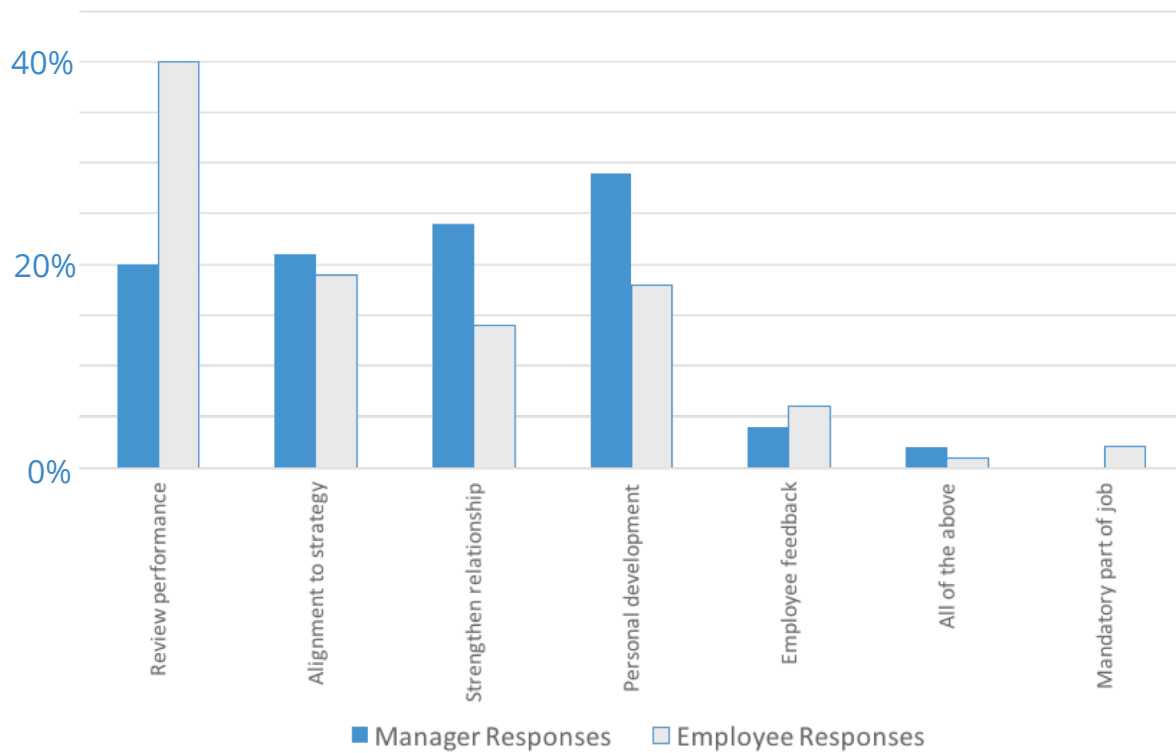
If you combine the two most popular responses from management, you can surmise that, **for managers, the most common belief is that one-on-ones are focused on coaching and building a relationship (*about the individual*).**

If you combine the two most popular responses from employees, you can surmise that, **for employees, the most common belief is that one-on-ones are focused on performance and providing context to larger organizational goals (*about the work*).**

The survey did not identify if managers and employees were from the same organization, so it's not possible to conclude that managers and employees are entering the same one-on-one with different beliefs on the primary reason they're meeting. However, considering that most one-on-ones have no shared agenda and most organizations do not provide training, it's definitely a possible point of confusion. **The key takeaway for both managers and employees is to not assume you're both aligned on the purpose of the meeting. Take the time to discuss and align on what the priority is.**

What is the PRIMARY reason you do one-on-one meetings?

- Review performance against objectives
- Provide (get) clarity on how their (my) job aligns to strategy or other important initiatives
- It's an opportunity to build a stronger relationship with my directs (manager)
- Give (get) coaching and help with personal development and longer term career planning
- Solicit (provide) feedback on how I'm doing as a (my) manager, as a team, as a company



Attitudes towards one-on-ones

How important are one-on-ones to you?

Managers and employees differed slightly in terms of how important they believed one-on-ones were. Employees responded with a much higher frequency that one-on-ones were not all that important or not at all.

- Rating scale question
- Number of manager responses = 278
- Number of employee responses = 271

While 70% of managers indicated one-on-ones an 8, 9 or 10 in terms of importance, only 53% of employees indicated one-on-ones were an 8, 9 or 10.

Only 11% of managers indicated an importance of 5 or lower, compared to 24% of employees.

No managers gave one-on-ones the lowest scores of 1 or 2, whereas 6% of employees did.

How important do you believe one-on-ones are to the performance of your team?

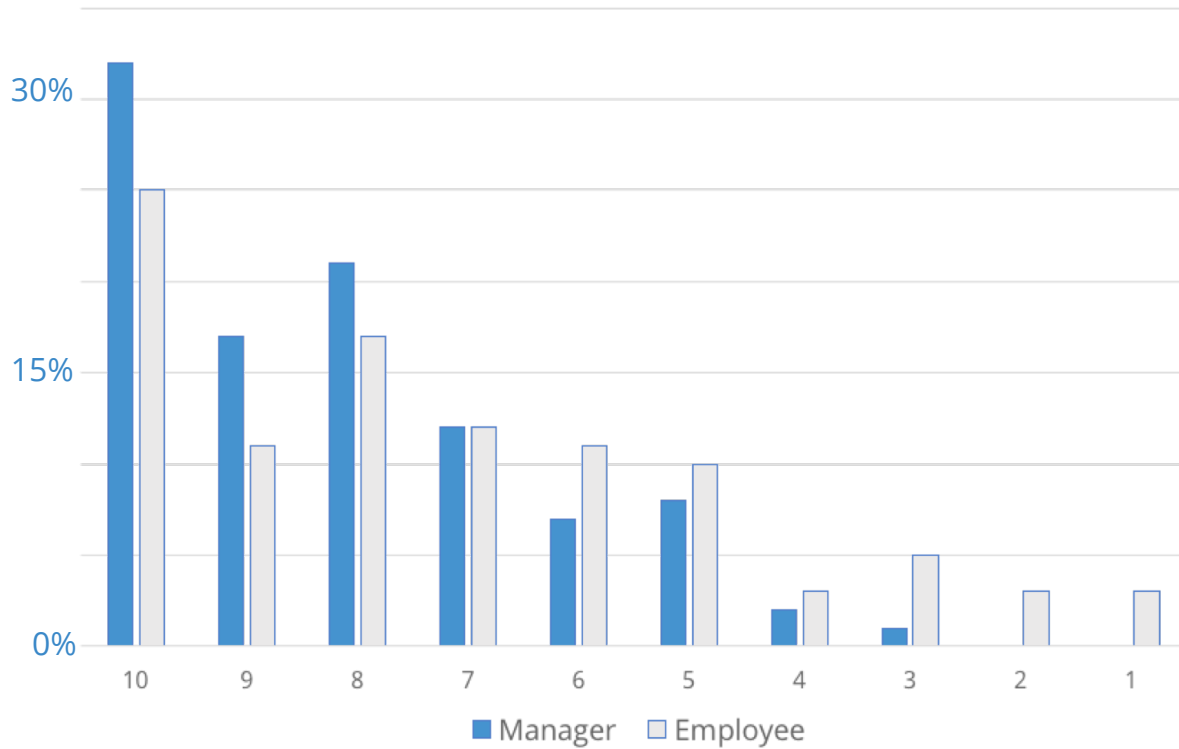
Three in four managers indicated one-on-ones were the most or one of the most important things for improving the performance of the team.

- Multiple choice
- Number of manager responses = 278

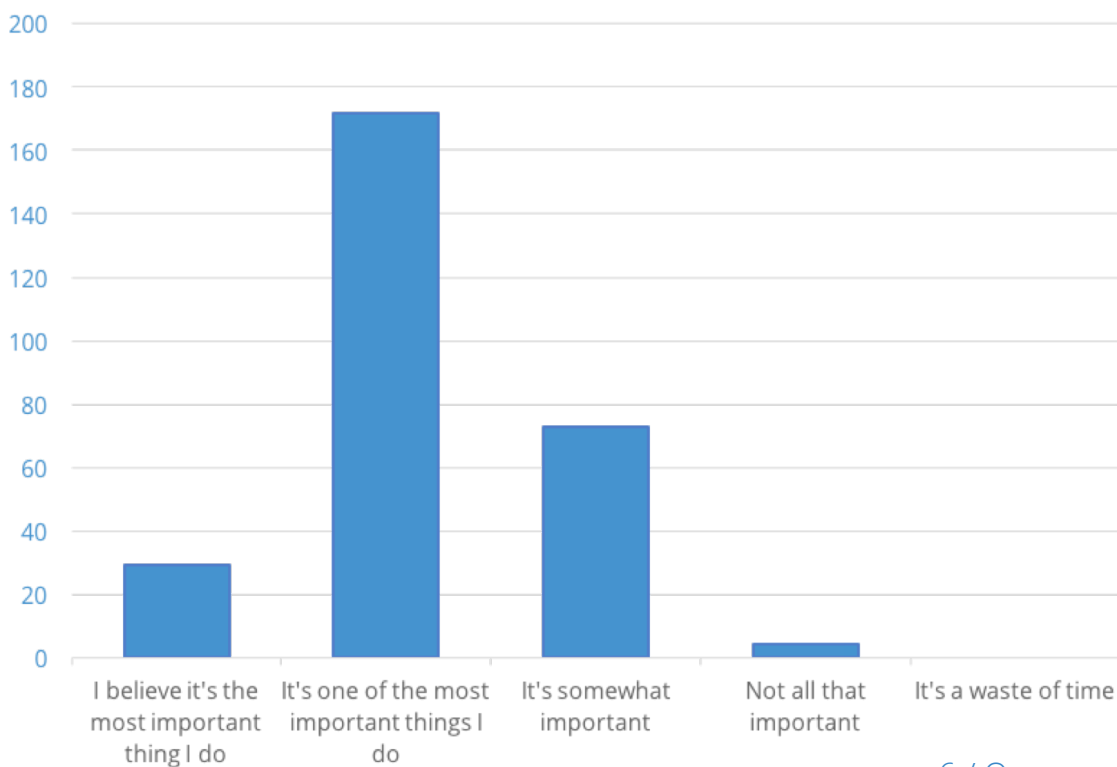
For managers only, we also asked them how important they believed one-on-ones were, not to them, but to the performance of the team. Here managers were even more bullish (versus how important one-on-ones are to them) with three in four managers indicating it is the most or one of the most important things they do to improve the performance of the team.

How important are one-on-ones with your direct reports to you? | How important are one-on-ones with your manager to you?

- Scale of 0-10 (0 = not at all important | 10 = incredibly important)



How important do you believe one-on-ones are to the performance of the team?



Why do you believe one-on-ones are important to the performance of your team?

How important a manager believed a one-on-one was to the performance of their team showed some clear differences in how that manager answered why they felt one-on-ones were important (or not) the performance of the team.

- This was an open text survey question that asked respondents to provide an answer to why they ranked one-on-ones in terms of importance the way they did. Of the 278 managers that provided a response to how important they thought one-on-ones were, there were 226 responses to why they answered that way. Of those, there were 192 responses that could be used (for example weren't NA or "I don't know"). Those 192 responses were categorized into some common themes within the responses, which you can see in the chart on the next page.

Managers who believed that one-on-ones were the most important, or one of the most important things they did for the performance of their team, were more likely to indicate that one-on-ones were important to performance because they build trust and were an opportunity for coaching and development.

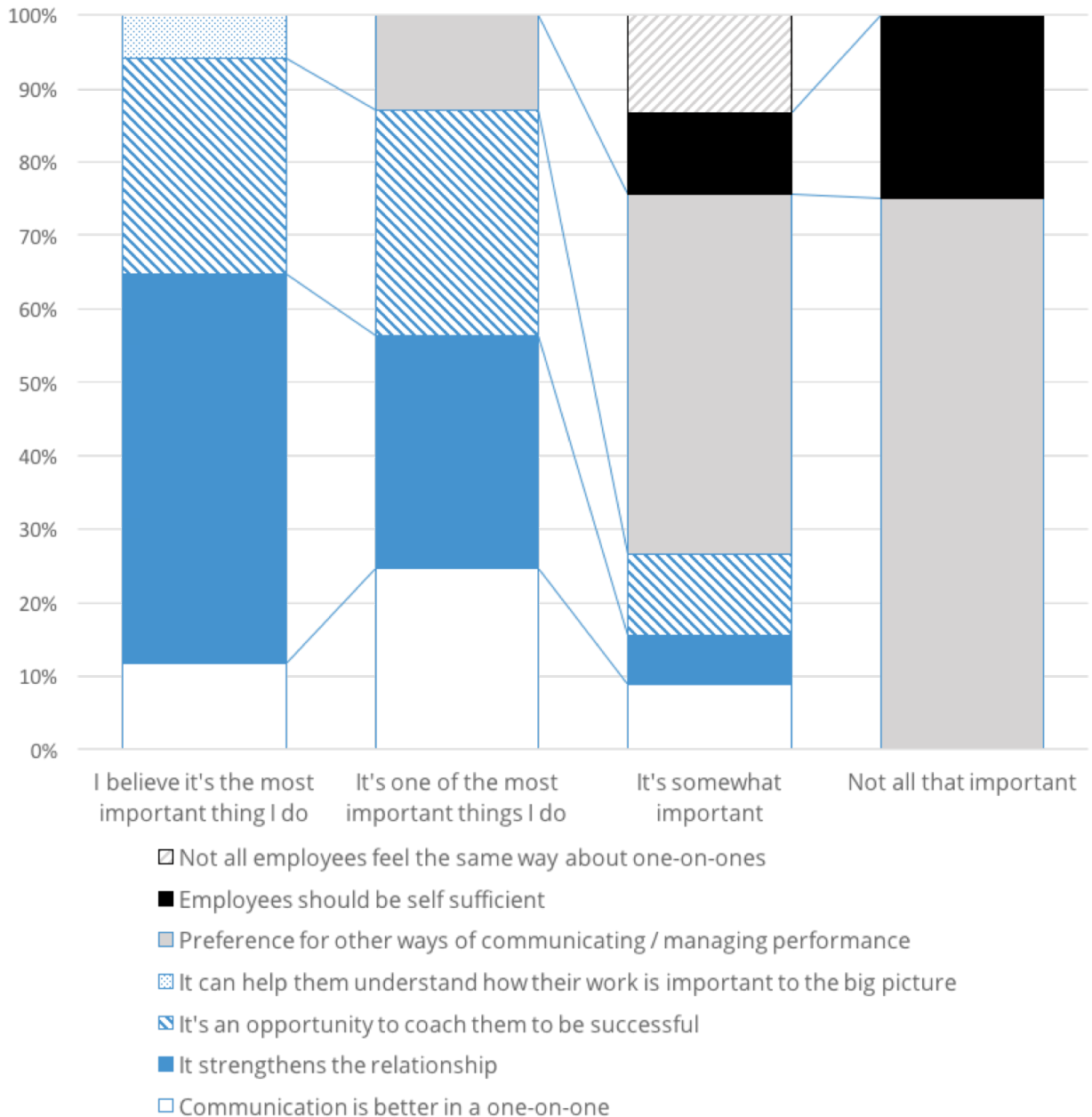
Managers who believed that one-on-ones were only somewhat important, or not all that important to the performance of their team, were more likely to indicate that one-on-ones are just part of what's done to manage performance and that there were other preferred methods of communication, or that the results were highly variable.

How important are one-on-ones with your direct reports to you?

- Scale of 0-10 (0 = not at all important | 10 = incredibly important)

Please elaborate why you answered the previous question that way?

- Open text (optional response)



The positives and negatives of one-on-ones

Is there a particular reason why you like one-on-ones?

Managers were more likely to like that they could build the relationship, while employees liked the fact that it gave them an opportunity to have a different type of conversation. Another major difference to call out was that while only one manager responded that there was nothing they enjoyed about one-on-ones, 8% of employees used open text to indicate that they did not enjoy one-on-ones at all.

This was an open text response in the survey. Responses were categorized into common themes. To create themes, we focused on understanding why they liked one-on-ones instead of what they liked. For example, “An opportunity to dig into their difficulties specifically without the rush of the regular day” conveys that digging into difficulties is what they like, but this could be accomplished a number of different ways. This respondent also indicated that one-on-ones provide an opportunity to accomplish this “without the rush of a regular day.” For this manager, we interpreted that a one-on-one provides a different environment for a more effective conversation.

- Number of manager responses = 219, of which 203 were usable (for example not NA or “I don’t know”)
- Number of employee responses = 232, of which 223 were usable

Here are the different themes that we used to organize responses:

More effective way to give / receive information: This theme related to responses that indicated a one-on-one created an environment for better quality communications. Example responses were:

- “Most efficient way to influence behavior.”
- “Chance to talk in less chaotic environment with more focus.”

An opportunity to be more candid / human: One-on-ones bring a more human element to interactions, allowing people to build a better relationship on a more personal level. Example responses were:

- “Building trust between us.”
- “A chance to be candid about initiatives and not worry about others listening in on the conversation.”

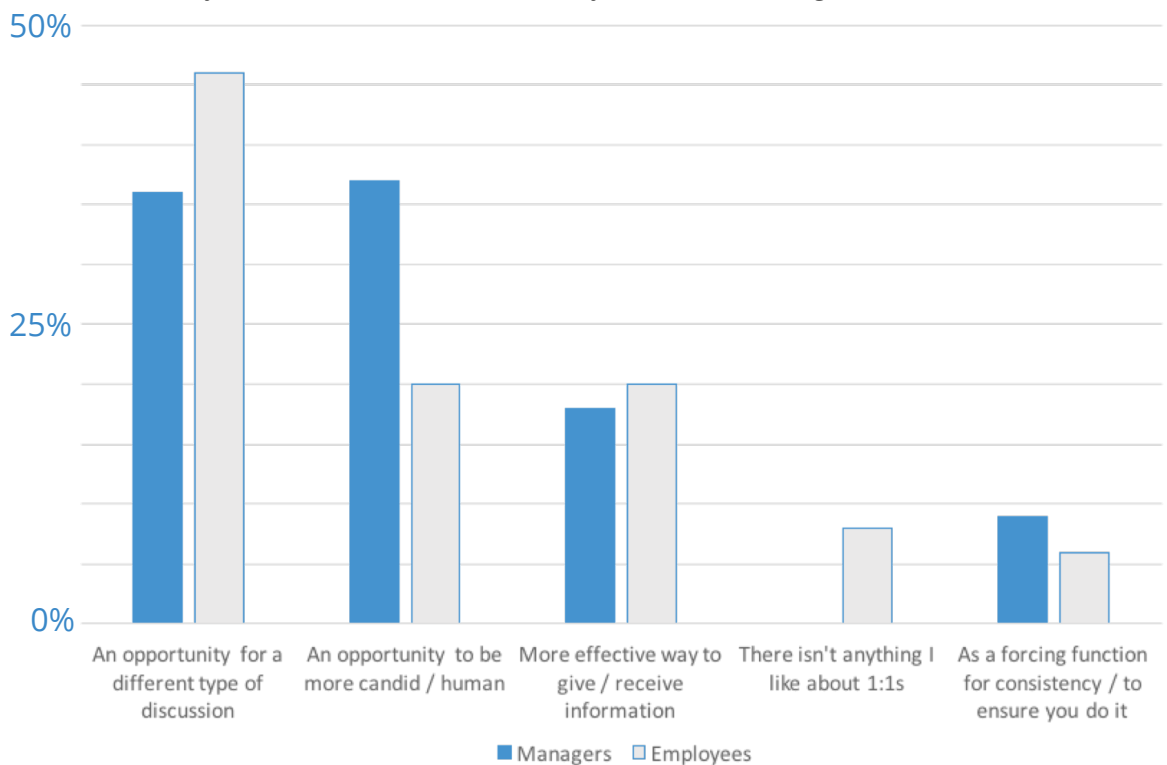
An opportunity for a different type of discussion: One-on-ones provide an opportunity to talk about something different, but important. Personal or career development were common responses. Example responses were:

- “Good chance to connect and discuss people related issues, individual development, new ideas - the items that we don't get to in tactical day-to-day meetings.”
- “I like to hear their feedback and perspective on current initiatives and future initiatives.”

As a forcing function for consistency: Day-to-day can be hectic at work and a one-on-one provides a regularly recurring meeting for important conversations that might otherwise get missed. Example responses:

- “Consistent time to meet and review goals. Maintain accountability.”
- “Gives me time to focus on their needs once a week.”

What do you like about one-on-ones with your directs (manager)?



Is there a particular reason why you don't like one-on-ones?

Broadly speaking, the sentiment was that one-on-ones can take up valuable time. For a one-on-one to be “worth it”, there should be clear outcomes as a result of the meeting. Common frustrations were inefficient use of time during the meeting, not being prepared, and not having a constructive conversation. For employees specifically, there was also a frustration from one-on-ones being cut short, managers being distracted during the meeting, or cancelling / rescheduling the one-on-one last minute.

There were quite a few different reasons that managers and employees identified about why they did not like one-on-ones. Unlike the previous question, we opted to more narrowly define the themes because of the usefulness of being more specific in what causes frustrations.

- Number of manager responses = 268, of those 141 responses were usable (for example not NA or nothing)
- Number of employee responses = 228, of those 202 responses were usable

Examples of manager responses for top three themes:

How much time it takes:

- “Finding the time to do them.”
- “Not having enough time to plan effective one-on-ones.”

Awkward conversations, stressful:

- “Sometimes it can be awkward.”
- “I am not as straight-forward about issues that may produce conflict as I should be.”

Negative interactions:

- “People can be unnecessarily defensive.”
- “Talking to people with difficult personalities.”

Examples of employee responses for top three themes:

Awkward conversations, stressful:

- “Kind of awkward at first.”
- “Hate being put on the spot; don’t see the point.”

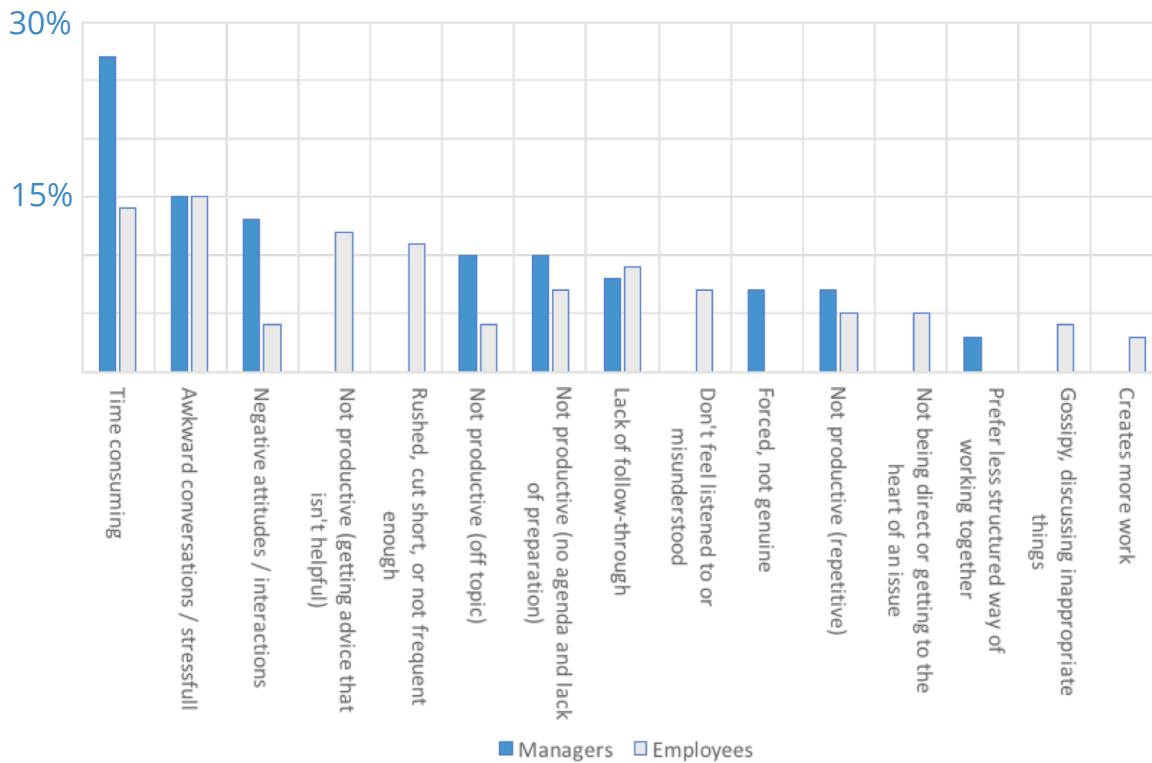
How much time it takes:

- “Time consuming, especially when I have other work to get done.”
- “They are time consuming and often times repetitive, not shedding any new light on things.”

Getting advice that isn’t helpful:

- “My manager is not great with offering suggestions, many times I need to find my own answers. That is frustrating.”
- “Giving suggestions that do not work for me but are in the strength of the manager only.”

What do you dislike about one-on-ones with your directs (manager)?



What's the sign of a good one-on-one?

Managers and employees identified similar signs of a good one-on-one, although they differed slightly on which signs were most important. We grouped the responses into themes.

The most popular sign for managers of a good one-on-one was that both the manager and employee were participating and listening actively during the meeting. For employees, the most popular sign was feeling that they had a safe environment to have an open, honest dialogue.

- Number of manager responses = 266, of those 260 responses were usable (for example not NA or nothing)
- Number of employee responses = 249, of those 241 responses were usable

Examples of manager responses for top three themes:

Two-way communication:

- "Both sides should have said what they wanted to."
- "Listening to one another."
- "We both contribute."

Accomplishing something:

- "People leave with a clear sense of what was accomplished during the meeting."
- "Accomplishment of goals."
- "Current questions / issues resolve."

Having the employee leave feeling positive, motivated and happy:

- "Feeling refreshed and appreciated."
- "They leave with a clear purpose, feeling excited and appreciated."
- "Positive attitude."

Examples of employee responses for top three themes:

Safe environment for open, honest conversation:

- "Ability of both parties to speak frankly with each other."
- "Honest talk about some of the successes and hurdles that are currently being experienced and discussion on productive ways to move forward on the challenges/ hurdles."
- "Anything is talked about openly."

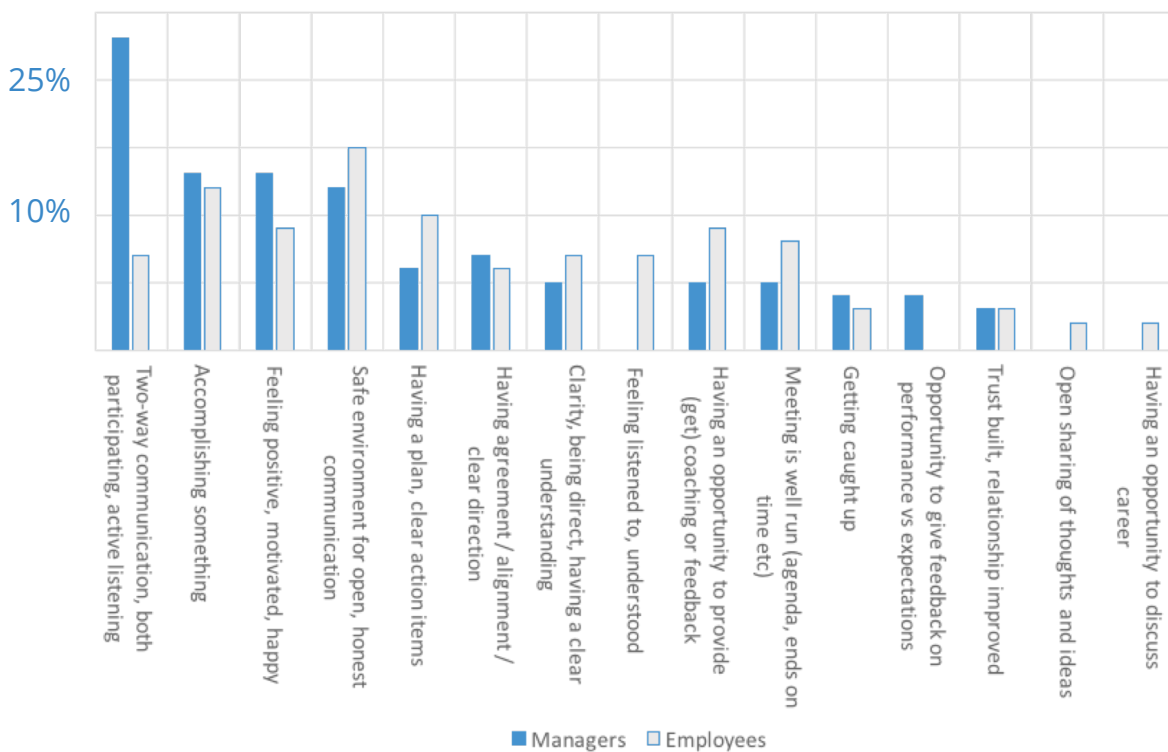
Having a plan and clear action items:

- "Agreement on a plan going forward."
- "Walking away with a clear idea of what's next."
- "Plan for upcoming projects and expectations are clear."

Accomplishing something

- "Leaving with a sense of accomplishment."
- "Walking away with a clear idea of what's next."
- "Accomplish something (agree to plan or strategy, give/receive feedback, discuss training or professional development, etc.)"
- "We both feel something was accomplished."

What is the sign of a good one-on-one meeting?



What's the sign of a bad one-on-one?

Similar to the signs of a good one-on-one, many of the same themes existed, but there were some slight differences in the most popular responses given by managers and employees.

- Number of manager responses = 265, of those 250 responses were usable (for example not NA or nothing)
- Number of employee responses = 250, of those 236 responses were usable

Examples of manager responses for top three themes:

Confrontational, defensiveness, negative attitude

- "The employee appears disengaged."
- "The employee is scared of the manager."
- "Lack of participation; apathy."

No agenda / lack of dialogue:

- "Closed off conversation. Unsure about topics to discuss."
- "When there is nothing to discuss and the meeting ends in 15 minutes."
- "No agenda / specific talking points."

No clear point or outcome of the meeting:

- "Not coming away feeling that definite progress has occurred."
- "Nothing changed after meeting."
- "Waste of time, nothing comes out of it, holding a meeting for the sake of holding a meeting."

Examples of employee responses for top three themes:

No clear point or outcome to the meeting:

- "Ability of both parties to speak frankly with each other."
- "Honest talk about some of the successes and hurdles that are currently being experienced and discussion on productive ways to move forward on the challenges/ hurdles."
- "Anything is talked about openly."

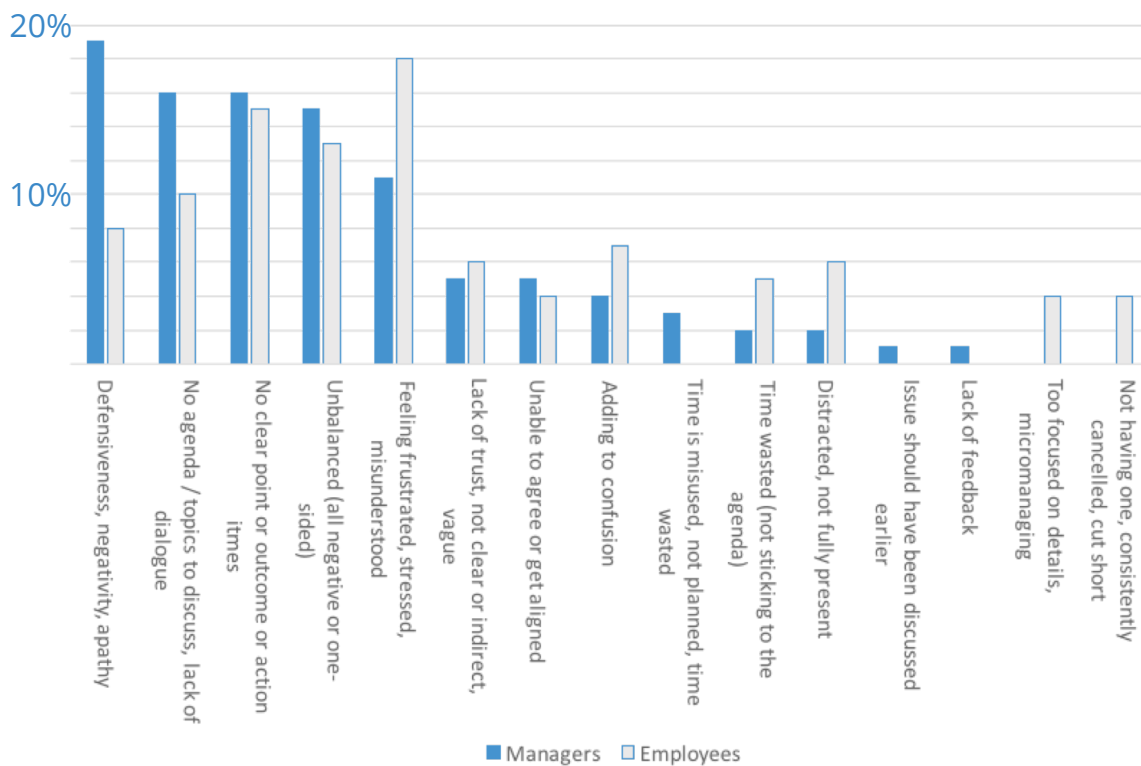
Feeling frustrated, stressed or misunderstood:

- “We leave feeling frustrated.”
- “De-motivated, wanting to shut it down after the one-on-one.”
- “Feeling worse when leaving. Getting nothing accomplished in the meeting.”

If the conversation was unbalanced:

- “Negative feedback only.”
- “One sided, no feedback.”
- “When I am not given the time to express my concerns.”

What is the sign of a bad one-on-one meeting?



Do one-on-ones help motivate team members?

Most respondents, both managers and employees, indicated that one-on-ones increase the motivation of the team.

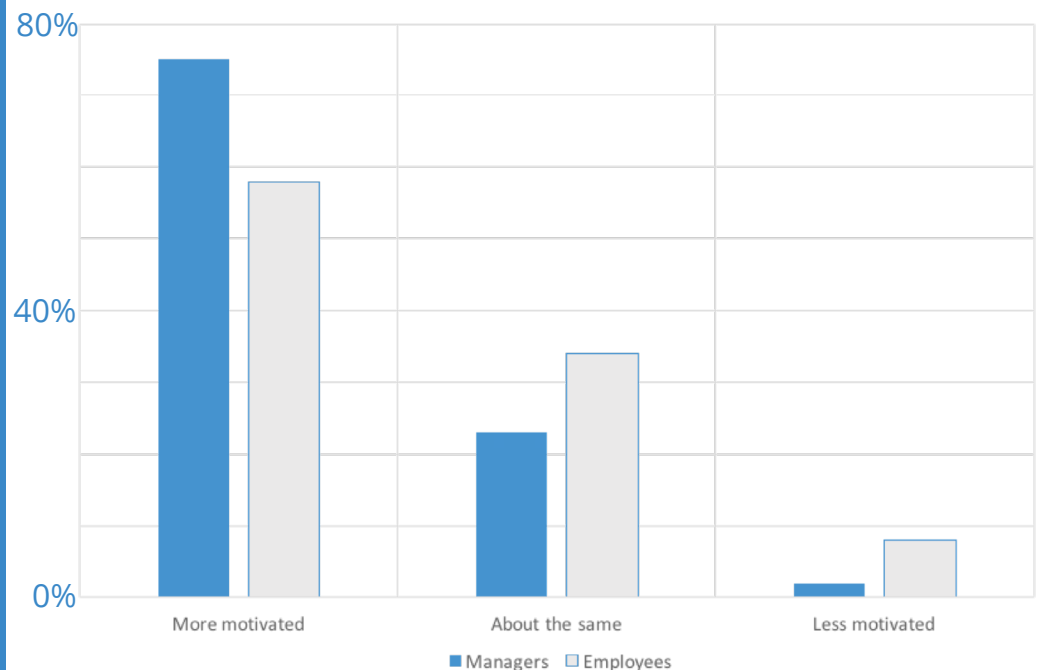
However, employees were far less likely than managers to indicate that they left feeling more motivated (58% of employees said they left more motivated vs. 75% of managers believed that their reports left the one-on-one more motivated). More concerning is that four times more employees than managers indicated they left the meeting feeling less motivated.

- Number of manager responses = 265, of those 250 responses were usable (for example not NA or nothing)
- Number of employee responses = 250, of those 236 responses were usable

How do you think one-on-ones with your direct reports typically leave them feeling?

How do one-on-ones with your manager typically leave you feeling?

- More motivated
- About the same
- Less motivated



Why are one-on-ones motivating?

Both managers and employees had “getting help with work” as their most popular reason for why employees left a one-on-one more motivated. Beyond that, employees were far more likely to put an emphasis on feeling positive after the one-on-one as the reason they felt more motivated.

This was an open-text, optional question to answer in the survey. In total, 358 responses were provided and of those, 288 provided a clear answer that could be categorized.

In terms of what managers and employees felt was the reason for being more motivated after a one-on-one, it fell into four themes:

Getting help with their job:

- *Examples of manager responses:*
 - “I try and help work through problems with them that will help them be more effective in their role.”
 - “It’s always motivating to have a clear path to success laid out for you.”
 - “I help them see strategies they would not have considered alone.”
- *Examples of employee responses:*
 - “I am told what I’m doing well and what I can improve on.”
 - “Because now I know what actions need to be made in order to succeed.”
 - “If I have an issue that can be resolved it usually is! We will at least outline a plan to resolve it.”

Feeling positive (as a result of recognition, focusing on the individual's ability to achieve goals, empowering the individual to achieve goals, or providing inspiration):

- *Examples of manager responses:*
 - “Because I encourage them to be the best they can be, provide positive feedback, and tell them what they’re doing right, not just what they are doing wrong.”
 - “Because I usually encourage them and reinforce good things they’ve done to hopefully make them want to take on more.”
 - “My father always said we should be cheerleaders. I make sure they know that my main goal is to make their jobs as easy as possible so they can do whatever needs to be done. As long as they know I got their back, they’re free to be more comfortable in their positions.”

- *Examples of employee responses:*
 - “Sometimes it helps to hear another perspective and to know that you are on the right track, which leaves you feeling more accomplished and ready to keep going.”
 - “I do a good job and it’s nice to hear it every once in awhile.”
 - “A large part of the meetings is spent on what’s being done right and how to improve even more.”

Having an opportunity to provide feedback and feel listened to:

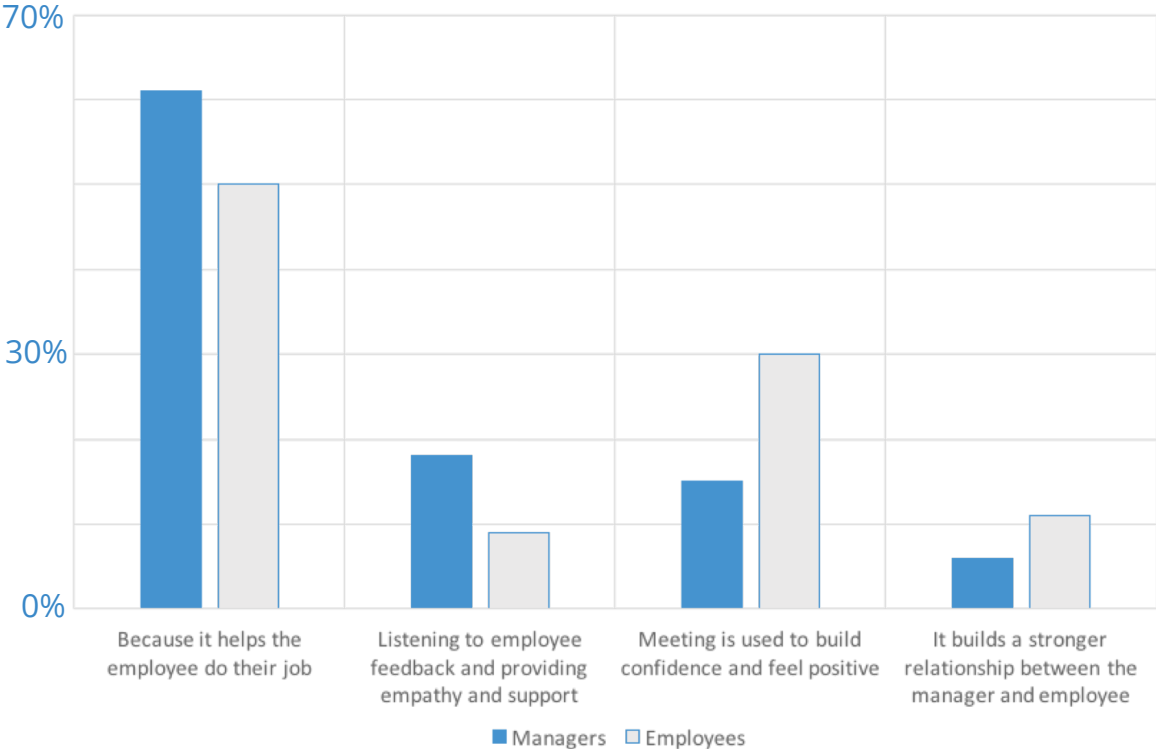
- *Examples of manager responses:*
 - “Because as a manager, I was able to listen to their feedback and demonstrate empathy and support and giving reassurance and guidance.”
 - “They feel that their voice and opinion matters and that someone is there for their development.”
 - “Gives them a direct feed to me and they can help steer the company. Having your voice heard is amazing, and being ignored sucks.”
- *Examples of employee responses:*
 - “Allows me to voice my concerns and get reassurance.”
 - “I feel as if I am being heard.”
 - “I feel like they know where I’m coming from now.”

Feeling more connected to the manager, team or organization:

- *Examples of manager responses:*
 - “We have a clearer understanding of each other.”
 - “We usually laugh and enjoy the experience.”
 - “I feel like when we have time to chat about their work and it’s impact on the company that excites them. I try to give them a good overview of how what they do fits in the bigger picture.”
- *Examples of employee responses:*
 - “I know I am helping the company.”
 - “I love feeling connected to my manager.”
 - “The time with my manager helps me to understand that my manager is a human being, just like myself. It helps me to feel more connected with her.”

Why do you think one-on-ones with your directs leave them more motivated?

Why do one-on-ones with your manager leave you more motivated?



Why are one-on-ones demotivating?

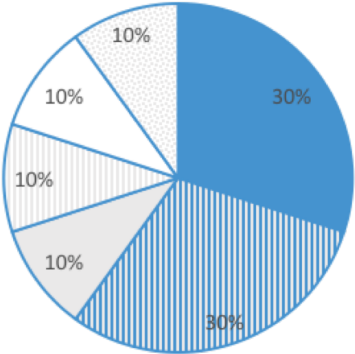
The most popular theme for why employees left one-on-ones feeling less motivated was because they felt judged, misunderstood, or unappreciated. For managers, it was that people could not take criticism or feedback or because they were unable to provide the information or assistance that the employee was seeking.

There were fewer responses from managers and employees for why employees left one-on-ones less motivated (total of 10 manager responses and 16 employee responses).

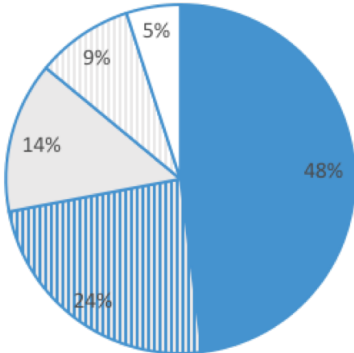
- *Examples of manager responses:*
 - “Sometimes candid feedback on performance that is less than optimal hurts pride. Some people don't like feedback or constructive criticism.”
 - “If they don't get the help they are looking for or if their manager doesn't have anything strategic advice for them.”
 - “They may have received negative feedback, or are frustrated with things out of their or my control.”
- *Examples of employee responses:*
 - “Because I usually come out of meetings with her feeling stressed out, angry, confused, or beaten down. I feel like she doesn't believe in me, and never recognizes me for my hard work, so I am very unmotivated to work for her.”
 - “Micro managing.”
 - “They are unfocused and I always think of the work I could have accomplished in that time.”connected with her.”

Why do you think one-on-ones with your directs leave them less motivated?

Why do one-on-ones with your manager leave you less motivated?



- People don't like feedback / criticism
- ▨ Employee didn't get the info they wanted
- ▤ Too focused on negative outcomes
- ▥ Style of communication was negative
- ▦ Because things aren't going well
- ▧ Frustration from things outside manager's / employee's control



- Feeling judged, misunderstood / unappreciated
- ▨ No outcomes, meeting did not provide value
- ▤ Manager does not understand the work environment
- ▥ Feel less clear on direction / what needs to be done
- ▦ Manager doesn't respect the time (late / no show)

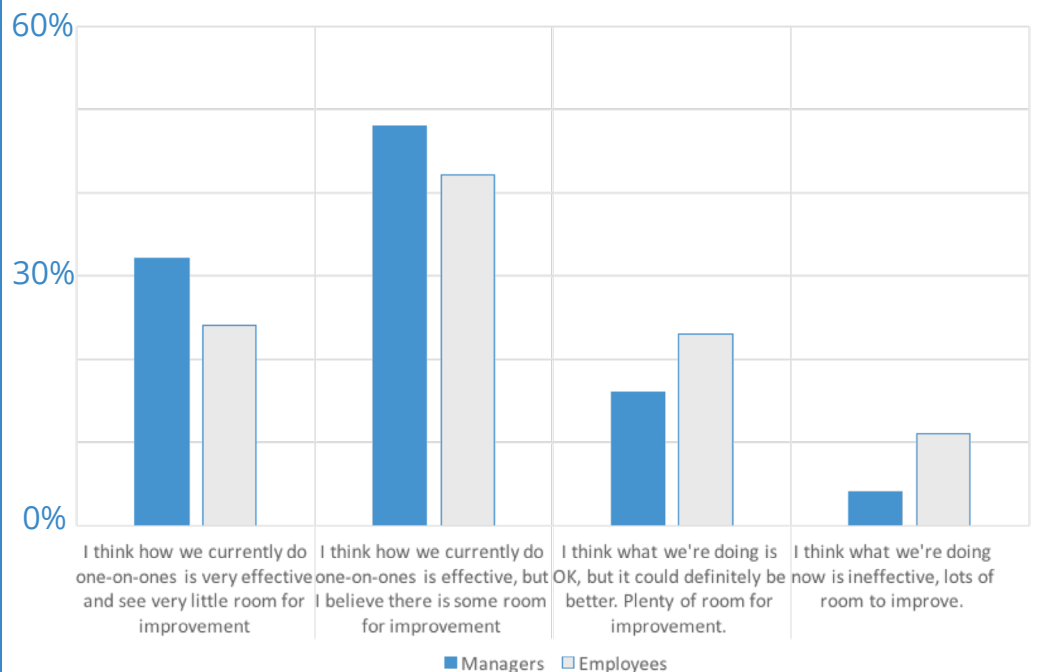
Overall, how well do you think your organization manages one-on-ones?

Overall, both managers and employees believe that one-on-ones are done well with either little room for improvement or some room for improvement. Employees were more critical as a group. A third indicated that there was significant or plenty of room to improve (vs. 20% of managers).

- Number of manager responses = 266
- Number of employee responses = 265

When you think about one-on-ones more broadly across your organization, how effective are they?

- I think how we currently do one-on-one meetings is very effective and see very little room for improvement.
- I think how we currently do one-on-one meetings is effective, but I believe there is some room for improvement.
- I think what we're doing is OK, but it could definitely be better. Plenty of room for improvement.
- I think what we're doing now is not effective, lots of room to improve.



How could one-on-ones improve?

The most popular answer for improving one-on-ones was adding an agenda in advance of the meeting to be better prepared and facilitate more productive conversations.

There were a total of 239 responses from managers on this question. Of these, there were 177 responses that expressed a clear suggestion for how one-on-ones could improve. Since many of these included more than one item, there were a total 190 suggestions.

Examples of responses:

1. Adding an agenda:

- "Agenda ahead of time."
- "Would like to have more time to prepare for them & make sure all needed items are covered."
- "They come prepared with topics and things they want assistance with."

2. Improving communication skills:

- "Open communication and active listening."
- "More discussion, less negativity."
- "If more of them they were more honest and open to constructive criticism."

3. Creating a better environment:

- "A quieter place to have them."
- "Busy environment and sometimes we rush through the meeting. Need to create a less rushed atmosphere."
- "Make sure it is not before a deadline."



Typical frequency and duration of one-on-ones

Do you do one-on-ones?

- Managers: Yes = 66.67% [316/474]
- Employees: Yes = 56.08% [295/526]

How often?

Most (72%) employees and managers report doing one-on-ones on a weekly, bi-weekly or monthly schedule.

- Managers who indicated doing a one-on-one at least once a month: 213/278 [76.6%]
- Employees who indicated doing a one-on-one at least once a month: 183/271 [67.5%]

For how long?

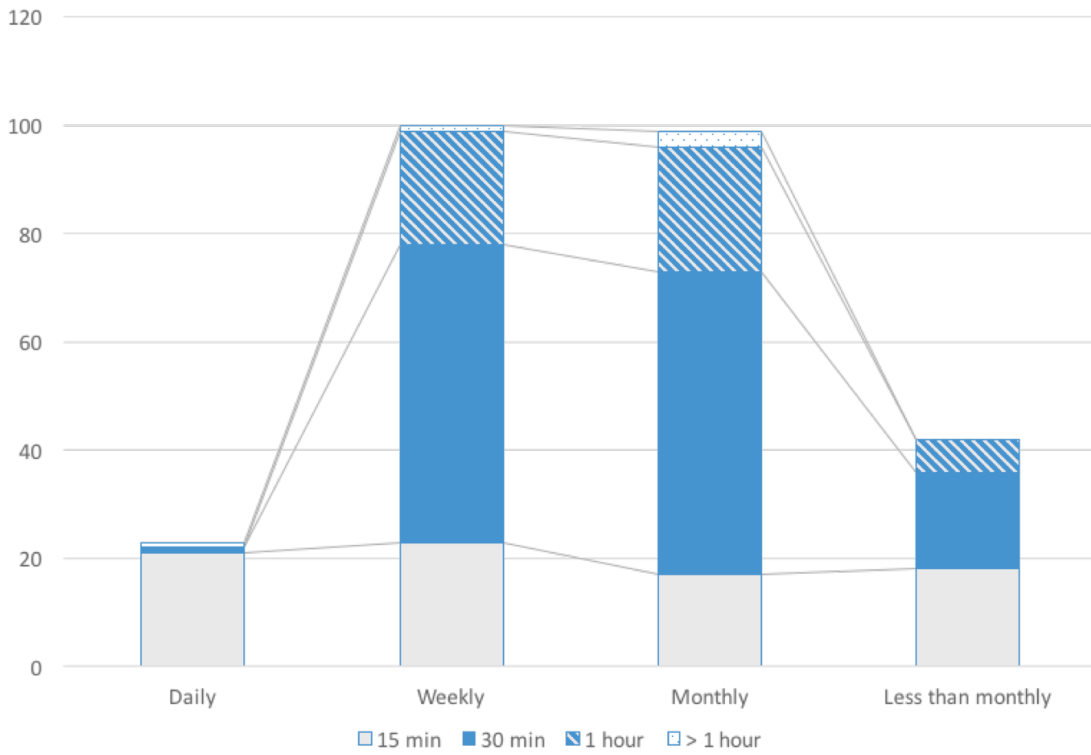
Thirty minutes and one hour are the most common durations (64% of responses). Generally speaking, the more frequently one-on-ones occur, the shorter the meeting, but that's not always the case. There are some instances where employees and managers reported meeting very infrequently and only very briefly (the percent of 15 minute meetings jumps again when one-on-ones occur less frequently than once a month).

- Managers who indicated their one-on-ones were either 30 minutes or one hour: 191/278 [76.6%]
- Employees that indicated their one-on-ones were either 30 minutes or one hour: 162/271 [67.5%]

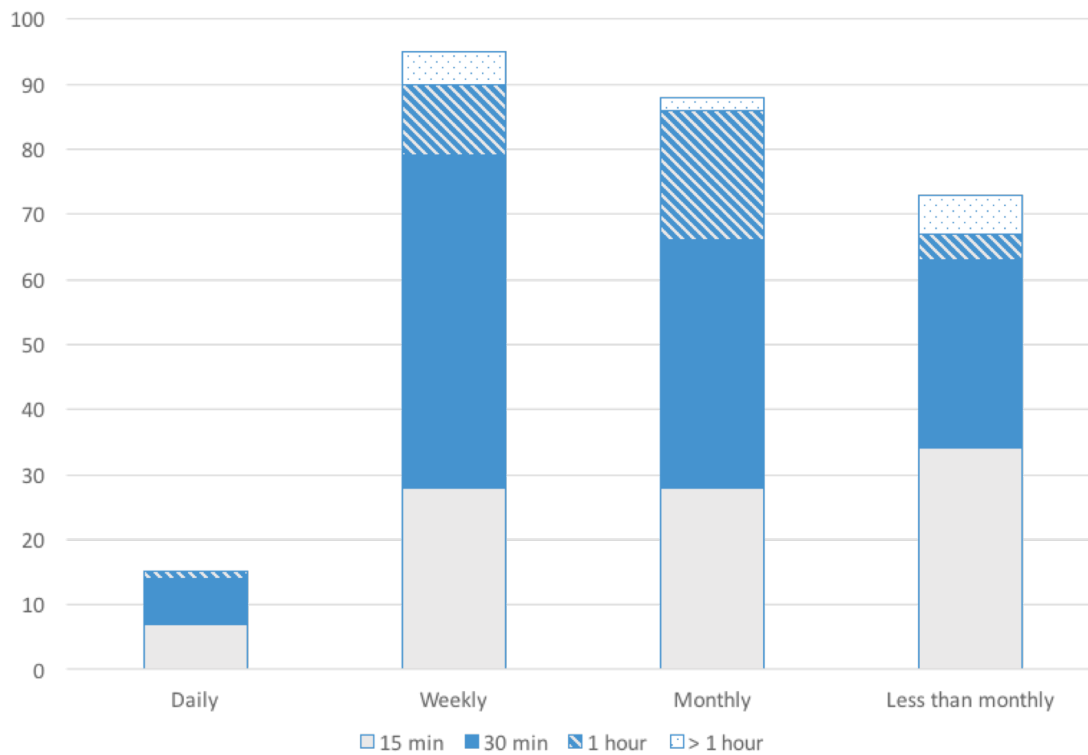
Does the reason for having the one-on-one have an impact on frequency and duration?

We looked for correlations in responses, but no clear trends appeared. Frequency, duration, purpose and attitude are all highly variable among respondents. In other words, there are so many different variables contributing to frequency and duration that it's not possible to come to any conclusions based on this survey. So we can't say, for example, that one-on-ones focused on coaching and development tend to be longer than other types of one-on-ones.

Manager responses for frequency and duration of one-on-ones



Employee responses for frequency and duration of one-on-ones



How are one-on-ones managed?

Did you get any training on how to do one-on-ones?

The majority of managers and employees have not received training on how to do one-on-ones.

- Managers: No = 77.34% [215/278]
- Employees: No = 73.44% [199/271]

Do you share an agenda before a one-on-one?

Most managers and employees state that they don't share an agenda.

- Employees: No = 60.52% [164/271]
- Managers: No = 58.28% [162/278]
-

If there is an agenda, who owns the agenda?

In the majority of responses, both managers and employees indicated that they were both responsible for developing the agenda (if an agenda was shared in advance.)

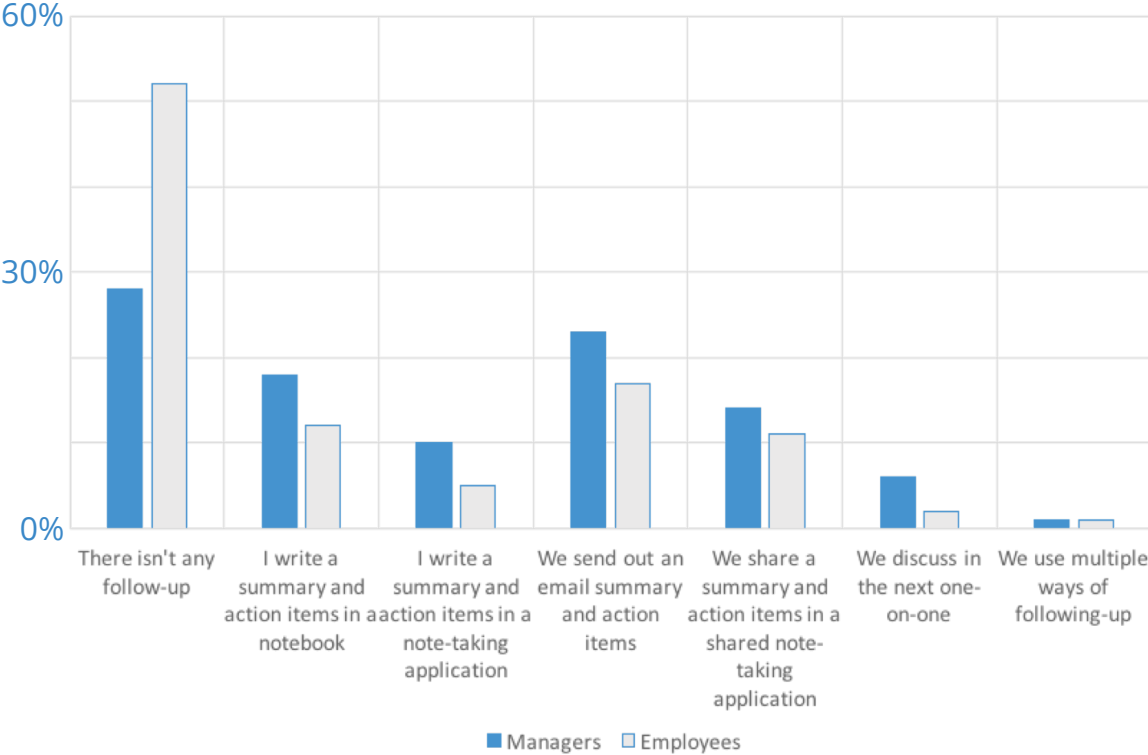
- *Managers:*
 - Manager sets the agenda 22% of the time [25 / 115]
 - Employee sets the agenda 10% of the time [12 / 115]
 - Both the manager and employee sets the agenda 68% of the time [78 / 115]
- *Employees:*
 - Manager sets the agenda 28% of the time [29 / 106]
 - Employee sets the agenda 8% of the time [9 / 106]
 - Both the manager and employee sets the agenda 64% of the time [68 / 106]

What type of follow-up typically happens?

Managers and employees differed significantly when indicating whether there was a follow-up after a one-on-one meeting. Twenty-eight percent of managers indicated that there was no follow-up after their one-on-one, while over half of employees said this was the case. The next most popular type of follow-up for both managers and employees was an email summary.

- Number of manager responses = 278

After the meeting, what type of follow-up typically happens?



Ideally, what kind of follow-up should happen?

Summarizing the main points and providing a list of action items were the top two responses for both managers and employees.

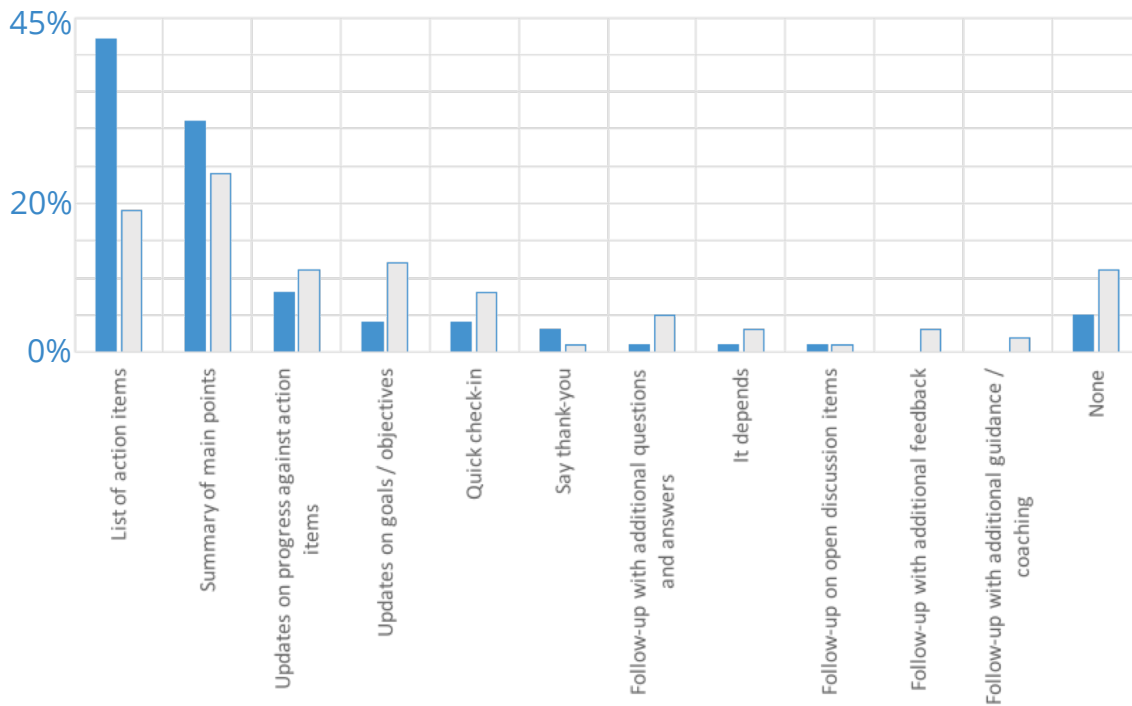
When it comes to follow-up, we interpreted the average response from managers to be a desire to have clear action items that could be tracked and checked for completion. On the other hand employees wanted follow-up to focus on progress against goals and to get help with attaining goals. They wanted help with how to hit objectives, but not to be told how to do it. In terms of how the follow-up should happen, employees overall also appeared to have a much stronger preference for informal as well as formal follow-up (discussion, quick check-in, job shadow, open door policy, etc.).

- 183 of 271 employees responded to this open text, optional question. Of those, only 11% indicated that no follow-up was needed and that the meeting was enough.
- 139 of 278 managers responded to this open text, optional question. Of those, only 5% indicated that no follow-up was needed and that the meeting was enough.

How respondents chose to answer varied significantly and many responses contained several ideas about what ideal follow-up should like like. For example, comments included how follow-up should happen (in the next meeting, informally, via email, in a shared location, etc.) and one or more suggestions on what the main purpose of the follow-up should be (to summarize action items, or key items discussed). Here's a few examples of responses:

- "A checklist of what was discussed and next steps/action items and way to ensure you're able to review what was discussed a month ago, 6 months ago & 12 months ago. Also a simple search function for keywords or projects."
- "A foot massage and some beer. But seriously, probably continuous communication after that - phone calls, emails, smoke signals, etc. The most important thing to me is effective communication - if everyone is on the same page, it makes everyone's job easier, and people are happier because of it. (But really, beer and foot massage.)"
- "A quick recap, next steps automated."

Ideally, what type of follow-up would happen after a one-on-one?



Do you use any software to manage one-on-ones?

- Managers: Yes = 14.70% [35/238]
- Employees: Yes = 11.07% [30/271]

For those that said yes, here are some of the most common applications used to manage one-on-ones

- MS OneNote [8 responses]
- Evernote [2]
- G-Suite (either docs or sheets) [2]
- BambooHR [2]
- All others listed were single instances or sometimes referred to as “calendar app” or email

