



Performance Conversations

WORKSHOP GUIDE

CONTENTS

CONTENTS.....	2
LEARNING OBJECTIVES	3
FEATURED VIDEOS	3
INTRODUCTION	3
FILM 1 – WHAT IS A ONE-TO-ONE?	4
FILM 2 – BETWEEN ONE-TO-ONES	5
FILM 3 – PREPARING FOR ONE-TO-ONES	6
FILM 4 – RUNNING A ONE-TO-ONE.....	7
ONE-TO-ONE PERFORMANCE CONVERSATIONS – GROUP EXERCISE	8

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Annual Appraisal has, for many years, been the cornerstone of many organisations' approach to performance management. In recent years, however, people have begun to realise that this approach has too many disadvantages and that informal, flexible and, above all, frequent conversations between managers and staff are more effective. That is why one-to-ones are proving to be increasingly popular.

One-to-ones are regular, informal, frequent reviews between managers and staff. Their frequency, tailored to individuals' needs, might be weekly or monthly. This frequency is the 'sweet spot' for learning and development – long enough to allow time for reflection and short enough to focus on specific implementation.

To benefit fully from one-to-ones, however, the conversations need to be quality conversations and that requires understanding and a range of skills – exactly what this programme is designed to deliver.

FEATURED VIDEOS

- What is a one-to-one?
- Between one-to-ones.
- Preparing for one-to-ones.
- Running a one-to-one.

INTRODUCTION

This guide will help you lead a short workshop featuring videos from the Video Arts' Conversations programme. Each video comes with a series of activities designed around the following structure:

Look – watch the video.

Think – reflect on the content and consider how the messages link to your own experience and goals.

Remember – summarise the key learning points.

These activities will take about 30 minutes to complete. At the end of the Guide is a practical exercise to help bring together all the learning points.

FILM 1 – WHAT IS A ONE-TO-ONE?

LOOK (play video, 3 minutes)

One-to-ones are brief, informal chats in which managers and staff review what has been done during the short period since the last one-to-one and discuss what will be done by the next one-to-one. They work best when their frequency and content is tailored to each individual staff member's needs – the work they are doing, what they need to achieve, where they are on the learning curve, etc.

THINK (10 minutes discussion)

Ask the group to think about their own experiences by discussing questions such as:

- Thinking about hobbies and interests that involve a degree of skill, how frequently do you review progress and decide on what you will do next (goals and learning)?
- Thinking about the work your staff do, what is an ideal frequency for discussions if you want to minimise problems, agree 'next steps', capitalise on learning opportunities and genuinely support staff?
- If one-to-ones are most productive when staff reflect on what they have done and think about what they will do next, who should do most of the talking in the conversation – the manager or the staff member? What might be a good target ratio of talking between manager and staff member? How would a manager achieve that ratio?

REMEMBER

- One-to-ones naturally facilitate learning and performance improvement:
- One-to-ones are short, frequent, regular chats that bridge the gap between spontaneous day-to-day conversations and formal reviews.
- Tailor the frequency, location, time, and content to each individual staff member.
- One-to-ones work best when managers encourage reflection and the main focus is on what happens next.

FILM 2 – BETWEEN ONE-TO-ONES

LOOK (play video, 3 minutes)

One-to-ones might be informal but they are more than an unfocussed 'How are things going?' chat; To be beneficial, they need to link together.

THINK (10 minutes discussion)

Help the group think about linking one-to-ones together by asking questions such as:

- Thinking of the work your staff do, what kinds of 'evidence' tells you that someone is struggling or, conversely, that they are improving?
- How much of that 'evidence' is about outputs (what they deliver) and how much is about inputs (what they do so that they can deliver the outputs)?
- During your own one-to-ones, what are the benefits* when your manager looks back to the previous discussion and looks forward to the next one? (*For example, your manager's credibility, your motivation, the quality of the discussion.)
- How useful is it if someone keeps notes during one-to-ones?

REMEMBER

One-to-ones are more beneficial when you:

- Look for evidence of performance and behaviour changes.
- Agree what the staff member will work on before the next one-to-one.
- You help the staff member reflect on progress over a long period.
- Ensure that the staff member keeps notes so that neither of you rely on memory.

FILM 3 – PREPARING FOR ONE-TO-ONES

LOOK (play video, 3 minutes)

In the same way that one-to-ones are quick and informal, so is their preparation.

THINK (10 minutes discussion)

Help the group think about making preparation quick and easy but also very useful by asking questions such as:

- When preparing for a one-to-one how much more effective is it to quickly check notes from the previous one-to-one compared to simply relying on memory?
- At the previous one-to-one with a staff member, you will have agreed what the staff member will do/achieve/learn. How effective will the forthcoming one-to-one be if you have not evaluated their performance?
- If your staff interact with people other than you, how valuable is feedback from those people? In what situations would third party be essential?
- As most learning/performance improvement opportunities 'stretch' people, how important is it to identify challenges in which staff would benefit from extra support?

REMEMBER

Preparing for one-to-ones is quick and easy when you:

- Review notes from the last conversation.
- Informally evaluate performance since the last conversation.
- Get third party feedback when necessary.
- Think about upcoming challenges and opportunities in which the staff member will benefit from extra support.

FILM 4 – RUNNING A ONE-TO-ONE

LOOK (play video, 3 minutes)

The concept of one-to-ones is simple – but that does not mean they are easy to do well. There are certain aspects that require extra care.

THINK (10 minutes discussion)

Help the group consider aspects of one-to-ones that make a big difference by asking these questions:

- How important to its outcome is the way a conversation begins?
- How might you open a one-to-one to a) a staff member who has no experience of them and b) a staff member with whom you have been doing one-to-ones for a long time?
- If a one-to-one addresses performance issues a staff member prefers to avoid, how might they try to distract you or shift the focus onto easier topics? How can you keep the conversation focused?
- One-to-ones can easily include how someone feels about their work – aspects they enjoy or which they find particularly challenging. They can even naturally drift into personal areas (family, hobbies, what someone did at the weekend, etc). How is a one-to-one effected if a manager tries to discuss such matters but does not genuinely care about staff? What is the effect on a manager-staff relationship if a manager does not actually care about his/her staff?

REMEMBER

One-to-ones are more effective when you:

- Open them appropriately.
- Keep the conversation focused.
- Genuinely care about your staff.

ONE-TO-ONE PERFORMANCE CONVERSATIONS – GROUP EXERCISE

This exercise provides an opportunity for participants to consolidate their thoughts about one-to-ones.

1. Arrange participants into groups of between 4 and 6. Allocate Topic 1 to half the groups and Topic 2 to the other half. Allow 10 minutes for each group to prepare a presentation (max 5 minutes) on the topic allocated to them.
 - Topic 1 – Prepare a brief presentation explaining the rationale underpinning one-to-ones from the perspectives of a) individual learning, b) organisational performance management and c) manager-staff relationships.
 - Topic 2 – Prepare a brief presentation listing the actions managers can take to ensure that one-to-ones are effective. Explain and justify each action.
2. Listen to, and discuss each presentation, correcting any misunderstandings at the end of each presentation.
3. After the last presentation summarise all the positive points (5 minutes).

Conclude by asking participants to present to the other people in their group how they will explain and introduce one-to-ones to their staff. Ask each group to select the best explanation/introduction for presentation to the whole group (10 minutes).