PEOPLE | FEEDBACK | GROWTH | RESULTS

DAY ONE LEADERSHIP TOOLS

ONE-ON-ONE LEADERSHIP GUIDE

BASED OFF OF **PERFORMANCE BEGINS ON DAY ONE**

BY KRISTA HAYES, SPHR

The One-on-One Leadership Model

1 THE FRAMEWORK

A commitment to regular one-on-one conversations is essential to building trust and increasing employee engagement. The model uses three distinct conversation types, each serving a different purpose and frequency.

01 MICRO 1-1

MOST FREQUENT

Brief, casual, conversational check-ins, scheduled or impromptu. Use for connection, clarity, coaching, course correction, and stay-interview dialogue.

02 PERFORMANCE / MENTORING

LESS FREQUENT

Scheduled, documented, strengths-based conversations about performance, goals, expectations, mentoring, and professional development.

03 SKIP-STEP

LEAST FREQUENT

Periodic, transparent conversations with a leader at least one level above the direct supervisor. Clarify how information will be used and follow up on opportunities raised.

LEADERSHIP PRINCIPLE

Frequency should be consistent and appropriate to employee and organizational needs. Leaders should take action in response to the opportunities presented.

Micro 1-1 Conversation

2 CONNECT, LISTEN, AND CHECK IN

Keep these conversations brief and comfortable. Dedicated, distraction-free time helps, whether during a coffee break, a short walk, or an informal check-in. Include a comfortable level of sharing and stay-interview questions.

STAY INTERVIEW PROMPT

What do you look forward to most when coming to work?

What is on your mind? What would you like to share?

What has been going well?

What are your favorite and least favorite parts of your job?

Are you managing any specific challenges?

What clarity, coaching, or support would be useful?

This is dedicated space to share and resolve concerns.

Performance & Mentoring Conversation

3 SET GOALS, DEVELOP STRENGTHS

Schedule and document these meetings. Discuss performance and overall well-being, set goals and expectations, and explore personal and professional development. Compare the employee experience with expectations and reset where needed.

Employee reflection: How has performance been going?

Leader observation: Strengths and performance results

Skills or interests the employee would like to develop

Potential opportunities, resources, or mentoring support

Where do perspectives differ? What needs clarification?

LEADER COMMITMENT

Do not promise support that cannot be confirmed. Record opportunities, investigate what is feasible, and follow up.

Skip-Step Conversation

4 BUILD TRUST ACROSS LEADERSHIP LEVELS

A skip-step conversation takes place between an employee and a leader at least one level above the direct supervisor. Its frequency depends on leadership experience, organizational maturity, and engagement needs.

TRANSPARENCY MATTERS

Explain the purpose of the meeting and how information will be used. Follow through on opportunities and concerns raised.

What is working well in the employee experience?

What barriers or concerns should leadership understand?

What opportunities could improve engagement or development?

What information may be shared, with whom, and why?

What actions or follow-up are appropriate?

Talking Points & 30/60-Day Goals

5 TURN DIALOGUE INTO PROGRESS

Use these prompts during performance and development discussions. Ask the employee for their perspective first, share observations, discuss differences, and work toward alignment.

What personal or professional skills would you like to develop?

What 1-2 manageable goals matter most in the next 30-60 days?

What will success look like?

What support can the leader realistically provide?

When will we check progress?

WHEN ALIGNMENT IS NOT REACHED

Document the differing perspectives and follow up with the appropriate manager.

Conversation Record & Follow-Through

6 DOCUMENT THE NEXT STEPS

EMPLOYEE NAME

LEADER / MANAGER

CONVERSATION TYPE

DATE

Key observations and employee perspective

Agreed goals, actions, and owners

Support and resources to be provided

Follow-up date and evidence of progress

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Record the discussion accurately. Acknowledgment confirms the conversation took place; it does not necessarily indicate agreement.

EMPLOYEE: _____

LEADER: _____

A Consistent Conversation Culture

7 A LEADERSHIP PRACTICE, NOT A ONE-TIME EVENT

Effective one-on-ones connect the everyday employee experience with clarity, coaching, development, and accountability. Use the right type of conversation at the right time, and follow through on what you hear.

MICRO 1-1

Frequent connection, stay interviews, coaching, clarity and course correction.

PERFORMANCE / MENTORING

Consistent, documented discussions about strengths, goals, performance, and development.

SKIP-STEP

Periodic, transparent conversations that strengthen trust across leadership levels.

THE DAY ONE COMMITMENT

Listen consistently. Respond thoughtfully. Be transparent. Follow through. Stronger performance begins with the conversations leaders choose to have.

Adapted from the One-on-One Leadership Model, a Zone Walk Solutions framework. Property of Zone Walk Solutions, LLC. For leadership development use; follow applicable organizational policies.