

# 50 Great Questions to Ask in One-on-Ones

from *The Introverted Manager*, [introvertedmanager.com](http://introvertedmanager.com)

Have you ever had a lull in conversation during a one-on-one with your employee and wished you had a good question to ask them to get the conversation moving again?

**This document has 50 questions to spark ideas and make your preparation easier.**

The questions are divided into six topics:

- [Current work](#)
- [Personal and skill development](#)
- [Career development](#)
- [Team development](#)
- [Building your relationship](#)
- [Improving your leadership](#)

Each of these topics is valuable in building a good working relationship. You don't need to cover every topic in every one-on-one. **Use these ideas as a springboard** as you plan and prepare for your meetings with each team member. Try to discern what they need and tailor your questions to them.

Many of these questions are solely for helping you **get to know the person better**, even if it doesn't relate to their work. That's one crucial piece of one-on-ones—getting to know your employees and building mutual trust. Be prepared to share some of your own experiences, interests, and ideas in case they ask, but let them decide where they want the discussion to go.

Turn the page and let's begin!

## Current work

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This meeting can function as a status update opportunity to keep a pulse on how projects are progressing. Learn how their work is currently going and what you can do to improve their productivity and engagement.

- What do you like or find most engaging about your current project?
- What do you dislike or find most irritating about your current project?
- What tasks would you like to do more of?
- What tasks would you like to do less of?
- What time of day are you most productive?
- Is your equipment sufficient to do your job well? If not, is there anything I could get you to make it better?
- Is your workspace conducive to your work? (only ask if you have power to change it)

## Personal and skill development

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Check up on their goals throughout the year, not just at annual review time. Figure out what they want to learn and how you can put them on the projects that will help them achieve their goals. Encourage them to develop themselves even in ways that aren't directly applicable to the business today.

- What did you do in the last week that really sparked your interest?
- What is something new you learned this week?
- How are things going with (goal X from personal development plan)?
- Do you find your work challenging? What part is most fulfilling?
- When you're evaluating a new technology or process, how do you go about deciding? What resources do you use to help make your decision?
- What's a skill you wish you had but haven't yet taken the time to develop?
- What is something you'd like to teach our team/company/clients?

## Career development

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Whether or not someone is a star performer on your team, you want to learn what their skills and desires are so you can help them advance their career. Some of the most-loved leaders are those who push their people to be their best, even when it means they move on.

- What things do you want to know about the company?
- What kind of role would you like to have in the next year? Five years?
- What's something you admire about (coworker X)?
- What areas of the business interest you the most besides your current role?
- What areas of our products interest you the most?
- What other industries or companies have you worked in? What did you like about them?
- What is your native genius? What do you do freely and easily? (read Multipliers by Liz Wiseman for more on this topic)

## Team development

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One of the best ways to improve your team is to get everyone to help out. Let each person know that you value their ideas and want them to assist and mentor others. Asking questions with this implication and then acting on the answers will foster that environment of service.

- How do you think we are doing with team cohesion?
- What would you like to change about our team structure?
- Have you ever met any of our customers? What did you learn from them? (If not, be prepared to share something you learned)
- What do you like about our process?
- What frustrates you about our process? (aim to guide the discussion productively)
- What could we do to make our team more productive?
- What's something you think would help (coworker X) get better at their job?
- Who on the team deserves recognition for their work?
- What's something we should fix or change in our product?

## Building your relationship

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These questions will help you build rapport with your employee by getting to know them as a person beyond their contributions to your team. They get at things like personality, interests, and values. Make sure you're ready and willing to share information about yourself as well, because building the relationship goes both ways.

- How are your family/kids/pets/etc.? (Asking about this consistently over time will show you care about their life outside work.)
- What do you like to do when you have free time?
- What hobbies have you had in the past that you don't get much time for these days?
- What was your favorite class in college?
- If you had the money right now and could travel anywhere for two weeks, where would it be?
- What's the last book you read? What did you think of it? (reading, especially in genres not related to work, often sparks ideas that can be relevant to your business)
- If you had the means to retire today and never work again, what would you do?
- If you had to pick between a cocktail party meet-and-greet and a dinner with an individual client, which would you prefer? Why?
- Who do you admire or look up to? What is it about them that you like?
- What's one of your talents that you don't get to use much at work?
- What keeps you up at night?
- What is a character trait that you value highly in yourself or others?

## Improving your leadership

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One-on-ones are important opportunities to get feedback on your leadership. Be open to their suggestions and be willing to change, and ask questions in a way that encourages honest, candid answers.

- Tell me about a boss you've had in the past whom you admire. What did you like about them?
- What is something I do that irritates you, like (give a self-deprecating example)?
- What things do I do that make your work easier?
- What things do I do that make your work harder?
- What should I do more of?
- What should I do less of?
- How do you like to be rewarded? What kind of incentives motivate you?
- What's something you wish I knew about you that would help me be a better manager to you?