

every
woman

WORKBOOK

Making the most of your 1-2-1s

For employees



CONTENTS

About this workbook	1
Re-thinking the benefits	2
Taking control	6
Adopting a 'Junior Partner' mentality	10
Receiving feedback	15
Promoting yourself	17
Your personal action plan	21
everywoman Experts	23
Further reading	24
Endnotes	24
Appendix: Your 1-2-1 agenda template	25

ABOUT THIS WORKBOOK

Established in 1999, everywoman advances women in business. Our aim is to ensure women from all over the world fulfil their potential. We produce workbooks on topics that matter most to our members, and we're constantly listening to your views to give you the tools you need to kick-start your career, at a time and place that suits you.

Business meetings get a bad reputation. One survey has calculated that the cost of unproductive meetings to US business is \$37 billion annually.¹ In his crusade to 'save the world from bad meetings', TED speaker David Grady speaks of 'Mindless Acceptance Syndrome', the 'global epidemic' affecting office workers universally, whereby they opt in to meetings of which they know neither the goal, nor what's expected of their attendance.

Why then, are we advocating that you start holding regular, formal 1-2-1s with your boss? Well, while there's every reason to dislike unproductive, inefficient and unplanned meetings that waste time and hold up to-do lists, most employees want and need individual time with their managers. In fact, 89% of people would ideally like to meet on at least a monthly basis, while 44% want to meet weekly.² And furthermore, the reasons for wanting those sessions are reassuringly positive.

The purpose of this workbook is to arm you with the practical tools you need to make that hour with your boss one that is mutually beneficial. We'll look at the best preparation methods, how to deal with constructive feedback, and get you thinking about your manager relationship in a more powerful way.

We'd love to know how you get on.

Share your experience with karenmax@everywoman.com. Good luck!

Maxine & Karen

The everywoman team

	% employees who desire this	% employees who experience this
Set goals	70%	36%
Review goals	73%	47%
Get performance feedback	6%	29%
Find solutions on problems	64%	50%
Solicit support	63%	49%

RE-THINKING THE BENEFITS

EXERCISE

In the table below, you'll find some of the common negative thoughts employees (and managers) have about 1-2-1s. In the central column, we have proposed some counter-arguments, and provided space for you to add in any thoughts of your own.

Some typical thoughts about 1-2-1s	Switching the thinking	Your thoughts
<p>“1-2-1s are just about ‘checking in’. It’s not necessary to run through everything I’ve done that week.”</p>	<p>With the right preparation, your 1-2-1 can be about receiving career-enhancing feedback. Status reporting can be limited to just a few minutes.</p>	
<p>“My manager clearly doesn’t appreciate me raising problems, so it’s best not to.”</p>	<p>By focussing on solutions rather than problems, you can use your 1-2-1 to demonstrate your future leadership credentials.</p>	
<p>“Asking for help or advice is a sign of weakness.”</p>	<p>Brainstorming ideas with your boss can power-up your partnership.</p>	
<p>“The conversation feels one-sided; I’m reluctant to just offload to my boss.”</p>	<p>By learning how to converse with your boss, you can gain valuable insight to improve your relationship.</p>	

<p>“My boss doesn’t give feedback outside official reviews, so the 1-2-1 has little benefit for me.”</p>	<p>The 1-2-1 is an opportunity to solicit your own feedback and demonstrate your willingness to accept constructive criticism.</p>	
<p>“I always meet my official objectives, so discussing them in 1-2-1s isn’t necessary.”</p>	<p>Reviewing your progress against official objectives ensures you stay on track to be a high achiever.</p>	
<p>“My boss just uses our 1-2-1 to offload work.”</p>	<p>By taking control of the agenda, you’ll keep your boss better informed of your workload and what you can and cannot take on.</p>	
<p>“My boss isn’t aware of my career goals so our 1-2-1s are unlikely to present any new opportunities.”</p>	<p>By sharing your career plan, you open the door to a wider discussion about your boss’s role in your growth and development.</p>	

By getting the thinking right, it's possible your 1-2-1s with your boss can:

- Elevate your career through feedback
- Showcase your strengths and talents
- Provide a forum for you to request support and resources when you need them
- Enable greater collaboration with and a better understanding of your boss
- Help you track progress against your personal and professional goals, while also ensuring they remain relevant as time passes
- Ensure you are made aware of any performance issues, long before your formal appraisal rolls around
- Afford your boss a better understanding of your workload
- Create a space in which career-elevating opportunities can be discussed openly.

EXERCISE

In the table below, you'll find some of the common negative thoughts employees (and managers) have about 1-2-1s. In the central column, we have proposed some counter-arguments, and provided space for you to add in any thoughts of your own.

Benefits of a 1-2-1	How these relate to me and my career
Elevate your career through feedback from which you can learn and grow	<i>e.g. I can use the session to get feedback on my monthly presentations to the department with the aim of improving my delivery.</i>
Showcase your strengths and talents	<i>e.g. My boss sits on a different floor and doesn't have much visibility of my management style. I can use the sessions to tell her about some new team initiatives.</i>

<p>Provide a forum for you to request support and resources when you need them</p>	<p><i>e.g. My boss often drops last-minute tasks on me on Mondays, which are my busiest days. I can use the sessions to agree a compromise.</i></p>
<p>Enable greater collaboration and a better understanding of your boss</p>	
<p>Help you track progress against your personal and professional goals, while also ensuring they remain relevant</p>	
<p>Ensure you are made aware of any performance issues, long before your formal appraisal rolls around</p>	
<p>Afford your boss a better understanding of your workload</p>	
<p>Create a space in which career-elevating opportunities can be discussed openly</p>	

TAKING CONTROL

Your boss may have several direct reports, totalling several hours each week of 1-2-1 time. So it stands to reason that you should take the responsibility for your own 1-2-1. After all, the focus of the session is you. Let your boss make the decision as to when and how frequently you meet, but commit to being the one who manages the session.

So how do you go about crafting an agenda? You should consider what factors will result in a valuable conversation. Focus your planning around the key principles mentioned in the previous section: goal setting, goal reviewing, receiving feedback, solving problems, and seeking help.

Use the following outline:

69% of employees think they should be responsible for setting the agenda of their 1-2-1; the remainder think their boss should.

Source: The Ken Blanchard Companies

REVIEW: What were the pressing issues or action points from the last session that need to be addressed? Point out any issues that have been resolved and highlight any action points that need to be carried forward.

STATUS: A quick, top-line review of on-going projects. Think about what will really interest your boss. If she/he's a stickler for detail, perhaps they'll enjoy hearing some of the technical details. If there is a big departmental presentation coming up, a nice juicy fact to share with the leadership team might be a welcome insight.

MAJOR SUCCESSES: Which achievements are worth highlighting? This is an opportunity to promote yourself, big up your team, demonstrate that you've listened to and acted on feedback, are on track for goal completion, or have done something that will reflect brilliantly on your boss and his/her department.

PROBLEMS: What issues have arisen that you would like help with? Be very careful you don't use this section of your 1-2-1 to have a moan! Present proposed solutions; ask for feedback and advice; be alert to anything your boss has to say on the subject.

RESOURCES: This is your opportunity to ask for help or support. Do you need clarification of priorities as you head into a busy period? Would you like a second opinion before you action an idea? Is there a team issue you would like to brainstorm? Frame any requests around wanting to do the right thing and respecting your boss's opinion.

GOALS: Check in with your personal and professional goals. Are they still relevant? In what ways are you succeeding and in what ways are you falling behind? What feedback can your boss give you at this stage with regards to your performance against formal targets?

LOOKING FORWARD: What's coming up over the coming week/month/quarter that either you or your boss needs to be aware of?

ACTIONS: You might have gone into your 1-2-1 with some action points for either you or your boss. During the session add others that arise as you work through the above.

Do not feel you must create a jam-packed agenda with multiple items in each of the above categories. Only a handful may be relevant to any one session. Your formal goals, for example, might be something you look at only quarterly.

Think about your purpose in adding any item to the agenda: Is it to please your boss with some good news they can escalate? To make them aware of problems that you're either handling or need intervention with? To help build the relationship with him/her? If you've no tangible reason for sharing, remove it. 'Filler' content is what makes 1-2-1s inefficient and unproductive.

Thinking about your next 1-2-1 use the outline below to put together an agenda:

REVIEW	What points from last time need discussing?	
STATUS	What's on my to-do list that my boss needs to know about?	
MAJOR SUCCESSES	What am I most proud of from the last week?	
PROBLEMS	How am I planning to work around issues?	
RESOURCES	What could I use advice on or support with?	
GOALS	Are there any new indicators of success or red flags?	
LOOKING FORWARD	What's coming up that we should discuss?	
ACTIONS	What does my boss need to do? What tasks does he/she need to pass to me?	

everywomanNetwork tips for building your agenda.

- ✓ File all past agendas so you can look back at what was discussed.
- ✓ Keep a fresh template for the coming week easily accessible so you can add items to it as and when they occur to you.
- ✓ Diarise a time each week to finalise the agenda and send it to your boss.
- ✓ Make it as easy as possible for your boss to add his or her own items to the agenda.
- ✓ Apps or cloud-based tools like Evernote or Google Docs can be a great way of managing a collaborative agenda. You can access them via various devices and you avoid clogging up inboxes.
- ✓ If you have an established 1-2-1 routine that you're looking to improve, use the agenda to communicate your new intention to your boss, highlighting your use of this workbook. If you're embarking on a new routine, use one of your agenda points to discuss how you plan to make your 1-2-1s as efficient and productive as possible for both parties.
- ✓ Share your write-up of the 1-2-1 afterwards, making it easy for your boss to see at a glance if he or she has any action points.

In the Appendix you'll find a template for creating an agenda for your 1-2-1s.

ADOPTING A 'JUNIOR PARTNER' MENTALITY

By taking control of your 1-2-1 and its agenda, you've already taken an important step towards becoming a 'Junior Partner' in your relationship with your boss. This is how Stanford University scholars Cohen and Bradford describe the best possible manager-delegate relationship.³ When you tap into this mindset and behave accordingly, powerful things can happen. And your 1-2-1 is very much the basecamp from which this junior partnership operates.

What do we mean by 'Junior Partner'? Be clear, it does not deny the hierarchy or your boss's place within it. Your boss is an authority figure and his or her preferences should be respected and acknowledged. But it is possible to adapt to their wishes and propel yourself forward.

EXERCISE

Consider the list of traits that a 'Junior Partner' exhibits in the table below. Use the space provided to jot down examples of times that you have demonstrated this behaviour, or when you might have the opportunity to.

Junior Partners...	Example of time I've demonstrated this behaviour...
Are concerned for the boss's success as well as their own	
Won't let their boss make avoidable mistakes	
Are committed to mutual goals	

Are proactive; do not wait to be told	
Encourage honesty and transparency with one another	
Give the senior partner the benefit of the doubt	
Are open to discussing their relationship	
Acknowledge their part in failures or difficulties	
Adapt to the degree of closeness required by their boss	

The case study below - relayed by Executive Director, Brad Holst in the Harvard Business Review - demonstrates how using 1-2-1 time to align your boss's goals and pressures with your own, can have a hugely positive impact on your working relationship.

“When I was Director of Organisational Effectiveness, I reported to the Senior Vice President of HR.

“My boss asked to meet to go over our results. What surprised me is she began the meeting by sharing the objectives on her plate. This was the first time I was hearing them and this was the end of the year. I suggested: “How about we begin the next fiscal year by sharing the goals the CEO has given you? I can then align my objectives with yours, and go about making them happen in a way which makes us more successful.”

“She thought it was a great idea. What I didn’t expect was the impact that meeting would have on our work relationship. Up to that point it was good, but formal. As a result of being on the same page, we found ourselves regularly brainstorming and working together.

“By the end of the next fiscal year, the results spoke for themselves. We were much more effective as a department, and our relationship was much more productive. She knew I had her best interests in mind and her trust in me grew exponentially.”

Source: ⁴

More ways to take a Junior Partnership approach in your 1-2-1.

- ✓ Make the conversation two-way: ask your boss what he/she is working on currently.
- ✓ Ask your boss if you can see his/her objectives. Frame the request in a way that makes it clear you want to be align goals with a view to making your boss more successful.
- ✓ Become an active listener: pay careful attention to what your boss reveals - both in what they say and through their body language.
- ✓ Notice any instances where your boss shares a weakness or reveals a particular task they hate doing. If this aligns with your strengths or preferences, you have an opportunity to plug the gap and create a partnership based on reciprocity.

A FRAMEWORK FOR AN EARLY 1-2-1

Lea McLeod is the founder of *The Job Success Lab*. She suggests the following framework for holding a great ‘get to know you’ conversation in an early 1-2-1.⁵ Read through the questions and prompts and consider which are suitable in your situation.

1. What’s the most important achievement you hope to accomplish in your current role?

This question will give an insight into your manager’s short-term motivation, which will give you a better idea of what your goals and objectives should be.

2. What are your career goals?

The answer to this will give an insight into your manager’s long-term goals. Knowing her/his long-term plan will help you understand why she might make certain decisions.

3. What is the most important thing your boss cares about?

Unless you’re working for the CEO, your boss reports to a manager, too. So, asking this question will help you learn more about what the upper level of your organisation expects.

4. What can I do to make you more successful today (or this week, month, quarter or year)?

This should be a question you ask on a regular basis because you should always be trying to make your boss as successful as possible.

5. What’s one thing I could do differently?

Having clear expectations is the key to delivering winning performance and this question is a way to find out those expectations.

6. What should I know about your work and management style?

Does your manager expect you to be available 24/7? Respond to emails on weekends? How does he or she handle stress?

7. How would you like to receive feedback from me?

No matter what, you won't agree with your manager on everything. But you don't have to simply simmer in frustration as long as you know how to present your points in the right way.

8. Why did you hire me?

The answer will help you hone in on exactly how your boss believed you would make the team better.

RECEIVING FEEDBACK

More than two-thirds of employees want regular feedback sessions with their bosses for the purpose of learning and growing. Yet only 29% receive feedback on a regular basis, and 36% never do.⁶

One reason is that the employee hasn't created a forum in which feedback can be shared. By taking control of your 1-2-1 routine and setting the agenda with your boss, you have made great inroads for receiving developmental feedback. Another reason is that many managers feel uncomfortable offering developmental feedback. In fact, 50% of managers on the everywomanNetwork avoid giving feedback altogether, and 13% admit they find the prospect too daunting.⁷

The simple answer is to ask for it - to let your boss know that you are open to learning from him or her and that you want your 1-2-1 to be a forum for them to share observations on any aspect of your performance. There are other ways you can solicit great feedback from a reluctant boss:

1. INCREASE YOUR OBSERVATIONAL SKILLS

Feedback is all around you - in the tone others use when talking to you, in their body language and in what they say or don't say. Become an acute observer, and if you feel that your boss is giving you feedback in a 'round about' way, seek clarity. For example: "I noticed you looked confused when I was talking at the team meeting - I'd really appreciate any feedback you could give me about my delivery style as this is something I really want to improve."

2. CONDUCT REGULAR SWOT ANALYSES

A great way to open up the conversation around your professional development is to conduct a really thorough SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis of yourself and share the details with your boss, asking for their input.

3. SHOW GRATITUDE AND ACT

If your boss has given you feedback you weren't expecting or that you felt was harsh, beware of responding angrily or defensively. You've asked for developmental feedback and you've received it, so express your thanks and suggest you take time out to think it through before you respond. Examine what was said for any grains of truth and make a plan for how you'll address it. Share your plan with your boss and ask to be held accountable.

4. NAIL THE SPECIFICS

If you're truly looking to grow or develop, it's time to get ultra-specific with your feedback requests. Less, "So how am I doing in my job?", more "I really want to improve my presentation skills so if there's anything you notice in the team meeting that you think I should work on, I'd really appreciate your input in our next 1-2-1".

PROMOTING YOURSELF

One of the benefits we've discussed around 1-2-1s is the opportunity to showcase all the great work you're involved in, any successes you or your team have had, and progress made towards goals.

While that sounds great in theory, in reality you might be inwardly shuddering at the thought of meeting up with your boss in order to big yourself up. Fewer than 10% of everywomanNetwork members feel comfortable selling themselves in this context.⁶ If this resonates with you, we recommend the following exercises as a means to getting you started in the art of self-promotion.

“We hear it all the time, that men are better at promoting themselves. Men put themselves forward for things even if they're not 100% sure they can do them. So really, we have a duty to ourselves and other women to get that ball rolling.”

Sara Parsons, everywoman Associate

EXERCISE ONE

WRITE DOWN ALL YOUR ACHIEVEMENTS

Give yourself 5 minutes to write down everything you've done, big and small, throughout your life, education and career to date that makes you really proud. This doesn't have to be an exhaustive list! But it should give you a springboard, and the opportunity to spot any patterns.

EXERCISE TWO

BRAINSTORM YOUR PERSONAL BRAND

What adjectives best describe your personality and working style? What makes you different to your colleagues?

EXERCISE THREE

YOUR LIMITING BELIEFS

What negative self-talk do you commonly give yourself?

EXERCISE FOUR

TALK YOURSELF UP

Put yourself in the shoes of your biggest advocate - a parent, your partner, best friend, boss, mentor or all of the above. What would they say in response to the voice in your head that tells you that you're not good enough?

EXERCISE FIVE

YOU RIGHT NOW

Think about 'you' at a point in the past, e.g. during the interview for your job, back in your school or college days or during a bout of low confidence. In what ways have you grown and developed as a person and as a professional?

EXERCISE SIX

PRACTISE SAYING IT OUT LOUD

If the thought of sharing any of the above with someone else is too much too soon, start by sharing it with an empty room. Move on to telling the mirror and the recording device on your phone (and force yourself to listen back). When you're ready, share with a trusted advisor. Once you've learned to big yourself up in an overt way, sharing details of a successful project or task will come more naturally.

YOUR PERSONAL ACTION PLAN

1. In what new ways can you commit to thinking about your 1-2-1 in order to help you remain motivated to take charge of the process?

2. What logistical steps can you take to get the ball rolling on your new 1-2-1 process, e.g. finding a time slot, tweaking the sample agenda?

3. What do I already know about my boss that will help me get the most out of our future 1-2-1s?

4. What's in it for my boss? How can I ensure the sessions are beneficial to her/him?

5. What elements of self-promotion and receiving feedback do I need to work on in order to optimise the benefits of my 1-2-1?

EVERYWOMAN EXPERTS

everywoman creates workbooks on topics that matter most to our Network members. We draw on member surveys and the latest thinking from the academic and business worlds, as well our own experiences as we navigate our careers. Each workbook offers practical advice, enabling tangible actions for your daily work lives ahead of those important performance reviews.



Maxine Benson MBE & Karen Gill MBE

Co-founders of everywoman, Karen and Max have spoken to thousands of women about the challenges they face at work. Through their own experiences of starting a business, they uncovered a real need for a network where female entrepreneurs and businesswomen could interact and share experiences. The everywomanNetwork, launched in 2013, serves as a truly global tool to enable members the world over to propel their careers and businesses through online membership.

everywoman workbook team

Rebecca Lewis, Associate Editor

Victoria Pavry, Head of Content

Any topics you'd like to see covered on the everywomanNetwork?

We'd love to hear from you: victoria@everywoman.com

FURTHER READING

everywomanNetwork Workbooks

[Managing upwards with success](#)

[Promoting yourself](#)

[Giving and receiving feedback](#)

[Preparing for tough conversations](#)

everywomanNetwork Articles

[The psychology of dealing with criticism](#)

[Your mid-year checklist: 4 quick ways to ace your next appraisal](#)

[Understanding your boss: the key to a successful partnership](#)

Books

Influencing Up by Allan R. Cohen and David L. Bradford (Wiley: 2012)

ENDNOTES

1. <http://www.businessinsider.com/37-billion-is-lost-every-year-on-these-meeting-mistakes-2014-4?r=US&IR=T>
2. *Are Employees' Needs Being Met by One-on-Ones? Survey Says "NO"* by Drea Zigarmi, Jim Diehl, Dobie Houson, and David Witt (The Ken Blanchard Companies: 2013)
3. *Influencing Up* by Allan R. Cohen and David L. Bradford (Wiley: 2012)
4. https://cdnsecakmi.kaltura.com/p/506471/sp/50647100/playManifest/entryId/1_47y2562e/format/url/protocol/https/flavorParamId/457711/video.mp4?ts=1446506764
5. Adapted from '8 questions you should be asking your boss' via *The Muse*.
6. The Ken Blanchard Companies: 2013
7. Poll conducted during the everywomanNetwork webinar: Giving great feedback (October 2015)
8. Poll conducted during the everywomanNetwork webinar: Know Yourself Before You Can Promote Yourself (August 2014)

COPYRIGHT

© 2016 Everywoman Ltd. All rights reserved worldwide. This publication is protected by law and all rights are reserved, including resale rights: no part of this publication may be reproduced and you are not allowed to make copies and distribute or sell this workbook to anyone else. You may only use it if you are a member of the everywomanNetwork and have downloaded it from www.everywoman.com.

No responsibility for loss caused to any individual or organisation acting or refraining from action as a result of the material in this publication can be accepted by Everywoman Ltd or the authors/experts.

YOUR AGENDA TEMPLATE

1-2-1 Meeting

Date:

Attendees:

Date of next meeting:

OUTLINE	Agenda points
REVIEW	
STATUS	
MAJOR SUCSESSES	
PROBLEMS	
RESOURCES	
GOALS	
LOOKING FORWARD	

ACTIONS	Responsibility	Deadline

advancing **WOMEN IN BUSINESS**