

# One-To-One

# Self-Coaching Guide

## Importance of OTOs

Having good one-to-one conversations with your staff (OTOs) is an important part of building and maintaining effective working relationships. It's an opportunity to become aware of any issues that could interfere with work and any emerging problems that could grow to be significant. Also, it's an opportunity to plan and agree ways of working. Although, the OTO may normally focus on work performance-related matters, it's important not to neglect any personal and developmental topics.

### *How do I have good one-to-one conversations?*

There should be a clear purpose to the OTO, which may include meeting some of these objectives:

1. Create an opportunity for open and honest, two-way communication
2. Care and support staff with work tasks/challenges/relationships and possibly any home-life issues
3. Offer staff some control and influence over their work and allow them to be 'part of the solution'
4. Appreciate staff contributions, frequently saying 'thank you' for their inputs
5. Explore staff opportunities for learning, personal growth, and career development

Also, the OTO should be held in a 'positive' environment, which should include these healthy behaviours:

1. Spend most of the time on the individual, not focused on tasks, projects and business performance
2. Allow staff to raise topics for discussion, rather than just covering your own agenda items
3. Both parties should respect their openness and honesty, and hold confidences to maintain trust
4. Choose a conducive environment, one that is private and without the possibility of being disturbed
5. Schedule the OTO suitably so enough time is allocated, people come relaxed, and it won't be rushed

## Use of Four Essential Coaching Skills

You should use these *four* essential coaching skills to make the most of your OTO conversations:

**1) Contracting:** You should agree the nature and purpose of the OTO. People can come with different, and possibly undeclared, expectations, preoccupations, and willingness to share. Failing to agree how the OTO works could seriously undermine its effectiveness and the working relationship. It is important to avoid making any assumptions. If you don't know, or suspect something's wrong, always ask.

**2) Structuring:** You should give structure and focus to your OTO to increase the likelihood of a positive outcome. [See SCG – '*How can I have focused and structured conversations?*' for more about this skill.]

**3) Listening & hearing:** You should listen with the aim of hearing what is actually said (and not said) and gaining an understanding, rather than just listening ready to respond. [See SCG – '*How can I become a much better listener?*' for more about this skill.]

**4) Questioning:** You should ask insightful questions that take the conversation forward rather than disguised statements that can usually be answered with a *yes* or *no*. [See SCG – '*How can I ask effective questions?*' for more about this skill.]

*"The ability to hold a good conversation has almost become a lost art form." Anon.*

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### More Information

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