

Your Cheat Sheet to Great 1:1s

A Quick Reference Guide

How to Lead Conversations That Matter

Plenty of managers run 1:1s; however, very few know how to turn them into powerful conversations that drive growth, connection and alignment.

Done well, a 1:1 isn't just a catch-up on workload or a progress check. It's a dedicated space for connection, reflection, capability building, and accountability. It's where learning, relearning, vulnerability, and genuine development are prioritised.

1. Start with Alliance - Connection Before Content

Every good 1:1 begins with trust. Before jumping into tasks or KPIs, take a few moments to connect as two people who are genuinely interested in each other. Ask how they're travelling this week, what's front of mind, has anything shifted in priority that you might need to know, or what they need from the conversation.

Starting employee meetings in this way consistently creates the space for psychological safety and a sense that it's okay to be honest, explore challenges, or discuss what's not working.

A quick check helps, too:

- Do we both know the purpose of today's chat?
- Have I checked what support they need from me right now?

When people feel safe and understood, they tend to show up with greater openness, accountability, and creativity.

2. Build Reflection - Think Together, Don't Just Update

Reflection is where learning and insight happen. Instead of jumping straight to progress reports, official updates and status reports, create space for curiosity.

Try prompts like:

- What are the most significant projects on your workload that you would like to touch on?
- What's been working well lately?

- What's been tricky or draining?
- What have you learned from this week's work?

When you shift from official task updates, creating space for reflection, it becomes less about fixing and more about understanding. When managers model curiosity rather than judgment or solution, they help individuals and their teams develop self-awareness and problem-solving skills.

Tip: Silence is your friend in this space. Let them think before they answer.

3. Focus on Capability – Stretch and Support

Every 1:1 is a chance to grow capability, not just manage performance.

Ask:

- What skill or mindset are you keen to strengthen?
- Where do you feel most confident right now?
- What would help you stretch a little further?

Capability building occurs when leaders strike a balance between **support and challenge**. Offer constructive feedback, help them name strengths, and explore next-level learning opportunities. Progress doesn't need to be perfect; it just needs to move forward.

4. Anchor in Accountability – Bring Clarity and Ownership

Accountability keeps your 1:1s grounded. It turns insights into action and maintains direction.

Spend time checking:

- Are the next steps clear and owned by the person responsible?
- Have we checked for risks, workload drift, or barriers?
- Do we both know what's expected before our next 1:1?

Accountability done well isn't about controlling and monitoring the work; it's about shared responsibility and commitment to the work and organisation. It helps people stay focused, confident, and connected to purpose.

5. Always Have Flexibility Front and Centre – Adapt to the Person and Moment

No two 1:1s should look the same. Some weeks call for coaching or reflection; others need clarity, direction, planning, or wellbeing check-ins.

Flexibility means reading the room and adjusting to the energy, context, or learning style of the individuals involved. It's what keeps the meeting inclusive, respectful, and relevant.

End by asking:

- How did this session feel for you?
- Is there anything you'd change for next time?

That small question builds ongoing trust and continuous improvement.

Putting It All Together

Over time, these five habits — **Alliance, Reflection, Capability, Accountability, and Flexibility**- form a rhythm of leadership that strengthens both people and performance.

You don't need to tick every box in every meeting. The goal is to bring intention, empathy, and structure into your 1:1s.

When you do, you'll notice the shift:

- Conversations become deeper and more meaningful
- People feel safe to be honest
- Growth happens naturally, not by pressure.

That's the foundation of the **ARCA+ Professional 1:1 Model**, which is a modern approach to reflective, people-centred leadership that's changing how organisations support their people.

Want to go further?

ARCA+ helps leaders and teams embed this practice consistently — building capability, wellbeing, and performance through evidence-informed supervision and 1:1s.

Learn more at www.collabway.com.au