

# 5 QUESTIONS EVERY GOOD MANAGER ASKS

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In an era where 70% of employees are disengaged at work, how do you raise employee engagement?

**Asking these five questions in your one-one-one employee meetings can make a significant difference in raising employee engagement.**

The key is to ask *how* your team member is doing before you ask *what* your team member is doing. Most managers only ask what their team is doing. But showing your employees you care about them as people deepens employee engagement. People care more about you and the mission when they know you care about them.

In addition, people bring their whole self to work. If things aren't going well at home, they bring their challenges to work. While you can't solve a team member's personal problems, listening to them, caring and encouraging them goes a long way. In addition, you can recommend counseling or other resources that can help them. And finally, letting an employee talk about their life can help them see that often, the stress they experience has less to do with work and more to do with other factors in their life. And if they are stressed because of work, you can address the issue directly.

**Here are five questions every good manager asks.**

Naturally, these may not be the only questions you ask (you may have specific projects, metrics etc you need to work through), but sometimes these five questions are actually enough for a good 20-45 minute 1-on-1 meeting with a team member.

## THE FIVE QUESTIONS

- 1 HOW ARE YOU DOING?
- 2 IS THERE ANYTHING I CAN DO TO HELP?
- 3 WHAT ARE YOU WORKING ON RIGHT NOW?
- 4 WHAT OBSTACLES ARE YOU FACING?
- 5 IS THERE ANYTHING I CAN DO TO HELP YOU ACCOMPLISH THE GOALS WE SET?

# COACHING ON THE QUESTIONS

## 1

### HOW ARE YOU DOING?

The purpose behind this question is to see how the employee or team member is really doing, personally. As you ask this question, tone and body language are important. It might take a while for someone to really be honest, but if you ask the question regularly and sincerely when you meet, and you show that you care about the answer, it's amazing how grateful people will be and how much it will help them just to articulate the issues.

Don't be frightened if someone breaks down or "dumps" on you. Often people never talk about this kind of thing. Isolation and loneliness are epidemics in our culture, and people have few to no outlets to talk about what's really going on.

When they know you care about them, they'll care more about you and the mission.

## 2

### IS THERE ANYTHING I CAN DO TO HELP?

No, you're not their therapist and that's not your role. Your role is to listen, empathize, show you care and let them know you're *for* them.

Surprisingly, 99% of the time, your team member will answer this question with a simple 'no.' That's normal. Of course, you can't help them with their marriage or with their sleepless infant, and reasonable people realize this.

But what this helps the employee see is that their issues (a tough relationship or marriage, being out socially night after night, not making it to the gym lately) have little to nothing to do with work.

Occasionally, they may suggest things like "just letting me talk about this has already helped" or "if I could take Friday off to sort some things out," and you can respond as appropriate.

Caring about the person really matters, and often your interest in them can be the impetus for them to take the action they need to sort out their issue. And the organization benefits from that, because people bring who they are into what they do. Ultimately, their personal well being impacts their performance at work.

# THE HIGH IMPACT WORKPLACE



## 3 WHAT ARE YOU WORKING ON RIGHT NOW?

Often managers can find it hard to track who's working on what, so this helps you and the team member clarify what their priorities are.

A helpful, normal work-related conversation that unearths the tasks and projects they're working on.

In addition, if an important project doesn't get mentioned, you can bring it up and check in on how it's moving along.

## 4 WHAT OBSTACLES ARE YOU FACING?

Sometimes the answer to this question will be none (they just need to keep going), but other times challenges surface. You may learn that your team member can't get someone to call them back, or that they're out of budget, or something as basic as their computer keeps crashing.

Phrasing the question this way separates the person from the problem and gives your team member a chance to succeed. They emerge as the hero, and your job is to help them tackle the challenges ahead of them.

Obviously, if the challenges are something company-wide (a bad culture, bad equipment, or a bottleneck in senior management), you have some work to do. But at least you now know how your employees feel and whether conditions are working for them or against them.

This is also your best moment in the meeting to coach, encourage and problem solve with your team member.

## 5 IS THERE ANYTHING I CAN DO TO HELP YOU ACCOMPLISH THE GOALS WE SET?

One of your chief jobs as a leader is to help your team win. This sets you and them up to do that.

Often the answer will be no, but if their computer keeps crashing or they can't get the client to call them back, you may be able to help them accomplish that.