



## Session 3.28 | The #1 Tool To Improve Work Relationships

In the last session, I showed you the first of 2 tools which will dramatically improve your interactions and your productivity and results at work.

In this session, I'm going to share with you the second tool.

Take a moment right now to download the Worksheet for this session so you can follow along as we move forward.

This tool that I'm going to show you is the most requested tool we've ever had - tens of thousands of leaders, all over the world, have downloaded it and have used it for more than 10 years.

Let me tell you a quick story about this tool...

Early in my career, I had a boss who recommended to me that I meet regularly with each one of my direct reports. In other words, I should do a one-on-one meeting with my team members. He knew that it would both improve their productivity and would improve my relationship and influence with my team members.

I thought it was a great idea! And since I wanted the time to be as productive as possible, I spent weeks trying to figure out how to structure the meetings and when to schedule them.

Looking back – I wasted a lot of valuable time trying to set up the agenda for the “perfect” meeting. Which was really a futile effort from the outset – because I was going to be part of the meeting – and I'm far from perfect!

I did the one thing that I knew would get me going. I asked my assistant to take the meetings and to put them on to my calendar. She scheduled them so I would have two weeks to get ready for my first meeting. So, here's what I did...

### 1. Purpose

First, I thought about the purpose for the meetings. I envisioned what my team members would like to accomplish in the meetings and what they would value most about our time together.

This may not be perfect for you but it's what I started with several years ago when we started planning these meetings.

I wrote out, "To hear more from my team members and to provide an intentional time to coach them in their roles."

My primary goal was really to listen to them and to give me an opportunity, in a non-threatening environment, to share things from my heart and from my perspective with them.

## 2. Regular time

The second thing that I did was we scheduled regular biweekly meetings. These were biweekly 30 minute appointments for each of my direct reports. We started out with biweekly meetings because I wanted to make sure that the meetings wouldn't be too often or too cumbersome by occurring too often without enough content.

Weekly or monthly meetings may work better for you and for your team. In fact, my assistant and I meet twice a week for 30 minutes each time. Although we work closely together, the regularly scheduled appointments are very focused and provide us time to slow down and address top priority functions and projects.

## 3. Be prepared

Preparation is the key to an effective meeting.

The more time I spend preparing, the more effective the meeting is for both of us. I spend approximately the same amount of time preparing for each one of them one-on-one meetings as I do in the meeting itself. I also review notes from our previous meeting and the list of projects for the individual. This provides a basic outline for the meeting. So I feel a whole lot better going into it.

This one-on-one meeting Guide and Template is linked on this page so you can download it now to take a look at it.

This Guide and Template prompt me to select specific questions prior to each meeting so that I'm properly prepared for the individual and the meeting.

## 4. Focus

A critical component of each meeting preparation is the location of the meeting. It's important that you pick a place where you can relax, focus, and engage. This may be your office, their office, a conference room, a cafe nearby or the local coffee shop.

For most of my meetings, I prefer to use an office or meeting rooms because we have access to tools for coaching when we need them.

Wherever you land, make sure you turn off the mobile phones, set the office phone to do-not-disturb, clear the desk and table, let the receptionist know or your assistant know that you are not to be interrupted. Eliminate as many distractions as possible.

## 5. Listen

The guide and template contain scores of questions that make it easy for you to prepare – personal questions, project questions, resource questions, follow-up and feedback questions. This is by design – questions prepare me to listen. And questions will prepare you to listen!

We need to listen to our teams far more than we do! Bill Greer, President of Milligan College, once said to me, “If you want to help people, listen as long as you possibly can before responding.”

Ben Reed once said, “When you ask your team more questions than you make demands, you’ll be more loved & more respected by them.”

### During the One-on-one Meeting

Just as my preparation improves the meeting, when my team members are well-prepared, we both get a lot more accomplished in the meetings.

I have asked each of my team members to use the agenda from the guide and template. And it’s based on 6 items that help prepare them for each meeting. The guide and template, again, includes this Agenda Form for you to give to your team members to help them prepare for your next meeting.

When I began using this process with my team, I saw remarkable improvements in each individual. And I improved! Although our meetings weren’t perfect, they became far more effective than they were previously.

### Use the One-on-one Meeting Template

To be truly transparent, when I first started the meetings for several months, I really struggled to stay motivated to continue being intentional about the meetings. They were awkward at times. There were times that I didn’t prepare properly.

There were times my team members came unprepared as they were trying to get used to the process.

There’s no doubt you might face some of these similar challenges. And that’s okay. You don’t have to get it all figured out right now. What you should do is apply the learning. What you should do is start with a simple plan for the meeting that prepares you to listen.

What I've learned as we worked with other leaders is that they are far more prepared because of the tool, the one-on-one meeting Guide and Template.

So, they don't have to waste valuable time, like I did, trying to figure it all out on their own.

It took me several months of tweaking to finally get the agenda and the template into the format that was comfortable for me. You can download a copy of it in this session.

The tool really has been transformational for so many leaders. It will help you:

1. Communicate more effectively
2. Save time and maximize productivity
3. Develop influence and impact more effectively
4. Better develop people
5. Work better together with senior leaders who may be inexperienced or ineffective

If you haven't already, take a moment right now to download the Worksheet and the Guide and Template on this page and complete the action steps for this session.

Remember, you don't have to get it perfect. You just need to take the next step.

I'll see you in the next session.