



BEYOND JUST LEADERSHIP

A FREE GUIDE FOR MANAGERS

The 1-on-1 Starter Kit

Your first month of one-on-ones that actually matter.

The weekly conversation is the most important thing you do as a manager. Here's how to run a real one, starting Monday.

Lead deeper. Lead people. Lead well.

START HERE

They're not numbers.

The people who report to you aren't rows on a dashboard. They're human beings whose work lives are partly in your hands. The 1-on-1 is where you prove you know the difference: one honest conversation a week, about the person in front of you, not just their tasks.

You don't have to be a natural. Leadership starts from within, and the rest is reps. This kit is your first one. Steal whatever's useful and run it this week.

PATC — it starts from within

Positive — a decision, not a feeling. Choose the state you walk in with.

Attitude — yours becomes your team's. What you carry in, they breathe.

Thoughts — the story you tell yourself in the hard moment decides what you do next.

Confidence — the choice to move forward, and to believe in people before they hand you the proof.

Five short tools are inside. Read it once, keep the last page by your desk, and let one good conversation a week compound.

The 1-on-1 question bank

Good 1-on-1s aren't status updates. These get you past "what did you do" to "how are you, really." Pick two or three; don't run the whole list.

START WITH THE HUMAN

- What's felt good this week? What's felt heavy?
- How are you actually doing, outside the work?
- What's on your mind that we haven't talked about?

WORK & PRIORITIES

- What's the one thing that matters most for you this week?
- Where are you stuck, and where can I actually help?
- What's slowing you down that I could clear?

GROWTH

- What do you want to be better at 90 days from now?

- What are you working on that energizes you? What drains you?
- Where do you want to be in two years?

FEEDBACK, BOTH WAYS

- What's one thing I could do differently to support you?
- Is there any feedback you've been holding back from me?

FIRST 30 DAYS (IF YOU'RE NEW TO THEM)

- What does your ideal relationship with a manager look like?
- What's one thing you'd ask me to do differently than your last manager?
- What do I need to know about how you work best?

The weekly cadence

The magic isn't any single conversation. It's the rhythm. You don't rise to your goals as a manager; you fall to your systems, and the weekly 1-on-1 is the system.

The rhythm: weekly or every other week · 30 minutes · same time, protected · their agenda first.

The one rule: never cancel it.

The manager who cancels 1-on-1s the moment they get busy stays busy forever; they've taught their team not to surface problems early. Move it before you cancel it.

Rules that always apply

- Open with them: "What's on your mind this week?"
- Prepare one question that goes beneath the surface.
- End with a clear next action that you own, not just them.
- Follow up on what you said you'd do, by next time.
- Keep notes. Memory is not a system.

Cadence, at a glance

Direct report	Weekly or biweekly	30 min	Their work, wellbeing, growth
Skip-level	Quarterly	30 min	Culture health, blind spots
Peer manager	Monthly	30 min	Calibration, shared challenges
Your manager	Weekly or biweekly	30 min	Alignment, obstacles, your growth

Tool 3

Your first 1-on-1

Especially if you're new to someone, the first one sets the tone. Don't fix anything yet. Set it up, and listen.

"I want to be a good manager for you, and the best way I know how is this: time, every week, about you, not just the work. So I'll ask a lot of questions early. What does a good manager look like to you? And what's one thing a past manager did that you'd want me to keep, or to drop?" Then stop talking and write down what they say.

Tool 4

The five mistakes to avoid

1. **Running it like a status meeting.** Status lives in your tracker. This time is for the person.
2. **Canceling when you're slammed.** That's exactly when they need it most.
3. **All business, no human.** If you never ask how they're doing, you'll be the last to know they're leaving.
4. **Saving feedback for the review.** Specific and same-day beats thorough and late.
5. **Talking more than they do.** The best 1-on-1 is mostly them.

Keep this by your desk

- Same time, every week. Never cancel.
- Open with them: "What's on your mind?"
- Ask one question that goes deeper.
- Feedback: specific, same-day, kind.
- End with an action you own.
- Close with: "How can I help?"

Want to go deeper?

This is the first rep. The full People-First Leadership training goes further: PATC, the three thinkers behind trust and honest feedback, and how to actually grow your people. And Around the Table is the tool that holds the cadence, the prep, and the history, so your attention stays on the person, not the paperwork.