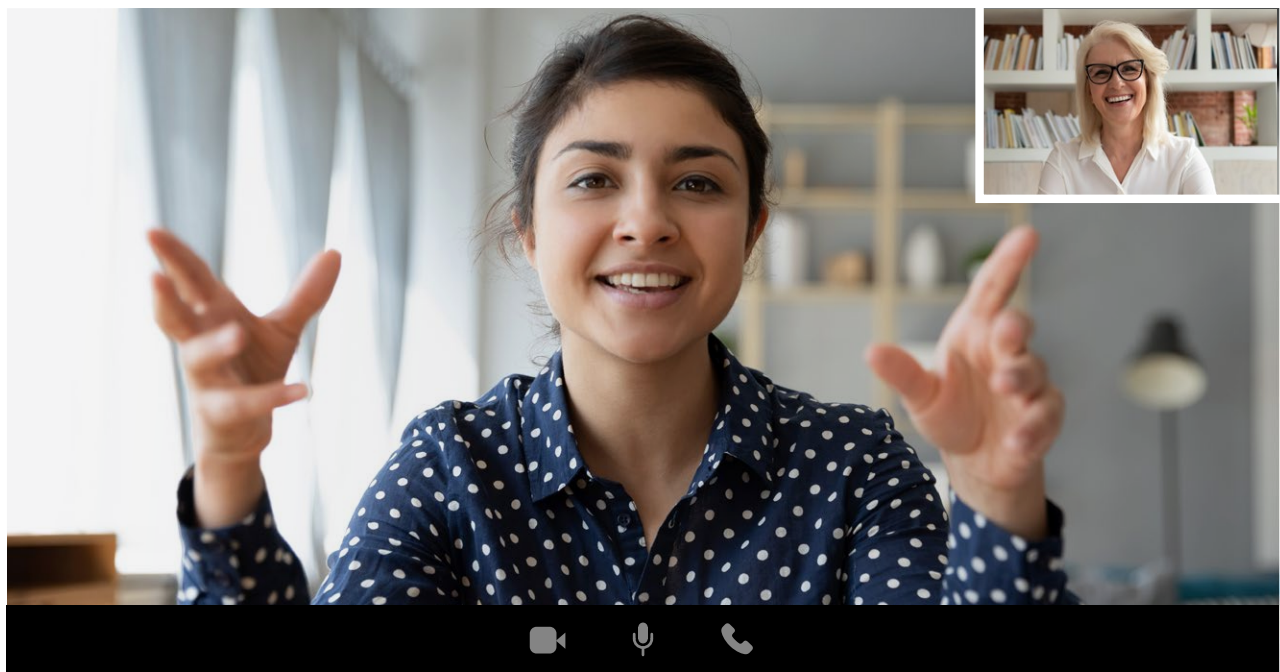




Conversing in a Crisis: The Relative Power of One-to-Ones

COVID-19 Weekly Culture Pulse Survey: May 11-15, 2020



The one-to-one conversation between employees and their leaders has become a common organizational practice and a critical experience in many company cultures. However, it's not just the quality of the discussion that makes it valuable. Regardless of how personalized, co-created, or natural they are, one-to-ones have a clear cumulative effect. The number

and frequency of these meetings is a significant factor in employee engagement, morale, and productivity. And it's an even bigger factor during times of crisis like the one created by COVID-19.

This is not to say the content of each one-to-one isn't important. It very much is. If you're curious, we outlined what makes a meaningful one-to-one in our last [Global Culture Report](#). But this week's pulse survey of 1,372 employees throughout the U.S., Canada, and the U.K. focuses on how often employees need this kind of contact to thrive, and what the benefits are for organizations that provide it.

More is more

Research we conducted last year, at the peak of an extended period of economic prosperity, indicated employees should have a one-to-one meeting with their leader at least every month. (Think of it as cultural hygiene; a baseline to maintain key metrics.) A regular cadence of twice a month was better, but any more frequently met a point of diminishing returns, with no appreciable difference in outcomes between every week and every other week.

Contrast that with our latest findings in the throes of a global pandemic:

A single one-to-one conducted over the last 30 days wasn't enough to yield any positive measurement.

Plus, there's now a statistically significant difference between every week and every other week.

Specifically, compared to conversations every other week, weekly one-to-ones:

Increase engagement + 58%

Increase perceived productivity + 31%

Increase sense of purpose + 19%

Increase feelings of appreciation + 23%

Decrease burnout - 47%

Decrease fearfulness - 15%

Decrease depression - 16%

And compared to monthly one-to-ones, weekly conversations:

Increase engagement	+ 79%
Increase perceived productivity	+ 67%
Increase sense of purpose	+ 22%
Increase feelings of appreciation	+ 31%
Decrease burnout	- 33%
Decrease fearfulness	- 53%
Decrease depression	- 21%

The moral of the survey

In spite of the fact that nearly a third of employees say they dread meeting with their leader, one-to-one discussions remain one of the strongest ingredients for generating great work. And even without examining the quality, it's safe to say the quantity is key.

While organizations could coast with even one personal chat per month in the past, that's not enough for most employees when work becomes more stressful. Unpredictable times with unfamiliar circumstances require one-to-ones at least every other week to have any positive effect.

Like so many other facets of our work lives that have changed with the coronavirus pandemic, caring for employees has a new prescriptive standard: one, 1:1 conversation every week.

For more insights from the O.C. Tanner Institute, check out our previous COVID-19 [pulse surveys](#). And check in next week for new ones.

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