

PM Insight

HR cheat sheet:
**How to help
every manager drive
engagement**



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Introduction

Despite the widespread benefits of regular performance development reviews for both individuals and businesses, **research from eloomi** reveals a breadth of challenges that are holding managers back from conducting meaningful 1:1s. It's not just lack of time and resources, but often a lack of support to run performance reviews that truly benefit employees.

"There's often a discrepancy between a manager's assessment of a 'regular and meaningful' conversation and an employee's experience of that same conversation," says Neil Morrison, group HR director, Severn Trent Water. "What works for one employee in a team may not be the same for another, depending on their experience, the work they're doing or their general need for feedback, guidance, or support. A shift in thinking by line managers from this being a cookie-cutter task to a tailored intervention based on the specific needs is the biggest challenge in driving meaningful conversations and, subsequently, performance."

A lot hangs in the balance: when employees don't feel adequately supported by their managers, they start looking for opportunities elsewhere. So what can HR professionals do to help bridge the gap and ensure that every performance development review is a good one?

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Five questions managers should ask during performance reviews

1 How are you?
"Genuinely seeking to listen and understand rather than hoping for a formulaic 'I'm fine' can help build trust. If your team can open up about how they feel at work and home, you've ticked most boxes as a manager," points out Morrison.



What's at stake?

The talent retention crisis

Ineffective one-to-ones hinder the alignment of individual efforts with company objectives, causing a disconnect between short-term performance and long-term strategy, ultimately affecting organisational goals.

For employees, ineffective appraisals mean they may not receive clear and specific goals, leading to disengagement and a lack of motivation to improve their performance. Consequently, employees may leave, resulting in talent retention issues for the business.

Talent loss isn't just demotivating, it burdens businesses financially. Recruitment agencies charge around £3,000 per new hire, while a UK Department for Education report found that organisations spent £1,530 on training each new employee, emphasising the need for talent retention.

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2 What are your goals or aspirations for your work? And how can I help you reach them?

Understanding your team member's goals will enable you to offer potential training options and tailored advice that will genuinely help them on their way.



The challenges presented by one-to-ones

1 They're time-consuming

Gartner found the process of year-end performance development reviews can take up to seven weeks or 200-300 hours, depending on company size. The associated bureaucracy and paperwork can also be a serious point of frustration.

Finding the time to fine-tune the one-to-one review process is tricky, particularly because HR teams often face the pain of a manual system, or one which comprises a mix of tools.

A potential time-saving solution is using software to manage and track your reviews. eloomi's e-learning platform is one such example. "You can tailor a flow that can scale for your entire organisation within a few minutes, and if you have departments with special requirements, it's easy to update and change," says eloomi's commercial product marketing manager, Stefan Timmermann.

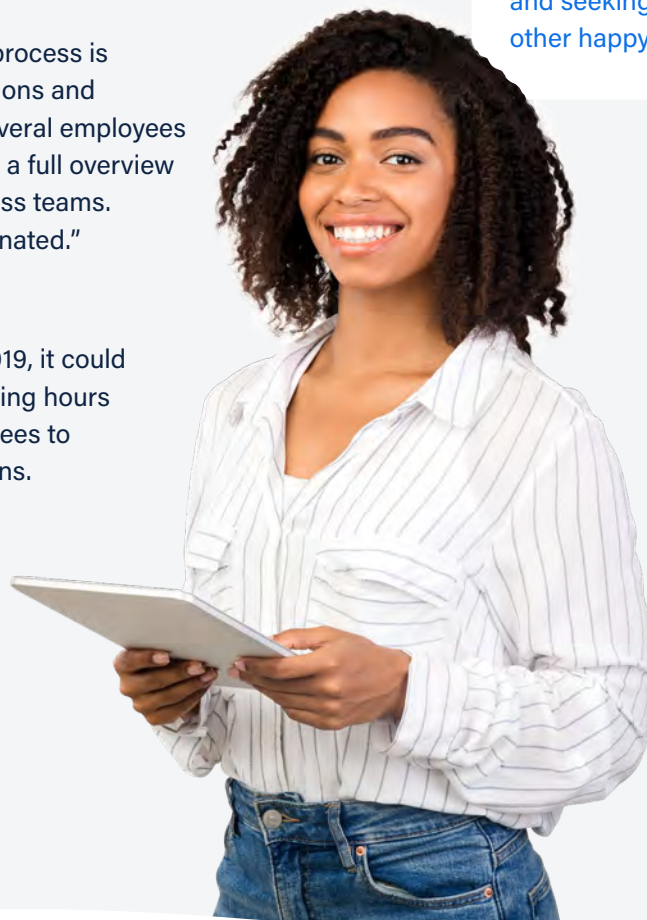
"For managers and employees, the process is completely automated with notifications and reminders. Being a manager with several employees is no problem since you always have a full overview of the status and the next steps across teams. Time wasted on following up is eliminated."

2 They're expensive

According to Gallup, even back in 2019, it could cost \$2.4m-\$35m a year in lost working hours for an organisation of 10,000 employees to participate in performance evaluations.

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Stefan Timmermann, eloomi



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3 Can you suggest one thing I could do differently this month?

Asking this question keeps your management style fresh and dynamic. It also helps to make the manager-employee relationship feel more equal: you're both learning and seeking to make each other happy.

The challenges presented by one-to-ones continued...

3 They can be ineffective

Gallup says only 14 per cent of employees strongly agree their performance reviews inspire them to improve. Additionally, in a McKinsey survey, many respondents said that their organisations' appraisal system had either 'no effect' or a 'negative effect' on overall business performance.

To make the problem worse, digital tools used for performance appraisals often lack integration with training and people analytics, limiting the effectiveness of the appraisal process. Often, these tools are too rigid or inflexible to really reflect individual employees' situations or development goals. And, with many people working remotely, these challenges are only growing.

4 They don't always permit employees to take ownership of their development

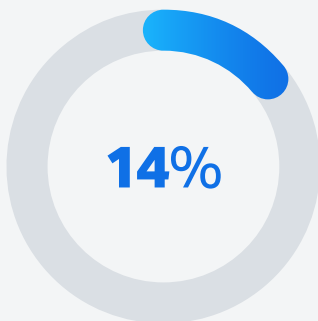
eloomi found that employees struggle to access the information and feedback they need to take ownership of their improvement, which hinders their development. This can be compounded by managers who fail to provide clear and supportive advice.

"The eloomi platform is ideal for a hybrid or remote work context, with virtual learning experiences, social engagement and people management capabilities, to mention just a few examples. It's also all accessible on mobile and desktop, allowing everyone to easily access and participate in training," says Timmermann.

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4 What would you like to cover in our one-to-one?

Opening up the floor to your team member will make them feel valued and it will spark anecdotes and challenges that managers could not have foreseen.



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How to make every one-to-one a success

“Performance appraisals are the regular handshake that managers and employees give each other to refresh the relationship,” says Timmermann. “The ideal appraisal process covers a proper 360-degree session as background, goal alignment, and well-considered preparation from each party. At eloomi, we help organisations drive employee retention by focusing on what matters: wellbeing, performance and, most importantly, the people.”

Performance reviews should involve managers:

- Evaluating work
- Providing feedback
- Setting actionable goals
- Discussing career development

“Communicate the purpose of the organisation and why the goals are important for the business and the customer or patient, so colleagues understand why their role is key to successful delivery.”

Sharon Benson, LloydsPharmacy Clinical Homecare



TIP ONE Make the ‘why’ clear to everyone

Whatever the strategy behind a company’s one-to-ones, it’s important to make it clear to all managers and employees.

“Communicate the purpose of the organisation and why the goals are important for the business and the customer or patient, so colleagues understand why their role is key to successful delivery,” advises Sharon Benson, HR director at LloydsPharmacy Clinical Homecare.



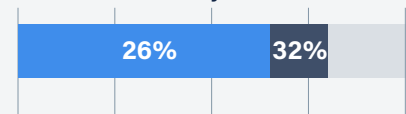
How to make every one-to-one a success continued...

✓ TIP TWO Ensure frequent and regular meetings

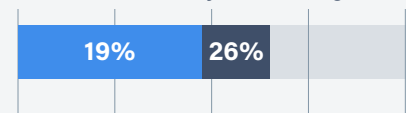
When it comes to one-to-ones, timing is critical. A CIPD report highlights a shift from annual appraisals to frequent, informal performance discussions to improve alignment, performance and manager-employee relationships. Regular feedback and coaching are vital for development. Engaging employees in goal-setting and performance discussions boosts motivation and engagement. **eloomi's latest research** found a discrepancy in perceptions between senior leaders, HR professionals and employees regarding feedback frequency. Thirty-two per cent of leaders believe that individual performance is discussed weekly, while only 26 per cent of employees agree. Similarly, 26 per cent of leaders think employees have weekly opportunities to provide feedback about their managers, but just 19 per cent of employees concur. Additionally, 25 per cent of leaders believe that managers check in daily with employees about their wellbeing, whereas only 15 per cent of employees report this to be true.

■ employees agree
■ employers agree

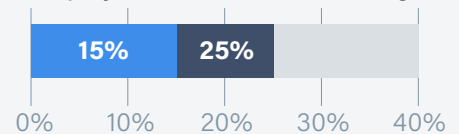
Individual performance is discussed weekly



Weekly opportunities to provide feedback about your manager



Managers check in daily with employees about their wellbeing



✓ TIP THREE Speak clearly and definitively

Clarity is key in feedback, and the steps employees are expected to take to reach defined goals. It's also important that the employee can see the benefit of taking those steps. Managers need to become skilled in setting goals relevant to the employee's needs as well as the needs of the business.

✓ TIP FOUR Take a strengths-based approach

Managers should shift the focus from weaknesses or problem areas and how to fix them, to building on strengths and successes. Strengths-based performance conversations are effective at boosting employee engagement.

✓ TIP FIVE Read the room

Managers should also be attuned to non-verbal cues as employees may not voice all issues, some of which may be personal. Respecting privacy while discussing wellbeing is crucial. Addressing emotional topics sensitively can help managers offer support and build trust.



What can HR leaders do to help?

HR leaders should actively engage with senior management to ensure that people development programmes are in line with the organisation's strategic direction. This engagement can facilitate better decision-making and support for HR initiatives, as highlighted by 40 per cent of leaders in the **2024 eloomi people development report**.

"The temptation within HR teams is to get overly prescriptive to ensure compliance, so they'll specify a frequency, duration, or structure," says Morrison. "On one hand that might help with achieving the regularity of a conversation but if it doesn't help to drive performance and productivity then it is a waste of time. HR teams would do better to equip line managers with genuine coaching skills that help them to place the employee at the centre of the conversation rather than the process."

Dave Ulrich, Rensis Likert Professor at the Ross School of Business, University of Michigan and a partner at the RBL Group, says managers sometimes want to defer difficult conversations to HR professionals who should be better equipped to do them. "My advice to HR professionals in this situation is to say, 'No, I won't do this because it would hurt you as a leader. If I do the conversation, you lose some of your credibility as a leader since employees expect you to give them feedback. But I will coach, role play, and help you to have a positive conversation.' I then challenge the leader (not HR) to have a conversation where the employee leaves feeling better about him/herself," he says.

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Dave Ulrich, The RBL Group

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5 Tell me about skills you have outside of the office

An employee could have a whole breadth of applicable experience and knowledge; managers have to ask to find out.



Conclusion

There's a whole host of benefits to be found in conducting regular performance reviews, for both the employee and wider organisation. However, too many organisations aren't tuned into their own performance processes, and as a result, not only waste time and resources but also drive away valuable employees. To overcome these challenges, managers and HR must ensure clear, frequent and supportive communication with their team members, facilitated by user-friendly tech platforms that enable analytics.



Explore performance management with eloomi

Drive retention and meaningful development with a platform that enables HR, managers, and employees to connect. Ensure regular 1:1s, consistent performance frameworks, and the flexibility to help every employee thrive.

Learn more →



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