

# Applause Winning One on One Meetings

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If your approach to being successful in a one on one meeting is to keep your fingers crossed and “hope” it turns out well, you risk disappointment. Applause winning meetings take thoughtful preparation and flawless execution. The following tips may turn the tide for you:

**Ahead:** Preparation is everything. The more important the meeting, the more preparation it takes.

- **Know the mindset of the person across the table.** Is the individual driven by metrics, containing cost, improving customer relations or capturing market share? If this is an outside customer or someone internally that you don't know, reach out to your personal contacts for insights on the best approach. Listen to interviews, review the company's 10K and notice what is written in LINKEDIN. Pay attention to memberships in professional clubs, alumni groups or other favorite organizations. If you know the person, you probably are familiar with how the individual processes information and prefers information. Think from that person's perspective at all times as you put together content. Winston Churchill was a master at understanding people he was addressing. You need to be also.
- **Consider what questions you might be asked.** Don't be blind sighted! Sit down with paper and pencil and make a list of any potential tough questions. Then, find the answers. If you are meeting to report a delay or a downturn, be ready to explain why and how this is being addressed to prevent future problems. Figure out what the decision hinges on, whether that is man hours, availability of product or skillset, and you can anticipate where the bulk of the questions will come from. One question many managers ask revolves around the risks and the opportunities. Be sure to have facts and figures at the ready. If using slides, create an appendix of slides to further explain a point.

- **Know what questions you need answered to meet expectations.** For example, you might ask, “*What changes do you want our team to make?*” OR “*What is the new timetable?*” If expectations are to be met, they need to be understood.
- **Create the appropriate support.** Most people prefer a conversation, but if you must use slides, keep them at a minimum. Make sure the slides make a single point, versus multiple points. Pay attention to font size. Slides should not be an eye chart. Consider whether a hard copy would be better. Also, use slides to help persuade or explain your ideas. Do not use them as your speaker notes.
- **Send a confirmation of the meeting a day before.** “*It is my understanding that we are meeting tomorrow from 10-11am to discuss the revisions in the marketing plan. Please reach out to me if this is not correct.*”

## During:

- **Build rapport** – If you don't know the person well, work at developing a relationship. Going forward, it will always give you an advantage. Comment on world events. Notice what is in the news about the company or the economy. Build off the manager's responses, but get down to business fairly quickly. Managers are busy.
- **Be respectful of time.** Speak for 70% of your allotted time. This will allow ample time for questions and discussion.
- **Open strong.** Speak in sound bites or short sentences. Get through your opening remarks in two minutes or less. Don't go into the details. The details come after you have carefully positioned your topic. Use strong descriptors. Discuss the impact of the issue if it isn't addressed.
- **Be clear on any action steps in your introductory comments.** It helps the manager

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process your information more readily. If you want the person to make something a priority or allocate funds, state it upfront. Otherwise, you risk disappointment. Never wait to the end to suggest the action you need. It delays a decision.

- **Be clear and concise.** If you have an update to give, provide context and zero in on the information that is different or critical. Make important points stand out with strong examples. Don't get lost in the "weeds." Tie ideas to what is important to the manager. Use phrases such as, "How this will help us grow, etc." "Why this is important for us to consider now is...."
- **Expect pushback.** Managers can't make a mistake. They need their questions answered. As you answer, be sure to link your answer to a benefit or action step. Have hidden slides or printed reports at the ready.
- **Take notes.** It shows you are committed.
- **Summarize.** As the meeting wraps up, repeat any actions for you or for the manager, clarifying any dates or times.

#### Afterwards:

- **Review your notes.** Don't rely on your memory. If need be, share the information from the meeting with a team.
- **Follow up on any action items.** If it is not possible to complete an action step by the agreed upon date, make sure the manager is kept in the loop.

Successful meetings aren't automatic. With thoughtful preparation and careful delivery, you will be someone that the managers trusts and wants in charge of additional projects.

**Question:** *What did you learn from this article that you can take right back on the job? We're interested in your reaction to this article. Click here – to comment on this article, share your concerns or ask questions. Judy will respond to all questions.*

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