# 3170 OneonOnes Where Development Actually Happens

People Book · https://kb.jeffreysummers.com/docs/3170-oneononeswhere-development-actually-happens/

Everything else is scaffolding. The training programs, the coaching titles, the development philosophy — all of it is the setup. The one-on-one is where development actually happens.

It is the only place where a leader and a cast member are in a direct conversation about that specific person — their growth, their challenges, what they need, where they are going. Everything else you do as a leader is broadcast. The one-on-one is personal. And personal is the only thing that actually changes people.

Most operators never do them. Or they do them once during onboarding and stop. Or they turn them into a performance review dressed up as a conversation — a list of things to get through rather than a real exchange. That is not a one-on-one. That is a meeting with one person in it.

A real one-on-one has no checklist agenda. It starts with the cast member — what is on their mind, what they are working through, where they feel stuck, what they want more of. The leader's job is to listen first and respond to what is actually in the room, not what they planned to say walking in.

The five categories that make a one-on-one worth having — in the order they have to happen. Goals and priorities first: where do you stand, what is in your way, what do you need from me. Performance second: what is working, what is not, what would you change. Communication third: am I giving you what you need, what am I missing, what are my blind spots. Development fourth: where are you trying to go, what do you want to learn, what strength are you not using here. Personal connection last — or first, depending on what is in the room: how are you actually doing, what is going on outside this building. The order is not arbitrary. You cannot have a real development conversation with someone you have not established trust with first. Most operators who run one-on-ones skip directly to performance and wonder why the conversation stays surface level.

The Experience Prerequisite applies here directly. You cannot lead a meaningful one-on-one if you have never been in one yourself. The leader who has never had a real development conversation has no frame of reference for what it feels like. They will run a surface conversation and walk away

thinking they did the thing. They did the shell of the thing.

The scheduled one-on-one is theoretical. It is where you establish the frame, build the relationship, and create the context that makes the real conversation possible. But theory without application is just vocabulary. Development happens in the real world — on the floor, in the moment, when the cast member is still inside the experience. The table that just went sideways. The service gap they just felt. The Guest they just recovered. That is the Point of Experience. That is where the coaching lands — not because the words are different, but because the cast member is still in it. They can feel what you are describing. The scheduled conversation two weeks later is a debrief. The conversation at the pass while the moment is still alive is development.

The longest acceptable gap between development conversations is a quarter. Ninety days. Anything longer and you have stopped developing and started managing by omission.

Two questions worth keeping in every rotation. The first: what would you do if you had my job? That question surfaces leadership readiness faster than any evaluation form. The cast member who has a real answer — specific, considered, willing to say it out loud — is on your bench whether you have put them there yet or not. The second: what is one thing about your job that you wish everyone in this organization understood? That question surfaces the friction the FOH/BOH divide creates and never names — the line cook who resents the server who sends back a plate, the server who does not know what the kitchen is dealing with at 7:45 on a Friday. Those are not personality problems. They are structural problems that a one-on-one surfaces before they become a service problem the Guest feels.