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1:1 meetings in software engineering are unproductive, time-consuming, and lack context.

So we decided to investigate this crucial ceremony and figure out how to make it better. We did this by conducting research calls with 63 VPs, Directors, and Engineering Managers at top tech companies from around the world.

Here are some insights we think could really help you reflect on how you run your 1:1s 💡

Basic facts about 1:1s:

- Average % of time spent on preparing and running 1:1s - **25-45% of the work week**
- Average developer team size - **8**
- Average 1:1 duration - **35 minutes**
- Average time for 1:1 preparation - **5 minutes**
- Average interval between 1:1s - **1 week**

Most frequent topics discussed:

- Operational issues (current tasks, projects, etc.)
- Developer's well-being (especially in remote-first companies)
- Growth (career expectations, ambitions, etc.)

Managers try to balance these 3 topics in a structured way. If you'd like to know how they did that, email tomek@howareyou.work, and we'll be sure to share more insights.

Top 5 tools used for running 1:1s:

Lattice 15five FELLOW bob Leapsome

Top 5 personal tools for productivity:

Notion Evernote Trello Things WorkFlowy

Books most frequently recommended by our participants:

- High Output Management by Andy Grove
- The Coaching Habit by Michael Bungay Stanier
- Manager's Path by Camille Fournier

1:1 meeting pain points:

- 1:1s are extremely **time-consuming** (25 to 45% of the work week!)
- 1:1s **lack structure**. As a result, not all critical issues are addressed because things get lost between meetings
- Tracking action items after the meetings is universally considered problematic
- Engineering metrics such as the number of PRs, commits, or story points **only show a part of the context**. They should be combined with well-being and growth
- It's difficult to know how developers are really doing, especially in the remote-first culture. As a result, managers often fail to identify developers who want to quit (e.g., due to burnout)
- Many managers want their developers to "own" the agenda, but in reality, **only about 20% come prepared** with their talking points

One of our research participants says:

> ***"They say that people join companies but leave their managers - I don't want to be that manager who makes people leave."***

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Want to know how engineering managers try to solve these problems? Sign up to our newsletter or join our community on Slack where we shed light on these topics.