

GETTING TO KNOW YOUR TEAM

If you want to be a great project manager, you have to do everything you can to relate to your team. That may mean stepping outside of your comfort zone to initiate conversation if you're an introvert or empathizing with someone else's need for quiet time if you're an extrovert.

Getting to know the people you work with will help you understand what they do, what motivates them, and what challenges stand in their way so you can support them better in the long run.



THE TACTIC: ONE-ON-ONE MEETINGS

The best way to get to know someone is to have a one-on-one conversation with them. So if you're new to a team or are working with someone for the first time, find time to sit down and talk.

Here are a few pointers to help you get the most out of the conversation.

MAKE IT CASUAL

Grab coffee or lunch in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere if you can. If it has to be a scheduled meeting because you're just that busy, take an informal approach. Find a comfortable place to sit in the office, or go outside if possible.

EXPLAIN YOUR ROLE

Start by taking a moment to introduce yourself. Talk about your role and how you serve your projects and teams. Be clear about what you expect to do on projects and how you interact with team members—and make it known you're there to help the team get through projects.

When you do that, you'll set a clear boundary for your role, while also letting your teammate know you're on their side if (and when) things get tough. You want to convey an air of cooperation and caring.

FIND OUT WHAT MAKES THEM TICK

Once you've explained your role on the team, it's time to ask some questions. Try starting with some personal stuff, just to get warmed up:

- What got you interested in your role?
- How long have you been doing this type of work?
- What do you like about it?
- What types of projects do you love working on?
- What do you like to do outside of work?

That'll get you acclimated. Then you can dig deeper to show you care about your teammate and their work.

Just keep in mind it's important to be completely genuine. Don't bombard them with a wall of questions. Make it a two-way conversation. Be open and vulnerable, and you'll get that back in return.

Here are some questions you might ask to take the conversation further:

- What's been a challenge for you on projects?
- Does anything about the way the project is being run feel problematic for you? If yes, what is it, and why is it problematic?
- Have you worked with a project manager in the past? What things did that person do to help (or annoy) you?
- How do you prefer to be communicated with during the day?
- Is there anything about our current project you have questions about or that I can help clarify?

Questions like these will not only open up a conversation about how you can work together to make the project experience better. They'll also create accountability for both of you.

LEAVE ROOM FOR MORE CONVERSATION

If done well, you'll walk away feeling confident in how you'll work with your new teammate. And if you end the conversation by leaving your door open to continuous feedback and discussion, you'll both feel like you've got each other's backs. That is what you want as a project leader—trust and confidence in one another.