

One-on-One Conversation Guide

The first sit-down with each person on your crew

You won't learn much about your people at line-up. Sit down with each one, alone, in your first 30 days. You're not evaluating anybody. You're finding out what they're after and what they need from you.

PART 1 OF 4

Set it up

Make it normal, not a summons. If one person thinks they're in trouble, the whole crew will.

Before you sit down

- ☐ Tell the crew at line-up: everybody gets one, and why.
- ☐ Go down the roster, not your friends list. Your early talks with close friends and anyone who tested don't count as these.
- ☐ Pick a quiet time, not right after a bad call or at 0300.
- ☐ Plan on 20 to 30 minutes. Let it run longer if it needs to.
- ☐ Know your department's rules on personnel records and what has to go up the chain.

When you sit down

- ☐ Somewhere quiet: the office with the door open, or an empty kitchen table.
- ☐ Phones down. Bring a notes page (page 3) and a pen.
- ☐ Say what you'll do with your notes, and that some things you may have to take up the chain.
- ☐ Have your peer support team and EAP contacts handy in case something heavy comes up.

EXAMPLE

Open with why: "I want to know what you're after and what you need from me. This isn't an evaluation, and nobody's in trouble."

PART 2 OF 4

The question bank

Pick four to six. It's a conversation, not an interview. Follow what they care about, and don't run down the list.

Getting started

- How long have you been on? Where have you worked?
- Best crew you've been on? What made it good?
- What should I know about how you like to work?

What they want to learn

- What skill do you want more reps on?
- What do you know that you could teach the rest of us?
- Is there a certification or class you're working toward?

What they need from their officer

- What's one thing you need from me?
- What did your best officer do that I should copy?
- When I have a correction, how do you want to hear it?

Goals

- Where do you want to be a year from now? Five years?
- What would make this a good year for you?
- What's one thing you want to get better at on this crew?

Promotion plans

- Are you thinking about testing? For what, and when?
- What can I do to help you get ready?
- If not, what job here do you want to be great at?

Home and life

- Anything going on at home you want me to know about? Only if you want to tell me.
- Anything coming up, like school, a new baby, or a move, that I should plan around?
- Last one: what should I have asked you?

PART 3 OF 4

Listen more than you talk

You already know what you think. The point is to find out what they think.

Listening tips

- **Ask one question, then wait.** Let the quiet sit.
- **Follow up.** “Tell me more.” “What happened then?” “What would you do?”
- **Write short notes.** Look up more than you look down.
- **Say back what you heard.** “So what I’m hearing is...” Get it right before you move on.
- **Close it out.** Tell them what you’ll do next, and when.

What not to do

- **Don’t turn it into a correction.** If something needs fixing, have that talk on its own.
- **Don’t pry.** If they don’t want to talk about home, leave it.
- **Don’t promise what you can’t deliver.** “Let me find out” is a straight answer.
- **Don’t repeat it.** What they tell you doesn’t get back to the crew. Don’t bring up what others said about them.
- **Don’t skip anybody,** even the one you don’t click with.

PART 4 OF 4

After the sit-down

The talk is the easy part. The follow-up is what they’ll remember.

Follow through

- ☐ Do what you said you’d do. Small things, fast. If you can’t, go back and tell them why.
- ☐ Store your notes the way your department’s policy says to, and keep them out of sight.
- ☐ Put the next check-in on the calendar. Somewhere around day 60 to 90 works.
- ☐ Do this with every new crew member, too.

At the next check-in

- What’s changed since we last talked?
- Did I do what I said I’d do?
- What should I keep doing? What should I do less of?
- Where are you on the goal you told me about?

Make it a habit



One sit-down won’t build a crew. Showing up for the follow-up, every time, will. More free tools are at companyofficerforge.com.

Where company officers are made.

General guidance, not policy. Follow your department’s policies, SOPs/SOGs, and chain of command. Not affiliated with any fire department.

One-on-one notes

One page per person. Keep it secure, and follow your department’s policies on personnel records.

NAME _____ DATE _____ SHIFT / ASSIGNMENT _____

TIME ON THE JOB _____ CERTIFICATIONS _____

Goals *One year, and longer*

Wants to learn / can teach

Promotion plans

What they need from me

Home and life *Only what they chose to share*

Anything else

FOLLOW-UPS: WHAT I SAID I'D DO, AND BY WHEN

☐ _____
☐ _____
☐ _____
☐ _____
☐ _____

NEXT CHECK-IN _____ FOLLOW-UPS DONE BY _____