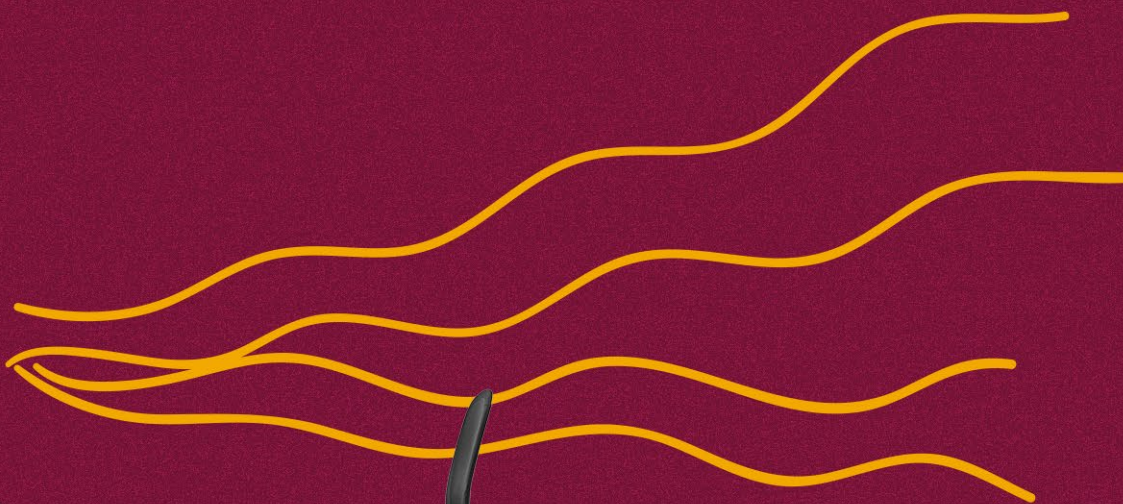


2024 WORKHUMAN IQ SURVEY FINDINGS

# The Lost Art of the 1:1 Check-in



workhuman\*



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# The employee-manager relationship is one of the most important at work.

A manager is often the lens through which an employee sees the organization, and they're meant to be the go-to person for support, problem-solving, raising issues, and mapping a path for development.

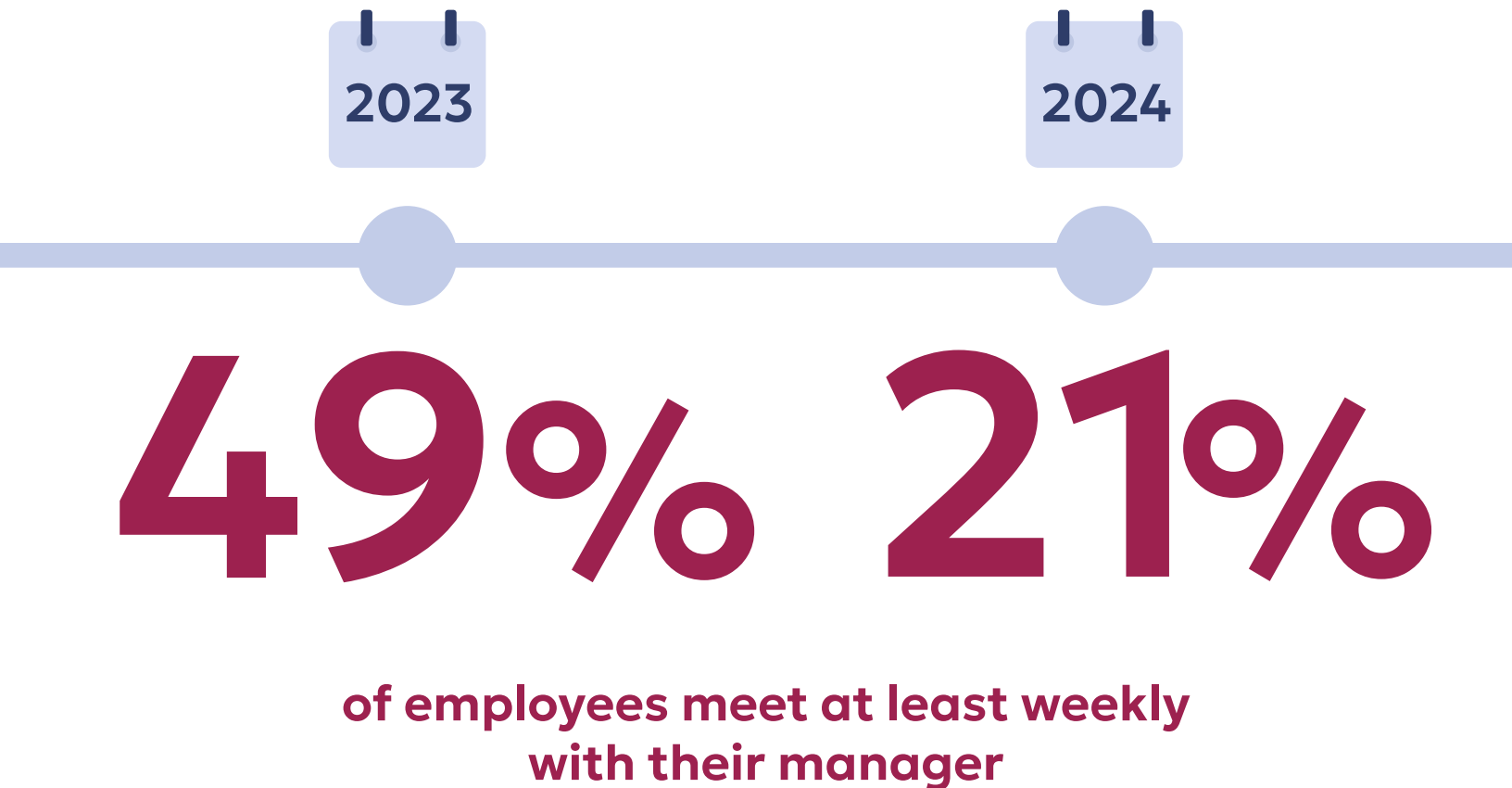
Fundamental to the success of that relationship is trust. And trust takes time. That's why we so often advocate for frequent check-ins with managers and employees. Because offering useful help, meaningful support, and effective feedback to someone requires practice. To properly set goals, you need to know what people are working on, what their strengths are, and where they can continue to grow.

Beyond development, it's also an ideal venue for recognition. With regular check-ins, managers can chart progress and perseverance, reward efforts and achievements, and let employees know exactly how they are valued by the organization. That tends to have a domino effect across an organization. When you receive meaningful validation, advice, and support, you know how to extend that to others.

Check-ins are a big deal in the employee experience. But as our research finds, they're lacking in both quantity and quality. This year, the Workhuman® iQ survey finds the rate of weekly 1:1 check-ins is less than half of what it was in 2023: Only 21% of respondents say they meet at least weekly with their manager vs. 49% last year. To make matters worse, more workers find check-ins to be

"sometimes," "rarely," or "never" time well spent rather than "always" or "often."

Employees who don't have a consistent, effective check-in tend to feel disconnected and unsupported – unfortunately, this is a trend reflected in this year's data. In fact, those who never meet 1:1 are more than 3x more likely to be highly disengaged.



Receiving high-quality feedback has a strong positive correlation with engagement and other key measures of the employee experience. However, research from Gallup and Workhuman® finds that 46% of all employees do not get feedback from their

manager at the rate they want. For the employees who do strongly agree they get valuable feedback about their performance from the people they work with, they are less likely to be burned out or to be looking or watching for a new job.

This dearth of feedback highlights that the practice of meaningful check-ins, in large part, isn't as widespread as it needs to be.

On the employee level, this leaves them **undermanaged** and **disengaged**.

As a company, it leaves the organization **less productive, less connected**, and, in all likelihood, **less successful**.

But these are just the headline findings. Let's dig into the wide-ranging impact check-ins have on the rest of the employee experience

and how managers and leaders can facilitate more effective feedback that builds a culture of appreciation.

# Frequency begets quality

We've said it before, we'll say it again: How often you as a manager meet 1:1 with your direct report(s) matters. Productive check-ins don't happen out of nowhere. Rapport comes from consistency, consistency builds competency, competency builds trust, and trust builds psychological safety.

And as it stands, leaders should not assume they and their fellow leaders and managers are getting check-ins right. This

year's data shows 94% of senior leaders and managers agreeing they know how to conduct productive, supportive, and meaningful check-ins.

Their employees don't agree as strongly. A mere 18% of individual contributors find their 1:1s to be always time well spent. That disconnect is not simply a difference of opinion and it translates to real-world challenges.

Those who **meet at least weekly** are:

**3x** more likely to feel their **check-ins are time well spent**

**1.5x** more likely to be **highly engaged**

**2x** more likely to receive **support and guidance for growth and development**

Those who **never have 1:1s** are:

**2.5x** more likely to **feel drained or exhausted** at the end of the workday

**4.2x** more likely to have **not learned a skill** recently or ever

**1.4x** more likely to **feel lonely** during the day

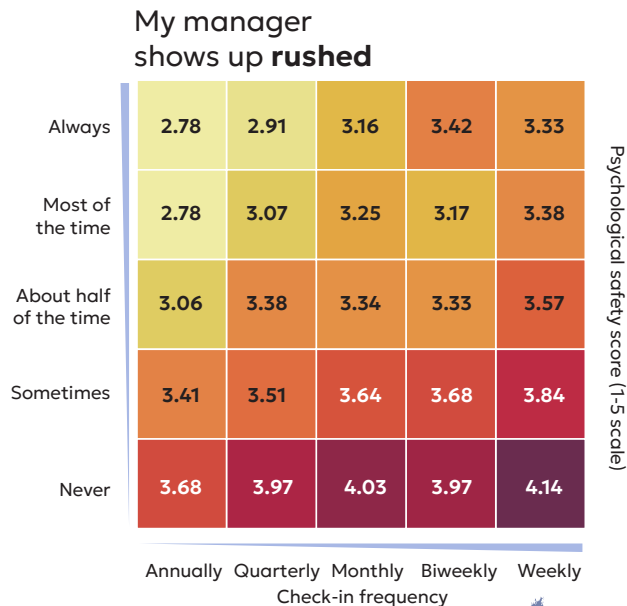
The frequency and quality of check-ins are tightly intertwined, with the quality of a check-in correlating with how often it happens. That's why the statistic we mentioned at the beginning sticks out: This year, weekly check-ins are occurring at only half of last year's rate. So this year, we dug further and asked respondents to rate how their manager shows up to their scheduled

1:1. Are they prepared? Empathetic and willing to help? Late or rushed?

Employees who meet more frequently are more likely to feel like their manager is showing up in a meaningful way, asking how they're doing personally, offering support, and making suggestions for growth and advancement.

## How you show up for your people matters

Employees experience higher psychological safety when they have frequent meetings and their manager is prepared.



But not when they are rushed.

# Crafting a healthier, more positive outlook

All the beneficial factors of frequent, quality check-ins correspond with another critical element of the employee experience: psychological safety. When they are always or often discussing items of importance, employees are 3x more likely to have high psychological safety than those who rarely or never discuss them. And 91% of those who always or often feel like their manager shows up willing to support them report high psychological safety, whereas only 31%

of those with low psychological safety feel this way.

Quality check-ins make employees less likely to be burned out, too. Those who always or often feel like their check-ins are time well spent are more than 2x as likely to have low levels of burnout than those who rarely or never feel this way. Having a manager ask about how they're doing in these meetings also leads to lower rates of burnout.

## For your next 1:1

As a leader, when was the last time you asked an employee **what is important to them** at that moment? Or **if the discussions are on topic** and relevant for what the employee is working on? Have you asked them directly **where they need support**? These are some questions to ask to ensure this time is spent productively for both of you.



There is a clear  
takeaway here:  
**Frequent quality  
check-ins make  
everyone better.**

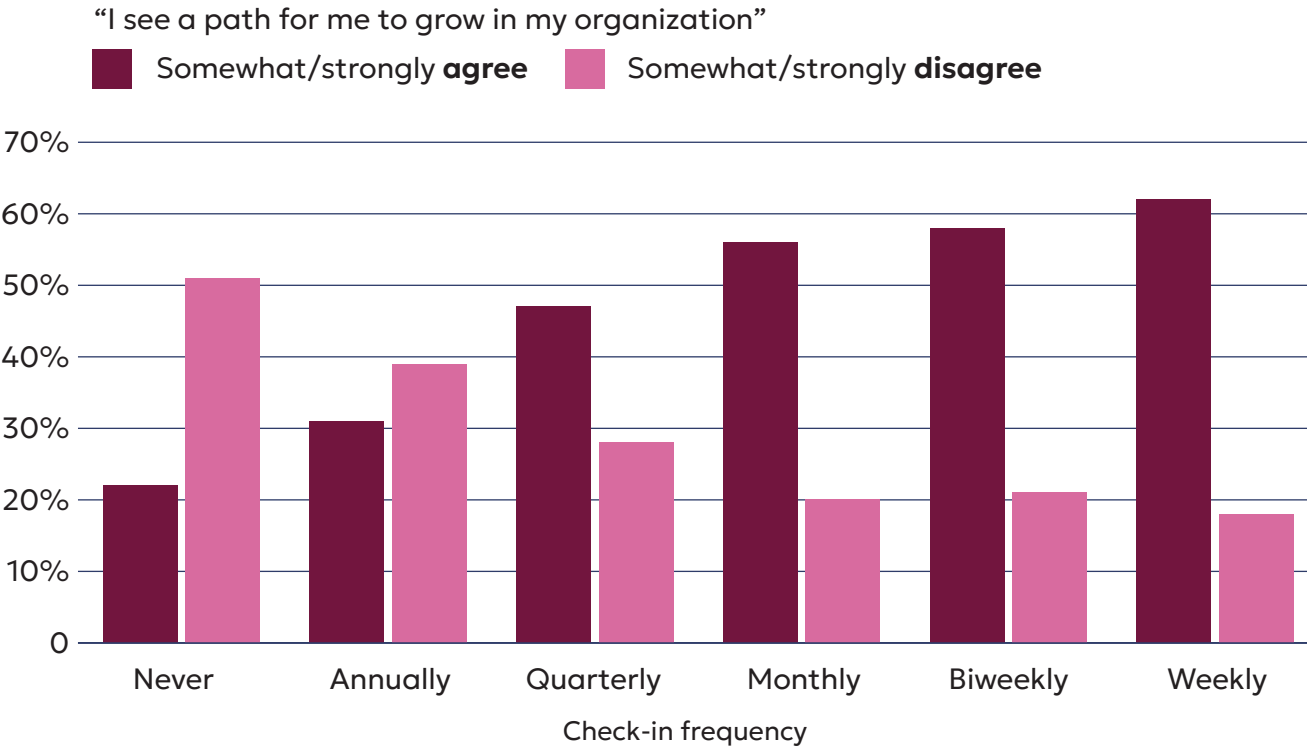
Individual contributors,  
mid-level managers,  
and senior leaders  
all benefit.

Last year’s survey data found people across age groups, tenures, roles, and career stages all report higher psychological safety scores when they check in at least weekly. Not a single group reported higher psychological safety with less frequent check-ins. This year, it is much the same story.

Further, employees from this year’s survey who meet regularly with their managers are more likely to see a path for growth within the organization and feel supported in their professional development. Managers are 1.5x more likely to feel confident running a productive, supportive check-in if they have a regular 1:1 with their own manager.

It should be noted that quality check-ins are not absent from the workplace entirely, but they’re not reaching everyone in an organization. As discussed in our Workhuman iQ survey report on the difference between senior leaders and individual contributors, senior leaders are more likely to have weekly check-ins, a key component of a positive employee experience. They are also more likely to say that those check-ins are always or often time well spent, that items of importance to them are always discussed, and that their manager always shows up prepared and willing to support. Senior leaders are also more likely to report that their manager is focused on paths for growth and advancement, problem-solving, and goal setting.

Regular check-ins correlate with positive career feelings



The benefits of quality check-ins are undeniable. And leaders can and should do everything they can to scale the experiences they have in their own 1:1s to the rest of the organization. A culture of feedback, growth, and recognition makes for more engaged and productive employees and stronger business outcomes. But it needs to reach everyone.

Sixty-seven percent of senior leaders rate their manager at least eight out of 10. Less than half of individual contributors do the same, with one in four rating their manager five or lower.

So, leaders know what good management feels like, but they're not passing it onto their employees or direct reports. **The self-assessments of leaders and managers are far rosier than their employees' reality.**

# The qualities of a quality check-in

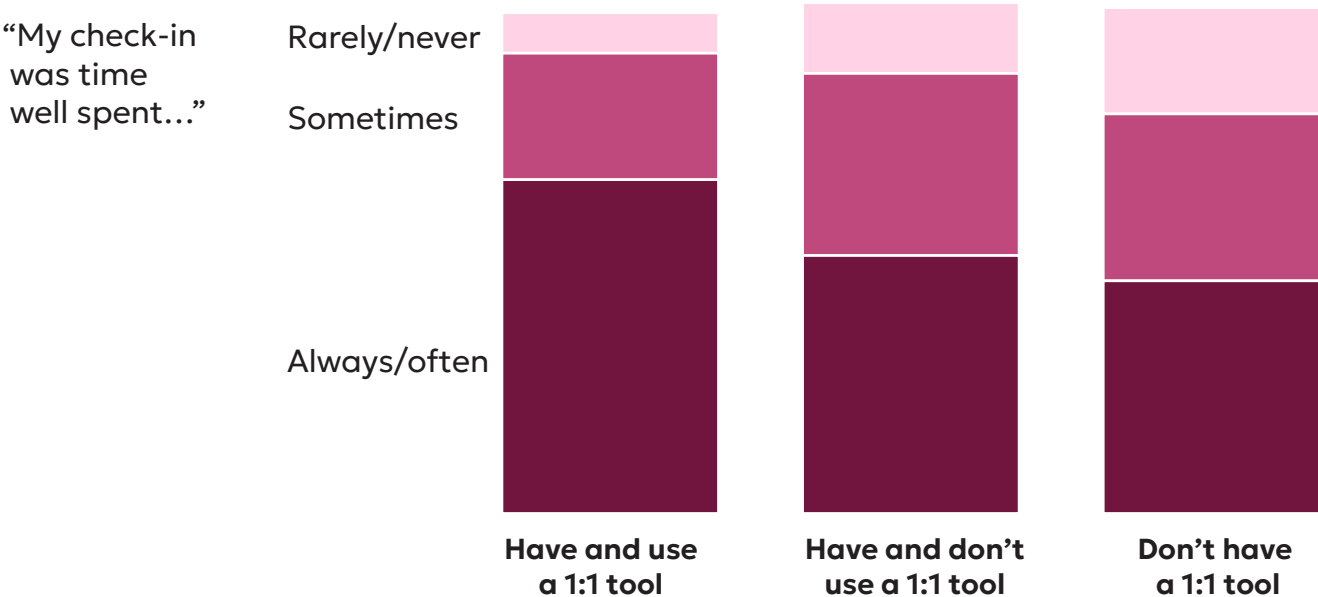
The research makes clear that, for many managers and leaders, a high-quality check-in falls in the “easier said than done” category. Luckily, the factors, beyond frequency, that make for an effective check-in are just as clear.

Having the right tools in place, like Conversations® from Workhuman, enables proper frequency and quality of check-ins. Those who have and use a digital tool to support scheduled 1:1s, goals, and priority setting are 10x more likely to meet at least once per week than those who don't. And those with a recognition program are up to

2x more likely to meet at least weekly than those who don't.

People are more likely to say that their check-ins are time well spent when they have tools to facilitate 1:1s and use them. Sixty-six percent of those who have a tool and use it find check-ins are always or often time well spent, and 64% of those who have and use a tool say they always or often discuss items of importance in these check-ins. These rates are higher than those who have a tool and don't use it (51% vs. 43%) and those who don't have a tool or aren't sure (46% and 47%).

## Check-in tools align with higher-quality meetings



This group is also 10x more likely to meet at least weekly.





# 80%

of employees who received meaningful feedback in the past week  
**were fully engaged.**

These tools become especially important in a world of varying work arrangements because they allow you to deliver feedback no matter where people work. Workhuman-Gallup research found that 80% of employees who said they received meaningful feedback in the past week were fully engaged, regardless of how many days they worked in the office. On-site workers have the lowest meeting frequency of any working arrangement; 34% meet at least biweekly, compared to 44% of remote employees and 45% of hybrid employees. Worse, 46% of fully on-site workers meet once a quarter or less. This is especially troubling given the increase in on-site work in the last year.

Check-ins should be used to recognize employees as well. Sixty-nine percent of those who meet at least weekly report being thanked in the last two weeks, whereas nearly 30% of those who never meet 1:1 have never been thanked. These meetings and moments of human connection are uniquely suited to inspire expressions of gratitude and appreciation throughout an organization.

Combining high-quality feedback with strategic recognition helps employees feel supported and valued while also communicating important information. It's a necessary practice to improve and scale across an organization.

# How to empower meaningful check-ins

On an episode of Workhuman's "How We Work" podcast, Dr. Steven Rogelberg, organizational psychologist and author, and Dr. Meisha-ann Martin, VP of people research

at Workhuman, outline where organizations should focus when training managers on how to run effective 1:1s.

## Dr. Rogelberg's four key factors for effective 1:1s

1. They are held weekly or biweekly, at least.
2. The meeting has some structure, but isn't rigid.
3. They focus on the employee's needs, progress, and concerns (not the manager's).
4. The manager demonstrates good listening, asks good questions, and does what they say they will do as follow-up.



The fact is, 1:1s are an ample opportunity for employees to have a core human need fulfilled: to be seen. An employee having this set time with their manager

increases psychological safety, wellbeing, and a more positive outlook of their role at the organization.

# In closing

Meaningful cultural change has to come from the top down. When leadership believes in the value of proper resources and training for check-ins – and leaders use the tools themselves – managers and employees alike have the support and role modeling they need for effective 1:1s.

Workhuman's Social Recognition® and Conversations are designed to enable these very moments of connection. With integrations across your tech stack, Social Recognition enables in-the-moment recognition where work is already happening. When you receive that "Project complete!" email, you can respond back with recognition, reinforcing both a job well done and a culture of feedback.

Conversations further cements the cycle by combining agile performance development with structured feedback and assessments, ensuring no one ever goes too long without a check-in and everyone has the proper tools to facilitate and solicit quality feedback when they feel they need it.

As it stands now, many employees don't agree that leadership or management is as effective as it needs to be, and that's a problem. Your engagement, productivity, and culture all stand to suffer as a result.

Check-ins matter for everyone across every cross-section of the employee lifespan, with far-reaching impacts that ultimately drive better business outcomes. It's time to get back into the practice.



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