

# The Value of Check-ins

## Accelerate Development, Course Correction, and Engagement

### Checking In on Check-ins

Unlike its whiteshoe cousin, the performance review, check-ins for employee development and alignment have not been around for that long. In the early 1990s, as PC computing began to proliferate in the enterprise, software development faced a crisis. Experts estimated that the time between a validated business need and an actual application in production was about three years during which requirements, systems, and even entire businesses were likely to change.

Many projects ended up being cancelled partway through, and those completed didn't meet all the business's current needs, even if original objectives were met. Hence the evolution of agile, scrums, and check-ins.

Unfortunately, industries outside of technology didn't have an imperative to move away from the annual review until recently. Before software ate the world and transformed every industry into a technology industry, HR teams were hesitant about check-ins for a few misconceptions:

- 1 Regular check-ins **take too much time** and detract from real work
- 2 Check-ins would be perfunctory and **not meaningful** if there are too many
- 3 There's **no best practice structure** to do check-ins for my industry or company

Danielle Morris,  
SVP People, Adobe



*"As a company, we were continuing to evolve from box software that takes 12 to 18 months to release to cloud-based software, real-time services, and cutting-edge digital marketing. But on the people resources side, a lot of our core processes had stayed the same. We just weren't seeing positive results from the way we had been addressing performance."*

### Check-in Benefits

Companies that have taken the check-in plunge - whether by necessity, like with Adobe's product transition, or demographic like GE's rising millennial workforce - have realized several benefits from a more frequent cadence.



**Agility** to adapt and align to changing business goals and course correct faster



Forward-looking focus on **development** to accelerate, not just correct performance



Improved **employee engagement** that reduced attrition and presenteeism

## How to Get the Most from a Check-in Process

The benefits and imperative of doing more frequent check-ins have become clear. For organizations unsure of how to begin, either with a new process or transitioning from an existing method, there are three tenets to remember in order to get the most from check-ins.

**Ensure Manager Change Management.** The group that will be most critical for making check-ins and feedback impactful and success are your managers. They will exemplify how to do the process correctly to downstream team leaders and model the actions and course corrections from a check-in. To get their buy-in, whether it's transitioning to check-ins or starting a new process, communication and training is critical. Consider testing check-ins out to just team managers and running simulations to iron out the kinks before a company-wide roll-out.

**Constantly Evaluate Structure.** Unlike reviews, the topics and areas covered in a check-in need to be flexible and a manager may spend more time in one area, like development, with one employee while versus more training with another. Not only does the check-in format need to be customizable at the employee-level, it also needs to be malleable to change like adding or dropping sections as the workforce gets more sophisticated with more frequent touchpoints.

**Consider real-time support.** More frequent check-ins need a foundation of data to provide value during the meeting. While the recency bias common to reviews should play a smaller role, it can still be difficult to point to specific events or actions related to a check-in criteria. That's why companies that now conduct check-ins very often have a channel for real-time feedback, logged as a note to reference later or sent directly to the colleague.

## Check-In Technologies Provide Structure Quickly

FREE RESPONSE

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What does this person do really well that they should plan to continue doing?

Jim is a consistently high performer who is self-motivated and does not require much oversight. He consistently inspires his team and colleagues to achieve. For example, he worked with Ryan last month on several significant deals, and gave an intern the perspective and motivation to actively contribute to the effort.

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What are some things that this person could improve upon?

More detailed feedback...

Corporate stalwarts like GE, Deloitte, and Adobe have all switched to more real-time feedback and check-ins from traditional review processes.

Growth companies like Pinterest, Lyft, and Glassdoor are also skipping past formal reviews to real-time feedback capabilities that funnel up to formal check-ins. Managers spend less time and have more data to develop their employees.