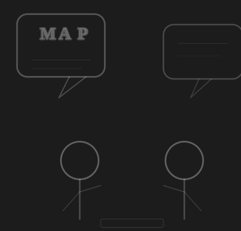
THE 50 FOR 50 GROWTH GUIDES · GROWTH FACTOR 18

Never Miss a MAP: 1:1s That Work

THE 50 FACTOR — GROWTH FACTOR #18

Never Miss a MAP — The 1:1 That Actually Works

The Complete Implementation Guide



BY SCOTT SCULLY

Principle #18: Never Miss a MAP — The 1:1 That Actually Works

The Complete Implementation Guide

This white paper is a companion to Chapter 18 of The 50 Factor by Scott Scully.

Why This Principle Matters

The 1:1 is the most squandered recurring meeting in most companies. Done well, it's the discipline that makes every other principle in this book actually work — because it's where recognition gets delivered, accountability gets practiced, scores get reviewed, playbooks get reinforced, and problems get surfaced before they become crises.

Done poorly — a casual "catch-up" with no structure, or worse, a meeting that gets canceled whenever either person is busy — it produces nothing but the illusion of communication. You think you know what your people are working on. You don't. They think you know what's worrying them. You don't. Both of you leave feeling like the communication is fine. It's not.

The MAP format changes this. It transforms the 1:1 from an unstructured conversation into a disciplined 30-minute operating rhythm that surfaces strategic risk, tactical status, and potential issues — in that order, every week, without fail.

The MAP Format

M — Major Projects (~10 minutes)

Start with strategy. What's the status of the 2-3 biggest things this person is working on? What's at risk? What's accelerating? What decisions need to be made?

Starting with Major Projects protects strategic conversation from being crowded out by fires. If you start with "what's on your plate this week?" (the default for most 1:1s), the conversation immediately drops to the tactical level and never climbs back up. Starting with Major Projects forces the conversation to begin at the strategic level.

A — Activities (~10 minutes)

Tactical update on this week and last week. Where are they tracking on their A-Player Score? What got done? What didn't? Where are the bottlenecks?

Activities become meaningful when contextualized by Major Projects. Instead of a random list of tasks, the activities map back to the strategic priorities. This creates alignment that most 1:1s never achieve.

P — Potential Issues (~10 minutes)

The most important section — and the one most 1:1s skip. "What do I need to know? What's worrying you? What's not working? What do you need from me?"

Most direct reports don't volunteer concerns when asked a throwaway "anything else?" at the end of a meeting. The P section must be a real, labeled section with dedicated time, set as an explicit expectation: "Come prepared with at least one thing." Over time, this trains people to surface problems — which is how you avoid being blindsided by a resignation, a client escalation, or a team meltdown you "should have seen coming."

The Four Rules

Rule 1: Sacred

Weekly. Same day. Same time. Never canceled. If a conflict arises, always rescheduled within the same week — never pushed to the next week and never skipped.

The moment you cancel a 1:1, you've sent a message: this meeting isn't that important. Cancel it twice, and the message becomes: you're not that important. Cancel it three times, and your direct report stops preparing — because why bother preparing for a meeting that might not happen?

Rule 2: Direct Report Drives the Agenda

They bring the MAP. They prepare the updates, the risks, the issues. Your job is to listen, probe, advise, and decide. Not to lecture. Not to run through your own priorities. Not to use the 30 minutes to download tasks onto them.

This ownership shift is transformative. When the direct report drives the agenda, they take ownership of their work at a higher level — because they have to think through it enough to present it coherently. The preparation itself improves their performance.

Rule 3: You Take Notes and Own Follow-Through

Keep a running document for each direct report. Review last week's notes before each 1:1. Track commitments made by both sides. Follow through on what you said you'd do.

If your direct report raises an issue in the P section and you say "I'll look into it," and then you never mention it again — you've trained them not to raise issues. The follow-through signals that you take their input seriously.

Rule 4: No Distractions

Door closed. Phone face-down. Notifications off. Laptop closed unless taking notes. Thirty minutes of actual focus. This is the one meeting where the direct report has your undivided attention — and that attention is how trust gets built.

The Rhythm

- • **3 weekly MAPs per month:** Standard tactical meetings. 30 minutes each. The core operating rhythm.
- • **1 monthly MAP extended to 60 minutes:** Add a career conversation. Where do you want to go? What skills are you developing? How's the job fitting? This is the development meeting.
- • **1 quarterly MAP extended to 90 minutes:** Formal performance review against the scorecard, the A-Player Score, and the quality metrics. No surprises — because you've been reviewing everything weekly.

The Defensive Response Trap

When a direct report raises something hard in the P section — a complaint about a process, a concern about a colleague, a frustration with leadership — your first instinct is to defend. Don't.

First response: "Tell me more. Help me understand from your perspective." Then listen. Then, only then, respond. Defensiveness trains people not to raise things. And once they stop raising things, you lose your early warning system. You can lose great people for years this way and never know why — because they stopped telling you what was wrong and started telling their next employer instead.

Warning Signs Your 1:1s Are Broken

- • You cancel more than 10% of scheduled 1:1s.
- • You can't recall what was discussed in last week's 1:1 with your key direct reports.
- • Your direct reports say "no, nothing" to "anything else?" week after week.
- • You've been blindsided by a resignation or major issue you "should have seen coming."
- • You check your phone during 1:1s.
- • The 1:1 consistently runs over time because it has no structure.
- • You do most of the talking.

Quick-Start Checklist

✓ ☐ Implement the MAP format in every 1:1 you run this week
✓ ☐ Share the MAP format with every manager in the company
✓ ☐ Include the MAP structure in the manager playbook (Principle #11)
✓ ☐ Create a running notes doc for each direct report
✓ ☐ Review last week's notes before every 1:1
✓ ☐ Set the expectation: "Come prepared with at least one P item"
✓ ☐ Never cancel. Reschedule same week if necessary.
✓ ☐ Close the laptop, silence the phone, close the door
✓ ☐ Schedule the monthly 60-min and quarterly 90-min extended MAPs
✓ ☐ Review your direct reports' MAP quality in your own MAPs with them

---

Implementation Tools

Ready-to-use templates for this Growth Factor

PDF **MAP Agenda Template**
One-page format for direct reports to prep

XLSX **Running Notes Template**
Columns: Date, M: Major Projects, A: Activities, P: Potential Issues, Action Items, Owner, +1 more

PDF **Monthly Career Conversation Guide**
Questions for the extended 60-min MAP

XLSX **Quarterly Performance Review Template**
Columns: Quarter, Audit Date, Keep %, Delegate %, Automate %, Eliminate %, +2 more

PDF **MAP Training Guide for Managers**
How to teach the MAP format to your leadership team

Get the book: The 50 Factor by Scott Scully

The Sanjay Problem

Here's a story that illustrates why the MAP format exists — and specifically why the P section matters more than anything else in this meeting.

A senior executive named Sanjay walked into his CEO's office one Monday and handed in a resignation letter. The CEO was blindsided. He'd thought everything was fine.

In the exit conversation, Sanjay said something that changed how that CEO ran 1:1s forever: "Every week for two years, I had concerns about the direction of engineering, about my own career, about things I thought we should be doing differently. Every week, at our 1:1, you asked if there was anything I needed to discuss. And every week I said no. Because the format of the meeting didn't invite it, and because I didn't want to seem like a complainer. You never pressed. So I never said anything."

The CEO had created a perfectly well-run weekly meeting that surfaced nothing of importance. Because the "potential issues" section wasn't a section — it was a throwaway line at the end of a conversation that had already run out of steam.

The MAP format fixes this by making the P section a real, labeled, time-protected part of the meeting. Not "anything else?" at the end. Ten dedicated minutes with an explicit expectation: "Come prepared with at least one thing."

That structural change — from afterthought to agenda item — transforms the quality of information that flows to you as a leader. Problems surface 90 days earlier. Frustrations get voiced before they become resignations. Concerns get aired before they become crises. The MAP is the pipe through which organizational truth flows upward.

Rolling MAPs Across the Company

The MAP format is not just for CEO-to-direct-report meetings. It's a company-wide 1:1 discipline.

The cascade: You implement MAPs with your direct reports. They implement MAPs with their direct reports. The managers implement MAPs with their teams. Within two quarters, every person in the company has a structured weekly conversation with their manager.

The review mechanism: In your own MAPs with your direct reports (who are managers), you review their MAP quality: "What's coming up in your P sections? What are your people telling you? What have you learned in your 1:1s this week that I should know about?" This creates an information channel that runs from the front line to the CEO — not through dashboards or reports, but through the most honest medium available: direct human conversation.

The training: Include the MAP structure in the manager playbook (Principle #11). Train every new manager on the format during their first month. Have them shadow one of your MAPs before they run their own. The format is simple enough to explain in 10 minutes and powerful enough to change the entire communication culture of the company.

The Career Conversation (Monthly Extended MAP)

Once a month, extend one MAP to 60 minutes and add a career conversation. This is where you shift from managing the person's work to developing the person.

Questions for the career conversation:

- • "Where do you want to be in your career in 12 months? In 3 years?"
- • "What skills are you developing right now? What skills do you want to develop?"
- • "What part of your role energizes you most? What drains you?"
- • "Is there anything you want to be doing that you're not? Anything you're doing that you wish you weren't?"
- • "What can I do differently as your manager to support your growth?"

These questions feel soft. They are not soft. They are the questions that determine whether your best people stay or leave. People don't leave companies for money. They leave because they stopped growing. The monthly career conversation is how you ensure growth never stalls — for the person or for the company.

The Quarterly Performance Review (Extended to 90 Minutes)

Once per quarter, extend the MAP to 90 minutes and conduct a formal performance review against the scorecard. This is where A-Player Scores (Principle #6), quality scores (Principle #5), and the Growth Formula numbers (Principle #4) get reviewed in depth.

The structure:

- • Review the numbers together: A-Player Score trends, quality scores, KPIs against targets
- • Discuss what drove the results — both positive and negative
- • Identify 1-2 development priorities for the next quarter
- • Adjust expectations or targets if the role has evolved
- • Document the conversation and both parties sign off

The critical rule: If the weekly MAPs are working, there should be zero surprises in the quarterly review. Everything has already been discussed. The quarterly is a formal summary and a forward-looking plan — not a reveal of problems the person is hearing about for the first time.

If there are surprises in the quarterly review, your weekly MAPs are broken. Fix the weekly cadence before worrying about the quarterly.