

## **Episode #90 Maximizing 1-on-1 Meetings : Octavia Goredema**

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**Introduction:** You're listening to workplace perspective and employment law podcast raising the bar at workplaces everywhere. Workplace perspective is a regular podcast series for employers and employees focusing on education, training, and the law to help organizations of all sizes develop and maintain successful workplace relationships.

The opinions expressed by guests on workplace perspective are their own and should not be considered legal advice. And now, here's your host, Teresa McQueen.

**Host:** Thank you James and welcome everyone to Workplace Perspective where we are striving to raise the bar at workplaces everywhere. Today we are talking with career coach and author Octavia Goredema about making the most of one-on-one meetings with your manager. Octavia will be sharing with us the importance of being strategic so that you can get the most out of that important one on one time with your boss. It's going to be a great show. Don't go away. We'll be right back.

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**Host:** Welcome back to our listeners and welcome to workplace perspective, Octavia Gordon.

**Guest:** Hi Teresa. Thanks for having me.

**Host:** I'm so happy to have you. So before we get started, why don't you tell our listeners a little bit about you and what you do?

**Guest:** Absolutely. I'm a career coach and I'm the author of a new book called prep push pivot. And I run a career coaching company called 2010 agency, and I help companies retain and advance their underrepresented employees.

**Host:** I love it. I love it. Well, I like this topic. I'm so excited to talk about this topic. It's a little unusual. But it's really important. So, and I want to start by asking you to talk to our listeners a little bit about why this is something that employees should spend time thinking about and planning for.

**Guest:** So visibility really matters to raise a whether you're in the office or working from home or adjusting to some hybrid schedule. And the past two plus years, so much has changed for us. And for so many of us who have continued to work the way we work has altered. The responsibilities that we have are altered and for our managers, this is even more pronounced. There are more and more and more meetings. And sometimes we might not be prioritizing some of the things that matter most for us in our careers, and that's the one-on-one time that you have with your manager.

**Host:** Absolutely. And I do think there is a fear going on, which is one of the reasons I like this topic so much because I do think that there is a concern among those who work who have gone 100% remote or those who are doing a hybrid. That you are less visible.

**Guest:** Absolutely.

**Host:** And that that's going to impact us somehow we're going to be disadvantaged because we're not face first. Now, I also think this is a totally different show, but I also think that's a manager issue. That's

managers have to learn now how to manage differently. But we'll deal with those issues later. Let's talk about let's talk about one-on-one meetings from the employees perspective. So how can how can we do that? How can we get the most out of those meetings and make sure that we're putting our best foot forward with our boss in that little amount of time that we have?

**Guest:** Yeah. And so I think there's two things I'd love listeners to remember before I go into some of the approaches you can use. And that's your immediate goals and your longer-term goals. In my book, prep push pivot, I share a story of a woman who was completely blindsided when she found out that her coworker was being promoted into a role she really wanted. And she had a good relationship with his coworker and so when she congratulated him, she asked him about how it had come to pass and he told her that 18 months prior in a one-on-one meeting with their manager, he discussed his longer-term goals. And from that point on, they had devoted time in their one-on-one meetings not every single one, but time there to really lay the foundations for that promotion. So yes, we are all reacting to deliverables, priorities, less and less time. But it's really important also to be mindful about what your bigger picture career goals are and your one-on-one meetings with your manager are priceless opportunity is yes to discuss those immediate priorities yes to gather feedback on what you're working on right now, but also to build trust and to cement relationships.

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**Guest:** They are so key. And I love as a career coach. I'm always reminding people to set their intentions of what do you want your manager to walk away knowing about you and your performance and what you're working on and what you're building towards. All of those

things matter so you can so if you can set your mindset along those lines, I then think there are three core things that essential for setting yourself up for success. The first one is clarify who is setting the agenda for your meetings. Sometimes you might find your manager wants to take the lead there. Sometimes your manager wants you to. Sometimes you're working together. But make sure that's clear at the outset and that you clarify the priorities for that meeting. And then when you go into the meeting, summarize that agenda at the start, but also be prepared to be flexible, if needed. The other core recommendation I make is really paying attention to your body language and I can talk about that in more detail too. And I think throughout you want to demonstrate that you are a problem solver and that can also involve, you know, really good listener and hear and absorbing what you're hearing in your meetings and demonstrating that you can add value and also be open to receive feedback as well along the way.

**Host:** One of the things you said really caught my attention and that's stating what your goals are, I think that so many people and you tell me if you've seen it, like so many people just rely on the fact that my manager is going to when the promotions come up when the juice projects come down, right? They're going to think of me. But if they don't know what you want and maybe you're not acting in a way that you think is showing that you actually want you want more responsibility or you want that promotion. You want to stay with the company, right?

**Guest:** Yes, it's so important because it's important for multiple reasons. First of all, your manager needs to know what your longer-term goals are. You also need to plant that seed early. Because often decisions are made. Really far in advance. And to be able to align your next steps with your companies' opportunities can take time. And then there's another reason things can also change really fast. Oh boy, have

we seen that during the pandemic? Businesses have to shift and be nimble. People can leave roles. So if you're manager knows what your intentions are, you might be front of mind or in consideration for other opportunities that might not even be on your radar. And also, if your manager feels you're not quite ready yet, it's a great time for you to hear the reasons why and to start course correcting and laying the foundations for what you want. And often we can think our work speaks for itself. And it is really important to do the work. But we're all here to do great work. And so it's really important to communicate as early as possible.

**Host:** Absolutely. I just resonate. I don't know why that just really just spoke to me that idea about letting him know. I mean, really, there's all kinds of things in there. You've always wanted everybody wants to make their supervisor look good, right?

**Guest:** Yes.

**Host:** Because and what better way to do that than when they're in a meeting and things are pivoting, things are changing. They can go, I have a solution for that.

**Guest:** Absolutely.

**Host:** I have someone who's in line too would be perfect for that role or

**Guest:** Exactly. Show where you're where you can add value, not just in terms of what you deliver, but to your point at sack about how you can support your managers priorities and the organization's priorities and where you can step up. And that might be involved supporting another team member. And often you can feel a bit apprehensive about one-on-one meetings with our managers. Even if we do have a good relationship and even more so if we feel the relationship is a little bit fractured, it might not be that calendar. Item that you look forward to

the most, you know, in your week, but it matters. It matters your manager's time is so valuable. And this is an opportunity you have to really show where you add value and how you can shine and how you show up. And that's why body language is so important.

**Host:** Let's talk about body language for a few minutes. I want to hear more about that because I also think too, so let's talk about body language and maybe you could script a little. Goals are a tough thing. And you don't want to wait for that year and review. Yes, sometimes they're so cursory, really don't have a good opportunity to speak. So maybe you could script a little bit about how you bring up the idea of what I'm looking for, I'm looking forward to you in the future with this job.

**Guest:** Yeah, I think what you absolutely should do is set plant the seed by telling your manager in an one on one, I'd love to hold some time to just talk about my professional development and some of the things I'd love to build towards because really value your input.

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**Guest:** And when that time then comes, be very clear about what excites you and share some proof points of recent successes, but also ask open ended questions about perhaps what the promotion process looks like or any recommendations that your manager might have in terms of next steps or timing it all depends on how much you know and perhaps what feedback you've been given. As part of your journey. But creating a dialog is so important and then on the body language piece. Whether we're in the office or whether we're on video or whether we're just on the phone, especially even if we're just on the phone. Our body language and our tone of voice and our connection we make with eye contact. It all speaks volumes. And next time you're perhaps if you're on Zoom or WebEx or Teams next time, you're in a perhaps

group meeting and people have their cameras like take a look. Take a look and see how are people showing up and it can be small things well, you know, sitting up straight conveys attentiveness with slacking makes it appear that you don't want to be there, even if that's not the case. Even if someone can't see you, if you are smiling, people hear it in your voice. Demonstrates that you're trustworthy. It creates a perception of confidence. And here's another thing. Studies have shown that if you try to just make some tweaks to your body language yourself, it actually makes you feel better. Makes you feel more confident. So it's actually a win all around. So definitely pay attention to it. What I sometimes say to my coaching clients is especially we can really comfortable after we've been in our roles for a while, but think of every meeting you have, as if you were coming in from a job interview for the first time, what impression would you want to make?

**Host:** Absolutely. Awesome point. I love that. And I'm sure everybody's got Zoom and Team stories to tell. But we'll save that for another show as well.

**Guest:** Absolutely. And it is tricky. I mean, we're not necessarily always able to bring our best sales to every single meeting, but all you have to remember is your manager only has. You know, a certain amount of time just with you. So when it's your one on one meeting, oh, you want to shine.

**Host:** Absolutely. Absolutely. All right, what we're going to take a quick break and we come back more on getting the most out of those one-on-one meetings with your boss. Stay with us. We'll be right back.

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**Host:** Welcome back, everyone. We are talking with Octavia Goredema about getting the most out of those important one on one meetings with your boss. So we started, we talked a little bit about what steps you could take to have any anything you want to elaborate on that before we kind of move on.

**Guest:** Yeah, one of the things I mentioned briefly is being flexible. I think that's really important. If your manager has to change the meeting, be patient. If it shifts if the agenda shifts, be responsive. And I think it's also important to really know when to be a good listener. If you're on the receiving end of some constructive feedback, that's not always the easiest. We want to go into the meetings, show what we've delivered, get a pat on the back. But sometimes it doesn't go that way. So listen, absorb reflect before you react. And showing that you can solve a problem, that's what you do next is what matters the most. How you respond to feedback is what matters the most. That's what your manager is looking for because your manager intern is trying to solve multiple problems. And their manager in turn is solved yet. That's what we're that's what we're here to do. And then the other thing I would just say is when you then step out of the meeting, don't forget about everything that was discussed as you're moving on to the next. Even if your manager didn't ask for a recap or doesn't expect. And it's really important for you to step away and take time to really recap what you learned, what was discussed. And do what you say, you'll do.

**Host:** And that follow through is really important.

**Guest:** Yeah.



**Host:** Because you can have a great meeting. You can guess, oh, definitely walk away. And if you drop the ball.

**Guest:** absolutely.

**Host:** Such an impact to that relationship, such an impact.

**Guest:** Absolutely.

**Host:** You mentioned something that I think is really important. About problem solving. So let's talk a little bit in this aspect of this show about the importance of focusing on problem solving, both during the meeting and after the meeting.

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**Guest:** Yes. Yeah, I think that's really important. If you receive feedback that perhaps pertains directly to your performance, we can often have a knee jerk kind of defensive reaction because it's us and it's our work and this is our manager and it's hard to sometimes hear feedback. But you have to remember that hearing the feedback is the most valuable thing you can have. Because that allows you to respond. And regardless of even if there is blind being pointed at you, but regardless of blame, there's an opportunity. And so the advice I often give, especially with the one on one coaching that I do because that is a safe space where the people I work with vent about, oh my goodness, this happened to me and I heard this and I feel this way. Your feelings are valid, but at work you have to separate your emotions and that piece from a little bit of objectivity. And we might not have that immediately. That's why listening can be really helpful. And maybe clarifying with open ended questions if anything is a little unclear and then it's what you do next. And a lot of that is actually about attitude professionalism and mindset. If your manager then sees how you respond to situations and knows that you can be trusted to keep things moving and deliver and help

solve a problem, that will make you stand out. Turning a situation around, is an incredible opportunity if you go from one thing to another. And you're helping your manager along the way in your responsive, that really makes you stand out and that helps build trust.

**Host:** Absolutely. I mean, if you think about, I think in preparing for this show, you know, I both shared our stories about learning that lesson about not going into a manager meeting with a problem when you don't have a solution or something to suggest as a solution.

**Guest:** Yes.

**Host:** Talk about just become part of the problem, not part of the solution.

**Guest:** And yes, I learned that early in my career when I got some direct feedback from my manager about don't always come to me with problems or give me your thought on what the solution could be as, you know, when you share it and it was a lightbulb moment for me in that moment because I didn't feel I had the authority to do that, but that's what my manager wanted to hear my opinions. And then also, I think, to me, it's also important for us to hold space for any listeners who perhaps feel their relationship with their manager isn't great. And they aren't sure what to do about that. And so my advice would be is perhaps take some time away and think about what you think might be the root cause of the disconnect your feeling. Is it a performance issue on your part or is it a breakdown in communication? Or is it maybe misaligned expectations, or is it just a straight up personality clash? Sometimes it's a little mix of different things. And you can consider your one-on-one meetings as opportunities for you to perhaps just try and understand a bit more about what might be the root cause and maybe asking some open-ended questions and kind of hearing what the top priority for your manager and then making sure you can align your

actions around those priorities or perhaps adjust your communication style to align to their needs. It's really a great opportunity for you to see if you can build bridges. And of course, relationships involve two people, but don't be disheartened if you feel that there's room for improvement because your one-on-one meetings are a fantastic opportunity to try and build those bridges.

**Host:** Yeah, and there's also this idea I think that we're looking through things to our own prism, our own views, our own insecurities, our own worries about the job, our own perceptions, even our perceptions of how other people perceive us to be. And that might be a blockage as well. And if you're not communicating, you don't have to have a personal conversation, but a professional conversation about, I think the biggest thing is expectations.

**Guest:** Yes.

**Host:** To clear that and you might find that it's not what you think at all.

**Guest:** Absolutely. Absolutely. And your manager does have a responsibility to do their best to communicate clearly to you. We don't always. Have that. And it can be very, very difficult, but don't let that throw you off or dishearten you or make you not prepare for your meetings or feel that their futile they are not. They are not, even if they don't always go the way you would like them to their incredibly important.

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**Guest:** Your manager wouldn't have a meeting with you. If it wasn't important. There were so many things to do.

**Host:** Yeah, absolutely. Absolutely. Well, as we wrap up today's show, can you give us, you've already given us some wonderful tips, but any

cautionary tales, any words of wisdom or thoughts for the future that you want to share with our listeners.

**Guest:** Don't be late for your one-on-one meetings. Even if your manager is running late, always be on time, show up prepared, but also be prepared to be flexible and be a good listener. Think about what's the one thing I want to make sure that my manager knows that from the time that we have together, make sure you convey that or embody that. It might be that you want them to think these things about you. Well, make sure you embody that from start to finish. And if you can have a positive mindset, even during difficult times, positivity is infectious. You won't realize it because the person on the receiving end won't say, oh, yeah. Teresa, you put your a game today. They might not say that, but they will be thinking that. And that all cements your professional reputation. So just be consistent, keep doing what you're doing and you'll be saying yourself up a success.

**Host:** Wonderful. Thank you so much for being on the show. Thank you so much for such great information by so appreciate you being here. Thank you for having me. You can learn more about Octavia by visiting [Octaviagordema.com](http://Octaviagordema.com). You can also connect with Octavia via our website at [www.workplaceperspective.com](http://www.workplaceperspective.com). I also want to thank our listeners, my radio angels, James and the name at night and workplace perspectives team extraordinaire, our engineer and producer Paul Roberts, our associate producer Melissa DeLacey, with music provided by the very talented Steven Verceloni. Thank you all for joining us on workplace perspective and until next time. Keep raising the bar.