Managing Up
Strengthening Relationships with our Supervisors

Andy Ceperley - May 2010

UP! The Metaphor
An eternal ensemble?

Too Hallmark
So much drama

Perky 24/7?
Better!  
Aspirational

Managing up is an ongoing process of building a relationship with our supervisor to obtain the best possible results. . .

for us,  
our supervisor,  
and our organization.
In 30 Minutes or Less

1. Summarize the common ground we share with our supervisors
2. Reflect on the value we add in our work relationships (all about me)
3. Examine some of the realities of being “in charge” (all about them)
4. Consider efforts that will make our lives easier (all about us)

Us vs. and Them

✓ We are both human
✓ We strive for professional satisfaction and personal happiness
✓ We navigate relationships with loved ones, treasured friends, and professional colleagues
✓ Our professional success is heavily reliant on people
✓ We are in eternal learning mode
✓ We possess expertise our boss may not
✓ We want to minimize struggle and maximize trust
Professional Drivers

SKILL

DEMAND

My Value
Competence with Good Will

The quality of your job performance is an important lever in achieving a better relationship with management. When you earn respect for your performance, you gain power and influence along with it. Your recommendations and decisions carry more weight. You become more valuable to the organization.

Michael and Deborah Dobson
Managing Up

Our stakeholders (boss, staff, peers) want us to possess credibility

- Honesty
- Forward focus
- Competency
- Inspiration
Leading & Managing

The distinction is between *running* the office and adding *value* to it, between *discharging* our responsibilities and *exceeding* them. Leadership is a matter of bringing more to the office than we were given, of adding greater value to the organization than it would have achieved without us.

Michael Useem
*Wharton School of Business*

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**Boss Realities**
I don't want any yes-men around me. I want them to tell me the truth, even if it costs them their jobs.

Samuel Goldwyn Jr.

Contradictions Abound

- Adhere to hierarchy and exercise independence
- Stand out and fit in
- Be responsive and build consensus
- Treat people equitably and be sensitive to individual needs
- Put students first and actively participate in administration
- We are an educational institution and students are our customers
- Exercise discretion and be transparent
- Pursue a balanced life and increase productivity
- Be passionate about work and don’t take things too personally
Getting Through the Day

- Dependable strengths
- Steady pressure (above, beside, and below)
- Values some priorities over others
- Emotions (joy, disappointment, frustration, hope)
- Particular conflict management style
- Macro focus
- Interpret filtered information
- Level of inclusion in the day-to-day
- Appreciates gratitude (just like us)

Our Shared Experience
Shared Awareness

**Communication**
- Feedback
- Style
- TMI

**Expectations**
- Tangible
- Implied
- Wellness

**Success**
- Our dependable strengths
- Their challenges

**Conflict**
- Mistakes
- Hot buttons

Suggestions from the Field

- Continue to improve our “threshold” skills (the job card)
- Address conflict privately
- Find opportunities to exchange pleasantries
- Show a genuine interest in the broader mission of the office (beyond our duties)
- Don’t go over our supervisor’s head (unless essential)
- Develop an agenda for our regular meetings
- Provide a “heads-up” of upcoming problems and suggest solutions to problems
- Ensure that communication spans beyond the “what’s in it for me”
- Connect our priorities to supervisor’s big picture
- Anticipate requests (becoming go-to people)
- Under-promise and over-deliver
Managing Up:
Comments

Up: The Recap

- Do we have an appreciation of our shared experience?

- Can we clearly identify our threshold skills that add value to the relationship?

- Are we able to put ourselves in our supervisor's shoes?

- Can we own 3 efforts that will bolster our working relationship with our boss?
Read. Read. Read.

- Effective Followership
  (govleaders.org/dynamic_followership.htm)
- Leading Up: How to Lead Your Boss so You Both Can Win by Useem
- Managing Up: 59 Ways to Build a Career-Advancing Relationship with Your Boss by Dobson and Dobson
- The Leadership Challenge by Kouzes and Posner
- Leading Quietly by Badaracco
- Academic Administrators Guide to Exemplary Leadership by Kouzes and Posner
- Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us by Pink

Feedback
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