

Managing your boss - An easy guide

(Management goes up as well as down - Make your work easier!)



Everybody talks about "leadership training" and how important it is to be a good manager and leader. The truth is that most of our time is spent as "followers" and nobody is ever trained to be an "effective follower". Even the Managing Director has to report to the Chairman and most people spend most of their day doing things that they were told to do - the only difference is that the higher you get the more of the work you can delegate!

Being an effective follower is different to being an effective leader but you need both skills for survival.

1. Bosses:

- Generally have: more status, more experience, more resources and more power.
- Bosses depend on their staff (Don't have dog and bark yourself).
- Bosses need information. You should report on progress and non-progress. Both are important.

2. You:

- Generally have: a better detailed understanding of the job, more up-to-date information and better customer contact, easier access to the team, information and data (not the same thing!).
- Depend on your boss for security and survival - if your face ceases to fit it can be very uncomfortable.
- Have access to power because real power is taken, never given.

3. You need to understand your boss and his needs

- What are his goals and objectives (both stated and unstated)?
- What are the pressures on him?
- What are his strengths and weaknesses?
- What is his personal work style - autocrat, democrat, indecisive?

What you do not understand you cannot manage. Analyse your boss. NOW!

4. You need to understand yourself and your needs

- What are your goals and objectives (both stated and unstated)?
- What are your strengths and weaknesses?
- What is your personal work style and do you resist or depend on authority?

What you do not understand you cannot manage. Analyse yourself. NOW!

5. Develop the relationship

- Ask how you can make it easy and more relaxed for him - it is always better than guessing!
- Does it fit both your needs and styles and mutual expectations? Is it a formal relationship (Written reports, memos, formal agendas for meetings, regimented hours) or an informal relationship (Verbal reports, notes, unstructured, flexible hours)?
- Identify the expectations. What is a good or bad performance from you?
- Minimise your use of the boss's time and resources.

Management is about relationships. Define the relationship, start to build it and manage it. NOW!

6. Set realistic expectations

- Clearly identify his expectations of you.
- Never accept unrealistic expectations - this is programming yourself to fail. Identify the things you cannot do at the start and state plainly that the expectations are too high. Doing this at the start is painful but rest assured it will only get worse the longer you delay it.
- Get him to define what he wants. If in doubt then do an outline and get him to approve it - it is easier than doing a whole load of work and then finding out that you were headed in the wrong direction!

Set realistic, achievable and mutually agreed expectations. NOW!

7. Win his support

- Establish a human context for relaxed conversations. Get comfortable with your boss so that you can say the tough things when the time is right. No gossip ever.
- Be willing to share the credit for new ideas and work. He can take it from you anyway if he wants to.
- Review projects together regularly. Tell the boss quickly about any concerns and agree what action to take. Keep him informed - bosses hate bad surprises but most can live with pleasant surprises.
- Set small goals and meet them. Win small battles to show that you can do it. Get a reputation as a winner and build on it. Boost his confidence in you and your work

Start to build his support by earning it. NOW!

8. Independent work - the pleasurable surprise

- Most people allow their day-to-day work take up 100% of their time. They will never be stars.
- Stars will develop methods to compress their day-to-day work into 80% of their time. This releases 20% of their time for independent star work.
- Pick a small project, develop the idea (without committing too much money) take the idea through to completion and ready to launch.
- Take the completed project to your boss and ask him to sign it off. Your boss now has a pleasant surprise in the form of a completed project - You too can be a star!

Decide on a small project for yourself. Don't wait. Do it NOW!

9. A4 Pages

- All bosses want solutions not a long rambling open-ended discussion about a problem.
- Define the problem in less than 3 paragraphs on an A4 page and present your recommended solution in a final paragraph.
- Give it your boss and ask him to approve it and sign the bottom.
- He gets solutions not problems. You get approval to proceed and the solution that you wanted. "Win-Win".

Prepare some A4 sheets and try it. NOW!

10. The bosses from Hell

- Believe in power and responsibility - they have the power, you have the responsibility!
- Take all the credit (when done) and even worse they

Leave quickly, it is easier, quicker and less painful. NOW!