

MANAGING UP

“You are involved [in] a *mutually dependent* relationship between two *fallible* human beings.” Gabarro and Kotter, *Managing Your Boss*, Harvard Business Review (1980, reprinted 2005)

Managing Up Case Study

ANNA is an account supervisor at a large direct marketing agency. The account grew and the job was split between Anna and her peer Dayna. They were both to report to Brad, a newly hired management supervisor.

Everything seemed fine until Brad met with Anna and Dayna to introduce himself. It was there Anna learned that Brad and Dayna attended the same college, and received degrees from the same department. Soon Brad and Dayna were sharing names of professors as well as fraternity and sorority acquaintances.

At first, Anna was not rattled by this. But as the weeks wore on, Brad began to hold court at client meetings, and he would remind everyone of his and Dayna's college experience. Anna started to sense that Brad offered more public praise to Dayna than to her.

Then one Monday, Anna arrived to find an e-mail to the entire account team from Brad announcing that Dayna would be taking on an important strategic assignment. This was a job Anna wanted and felt she deserved — she'd been at the agency two years longer than Dayna and had more experience developing marketing strategy.

So she stormed into Brad's office to tell him off. She bitterly complained that he disregarded her, and was playing favorites with Dayna.

He didn't fire her, but he might as well have. Anna floundered at her job for six months, and in the end saw no alternative but to leave.

Excerpted from: *Managing Up* by Victoria James (2002)
http://www.directmag.com/mag/marketing_managing/index.html

How to Manage Up

I. Gain some self-awareness

A. Know something about yourself - your own character, values and traits. Use self-reflection, assessments, feedback from performance evaluations, friends and family. Review this information. Does the job or working with the person compromise your values? If so, maybe this is not the place for you.

B. Body language – ask someone you trust to observe you and give you feedback on how you sit, stand, or otherwise position yourself when you are with the person you want to “manage up.” Ask if they think you are conveying messages you don’t intend to?

C. Get coaching – don’t be afraid to spend some time and money to gain self-awareness and the skills to stay in the job if you need to. Coaches can provide the process to help you understand yourself and others as well as identify areas you can develop.

D. Communicate assertively and effectively. No tears or yelling. Just be firm if you need to. Be authentic. Stay calm.

II. Gain some awareness of the person you must “manage” up

A. Ask how the person wants to be supported. Have a conversation to discuss expectations of support, how to communicate (preferences for email, phone, in person), etc. If you’ve done any kind of assessment in a team building situation with this person, reopen the conversation and share both of your assessment information again. The conversation can focus on how you can be supportive to the person given your respective types/information.

B. Observe, observe, observe. What works with this person? Watch others who you think are successful with this person and acknowledge what works: tone of voice, quantity of information, body position, etc. Watch what the person responds to or listens to. Is the person visual, auditory, kinetic?

C. Speak their language. If the person needs metrics, give metrics. If they speak in business terms, give business terms. Listen to them to determine what they need in order to be successful with their bosses, boards, shareholders, etc. and help them look good.

D. Build the relationship. Find common ground. It may help to watch the person work and see how they do things, how they relate to people.

How to Manage Up (continued)

E. Be aware of the person's ego needs. Saving face is important, too. Don't undermine the person or deny their ego needs because you are trying to "right size" their ego or not feed it. Be aware that a seeming lack of ego needs does not mean they don't have them.

F. Pinpoint issues. After you've observed whether the person is "big picture" or "detail" oriented, adjust your presentations to this style. When presenting to them, present options in their language with a level of detail you know they will be comfortable with. Provide the rationale, your recommendations (and rationale for those) and ask for their opinions/thoughts.

G. Try to see their perspective. You don't have to agree, just understand it. Manage your own emotions and talk to the issue.

III. Try things!!

Other suggestions and guidelines from one person's experience (besides the above):

1. What is the person's time lines? Work within them. Or negotiate new ones.
2. Respect their position of authority and don't do end runs or otherwise undermine them.
3. Express loyalty in words and actions.
4. Give the person acknowledgement and/or talk about their strengths and learn from them (create a mentor).
5. Don't bring up old stuff.
6. Pick your battles – you can't fight them all. Drop stuff and let it stay dropped.
7. Try to see their perspective. You don't have to agree, just understand it.
8. Acknowledge that you have the ability to change your behavior.
9. Accept responsibility for your own situation and choices.
10. Accept the person the way they are. You can get different reactions only if you change your behavior.
11. Recognize that it's not about you, but it may feel like it. Learn to recognize when you get hooked and give yourself time to work through things.
12. ASK QUESTIONS!!!!

Managing Up Resources

Free Assessments

MBTI (unofficial informal Q&A version) http://www.personalitypathways.com/type_inventory.html#Inventory
For more info: <http://www.myersbriggs.org/my%5Fmbti%5Fpersonality%5Ftype/take%5Fthe%5Fmbti%5Finstrument/>
(NOTE: many sites offer "personality profiles," Jungian profiles, and similar offers under the MBTI name, but they are not the MBTI, which must be administered and explained by a qualified person)

Keirsey Temperament Sorter (free version) http://www.advisorsteam.com/temperament_sorter/register.asp?partid=1
For more info on the assessment see <http://www.keirsey.com/>

Enneagram (free version) http://www.enneagraminstitute.com/Tests_Battery.asp
See the home page for general info: <http://www.enneagraminstitute.com/>

DISC (this may come with a "sell") http://www.transformationallearning.com/html/free_disc_offer.html
For general info: <http://www.internalchange.com/PPS2800O-255.pdf>

Articles

Managing Up

"communicate clearly, set high personal standards, solicit challenging tasks, avoid fomenting office coups, don't sleep with anyone who is also sleeping with the boss." <http://www.inc.com/articles/2003/03/25282.html>

Managing Up

"You are involved with a *"mutually dependent"* relationship between two *fallible* human beings," according to J.J. Gabarro and John P. Kotter in an article titled "Managing Your Boss" in the *Harvard Business Review*. This understanding includes the notion that bosses are probably more dependent on associates than associates are on them, which, in turn, means that bosses probably do not have any magical answers to problems, but expect their associates to come up with practical solutions that achieve the bosses' goals. Don't underestimate the power that you have. <http://www.charleswarner.us/manageup.html>

Managing Up: An Overlooked Factor in Career Success

<http://management.monster.com/articles/managingup/>

Managing Your Boss

<http://www.aafp.org/fpm/20010600/33mana.html>

Managing Up Management Blog

<http://management.about.com/b/a/042400.htm>

Bad Bosses

<http://www.badbossology.com/>

Books

Managing Up: 59 Ways to Build a Career-Advancing Relationship with Your Boss (Paperback)

<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/tg/detail/-/0814470424/002-5133292-4368013?v=glance>

Managing Up : How to Forge an Effective Relationship With Those Above You (Hardcover)

<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/tg/detail/-/0385507720/002-5133292-4368013?v=glance>



Managing Up Commitment Worksheet

What is one thing that I will do?

Examples: learn something about my boss, take a personal risk and speak out, learn about myself through an assessment, change the way I stand/sit when talking with my boss, ask clarifying questions, observe people with my boss and identify one thing others do that I do not

What is the time frame that I will give myself for accomplishing what I said I would do?

Am I willing to have Becky contact me and report back on whether I fulfilled my commitment and to share the results?

Name _____

Email address _____

Phone number _____

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What is one thing that I will do?

What is the time frame that I will give myself for accomplishing what I said I would do?
