



Managing Up - QUICK TIPS

Five quick tips to establish an effective working relationship with the person whom you report to.

Set an Efficient Communication Early On

Efficient communication is critical for establishing a good working relationship. Maximize your knowledge on working styles of the person you report to, his/her goals, and the constraints s/he faces. Pay attention to the language, word choice, or communication style of the person; establishing effective communication early on is critical for good working relationship, so ask important questions: "how would you like to receive information from me?" Ask about how s/he prefers you to communicate: email? voicemail? paper documents? texts?

- * How would you like to receive information from me?
- * How do you prefer to communicate? Email, voicemail, paper document, text, or in-person discussion?
- * How often do you want to receive updates?

SAMPLE SCRIPTS
for effective
communication

This information will prepare you with effective and appropriate strategies for working effectively with the person.

Frame Your Need Around Common Interests and Goals

Learn as much as you can about the person whom you report to, and his or her priorities, goals, and challenges. Invest time to build a good working relationship within the available time constraints: ask about his or her job and what he or she seeks most from you in your role. Clearly understand your own interests to find the common ground between yours and his or hers. If you also know yourself and focus on communicating through common interests, you will have more successful meetings than if you go in with a "me-first" approach. Avoid egocentric presentations; instead, reframe ideas and present them in a way that highlights how your interests align and why what you are seeking is relevant to his or her goals. Remember that human beings have strong hypocrisy detectors! This is not about manipulation or being false: the ultimate purpose is to respect time and resource and to achieve institutional goals through efficient communication.

Expect Some Difficulties

It is reasonable to expect difficulties working among high achievers. Anticipate some by-products of high confidence in your interactions and be prepared for them. Take a step back and focus on solving problems and addressing issues together rather than seeing your interactions as a power struggle. You have both personal and institutional/role relationships, and maintaining cordial personal interactions and seeking a problem-solving stance in alignment with those to whom you report will make it more likely that you can help your unit advance at the same time. Your responsibility to serve as an advocate for your unit may not always align with the constraints and larger picture faced by the person to whom you report, so it can be a delicate task to walk the line between being a good advocate for your unit and being a good institutional citizen. There may be a steep learning curve about when to keep asking and when it is your duty to take adverse news back to your unit.





Prepare, Prepare, Prepare

One-to-one time with the person you report to may be scarce. Your responsibility is to prepare. Efficient meetings are appreciated by everyone. When you meet, have a clear idea in mind of your goals and what you're presenting with a tangible action plan; where necessary, and especially for difficult topics, prepare personal scripts beforehand. To maximize the likelihood of prompt and constructive responses, do not approach only with a problem. No one wants a tangled mess left on his or her desk, with the tag line: "Over to you, boss." Your job is to get the most out of her or his input during the meeting, and work to solutions. If there are options in a situation, be ready to effectively present and articulate them. If you are to persuade the person, clearly present your argument with supporting data. Whining up may release your anxiety on an issue, but it is never an effective way to make your opinions heard.

Policies, Procedures, and Principles Are Your Friends

Approach your duties with principled positions; don't make it about personalities. Familiarize yourself with institutional rules, boundaries, and control systems. Take the time to learn where the limits are drawn and make sure your requests or proposals are consistent with them--or build a strong case for an exception.

