

Employees, Here Are 3 Ways To Skillfully Manage Your Boss

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Despite what many employees believe, managing your boss isn't about vilifying their shortcomings. It's finding a clear way forward and accomplishing what needs to be done while maintaining professionalism. Furthermore, it's about fostering mutual respect, trust, and open communication. In addition, it allows your boss to manage you better because they understand your needs and communication style.

The reality is that few individuals in management positions have the natural ability to be an effective manager. Gallup research states that only [about one in 10 people](#) possess the talent to manage. In fact, Gallup shared that individual contributors are commonly promoted to a manager due to the success they've had in their non-managerial role. However, a CareerBuilder study revealed that 58% of managers didn't receive any management training before being promoted. As such, a manager's direct reports have to figure out the best way to work together which results in them managing up.

There are many benefits to managing your boss such as

- Improving your own managerial skills
- Learning how to advocate for yourself
- Demonstrating to others how to effectively manage up
- Creating a healthy work environment for everyone
- Understanding your manager's needs, behaviors, preferences, etc.

Here are some reasons why an employee would need to manage up

- Their manager doesn't communicate expectations clearly or at all

- Gives conflicting information about a task or project
- They're hands-off
- They don't get to the point when they're talking
- They're indecisive
- They give last-minute tasks with little information and a quick turnaround for completion

Here are three ways an employee can skillfully manage their boss.

Build A Relationship With Your Manager

The goal of building a strong relationship is to establish trust. When managers trust an employee, they're more inclined to listen when that employee delivers constructive feedback. Likewise, they'll seek that employee's opinion, ideas, and perspective on things. It's no surprise that many employees are too intimidated to initiate difficult conversations with their managers to give constructive feedback. By avoiding these difficult conversations, they let the issues fester. This then leads to the employee becoming resentful, exploding, disengaging, or becoming passive-aggressive, to name a few.

Something valuable I've learned from a mentor during my career is that delivering constructive feedback shows the individual you value them. It also shows them that you believe they're capable of changing for the better with the feedback they receive. This has allowed me to overcome my own fears when having difficult conversations with managers or employees because I know it's coming from a good place and meant to help them.

Rather than waste time trying to figure out a manager's communication style and preferences, ask them directly. Doing so helps the employee understand what's important to their manager, and avoid doing things they don't like. Likewise, it'll be easier to manage up and deliver critical feedback when needed.

Here are some questions an employee can ask their manager to get to know them better

- How do you want me to communicate with you? Through Slack? Email? Casual conversation? Formal one-on-one meeting?

- Does this communication preference change depending on the circumstance?
- How do you prefer to receive feedback?
- How do you give feedback? Share with them how you prefer to receive feedback
- How often do you want status updates?
- If you're unavailable, who do you recommend I reach out to for help?
- What decisions would you like for me to make on my own? What decisions do you want me to run by you?

Take Initiative

When an employee takes initiative, it shows they want to do well. This often inspires others on the team to do the same. Employees can take initiative by finding work that needs to be rather than waiting for their boss to assign a task.

Here are some ways an employee can take initiative when managing their boss

- Asking questions
- Building relationships with your peers and know how to leverage their strengths for specific projects
- Mentoring junior employees
- Finding ways to develop and upskill
- Asking for feedback
- Taking on more responsibility
- Providing regular status updates
- Stepping in/up when a team member is absent or unavailable
- Identifying gaps in systems, procedures, or policies and offering solutions

- Being prepared for meetings and contributing

Another way to take initiative is to schedule a recurring manager-employee one-on-one, and come prepared with an agenda. One-on-one's are crucial because they give the employee their manager's undivided attention.

Here are some ways to make the most of a manager-employee one-on-one

- If your boss doesn't ask about your career goals, volunteer that information and don't be afraid to weave it into future conversations
- Use these one-on-ones to share how you prefer to receive feedback
- Talk about short and long-term goals
- Ask them what they perceive your strengths and areas of opportunities to be
- Learn more about their career journey
- Seek coaching for challenges you're facing, etc.

Set Goals And Advocate For Yourself

Taking initiative and self-advocacy go hand-in-hand. Whether a boss is new or seasoned, it's important to take the time to set goals, establish boundaries, and advocate for oneself. Self-advocacy is more than touting accomplishments; It's about prioritizing one's mental health, professional goals, and needs.

Here are a few examples of what self-advocacy looks like

- Knowing your strengths and weaknesses
- Speaking up when your workload is becoming overwhelming or maxed out
- Seeking help
- Collaborating with others
- Managing your time
- Sharing accomplishments

Oftentimes, employees assume their manager will be know when they're struggling and jump in to help right away. However, the fact is their manager is most likely buried underneath their own pile of work. Being remote also makes it challenging for managers to notice when an employee is struggling unless it's brought to their attention. This is why employees should be proactive and reach out to their manager right away so they can get the support they need without delay. Moreover, if an employee has found a more effective way of doing something, they shouldn't hesitate to bring that to their manager's attention.