



# **Managing Up and Across**

**Participant Guide  
Extract - Working more Effectively  
with your Boss**

### Managing Upwards Relationships

#### Reflection

Why does it matter?

What are some of the **benefits** that come from having an effective working relationship with more senior people?

What are some of the **challenges** you have had with working with more senior people?

## Taking Stock

### Understanding Your Boss

Select a boss you work for. Spend a few minutes standing in their shoes...

Consider the *sensitivity* of what you may write on this page. Rather than writing their name, you may wish to write their initials...

### Take the time to understand your boss

Organisational Context	
What do you think are your boss' key goals and priorities?	
What sort of pressure and challenges do they face?	
What does <i>their</i> boss expect of them?	
What are the organisational 'hot buttons' right now?	

<p>Think briefly about the organisational landscape...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What complexities are added to relationships that are the result of the nature of this organisation?</li> <li>• <i>for eg, political landscape? 'working with the government / council of the day?', ambiguity in some areas</i></li> </ul>	
<p><b>Personal Context</b></p>	
<p>What do you think they do well / are particularly good at?</p>	
<p>In what areas are they less strong?</p>	

**NOTE: Please respect the sensitive nature of what may be written on these pages**

#### Understand how your boss wishes to work with you

What does your boss expect of you?	
How does your boss like to work with their staff?	
What issues do they want to be updated on – and with what frequency?	
Do they prefer the detail or the big picture?	
How do they like to be informed? By email, by phone, formal meeting, by a report?	
Are they are reader or a listener? <sup>1</sup>	
Does your boss like to delegate?  How do they oversee what has been delegated?	

<sup>1</sup> A *listener* likes to hear your thoughts then have you follow up with a memo. A *reader* likes to receive the memo with the background information first, then discuss it with you.

<p>Do they like you to come to them with a recommendation (a 'fully cooked idea'), or do they prefer you to present a few 'half cooked' ideas you can collectively explore?</p>	
<p>On what issues do <u>they</u> like to be involved / make decisions?</p> <p>On what issues do they want <u>you</u> to make the decisions?</p> <p>On what issues do they like to seek the <u>input</u> from others?</p>	
<p>What level of supervision do they tend to demonstrate? Hands on or hands off - or somewhere in between?</p>	
<p>How can they help you?</p>	
<p>How can you help them?</p>	

*Stop here once you have completed the reflection. Find a partner and share your insights. Remember - this information is going to be sensitive. 'What goes on tour - stays on tour!'*

### Taking Stock

#### Understanding Yourself

Now stand back in your own shoes and consider similar things...

<p>What do you think are your key goals and priorities?</p>	
<p>What sort of pressure and challenges are you currently facing?</p>	
<p>What do you think you are particularly good at?</p>	
<p>In what areas are you less strong?</p> <p>What do you tend to avoid?</p>	
<p>Do you think you are meeting your boss' expectations?</p> <p><i>See the table on p13 for some of the possible 'undocumented' expectations</i></p>	

#### Understand how you like to work with your boss

<p>What do you expect of your boss?</p>	
<p>How do you like to work with a boss?</p>	
<p>What do you need from them?</p>	
<p>When you approach your boss do you expect guidance or answers?</p> <p><i>This may differ for different parts of your role...</i></p>	
<p>Do you present a problem and expect your boss to solve it?</p> <p><i>This may differ for different parts of your role...</i></p>	<p><i>Be honest....!</i></p> <p><i>Many bosses resist this approach. Try going in with a problem, an analysis, alternatives and a recommendation</i></p>
<p>What level of supervision sits comfortably with you?</p>	

### Decision making in your organisation

<p>What sort of decisions are expected to be made by you in your position?</p>	
<p>What sorts of decisions are made by your boss or others more senior to you?</p>	
<p>What role do you play in the decisions made by people more senior to you? (or by other stakeholders - eg council, government, senior management?)</p>	

### A.I.D. – Advise of Implications of Decision

- When the decisions are made by someone else – it is important to ask yourself : *How far do you go in fulfilling your responsibilities?*
- In many organisations, particularly those that operate in a political landscape, decisions are often made that are *not what you would recommend in an ideal world*
- Your responsibility for the decision stops somewhere...and then you need to accept it / and potentially implement it

## AID

Advise of the Implications of the Decision

- And then move on...

### What Your Boss Expects of You

You and your boss agree on your annual, individual performance targets that support larger organizational goals. But what about her *undocumented* expectations? What should you be doing beyond your formal job description that will make you indispensable to your boss and your organization as a whole?

- **Collaborate.** Overcome differences between you and others so you work together effectively—even if you don’t like each other.
- **Lead initiatives.** Don’t be reluctant to associate yourself with unproven ideas, especially those that cross functional or unit boundaries. Raise your hand, and you’ll climb the ladder faster than those who don’t.
- **Develop your own people.** Take as active an interest in your employees’ development as you do in your own—if not more. Go out of your way to criticize and praise your people when they need it. And during performance reviews, supply people with specific, candid, and useful feedback.
- **Stay current.** Regularly read and watch the news. What happens in the world affects what happens with your team, your marketplace, and your competition. Also know what’s going on with your customers—how they’re changing, how their competition is changing, and how technology and world events are affecting their strategies. Your customer relationships are key assets: Bring them to the table.
- **Drive your own growth.** Seek perpetual education and development—not necessarily by going to school but by finding exposure to new people and ideas. Seek feedback from your boss, and accept demanding assignments.
- **Be a player for all seasons.** Demonstrate positive behaviors even during hard times. You’ll sustain your ability to motivate and inspire your own people no matter what’s going on around you.

Adapted from “What Your Leader Expects of You” ([product #Ro7o4C](#)) by Larry Bossidy, *Harvard Business Review*, 2007.

### Your Boss’s expectations of you – often ‘unsaid’

Work well and collaborate with others	Volunteer to lead things Show initiative	Develop your own people
Manage up but also manage down and across	Stay current	Drive your own growth, actively manage your own career
Demonstrate resilience	Manage your moods	Communicate

## Taking Stock

### Developing a mutual understanding around how you will work together

‘Don’t assume you can make significant differences in how your boss thinks or operates. Most likely, the best you can do is nudge her in directions that work better for you’.<sup>2</sup>

That being said, it is worth making the time to develop a mutual understanding around how you will work together. Discuss this explicitly. Advocate your preferences and expectations and inquire about their preferences and expectations. Sit down with them and explore some of the questions listed above. Develop a way of working that suits both your styles.

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## Checklist for Managing Your Boss

**Make sure you understand your boss and his or her context, including:**

- Goals and objectives
- Pressures
- Strengths, weaknesses, blind spots
- Preferred work style

**Assess yourself and your needs, including:**

- Strengths and weaknesses
- Personal style
- Predisposition toward dependence on authority figures

**Develop and maintain a relationship that:**

- Fits both your needs and styles
- Is characterized by mutual expectations
- Keeps your boss informed
- Is based on dependability and honesty
- Selectively uses your boss’s time and resources

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Adapted from “Managing Your Boss” (product #R0501J) by John J. Gabarro and John P. Kotter, *Harvard Business Review*, 1980.

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<sup>2</sup> Managing Your Boss, Hill and Lineback, HBR, Managing Up and Across 2011

### Developing a way to work together

- Focus heavily on communication
- Put a conscious effort into the relationship with your boss
- Focus more on results than 'efforts'
- Use your influencing levers wisely
- If the situation calls for it, have the 'difficult conversation'
- Ask for feedback from your boss
- Show strong leadership by being a good follower
- Diligently follow through on your commitment
- Present options, and solve problems that you should be solving yourself
- Don't ever give reason for your boss to question your credibility

#### Extract from Discovery in Action® 'Managing Up' tips and hints document

- **Put a conscious effort into the relationship with your boss.** If your relationship with your boss is rocky, it is *you* who must begin to manage it. At the heart of any relationship transformation is the transformation of ourselves. What behaviours am I demonstrating that are contributing to the situation? Am I fully aligned to what the group is trying to achieve? What combination of knowledge, skills, networks and communication channels do I need to draw on? When you take the time to cultivate a productive working relationship, everyone benefits.
- **Focus more on results than on 'efforts'.** Just like you, your boss' time is limited. Don't waste time on issues that have a small impact on results. Focus on the issues that make a real difference. Help make the **connection** between your results and the contribution to the larger needs of the organisation. As Jim Collins discovered in 'Good to Great', the most successful business leaders are those who always put the organisation's interests ahead of their own.
- **Realise that your boss is just as human as you are...** don't say "I am amazed that someone at this level..."<sup>3</sup> Remember to put yourself in their shoes for a moment. What is their perspective? What is going on in their world right now? Focus more on helping than judging them.
- **Focus heavily on facilitating communication.** Initiate regular connections with your boss, and keep the lines of communication flowing. Regularly ask yourself, what do they need to know; when and how? Help yourself and your boss by keeping on top of the communication flow. Communicate the good and the not-so-good stories – ensure there are **no surprises**. And make sure the communication is *two way*. Listen and ask questions.
- **Be specific about what you need from them.** Tell them how they can help you.
- **Diligently follow through on your commitments, present options, and solve problems that you should be solving yourself. Don't ever give reason for your boss to question your credibility.**

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<sup>3</sup> Influencing up, Marshall Goldsmith, Leadership Excellence Publishing

### Sense-making

**What ideas do you have about developing a mutual understanding around how you will work together**

Now – think about what you wish to commitment to...(pto)

### Working with Multiple Bosses

#### The Challenges

Risk of Overload

Conflicting messages

All want #1 loyalty

- **Know who your ultimate boss is** – performance review
- **Stay connected** – use your calendar to communicate what project is being work on when, where you are, send quick emails / instant messages
- **Be proactive about your workload** – create a shared document that lists all ongoing projects and tasks
- **Get your bosses to communicate** –bring them together to help work out conflicts
- **Set boundaries** – block out times to get work done, remind bosses of need to assess how new request fits into overall workload
- **If things aren't working** -work out who has the most power
- **Reap the benefits** – more autonomy, more robust feedback

### Working with Senior Leaders - Sense-making

#### Developing a mutual understanding around how you will work together

Which behaviours or actions do you wish to experiment with over the coming months that will improve your working relationship with your boss/s?

Select 2-3 things you consider to be of high importance; find the ones that will have the greatest impact.

- What specific actions are you going to take?
- What results / benefits do you expect the actions to have?
- How will you evaluate the impact of your actions / whether the result is being achieved?

Planned action	Anticipated result	How will I evaluate?