



## Managing-Up: Managing Your Boss for Mutual Success (Dr. Brendan McCann)

*“To be a leader you must learn to follow first.” Ralph Waldo Emerson*

### Fundamentals

- Your boss is your best route to connection, resources, opportunities and success
- Your boss has a unique behavioral style – know that, acknowledge it and adapt
- Your boss is in the Solutions Business – Make Things happen for him
- Your boss lives vicariously through you – Make him Look Good
- The skill-set of Managing-Up is complex but learnable – leverage it to build a healthy relationship with your boss
- Managing-up works best when there is reciprocity and win-win outcomes -empower your boss to help you succeed
- Respect your boss but ethically and elegantly build your own network and relationships

Of all the stakeholders you serve, arguably your boss is the most critical. You and your boss are interdependent. You need him (leadership) and he needs you (followership). In most cases, you can only progress through and with your boss and your boss is your best route to the “oxygen” you crave – resources, access, connectivity, opportunities.

Managing your boss – an intentional and strategic act – is not a “dirty game” of politicking and grubby careerism, it is a critical success factor for any professional who is committed to their own development and progress.

### Managing-Up Definition

There is little to no upside in having an unproductive relationship with your boss. The upside of a productive and reciprocal relationship is clear and compelling – trust and reciprocity define the relationship, shared goals and win-win outcomes define the dynamic and ultimately, the leader, follower and organization accrue the benefits.

Managing up is a learnable skill set. It involves setting a positive mindset and building the skills, behaviors and habits of a great follower.

At OLE Consulting we define Managing-Up as:

*“The intentional act of building a positive relationship, trust and reciprocity with your boss in pursuit of win-win outcomes.”*

Managing-Up is a complex process but it is learnable and worth investing in.

### The Managing-Up Primer

#### **Step 1: Set your mindset**

In Managing-Up, your mindset, or mental preparation, matters as much as your skill-set. Setting the optimal mindset means that you accept the fundamental premise that your boss is your boss, his agenda is your agenda, you are in the solutions business (not the problems business) and you have a better chance of progressing when in lock-step with your Boss.



## **Step 2: Reflect and plan**

Get to know your Boss' world – his personality and preferences, his behavioral and communication style, his goals and motives, his challenges and frustrations.

To elucidate this, reflect on previous interactions with your boss – what went well? (plan to amplify this) what didn't go so well (plan to refine this) and what "bombed" (plan to discard this).

Leverage your findings to build a coherent plan to enhance the relationship, invest in reciprocity and above all, to deliver on or above your boss' expectations.

## **Step 3: Assume high-impact roles and be skillful in their implementation**

The relationship with your boss is a complex one and it is imperative that you know what role (and what value) he requires from you at any one time. Becoming adroit at switching roles is critical for your success with your boss.

- **An Empathizer** – Try as hard as you can to understand your boss' world and what that feels like, listen intently and offer support as necessary
- **An Analyst** – Use hard evidence and data – qualitative and quantitative – to inject rigor, objectivity and clarity in the decision-making process
- **A Trusted Advisor** – Assume the role of "sounding board," facilitating powerful conversations, offering insights and ideas, furnishing options and staying poised to help with implementation
- **The Solutions Guy** - Bosses like options, they love solutions. Ultimately you are your bosses "solutions guy". The analysis, the idea, the plan.... perfectly planned, flawlessly executed!

## **Step 4: Think problem-solving, strategic options and SOLUTIONS**

Bosses are in the solutions business. Above all else, they need followers who deliver effective and sustainable solutions. Stay piqued and creative. There isn't anything more powerful in career management than becoming associated with, or driving a solution to a pressing organizational problem (think, problem accounts, dysfunctional processes, or staid products) through and with your Boss – a three-way win (Boss, Follower, Organization).

## **Step 5: Stay alert and nimble**

Bosses agendas change, their moods, focus and productivity varies, in most organizations they come and go with alarming urgency and frequency. Respect the management chain and act ethically towards your boss but always ensure that you build and invest in relationships and networks up, down and across the organization.

## **Bottom-Line**

In most cases your relationship with your boss is the most important relationship you have at work – most people know this and manage-up intuitively. Managing-up works better when it is a conscious and intentional act. Reciprocation is key to an effective boss-follower relationship, only where there is a mutual exchange of value, win-win outcomes and lock-step progress can the relationship be truly effective – always empower your boss to reciprocate and help you. Managing-up is critical and it is worth the effort.