

Managing Up

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Being a “good employee” takes more than just doing what your manager asks you to do. The idea of “managing up” is that you, the employee, can take proactive steps to make sure you have a positive relationship with your manager and get what you need to do well at your job. When it is done well, it makes your manager’s job easier, which should make yours easier as a result. Here are some different ways to manage up effectively.

1. Understand who your manager is as a professional. What are their strengths, weaknesses, work preferences, and professional goals? Ideally you’ll be able to adapt your work style to complement theirs so that you can be an effective team.

2. Schedule regular one-on-one meetings with your manager. It’s important for them to be face to face so that you can both actively listen and take notes. These should NOT be over the shoulder interactions.

3. Improve communication in order to build trust and increase efficiency. Here are some tips:

- Make sure you are clear on the “what, how, and by when” if your manager assigns a task or project. It is better to ask in the moment rather than guess in the future.
- Be proactive about your communication so that your manager doesn’t have to track you down for reminders or updates, especially when there are deadlines involved.
- Don’t surprise your manager with anything, especially anything that could be considered “bad news.” If any problems come up, tell them as soon as you can so they can support you.
- Advocate for your needs by asking for support in a professional manner. Your manager can’t read your mind about what you need to be successful in your role.

4. Think about the big picture. When facing a challenge, take a step back and look at the situation from above for a fresh perspective.

- Identify potential risks and bring ideas for solutions.
- Take initiative to improve processes. You probably understand the things you’re working on better than anyone else so if you can propose changes to make things flow better, it will likely benefit everyone.