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The Art of Relationships
February 14, 2012

THE ART OF MANAGING UP: Critical To Positioning Yourself and Your Department as Part of Organizational Strategy

A PRACTICAL 5-POINT CHECKLIST

1. Get clarity on how you and your department are viewed by the organization.

- ✓ What is the role of your department in making decisions that affect the organizational strategy?
- ✓ Is HR viewed as "support" or as a true "partner"?
- ✓ Is your department seen as strategically relevant?
- ✓ Are you and your boss sought out for your advice and counsel?
- ✓ Where are the gaps in terms of how you/your department are viewed and where you want/need to be?

A research study by the Management Research Group® found... "CEOs want their head of HR to be someone who really understands what it takes to run the business, what will make it prosper, and how people can be mobilized to meet increasing demands on their time, energies and talents."

2. Determine what is important to your boss' success and personal gratification.

- ✓ What is on your boss' list of key priorities, KPIs, deliverables or objectives?
- ✓ Specifically what can you do to help him/her achieve those goals? Select one or two areas in which you can demonstrate a "quick win".
- ✓ Be clear about your sincere desire to help. Engage your boss in conversation about his/her specific goals.
- ✓ Use colloquial and memorable phrases, such as "What can I do to help you gain more visibility, get promoted, etc.?"
- ✓ Follow through: setting expectations but not following through is a career-limiting move.

A recent **HRworld** article states... "Knowing how to communicate with the boss is one of the keys to managing up. Do they prefer formal or informal communication methods — memos or a heads-up in the hallway? Do they prefer to be briefed in writing before meetings or to brainstorm new ideas in a conference room? ... Pay attention to the differences between your work style and your boss's, and adapt where possible."

3. Maintain a close relationship with your boss.

- ✓ Volunteer to be your boss' "first call" whenever he/she has an issue or problem.
- ✓ Keep your boss informed and current on your activities and other initiatives/activities pertinent to him/her.
- ✓ Establish regular touch-points, but do not be a pest.
- ✓ Do not bring problems to your boss: bring recommended solutions. Fix them and then let him/her know what you did and why it was the best option.
- ✓ Do not share confidences with your boss that place him/her in an untenable position.
- ✓ Earn your boss' trust and respect by never sharing with others confidential or sensitive information he/she discloses to you.

Please See The Reverse Side For Additional Information

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4. Polish your influence skills.

- ✓ Master the fine art of “pre-wiring” so you are in a position to influence the outcome of meetings and decisions.
- ✓ Establish yourself as a thought leader in one or two areas of importance to your boss and to the organization: look to the CEO/President letter for priority areas.
- ✓ Be armed with facts and details to support your opinions and recommendations rather than hoping you will persuade others because of your personality or because of your role.
- ✓ Learn how to make your case in a way that credits others for helping you arrive at your point of view.
- ✓ Accommodate others when the outcome is more important to them than it is to you.
- ✓ Recognize that “influencing up” is at the heart of “managing up”: influence skills are very powerful.
- ✓ If you become an excellent influencer, your boss will start to think your ideas are his/her own... congratulations!
- ✓ If your boss has a different view, do not immediately “cave” but do not dig your heels in: provide rationale.

In “The Art of Influencing Up” on BusinessWeek Online, Marshall Goldsmith states ...
“The best ideas don't matter if no one pays attention. Realize that your upper managers are just as “human” as you are. It is realistic to expect upper managers to be competent; it is unrealistic to expect them to be better than normal humans. Even the best of leaders are human. We all make mistakes. When your managers make mistakes, focus more on helping them than on judging them.”

5. Exhibit a positive, productive demeanor and attitude.

- ✓ Do not get sidetracked by politics but do not ignore political realities.
- ✓ Model positive behaviors for others.
- ✓ If you are justifiably angry or at odds with a decision or an individual, sleep on it before you vent to your boss, and if you do vent, propose a “win-win” solution.
- ✓ Being positive does not equal being a pushover: have the courage of your convictions when justified.
- ✓ Be a “good soldier” if the circumstances warrant it.
- ✓ Become known for your calm, competent behavior when others are in turmoil.

MiddleShelf.com tells us...
“Attitude is your most priceless possession, one of your most valuable assets. To a great extent, it determines the overall quality of your life. In this climate of uncertainty ... having an ongoing positive attitude toward your business associates and customers is key to success.”



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