

The do's and don'ts of managing up

Master the subtle art of managing your manager.

Elana Lyn Gross, **Monster contributor**

There's more to career advancement than just doing your job well. To move up the ranks sooner rather than later, you not only have to be on top of your to-do list, but also the to-do lists of others—namely, your boss. By managing up, you can reinforce your reputation as someone who is a valuable asset to any company.

“Managing up means to make your supervisor's life easier and taking care of things in her professional life that will facilitate her job-related duties,” says Jason Patel, founder of the Washington, DC–based college and career coaching company Transizion.

By being dependable and proactive, you can make yourself indispensable to your boss, and that goes a long way when it's promotion time. “A good working relationship can accelerate your success—and a bad relationship can hinder your success,” says Mary Abbajay, co-founder and president of the professional development company Careerstone Group and author of *Managing Up: How to Move Up, Win at Work, and Succeed with Any Type of Boss*.

“Your boss has a lot of influence over the projects, people, and positioning that come your way; your relationship with her, and her experience with you, will determine the kinds of opportunities available to you in your organization,” according to Abbajay.

So how do you master managing up? Monster spoke to career experts to deliver the do's and don'ts you need to know.

Do become a mind reader

Spend time figuring out your boss's likes and dislikes so you can anticipate her needs in advance and stay on her good side. “You need to put in some work with your supervisor before managing up because you need to know more about their needs, habits, schedule, and duties,” says Patel. “Going in cold turkey is a recipe for disaster. You need to know what you're getting yourself into.”

Don't overstep



Managing up can benefit an entire team.

There's an art to managing up. Though your intentions are well-meaning, you must avoid overstepping any boundaries or making it seem like you're vying for your boss's position. "Most bosses don't like when reports get too close because it decreases their authority, and it's never good when a boss has to step in to enforce his boundaries of authority," says Lucio Buffalmano, founder of the social dynamics resource The Power Moves.

"Show you see him as a normal human being, but that you also respect his authority position," he says. Come up with ways to make your boss's job easier, but ask first. (<https://www.monster.com/career-advice/article/make-your-boss-love-you>). You could say something like, "I know you have a lot to do to prepare for the big meeting next week. Would you like me to help design the presentation?"

Do provide value

Ask not what your boss can do for you, ask what you can do for your boss. "When you manage up, be sure to create value for your boss," says Andrea Palten, founder of the Denver-based life and business coaching firm Success Coaching. For example, if your boss has a big presentation to give and you know she doesn't like designing the slides, offer to create it for her, she says.

"Managing up is a big part of showing that you're ready for the big time or a major step up in job duties," says Patel. "If you're able to handle duties or facilitate your supervisor's life, it shows her, and others in the know, that you're capable of putting on many hats and playing multiple pivotal roles."

Don't drop the ball

You have more work to manage when you manage up. Be honest with yourself about your workload so you don't overextend yourself. You also may not have all the skills you need yet, and that's okay. Taking on new assignments is a great way to learn, but don't be afraid to ask for help from your manager.

"If human relationships are built on trust, managing up poorly is a great way to expose your weaknesses and have no one ask you for help in the future," says Patel. "If you manage up, do it well and focus on putting your best foot forward. You don't want to take on extra work or perform a role above your pay grade, only to do a bad job and have your superiors avoid letting you step up next time the team needs you."

Do communicate

Unless it involves cake and balloons, bosses normally don't like surprises. You don't want to spend a month working on something you think your boss will love only to find out that it's not something they want or need. Part of your boss's job is to manage you and how you spend your time, so make sure she approves of your projects in advance.

"When managing up, it's important to communicate before it's absolutely necessary. Sometimes this means telling your boss your plans months in advance—whatever you need to do to set clear expectations and then exceed them," says Alex Robinson, a human resources manager at Team Building Hero.

Don't stress out

Remember that it's okay if you aren't the best at something right away. "A good supervisor won't hold it against you if you have a tough time managing up at first. You're human. You make mistakes and don't know everything, (<https://www.monster.com/career-advice/article/feedback-from-boss-0317>), so it's important to keep your head up and continue learning," says Patel. If your boss is overly critical or you realize that despite your best efforts, you just can't impress them, then it's time to manage your career and look for a new opportunity.

Need help making that move? Join Monster for free (<http://member.monster.com/>) and get weekly emails with job listings, advice on career development, management skills, and business trends. As a member, you can also upload up to five versions of your resume so that all your great experience will get noticed by recruiters who check Monster every day for candidates like you.

Related Articles

- [Top reasons to consider a temp job \(/career-advice/article/Top-reasons-to-consider-a-temp-job\)](/career-advice/article/Top-reasons-to-consider-a-temp-job)
- [How to assess company culture to find the best fit \(/career-advice/article/Assess-Company-Culture-Best-Fit\)](/career-advice/article/Assess-Company-Culture-Best-Fit)
- [Expert strategies to show off your awesomeness \(/career-advice/article/prove-your-competence-Jack-Nasher\)](/career-advice/article/prove-your-competence-Jack-Nasher)
- [How to find a boss you want to work for \(/career-advice/article/find-boss-want-to-work-for-1112\)](/career-advice/article/find-boss-want-to-work-for-1112)
- [The 5 people you need to make friends with at work \(/career-advice/article/5-people-make-friends-with-at-work-0701\)](/career-advice/article/5-people-make-friends-with-at-work-0701)