

# **BUILD A PRODUCTIVE RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR BOSS**

## **CAREER MANAGEMENT > FIRST 90 DAYS**

Managing up is as important as managing down. A productive relationship with your boss is not only paramount to the success of your project and your team, but also a solid foundation for your own career development at this firm and the future. Start a dialogue with your boss to determine the situation, expectations, working style, resources, and personal development. Proactively engaging with him/her to shape the game so that you have a fighting chance of achieving desired goals. Negotiate with your boss to establish realistic expectations, reach consensus, and secure sufficient resources.

Keep in mind that depending on the position you have, you might be expected to work independently or under close supervision.

### **HOW TO BUILD THIS PRODUCTIVE RELATIONSHIP?**

#### **Five Conversations to Have with Your Boss**

Your relationship with your new boss will be built through a series of conversations. It is critical that you cover certain fundamental subjects in these conversations:

**Situational Diagnosis.** Understand how your boss sees the business situation you are in, what business objectives you need to meet, such as problems you are tasked to solve, or customer needs you need to address.

**Expectations.** Set Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Time-bound goals that you both agree upon, to know what success looks like and how it is measured. When there are competing goals under strict deadlines, establish priorities that you both agree. It is wise to break bad news early to lower unrealistic expectations.

**Resources.** Secure commitment for the resources you need to accomplish your goals. What do you need to be successful? What do you need your boss to do? Negotiate for the key resources - people, funding, knowledge, his/her influencing others - you need to succeed.

**Communication Style.** It's essential to figure out how you and your boss can best interact on an ongoing basis. Your preferences may differ, such as in-person or in-writing, how much information the boss wants (and you want to give) and how involved the boss wants to be (and you want him or her to be) in the details of what you are doing. Rather than allowing misunderstandings to complicate your relationship, spend some time at the start to discuss how you will work together. Even if you don't develop a close personal bond, doing so will help you create a productive working relationship.

**Personal Development.** Discuss how your time in this job will contribute to your personal development. Are there projects or special assignments that you could get involved in (without sacrificing focus)? Are there courses or programs that would strengthen your capabilities?

## DO's

- Clarify expectations early and often
- Take 100% responsibility for making the relationship work
- Negotiate timelines for diagnosis and action planning
- Aim for early wins in areas important to the boss
- Pursue good marks from those whose opinions your boss respects
- Come with ideas for solutions, not problems

## DON'T's

- Don't stay away: reach out and make sure your boss is aware of issues you face and that you are aware of his/her expectations
- Don't surprise your boss: no boss likes bad news but what they like even less is if you do not make them aware of issues early enough
- Don't approach your boss only with problems
- Don't run down your checklist: focus on the most important
- Don't expect your boss to change

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Riggio, R. E. (2012). "How to deal with a difficult or bullying boss." *Psychology Today*. Retrieved March 5, 2014 from <http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/cutting-edge-leadership/201201/how-deal-difficult-orbullying-boss>

Toscano, S. (2014). "How to Deal with 10 Types of Difficult Bosses." *Yahoo*. Retrieved March 5, 2014 from <http://shine.yahoo.com/secrets-to-your-success/deal-10-types-difficult-bosses-160000839.html>

American Psychological Association. (2014). "Managing your boss." Retrieved March 5, 2014 from <https://www.apa.org/helpcenter/boss.aspx>

Conlow, R. (2014). "6 proven ways to deal with a bad boss." *LinkedIn*. Published April 14, 2014