



December 2007

Masterful Mentoring

▼ TIP

Tip of the Month

Honesty, integrity, and genuineness should play leading roles in your actions.

▼ MANAGING UPWARD

Personal career management is an individual responsibility, one that is too important to leave to the hands of fate. One of the most critical dimensions of personal career management is the ability to manage upward. Managing up is a skill that is often overlooked and underutilized, yet its impact on personal career development is significant. Those who learn how to manage upward stand a much stronger chance of gaining recognition, prestige, and ultimately promotion. In this article, we will discuss how to leverage your mentoring relationship to increase your ability to manage upward.

Two Factors for Success

Managing upward should not be confused with “kissing up” or manipulating the system. When done correctly, managing upward is focusing your priorities with those of the organization. If you find yourself out of step with the will and purpose of the organization that you are serving, you will have diminished abilities to make a positive impact. By learning to discern the proper approach to take with your superiors, you can ensure that you are in the best position to gain from organizational opportunities that arise.

Two factors play the starring role when managing upward: communication and relationships. These two dimensions are interrelated and dependent on each other; if one is lacking, the other will suffer. By focusing on these two critical dimensions, you can discern how effectively you are managing upward.

- **Communication** – Communication is the act or process of imparting or exchanging ideas, thoughts, and information with your superiors in the organization. It is important that you communicate the proper types of information to your superiors in a timely and relevant manner, making sure that they are apprised and not surprised by your progress (or lack thereof). You must be able to deliver good news as well as bad with equal veracity. Another important consideration is not just what you communicate but how you present it. Effective communication is presented in the form and manner that the receiver prefers. Essentially, you have to discern the communication preference of your superiors and endeavor to communicate to them accordingly.



RESOURCES

Triple Creek offers many free resources on our web site, including booklets, research papers, and an archive of past newsletters.

Visit www.3creek.com for access to these additional mentoring resources.

MANAGING UPWARD (cont.)

- **Relationships** – Relationships are the supportive bonds or associations you have with your superiors. It is important that you establish and maintain a high degree of trust with those above you. It is preferable that they have strong confidence in your commitment and competence. Trust and reliability are gained by being true in both word and deed. It is important to make yourself known to your superiors and to be supportive of their agenda. By creating and maintaining high-quality supportive bonds, you provide a conduit to be able to let your needs be known.

Tips & Techniques

Effectively managing upward takes into consideration four styles that impact communication and relationships. Understanding the style of the person with whom you are interacting (action-oriented, analytical, socially supportive, or intuitive) will help you know the best way to handle that person. The table on the next page explains these four styles further.

While not everyone fits smoothly into one category, there are several things you can do to increase your effectiveness while managing upward with all four styles.

- *Present optional solutions rather than problems.* When bringing an issue forward for consideration by your superiors, make sure you have several viable solutions in mind rather than just an ill-defined problem. This shows both respect for their time and your competence to solve problems.
- *Keep superiors well-informed.* In the absence of timely relevant information, our superiors will make something up, and it probably won't match up with what we are actually doing. Consider routine updates either in person or via email just to report progress and current status on key activities.
- *Listen and ask probative questions.* This shows that you are concerned with understanding and producing accurate results.
- *Empathize with your superiors.* Get to know their concerns, agenda, hot buttons, and drivers. The more you can relate to them based on these things, the more effective you can be.

Style Impact on Communication and Relationships

Style	Communication	Relationships
Action-Oriented	Prefer to trust you to be competent. They desire infrequent conversations that are highly focused on producing results. They prefer the bullet points and will ask for the details that they need.	Expect you to be competent, do your job, achieve your results, and not bother them.
Analytical	Prefer to trust the data or facts. They desire routine data exchanges and want to monitor results. They prefer well-documented updates and will ask for the additional information that they require.	Look for you to feed their need for data, show up well-informed, and not get too emotional.
Socially Supportive	Prefer to trust relational commitments. They desire frequent conversations that focus on both work and personal issues. They prefer to know how you are feeling and how you are cooperating with others to get your work done. They will assume that you are sharing all of the relevant information with them; you don't want to let them down by not sharing.	Expect you to share personal information with them, as well as be a good team player.
Intuitive	Prefer to trust in long-range possibilities. They desire frequent, but brief, dialogues that focus on creative problem solving. They prefer discussing future implications of your work and will often see things others don't. As a result, your updates will likely take unexpected turns.	Look for you to exchange ideas on a conceptual level, not get bogged down in detail, and let them avail themselves of your network of resources.

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MANAGING UPWARD (cont.)

Managing upward is a fine art that takes a lifetime of practice. Your mentoring partner can help you become more effective in your efforts by being a sounding board for your specific situation and providing guidance from their experience.

Practice Exercise

The following exercise can help you construct a plan for increasing your effectiveness in managing upward.

1. Identify someone above you who has the most sway over your career advancement.
2. Assess the viability of your communication and relationship with this person.
3. Discuss your conclusions with your mentoring partner and solicit their perspective of your assessment.
4. If you have determined that you need to strengthen your communication and/or relationship with this person, determine what new techniques you will apply.
5. Set a time to review your progress with your mentoring partner.