

## **Managing your Professor**

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Gabarro, J. J. and Kotter, J. P. (2005) *Managing Your Boss*, *Harvard Business Review*, pp. 92-99.

Managing your boss: The process of consciously working with your superior to obtain the best possible results for you, your boss, and the company.

Premise: If you forge ties with your boss based on mutual respect and understanding, both of you will be more effective.

Research shows that effective managers take time and effort to manage not only relationships with their subordinates, but also those with their bosses.

### **Understanding your Professor**

- Gain an understanding of your adviser and his or her context, as well as your own situation.
- Appreciate your professor's goals and pressures, his or her strengths and weaknesses.
  - What are your boss's organizational objectives, pressures, and blind spots?
  - What is your adviser's preferred working style?

### **Understanding Yourself**

- Your professor is only half of the relationship.
- Developing an effective relationship requires that you know your own needs, strengths and weaknesses, and personal style.
- You are not going to change your personality structure or that of your professor. But, you can become aware of what actions impede or facilitate working with your boss, and choose actions that make the relationship more effective.
- Although a superior-subordinate relationship is one of mutual dependence, it is also one in which the subordinate is typically more dependent on the professor.
- Instead of instinctively becoming frustrated in the ways that your actions or options are constrained, focus on the control that you do have.

### **Key Points**

- Know my strengths.
- Gain new knowledge and information.
- Ask my professor what he/she specifically needs.
  - What is on your list of goals?
  - What can I do to support your agenda?
- Ask a curious question where I care about the answer.

## Power

How do you define power?

**Power: The ability to have influence, either good or bad.**

In graduate school, who will have power over you?

What do powerful people have?

**Have** "Them"  
Manage career  
Recommendation letters  
Dictate when/if you obtain degree  
Funding  
Teaching, Research, Service Awards  
Reputation  
Connections

Why are these powerful?  
I care about these things.

As graduate students, what are our needs/wants?

**Our Needs/Wants** "Us"  
We want what these powerful people have.

What do I have?

**Have** "I"  
Mental, intellectual ability  
Skills  
Knowledge  
Lab Techniques  
Time to teach and do research  
The ability to use my strengths to influence formal decisions and affect the outcome.

What do these powerful people want from me?

**Their Wants** "Them"  
Productivity  
Honesty  
Solid work  
Strong educators; successful undergraduates  
Funding for grants  
Publications  
Increase reputation of department  
Past experience; skills

Bright, hard working students  
National and international recognition

### **Key Points**

- Know my strengths.
- Gain new knowledge and information.
- Ask what these powerful people specifically need.
  - How can I help?
  - What is on your list of goals?
- Listen to response.
- What can I do to support your agenda?
- Ask a curious question where I care about the answer.