

Managing Up in the Academic Arena

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All of us are leaders and followers. However, we attend endless lectures and conferences on leadership, but are almost never taught good followership!

Part of being a “good follower” is being a good team-player, but another part is managing up well. This can benefit you as well as those above you, as the relationship is always a two-way street.

First, think about your boss. This could be your chair, medical director, program director, hospital CEO, etc:

- What do they value?
- What pressures are they under? - The turtles above you have turtles above them!
- How does what you are doing align with that care about?
- How to they work?
- How do they like to communicate?
- What kind of boss are they?
- What is their personality type?

If your boss is a:

1. Dictator:

- a. Be prepared and anticipate what they need. Their bias is to think everyone is incompetent, so don't give them the satisfaction of being right.
- b. Do your job well! Provide him/her with frequent updates if needed to avoid the micromanaging and earn trust.
- c. Pick your battles – they likely don't react well to differing opinions and are not interested in debating.
- d. Work on developing credibility over the long term. Also, find ways to work within the constructs. What things can you accomplish without having to go to him/her?

2. Hands-off boss:

- a. Be respectful of their time and communicate succinctly
- b. Keep them informed of your progress. You may have to take the initiative to update him/her of what you are doing.
- c. Keep him/her informed of your accomplishments. Prepare a list of what you are doing or have done for your annual review. If you don't have an annual review, schedule one.

3. Bureaucrat:

- a. Learn what the rules are and try to work within them.
- b. Follow the protocols. Go to the right people to get things done. Go about things in the right way.
- c. Become adept at working within a complex system
- d. Be patient, as it takes time to earn credibility and respect

4. Collaborative Leader:

- a. Be prepared with well thought-out ideas and solutions.

- b. Be a good team player, give others credit when due.
- c. Show appreciation. The collaborative leader may not have as much intrinsic confidence.

For any leader type, never bring a problem without bringing at least one suggested solution.

When managing up with a mentor, here are some suggestions:

1. Figure out what it is you want from the mentoring/coaching relationship.
2. Set SMART goals and share them. Plan small but dream big.
3. Have meetings with a plan
4. Play to their strengths
5. Figure out their MO
6. Do what you say you will.
7. Ask for feedback often.
8. Take feedback well!

Suggested reading:

