



Having a great relationship with your boss is important on so many levels.

If You're the Boss:

How can you make it easier for your direct-reports to work with you?

You need to understand the boss's picture and expectations to know how to hit the mark. If you're going to be viewed as a valuable asset, you need a comfortable communication pattern where you can ask questions, make suggestions and get support and help when you need it. All that can be easier said than done, however.

So here are a few things that will help you create a great working relationship with him or her.

1. Start by viewing it from your boss's perspective

If you were the boss, what would make the ideal employee? Needless to say, the basics are important - someone who comes to work on time, puts in a solid day's work, does a great job, is easy to work with and a team player, friendly and communicates well with others. But

- Let them know your expectations
- Make sure goals are clearly written (for more information about this, see my June newsletter): [Top Down and Bottom Up Goal Alignment](#)
- Ask them to bring you solutions rather than problems
- Schedule regular update meetings and ask them to hold questions that can wait until you meet
- Ask them about their career goals and provide

beyond that, what are things employees do that can either drain the boss or make his/her job easier?

2. Bring your boss solutions rather than problems

It's easy to run to the boss when a challenge arises to find out how the boss wants it handled. If you know what they want you can save time, right? You won't have to experiment with solutions only to find that the solution you chose wasn't the boss's choice and you have to do it all over again. However, you can save yourself and the boss time by thinking it through and presenting your best suggestion to him/her and getting his/her reaction and feedback. You save the boss time, so that he/she isn't having to start from scratch to think about solutions and you save yourself time not having the boss react after the fact and redoing it. Here's an even more important plus. You show the boss that you do have answers, know how to analyze and think things through and it can be a factor in demonstrating that you are ready to move to the next level.

3. Have a regular time set aside to meet with the boss

Don't you hate interruptions when you're trying to get something done? So does your boss. So rather than communicating randomly or intermittently, have a regular time set-aside. Keep a list of things to discuss in that meeting and go to the boss in between meetings with only "can't wait emergencies". When you meet, bring written updates. If the boss is distracted, he/she will always have your written document to refer to. They need not be long reports - bulleted items are easier to read anyway.

4. Be your own promoter

If you want to be promotable and you want the boss to recognize your value, respect your opinion and listen to your ideas, then it's up to you to help the boss see that

"stretch"
opportunities for
them

- Be willing to listen, even if you don't agree

What do you do when you disagree with your boss?

This is a question I get frequently and I wrote a newsletter on this topic. If you didn't have a chance to read it, here's the link: [What To Do When You Disagree With Your Boss](#)

"In most cases,
being a good
boss means hiring
talented people
and then getting
out of their way."
-Tina Fey



I know we will never get a
chance to say this, but
we really think that you
are just an amazing boss!
Keep it up.



value. Busy people are focused on their own to-do lists and don't always take the time to think about what you're doing or recognize your contributions. So don't assume they will. Use your meetings with the boss and your updates to point out your accomplishments and strengths. Don't be afraid to toot your own horn. Some starters can be things like:

- I am so excited about something I did and I want to share it with you.
- May I take a few minutes to bring you up to speed on a challenge we just encountered so you know how I addressed it?
- I am really proud of how I just handled a conflict and I want to tell you what I did.
- I'm making some real strides on this project. Let me update you on what I'm doing.

Your boss will appreciate the heads up on a lot of the information and also knowing what's going on in the department.

5. Under-promise and over-deliver

A really great definition of stress is the difference between expectations and reality. If the boss is expecting you to start or complete something by a certain date and it's not done, that creates stress not just for you, but for the boss as well and who knows who above them! Negotiate start dates and completion dates and give yourself as much wiggle room as you can, and then be sure to put an earlier date on your own schedule. When you deliver **EARLY** on a commitment (as opposed to just on time), you have just made the boss's day and shown yourself to be an incredibly valuable asset! When you are someone who can be depended on to deliver, you've just differentiated yourself from the pack!

6. Speak up when you feel strongly that your boss needs to hear your input or ideas



Do you have a boss who you think micromanages you?

If it's annoying and frustrating, here's another perspective that might help. Some bosses who "micromanage" don't realize that's how their behavior is being perceived.

Often times, they believe they are imparting helpful tips or information that they think is helping you or making your job easier, so that you don't have to learn the hard way everything they have already learned.

If that's the case, you can help your boss by letting them know that when they tell you how to do something, it takes away your opportunity to spread your wings, learn and grow. Here's an approach you might try.

When you are first assigned a task or project, talk with your boss, get his or her expectations, ask for parameters or general guidelines and then ask them for the top three things they've learned that they'd like to

Let's face it, the boss doesn't always want to hear your opinions. Sometimes he/she is too busy or a decision has been made above his/her level and he/she is really not in a position to change it anyway so why spend time listening to you, right? So what do you do when you see something or have a perspective you believe is really important? How do you get the boss's attention? You can start by letting him/her know you respect his/her opinion and decisions and will support those decisions. It's also helpful to let him/her know that you feel part of your job is to make sure he/she has critical information and different perspectives so he/she can make the best decisions. If you feel passionate about something, you can say that! "I need to say this to you because I feel really passionate about it!" Even if he/she ultimately disagrees with your suggestion or perspective, it's important to you that he/she at least heard it. Remember though, there's a fine line between being the voice of the "critical friend" to your boss and being a thorn in the side.

7. Offer to take something off the boss's plate

I offer this option with a caveat, because this can be a double-edge sword. If you have the time and the skills, you could be a real support to your boss and have the opportunity to shine and show you are ready for more responsibility or a promotion by offering to take something off his/her plate. However, the other side of that sword is that you end up overworked and underappreciated and the boss starts giving you more work. So be careful. If you want to do this, I suggest sitting down with him/her to discuss the possibility and explaining that you have time right now because.... and that this is an area where you'd like to have the opportunity to show your skills and abilities to be ready for the next level. You can make it clear in that discussion that you'll be going above and beyond and don't want to make it a regular pattern, but that you'd like to have this particular opportunity. Set the stage for expectations both for what you will be taking on and for future expectations so you don't end up just adding more

share with you before you start that they think would be helpful.

Then let them know that you'll take those tips and you'd like the freedom then to work on it without additional help so you can spread your wings a bit and fly by learning and exploring and using this as a chance to grow. However, so you don't end up going astray, schedule some check-ins with your boss throughout the project so you can both be assured you're on the right track.

Help you boss help you by letting them know how to help you.

If they don't know that what they're doing isn't helpful, and you never tell them how you would like their help, how are they to know?

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to your workload on an ongoing basis.



8. **Remember, bosses are people too.**

They struggle; they do their best; they make mistakes; they second-guess themselves; and they lie awake worrying if they made the right decision. Managing people is some of the hardest work there is and nobody gets it perfectly right all the time. Your boss needs a kind word and some praise now and then too. And there's a difference between honest support and praise of the boss versus brown-nosing. To make it honest, acknowledge specific things they do, or acknowledge that sometimes their job is hard and you appreciate the way they just handled something. Praise that's very general can sound like you're sucking-up. Praise that is sincere and specific usually doesn't. And sometimes you just need to cut them a little slack.

Be purposeful in your interactions with your boss and build a better relationship that will help you both!

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