

**INFLUENCE
WITHOUT AUTHORITY**

**PARTNER WITH
YOUR BOSS**

Guide to Managing Up and Across

**PERSUADE
YOUR PEERS**

**JUGGLE MULTIPLE
BOSSES**



**Harvard
Business
Review**

Guide to Managing Up and Across

Does your boss make you want to scream? Do you have more than *one* boss? Do you spend your day herding cats—corralling people who don't report to you? Do you work across departmental silos? Collaborate with outside contractors?

Then you know that managing up and across your company is critical to doing your job well. It's all about understanding your boss's and colleagues' priorities, pressures, and work styles. You need to manage up and across not just because you may have a problem boss, incompetent colleagues, or fabulously hairy projects that touch all parts of your organization. You need to manage up and across, for example, to get your marketing and sales folks to see that *your* project will help them meet *their* goals, too; to establish authority with bigwigs so they'll bless your new product ideas; to secure people's time for a new team when they're already feeling overextended.

Managing up and across will help you get the information and resources you need to solve your complex problems, increase your effectiveness, and make your work more enjoyable.

YOU'LL GET BETTER AT:

- Getting what you need from people who don't report to you
- Coping with micromanaging, conflict-averse, or generally incompetent bosses
- Discovering what drives your colleagues
- Partnering with your boss
- Selling your ideas up and across your company
- Making the most of your boss's influence
- Establishing a shared vision and commitment
- Juggling multiple bosses' priorities
- Tailoring your pitch based on your audience

Table of Contents

Managing Up

- 5 **Managing Your Boss**
Build a strong partnership with your boss by clarifying *her* priorities and *your* needs
by Linda A. Hill and Kent Lineback
- 10 **Steps for Presenting Problems or Opportunities to Your Boss**
How to get the support and resources you need to advance your agenda
- 12 **Change the Way You Persuade**
Tailor your idea to your audience
by Gary A. Williams and Robert B. Miller
- 14 **How to Make Your Boss Look Good—Without Becoming a Sycophant**
Sell your boss to *her* boss
by Michael Schrage
- 15 **Stop Being Micromanaged**
...and start focusing your boss on the big picture
by Amy Gallo
- 18 **Dealing with Your Incompetent Boss**
Turn your boss's weaknesses into opportunities for you to shine
by Amy Gallo
- 20 **Coping with a Conflict-Averse Boss**
Make bad news bearable so your boss won't run for the hills
by Anne Field
- 22 **How to Give Your Boss Feedback**
... without putting your career in jeopardy
by Amy Gallo
- 24 **Managing Multiple Bosses**
Juggle their competing demands without getting caught in the middle
by Amy Gallo

continued on next page

Managing Across

- 28 **What Makes a Leader?**
Polish your people skills by focusing on your colleagues' priorities and pressures—not your own
by Daniel Goleman
- 30 **The Discipline of Teams**
How to lead a group of people who don't report to you
by Jon R. Katzenbach and Douglas K. Smith
- 32 **A Smarter Way to Network**
Build a strong support system for your next crisis or opportunity
by Rob Cross and Robert Thomas
- 34 **The Necessary Art of Persuasion**
Four steps to winning people over
by Jay A. Conger
- 36 **Three Ways Not to Persuade**
Avoid these common mistakes
by Jay A. Conger
- 37 **Harnessing the Science of Persuasion**
Influence your colleagues by appealing to basic needs such as reciprocity and their desire to be liked
by Robert B. Cialdini
- 39 **How to Get Your Colleagues' Attention**
Frame your message so your colleagues immediately see what you need from them and why
by Amy Gallo
- 41 **When the Direct Approach Backfires, Try Indirect Influence**
What they don't teach you in business school
by Martha Craumer

Managing Up

Neglecting to manage your boss has costly consequences. You may miss promotions or opportunities to put your great ideas into action. Understanding your boss's priorities, what makes him tick, and how he prefers to work and communicate will open doors for you.

This is not kissing up or manipulation. You're not trying to inflate your boss's ego. You're helping him be successful, which, in turn, makes you successful.

The articles in this section of the guide will help you create these win-win relationships. You'll learn how to effectively present problems and opportunities to your boss; how to give him feedback; how to deal with a variety of difficult managers—from the micromanager to the conflict-averse.

Managing Your Boss

by Linda A. Hill and Kent Lineback

Managing *up* is important because your boss plays a pivotal role in your success—or your failure. You can leverage your boss’s influence in the organization on your behalf in several ways—for example, by obtaining valuable information, winning needed resources, and securing important support for your personal development and career. When you face difficult trade-offs and must make decisions that create both beneficial and painful consequences for others, your boss’s advice, insight, knowledge of the organization, and access to higher management can be invaluable. As your organization shifts and changes shape in an uncertain market, a good relationship here becomes a necessity for navigating through the turmoil. The penalties of a poor relationship are many: less influence, little information or advice, fewer resources, and limited personal development and career support. Worst case, you can find yourself isolated, ignored, pushed out—your journey stalled, your career derailed.

Why Is It Often an Uneasy Relationship?

This relationship can be problematic for two reasons. First, a boss plays conflicting roles: supporter and evaluator, which can create confusion. Second, people often bring their past experience with authority into the relationship, which can create unnecessary complications.

This is an area where being a star as an individual contributor may not have prepared you for management. As an exceptional performer, you probably had minimal interaction with your boss. If so, you most likely didn’t develop the skills of managing up that you need.

Do you see your boss as coach and developer or as evaluator and judge? You’re caught in a difficult dilemma, one that can feel personally threatening. The boss is not only a potential source of great help, in both your job

and your career, but also the one who evaluates your performance. To get help from her as a developer, particularly with your personal development, you must reveal your shortcomings. But if you do, she in her role as evaluator may interpret your weaknesses as serious faults. Many managers handle this dilemma by striving to appear capable and in control even when they’re not. They see their boss more as threat than ally and lose the potential benefits of her help.

Are you confused by your boss’s dual role? Do you tend to see your boss as primarily a judge? Does that attitude seem safer to you? That’s understandable, but it’s not always the most helpful point of view.

What can you do? Don’t presume your boss is always one or the other, judge or coach. Instead, think of his dual roles as extremes between which he moves back and forth depending on the situation. At first, in small ways that aren’t risky, test his willingness to provide support. That way, you can see when, where, and how he’s likely to focus on development rather than evaluation. Learn his feelings about what’s important in management—such as careful planning, decisiveness, building consensus—and make sure you develop and display those qualities.

Do you see past bosses in your current boss? How do you feel about your current boss? How do you respond to authority in general and to those who have it? If most of your bosses have frustrated you and fallen short of your expectations, you and they may be victims of the emotional baggage you carry forward from past experience. Reflect on your own history and the feelings it’s created in you. That history may lead you to perceive your current boss not as who she is but as an amalgam of past authority figures, with all the positive and negative feelings that flow from that past.

Unless you're aware of these feelings, you'll be at their mercy.

On the other hand, you may respond to authority with overdependence, rather than resistance. Extreme deference and automatic, unquestioning compliance don't work well either. Those who react this way never disagree or push back, even when they're right or it's in their best interest.

Both antagonism to authority and too much deference will keep you from seeing your boss clearly and realistically and prevent you from securing the work and personal benefits available from a good relationship.

What Should Your Relationship with Your Boss Be?

Do you realize that your relationship is actually one of *mutual* dependence? Your boss depends on you and needs your commitment and support to succeed. Just as you may wrestle with

your reliance on your people, he probably struggles with his dependence on you and his other direct reports.

Think of the relationship as a partnership in which the partners depend on each other to succeed and are able to influence each other in ways that improve the performance of each. It's not a relationship of equals, certainly, but it's not entirely one-way either. You usually do have some room to negotiate and create the relationship that works for both of you.

Take Stock of Your Current Relationship

Is your current relationship a partnership? Are you and your boss able to have a normal, constructive discussion about work? If not, why not?

Don't assume you can make significant differences in how your boss thinks or operates. Most likely, the best you can do is nudge her in directions that work better for you. That's certainly worth doing. But you're unlikely to create large changes.

With that in mind, use the following questions to assess and improve your relationship. They focus on actions you can take.

Are you meeting expectations? By far, the key factor in a good relationship is your ability to perform as expected.

Results. Performance targets create the foundation for your ongoing relationship. Unless you and your group produce the results expected, you're unlikely to enjoy much of a partnership. And it's not just the results you attain but *how* you attain them. If you hit your numbers but your boss hears complaints all day about how you railroad other groups, he probably won't consider you someone who "meets expectations."

Information. But results aren't the only expectation. Do you keep your boss informed? Reach explicit agreement about how often and in what way you will report progress. Develop a sense of what your boss wants to know. Some prefer to know a great deal; others, much less. In general, no boss likes to be surprised or seem ignorant of something she should know. If you must err, do it on the side of overinforming. Many bosses actually want more information than they say, so discover the right balance through experience. Find out as well how your boss wants information delivered:

What Your Boss Expects of You

You and your boss agree on your annual, individual performance targets that support larger organizational goals. But what about her *undocumented* expectations? What should you be doing beyond your formal job description that will make you indispensable to your boss and your organization as a whole?

- **Collaborate.** Overcome differences between you and others so you work together effectively—even if you don't like each other.
- **Lead initiatives.** Don't be reluctant to associate yourself with unproven ideas, especially those that cross functional or unit boundaries. Raise your hand, and you'll climb the ladder faster than those who don't.
- **Develop your own people.** Take as active an interest in your employees' development as you do in your own—if not more. Go out of your way to criticize and praise your people when they need it. And during performance reviews, supply people with specific, candid, and useful feedback.
- **Stay current.** Regularly read and watch the news. What happens in the world affects what happens with your team, your marketplace, and your competition. Also know what's going on with your customers—how they're changing, how their competition is changing, and how technology and world events are affecting their strategies. Your customer relationships are key assets: Bring them to the table.
- **Drive your own growth.** Seek perpetual education and development—not necessarily by going to school but by finding exposure to new people and ideas. Seek feedback from your boss, and accept demanding assignments.
- **Be a player for all seasons.** Demonstrate positive behaviors even during hard times. You'll sustain your ability to motivate and inspire your own people no matter what's going on around you.

Adapted from "What Your Leader Expects of You" (product #Ro704C) by Larry Bossidy, *Harvard Business Review*, 2007.

written reports via e-mail, in person if that's possible, or by video call.

Support and loyalty. Your goal is to make the relationship work for both of you, and that requires some degree of support and loyalty. Just as you want your boss to care about you, and your people want you to care about them, your boss wants your care and concern, too.

Be generous and assume the best intentions, even when you disagree. Express disagreement as your opinion offered in support of your boss's success. Some people bridle at the word *loyalty*. We don't mean blind loyalty, but loyal people earn the right to question and disagree on occasion. Those who speak up only when they disagree will usually enjoy less influence than those who have demonstrated prior support. So on those occasions when you do honestly agree with your boss, say so clearly and explicitly.

You cannot succeed in this relationship at the expense of your boss; you will rise or fall together. Your task is to make *both of you* effective. Help your boss build on her strengths, and overcome or bypass her limitations.

Does your boss trust you? The foundation of all network relationships is trust, and the relationship with your boss is no different. Can he count on you to do the right thing? If you feel micromanaged, the reason may be that you've neglected to establish real trust. The essence of building trust is to negotiate what you both mean by "do the right thing."

Do you both see the current situation the same way? Make sure you share a common understanding of the challenges your group faces and what needs to be done. If you see the need for fundamental change and your boss wants to stay the course, you must resolve this difference right away.

Do you agree about where you and your group are going? Once again, a plan is critical. Do you have one? Have you reviewed it with your boss? Does it make clear what's to be done and when? Make sure your boss knows your goals and plans and agrees with them. Ideally, she had a hand in creating them.

Do you negotiate expectations when you're given an assignment? Don't let your relationship be one in which you simply accept whatever is passed down without discussion. If the expectations are unrealistic, you will have no

one to blame but yourself when your team fails. Reach agreement on the results you're expected to produce—what will happen by when. Do this at the beginning, and update expectations periodically. Warn your boss of potential risks, and play out various scenarios of how you might handle them.

Do you see and understand your boss as a person? It's easy to forget that beneath your boss's mantle of authority there's a person just like you. He has hopes, aspirations, frustrations, strengths, weaknesses, and fears. He's the product of his background, training, and experience. He has a personal life—a family and family history, religious beliefs, social organizations, political views, and hobbies. Do you know enough that you're able to see the world through his eyes?

Do you understand your boss as a manager? Your boss has goals, plans, and pressures, as well as managerial strengths and weaknesses, preferences, and foibles. Do you know them? What's your boss on the line for? What's her boss telling her to do?

Do you know how your boss prefers to make decisions, and do you work within that pattern? Does he prefer lots of analysis and data? Does he need time to reach a conclusion? Does he want everyone's opinion before deciding? If you must depart from these preferences, do you first negotiate explicitly what you will do?

Do you know and respect the ways your boss prefers to work? Some bosses want written analyses before a discussion, while others prefer the discussion or presentation first, followed by a written summary. Some want lots of data; others want the highlights. Some want to be intimately involved in every detail; others prefer regular reports but nothing more unless there's a problem.

When you approach your boss, do you expect guidance or answers? We know a manager whose boss always responded to questions with questions of her own. Finally, this manager realized: "I had to come in with some ideas about how I would handle the situation, and then she would talk about them with me. She would spend all the time in the world with me."

Do you present a problem and expect your boss to solve it? Many bosses resist that approach. Instead, try going in with a problem,

an analysis, alternatives, and a recommendation he can react to.

Can you identify your boss's strengths? This stumps many managers we know. They focus on their boss's weaknesses and can talk at length about them—and often do with their peers. But they seldom look for strengths. That's a shame because your boss's strengths are what you must leverage, and you cannot leverage what you don't recognize or appreciate. Whatever your boss's weaknesses, identify what she does well. There must be something. Don't fall back on something like "She knows how to play the organizational game." There's something there. What is it, and how can you use it to learn and do your work more effectively?

Are you clear about what you need and expect? Negotiate what you need from your boss. Don't make him guess. What can he do to help you? Provide resources, support from other groups, relief from distracting responsibilities, clearer direction?

In addition, think about the way you prefer to work and what you need from a superior, such as specific goals, help and ongoing guidance, or a certain degree of autonomy. Be sure you know where the boundaries are. Test

how negotiable they are. Where your needs and your boss's way of managing diverge, talk through the differences. Where differences involve high stakes, talk sooner than later. It's easy to underestimate the risks of conflict avoidance and the cost of the passive aggression that often accompanies it. Your nonverbal communications—expression, manner, body language, tone—often reveal your true feelings about your boss and can slowly corrode this critical relationship.

Have you discussed with your boss your own growth, development, and aspirations? How can your boss help you grow and develop? She's not responsible for your career and personal development, but it's in her best interest for you to improve in ways that will help you (and her) succeed. From your boss you can get advice and guidance; feedback about your performance, strengths, and weaknesses; insight into what others think of you; developmental assignments; and access to training programs and other learning opportunities.

To obtain these, you must first communicate your desire to learn. Then, you must agree about *how* and *where* you want to grow—what competencies you need to develop, such as building a network, making a plan, managing performance, or assessing subordinates. Have reasonable expectations. Take responsibility for your own development. Besides, your boss probably has no more time and no less pressure than you, and many bosses, unfortunately, are uncomfortable in this role. The more specific the requests you make, the better—to attend a training course, for example, or advice about a specific problem.

Do you and your boss come from different cultures? Be aware that cultures differ in their expectations and treatment of people with authority. In some, the boss is expected to be participative; in others, directive. In some, proactive and assertive; in others, humble and modest. Compare the characteristics of both your cultures. Where your assumptions and expectations differ, be prepared to talk about them explicitly.

Work hard to build a productive relationship with your boss. Initiate the kinds of discussions we've suggested. It's difficult to succeed without his support, and impossible in the face of his opposition. Always remember that your

Checklist for Managing Your Boss

Make sure you understand your boss and his or her context, including:

- Goals and objectives
- Pressures
- Strengths, weaknesses, blind spots
- Preferred work style

Assess yourself and your needs, including:

- Strengths and weaknesses
- Personal style
- Predisposition toward dependence on authority figures

Develop and maintain a relationship that:

- Fits both your needs and styles
- Is characterized by mutual expectations
- Keeps your boss informed
- Is based on dependability and honesty
- Selectively uses your boss's time and resources

Adapted from "Managing Your Boss" (product #RO501J) by John J. Gabarro and John P. Kotter, *Harvard Business Review*, 1980.

reports face these same issues with you. Let your experience in each relationship—with your boss and with your people—guide you in the other.

Don't make the mistake, as many managers do, of ignoring such a potentially powerful source of help and support. Take responsibility for, and play an active role in, making it a partnership that benefits both of you. Avoid seeing yourself as a passive, powerless subordinate. Don't assume it cannot be a positive, mutually helpful relationship until you've tested the possibilities on several occasions. It's too important—to your ability to exercise influ-

ence and thus to your journey—to merely let it be whatever it will be.

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Adapted from *Being the Boss: The 3 Imperatives for Becoming a Great Leader* ([product #12285](#)), by Linda A. Hill and Kent Lineback, Harvard Business Review Press, 2011.

Steps for Presenting Problems or Opportunities to Your Boss

Did your project come in \$10,000 over budget? A rival poach your star performer? Your competitor beat you to market with a new product? None of us likes to deliver a difficult message, but it can be a valuable tool for building a trusting relationship with your boss. You know that you should never bring a problem to your boss without a proposed solution. But often we forget to frame the situation in a way that helps us garner the necessary resources or approval to begin moving toward a solution. Here are five steps to take the next time you need to deliver bad news—or a promising opportunity.

1. Describe the problem or opportunity to your boss. Provide a general overview of the problem, and show the specific impact it has on your work and the company's goals. If you have identified an opportunity, show the potential benefits—not just to you or your team, but to the larger organization.

“Stu, we’ve got a morale problem on our tech team. Our recent employee survey shows that 40% of our staff in Atlanta doesn’t find their work rewarding or challenging. If we don’t address this, we might lose some of our best talent. We can’t afford that at any time, but especially now when we’re trying to release the new system by Q1. I have a few ideas I’d like to try, with your help and the cooperation of HR. I think with the right approach we can keep the team focused on meeting the Q1 goal.”

2. Identify your solution or approach. Explain how you’ve already tried to solve the problem and what you’ve learned from those attempts. Recommend a specific approach, along with alternatives, to provide your manager with options.

Clearly define each possible option, addressing the pros and cons, and any potential risks or barriers. Explain the logic

behind your recommended approach. You want your manager to be aware that you’ve considered several possible outcomes.

“It looks like we’d need to add two more managers to the project to meet the client’s latest round of requests. When I mentioned this to Sarah during our conference call, she didn’t respond. I’d like to go Cincinnati and meet with her to discuss how we might renegotiate the contract. I think seeing her face-to-face will make a big difference. Plus if I do it the week after next, we’ll have just delivered on the second phase of the project and she’s likely to be pleased. We could of course take the hard line and just say no to their requests and then see what they come back with. But I’m afraid we’d be putting our future relationship at risk. We could also just expand the team and do the work and see it as a marketing investment. We’d likely win Sarah’s good graces and, as you know, she’s well connected with many companies in our target group. But it may be more financial risk than we’re willing to take on right now.”

3. Explain the implications. Consider the impact that your proposed solution will have on yourself and others, including your manager. Be explicit about how your idea will have far-reaching effects on the goals of the organization.

“If we put a formal process in place to track all sales leads, I can do a better job of connecting the dots between the VPs who are meeting with potential customers. As you know, the current approach worked well when we just had two VPs doing the calls, but now we have over 20. This will increase their workload slightly, but it will be clearer to them how to share lead information. It will also give senior leadership a better view into the pipeline. It won’t take a week to pull together our sales dev reports,

which means you can be more responsive to requests from above.”

- 4. Discuss the benefits.** Focus your conversation on concrete examples of your idea’s benefits. The specific features of the solution, or how it will be implemented, are less important at this stage. If you have tested your approach on a small scale with good results, share that information.

“Delivering the product in a smaller container in the Latin American market will expand our customer base. We’ll be able to serve truckers with small rigs who go on long hauls but don’t have room for the 20-gallon containers. Most of these truckers haven’t bought our products before, so we have the opportunity to convert them to our brand. They’ll also be able to pay cash, since the smaller container will be at a lower price point. This is a real advantage in their cash-heavy economy. Carlos helped me run

a quick experiment with a small set of truckers in Panama, and the response was overwhelmingly positive.”

- 5. Accept responsibility for the outcome.** Demonstrate your commitment to ensuring success. Work with your manager to develop a final action plan for taking advantage of the opportunity you’ve presented.

“This rests squarely on my shoulders. In the unlikely event that we don’t convert enough customers from this campaign, I’ll quickly move on to Plan B. But to get started I’m going to reach out to Terry to get the e-mail list of current customers who have opted-in. Then I’ll work with Ellen to draft the e-mail pitch. Once I’ve done that, I’d like to get your help running it up the flagpole. Does that sound like a sensible plan to you?”

Adapted from *Managing Up* (product #14784) from the Pocket Mentor series, Harvard Business Review Press, 2008.

Change the Way You Persuade

A summary of the full-length HBR article by **Gary A. Williams** and **Robert B. Miller**, highlighting key ideas

The Idea in Brief

Your proposal was brilliant; your logic, unassailable; your argument, impassioned. So why didn't your boss buy your proposal?

Perhaps you took a one-size-fits-all approach to persuasion. But different people use different styles when deciding to accept an idea: Each wants certain kinds of information, at specific steps in the process.

There are five common but distinct decision-making styles: charismatic, thinker, skeptic, follower, and controller. One decision-making style isn't better than another. But to tip the outcome your way, understand your listener's preferences—then tailor your persuasive efforts accordingly.

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The Idea in Practice

Style	Decision-Maker's Characteristics	Prominent Examples	Persuader's Strategy	Examples of How to Approach Them
Charismatic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easily enthralled, but bases decisions on balanced information • Emphasizes bottom-line results 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lee Iacocca • Herb Kelleher 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on results • Make straightforward arguments • Stress proposal's benefits with visual aids 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diagram your current organization and the problem(s), proposed solution(s), and benefits—especially improved competitiveness • Explain potential challenges and risk of inaction • Provide detailed reports for your boss to review postpresentation
Thinker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toughest to persuade • Cerebral, logical • Risk-averse • Needs extensive detail 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Michael Dell • Bill Gates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present market research, customer surveys, case studies, cost/benefit analyses • Help your boss understand all perspectives of a given situation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present different options in detail in a face-to-face meeting • Explain your data-gathering methods • Present case studies of similar initiatives • Use a follow-up meeting to fill argument gaps and recommend optimum plan • Wait weeks, months for your boss's decision
Skeptic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenges every data point • Decides based on gut feelings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Larry Ellison • Tom Siebel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish credibility ahead of time with your expertise; draw on positive previous work experiences • Get endorsements from someone your boss trusts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copresent with a trusted colleague • Emphasize the credibility of your sources of information • Stroke your boss's ego (“You’ve probably seen this case study...”) • Ground your argument in the real world
Follower	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relies on own or others' past decisions to make current choices • Late adopter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carly Fiorina • Peter Coors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use testimonials to prove low risk • Present innovative, yet proven, solutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highlight case studies from other industries, but note “We could be the first in our industry to do this.” • Omit failed real-world examples (although you should have this information available should your boss request it) • Present multiple options • Tap your network for references to steer your boss toward your preferred choice; emphasize the option's affordability, etc.
Controller	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unemotional, analytical • Abhors uncertainty • Implements only own ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Martha Stewart • Ross Perot 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present highly structured arguments • Make your boss “own” the data • Avoid aggressive advocacy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over several months, send your boss customer reports, marketing studies, financial projections; give him everything he needs to build your case for you • Emphasize data highlighting the company's challenge • Identify data contradictions, but let your boss analyze them • Wait for your boss to request a meeting after a significant incident (e.g., a large customer defects)

How to Make Your Boss Look Good—Without Becoming a Sycophant

by Michael Schrage

I find suck-ups loathsome. But I admire the managing-up technique I've seen ambitious people skillfully deploy. No fawning or flattery—they make smart use of technology to make their bosses look good.

For example, the boss's boss at one marketing firm had given a keynote speech at a major industry event. A twentysomething analyst easily found a couple of complimentary tweets referencing the talk. He e-mailed them to his fortysomething boss, who barely knew what Twitter was, but who was thrilled to bring them to his boss's attention. Win. Win. Win. Everyone was happy. A simple 90-second investment made his boss look good.

At another firm, a project manager found that her boss's boss had an offbeat sense of humor and liked injecting levity into boring project reviews. She made it her mission to find the appropriate *New Yorker* or Dilbert cartoon to paste into a PowerPoint slide for presentations. Of course, she didn't do this for her own presentations; she selected amusing and relevant options for her boss's talk. He was grateful, and the boss's boss liked them.

What I like about making your boss look good is that it is the mirror image of the marketing mantra about knowing the customer's customer. Understanding your boss is vital. But researching, knowing, and appreciating your boss's boss ought to give you valuable insight into what makes your boss effective—and frustrated. That shapes how to better position your boss in the mind of *his* boss.

Your Boss as a Brand

If you saw your boss as a brand, how would you sell that brand to the ultimate customer—your boss's boss? Answering this question well requires market research. Think of it as an interesting design problem: What can you do that will move your project forward and make your

boss look good to his boss and peers, too? It can be a worthwhile investment of your time to consider what tools and technologies may help you.

The economic and technological “barriers of entry” to figuring out appropriate approaches to making your boss look good have collapsed. Most managers are but a LinkedIn connection or a blog comment away from insights into their boss's boss that makes a win-win-win outcome a good bet. Should this occur daily? Only if you like having a brown nose. But there's nothing wrong with making your boss look good be a part of *your* brand.

Perhaps you think it would test the outer limits of your creativity and authenticity to make your boss look good. But give it a try. Think of it as a marketing challenge: What are the two things you could do in the next three days that would make your boss look better to his boss?

Michael Schrage, a research fellow at MIT Sloan School's Center for Digital Business, is the author of *Serious Play* and the forthcoming *Getting Beyond Ideas*.

Posted April 15, 2010 on hbr.org

Stop Being Micromanaged

by Amy Gallo

None of us likes a boss who constantly scrutinizes our work. Micromanagers are not only annoying, their lack of faith may make you doubt yourself and stunt your professional growth. But you don't have to suffer with an overly controlling boss. If you reduce your micromanager's stress, you may be able to secure the autonomy you need.

What the Experts Say

Micromanagement can make you feel inept, but typically it has nothing to do with your performance. "It's more about your boss's level of internal anxiety and need to control situations

At the other end of the spectrum are people Manzoni describes as "pathological micromanagers who need to make it clear to themselves and others that they are in charge." These are the bosses who give you little to no independence, insist on being involved in every detail of your work, and are more concerned about specifics, such as font size, than the big picture. "You know you're working with [a pathological micromanager] if he gets involved in a level of detail that is way below his pay grade," says Chatman.

Don't Fight It

Railing against micromanagement isn't productive. "If you push back in one way or another—passively or aggressively—your manager may conclude you can't be trusted and get more involved," says Manzoni. It may be tempting to complain, but it will probably only make your situation worse. "If I sense disdain, I'm going to be encouraged to show you that on my forehead it says 'boss' and on yours, it doesn't," says Manzoni. Instead, try to understand what's causing your boss's behavior. Is he under immense pressure? Is this his intuitive way of managing? Does the company culture encourage and reward this kind of behavior? If you recognize the underlying reasons, you can figure out how to respond.

Increase Trust

Micromanagement is usually "based on a general view that the world's standards are not up to what they should be," says Chatman. You therefore need to make a conscious effort to earn your manager's trust by succeeding in the dimensions that he cares most about. "You absolutely, positively must deliver and deliver in a way that doesn't increase your boss's stress. In fact, identify things that reduce [it]," says

Micromanagement is about your boss's level of internal anxiety, not about you.

than anything about you," says Jenny Chatman, a professor of management at Haas School of Business at UC Berkeley.

You can't change the way your boss leads, but you can change the way you follow using these tactics:

Evaluate Your Boss's Behavior

Jean-François Manzoni, coauthor of *The Set-Up-to-Fail Syndrome: How Good Managers Cause Great People to Fail*, cautions that all controlling bosses are not the same. On one end of the spectrum are managers with very high standards who like some degree of control. They may regularly have you rework something that doesn't measure up. They pay a great deal of attention to detail and exercise some degree of control, but they don't stifle you. In fact, you may learn a lot from them.

Manzoni. If you meet your boss's standards—deliver work on time, make sure projects include the elements she wants—she's likely to see you as someone she can lean on. The more she trusts you, the less inclined she'll be to tell you exactly how to do something.

Make Up-front Agreements

Another tactic is to talk to your boss—before a project starts—about how he'll be involved. "Try to agree on standards and basic approach," says Manzoni. What role will each of you play? What criteria will you use to measure the project's success? Explain what you think the ideal plan of action is and then ask for his input. "Be sure you understand up front what the guiding principles are for the work—not just the tactical elements," says Chatman. For example, if you're working on an internal marketing campaign, be sure to talk about the message you want to send, not the font you should use. If the discussion becomes overly focused on detail, try to bring it back to the principles and approach you agreed on. Flattery can also work. Remind your boss that he's better off not getting involved in the minutiae because his time and effort are more valuable to the big picture.

Keep Your Boss in the Loop

Remember that micromanagers are often motivated by anxiety. "They are nervous about anyone else being able to do things as well or in the same way they would," says Chatman. Address that concern by keeping your manager informed of your project's progress. Schedule regular check-ins to help her feel part of the process. Or send unprompted e-mails that share important information. If she wants detail, get specific. Although annoying now, it may save you the effort of redoing work later on.

Give Feedback, but Only if Appropriate

Telling a micromanager that you don't appreciate his controlling behavior may only trigger more of it. But some managers may be open to hearing your input. "Try to catch your boss in a moment of openness," says Manzoni. He suggests using the time in a scheduled performance review. Focus your feedback on how his behavior affects the process. Can you tweak

his involvement so that he gets the information he needs without becoming a roadblock?

Get Help or Move On

If none of these approaches work for you, ask yourself: Do I really want to work here? "If it's pathological, you should consider transferring to another part of the company or finding another job," says Manzoni. Before you throw in the towel, however, look to others inside the company. Find a trusted coworker or a reliable HR manager who can counsel you. At the very least, you'll be able to do some restorative venting, and you may uncover additional tactics that could work for you.

Principles to Remember

- Do everything you can to gain the micromanager's trust
- Know what worries your boss and try to reduce her concerns
- Provide regular and detailed updates so your boss is aware of your progress
- Don't defy the micromanager—that often triggers more of the behavior you're trying to avoid

Case Study:

Be Attentive to Her Concerns

In 2006, Marcy Berke* worked for an insurance company with offices throughout the U.S. Her boss's boss was a woman named Barbara*, who was responsible for 10 agencies in her region. Barbara was passionate about efficiency. She asked all the agents in her region to produce a time report, accounting for the number of minutes each of them spent on various tasks each day. "She was concerned with keeping her own production figures up and burnishing her image with senior management," Marcy says.

Marcy recognized what mattered most to Barbara. "If I were heading up a project, I would make certain to e-mail Barbara, early and often, with any questions I might have about what her expectations were, and give her an outline of what my team was working on and the anticipated date of completion," she says. If her team was having difficulty meeting the deadline for any reason, she would let Barbara know as soon as possible, providing both a reason and a revised end date. Marcy supplied the information Barbara needed without

being asked first so that Barbara could learn to trust her.

Since Marcy knew that Barbara was so pre-occupied with time, she arrived at least two or three minutes early for meetings. When Marcy needed to set up a meeting with Barbara, she would make the request by e-mail, clearly stating the reason for the meeting, listing the questions she would be asking, and indicating how long the meeting would last.

This approach worked well for Marcy. She was able to thrive at the company for four years, despite Barbara's micromanagement, before she left to start her own firm.

*Not their real names

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Dealing with Your Incompetent Boss

by Amy Gallo

We all complain about our bosses from time to time. Some of us even consider it part of our job descriptions. But there's a difference between watercooler griping and paralyzing frustration, just as there's a clear distinction between a manager with a few flaws and one who is truly incompetent. So how can you handle your bad boss?

What the Experts Say

"Most people have had experience with someone who is incompetent, or at least unhelpful," says Annie McKee, coauthor of *Becoming a Resonant Leader: Develop Your Emotional Intelligence, Renew Your Relationships, Sustain Your Effectiveness*. That's because too many companies promote people for the wrong reasons. Whether your boss lacks technical or managerial ability, says Michael Useem, author of *Leading Up*, bad bosses sap motivation, kill productivity, and can make you want to run from the job screaming.

Although leaving is sometimes an option, it's not the only one for coping with a bad boss. Consider these tactics first:

Understand Your Boss's Incompetence

Before you declare your boss useless, check your bias and better understand what you're seeing. "When you're looking at your boss, the first thing you need to do before you judge is look at yourself," says McKee. Many of us have blind spots when it comes to our bosses. Ask yourself if you're jealous of her position in the organization or if you have a natural tendency to resist authority.

Also "...be cautious about your judgment until you collect all the evidence," says Useem. Your boss may have stressors you don't see or fully understand. "It's very common for people to completely miss the pressures their bosses are under; partly because a good man-

ager will buffer you from them," says McKee. By learning more about your boss and developing empathy for him, you may reevaluate his competence. Even if you still conclude that he's incapable, remember that he's human. Don't demonize him.

Ask Others for Help

Look to peers or people outside the organization for advice and a place to vent. This doesn't mean indiscriminate moaning about your boss. Instead find confidants: a trusted colleague, a spouse, a mentor, or a coach. Explain what you're seeing, how it's affecting you and your work, and ask for advice. "This is not to conspire against your boss but to check your point of view," says Useem. People outside the situation can give you a fresh perspective or offer new coping strategies.

Find a Way to Make it Work

Regardless of your boss's incompetence, you need to work together to get your job done. Be creative in collaborating with her. Figure out where she excels and then find ways to pair your strengths with her weaknesses. For example, if your boss is a competent writer but falls apart in front of an audience, suggest ways you can help with her presentation to the executive team. Can you listen to her trial run? Or present portions of it, as a development opportunity for you?

When you request something from her—whether it's input on a work plan, an introduction to a colleague, or her permission to reach out to a client—be specific about what you need. And do as much of the work for her as you can: Provide a draft e-mail or point out the three areas you'd like her to comment on. If she's unable to help, suggest an alternative: Perhaps you can ask one of her peers or superiors for input or the introduction. Your goal is

to help her solve the problem, not set up more situations where she'll fail.

Step Up

Rather than give up on an ineffectual boss, focus on what *you* can do to make up the difference. If your boss fails to set priorities for the team, propose some that he can then approve or tweak. If meeting follow-up isn't his strength, offer to send out the to-dos. Without harboring resentment, do what's best for your team and the organization. Recognize that stepping up can be a growth opportunity; you may be taking on responsibilities someone at your level doesn't usually have. And in the process, you gain the respect and appreciation of other higher-ups.

Develop Yourself

Sometimes incompetence can manifest itself in a lack of communication. You may have a manager who hasn't given you a clear sense of your goals or even a concrete job description. These are essential to doing your job well and advancing your career, so take them on yourself. Write your own job description and articulate goals for the quarter or year. Send them to your boss and ask to review them together. In person, you can then confirm your priorities and understand her expectations. If she's still unresponsive, keep a record of what you've proposed and work to meet the goals you laid out. It may be that she isn't sure what you should be working on and needs you to just take action.

Take Care of Yourself

Working for an incompetent boss can be bad for your health. "There's a lot of research on the negative psychological effects," says McKee. She suggests creating boundaries that protect you from the emotional damage. We have a tendency to point to a bad boss and say, "He's ruining my life." But this ignores the fact that you have agency in the situation. "Once you become a victim, you cease to become a leader," she says. Focus on what makes you happy about your job, not miserable. "We can come to work every day and pay attention to this horrible boss, or we can choose to pay attention to the people we are happy to see every day and the work we enjoy. We can choose which emotions we lean into," says McKee.

Whenever possible, take on projects that allow you to spend time in other parts of the organization or with other leaders. Identify a mentor who can provide you with the feedback and instruction you aren't getting from your boss. Find a way to let off steam, such as taking short breaks throughout the day. Look for humor in the situation, and try not to allow one person to ruin your day, your job, or your career.

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Coping with a Conflict-Averse Boss

by Anne Field

Does your boss avoid conflict at any cost? Do you find it difficult to get the resources you need because your boss won't advocate for you? Does she push your team to the brink because she fears saying no to requests from above?

Here's how to cope—and get the critical feedback and guidance you need.

Make Conflict More Comfortable

Having a defensive and conflict-averse boss doesn't mean you can never disagree with him. When an issue crops up, frame it in terms that

Having a defensive and conflict-averse boss doesn't mean you can never disagree with him.

will get the best results *for your business*. Play devil's advocate. Ask lots of "what if?" questions. "What if our printer continues to have quality-control issues? Might it be a good idea to start investigating other options now just in case?" Use gentle lead-ins such as "I might be off base here, but..." or "This might sound like a crazy idea, but..." all the while reassuring your boss that you're working toward the same goal as he is.

Focus on Problem Solving

If you need to talk about a difficult issue with your boss, focus on the problem, not the people. This will help establish neutral ground.

Offer specific suggestions. For example, if your weekly team meeting has turned into a gripe session for your colleagues, volunteer to create and distribute agendas. "I know how busy you are preparing the Williams presenta-

tion, so why don't I poll everyone for agenda items for this week's meeting?" You'll help provide a structure for your boss to approve and then follow.

Gather Supporting Evidence

If you want your boss to use her authority on your behalf, give her everything she needs to build her case: assemble data, write drafts, zero in on how your request fits into larger unit or organizational goals.

For example, a manager in a consumer products company dragged her feet when her staff urged her to ask for a bigger budget. So, they gathered the necessary backup, specifying each team member's duties, and the resources needed to meet their goals. They highlighted how meeting their goals would contribute to the unit's overall strategy. With that ammunition in hand, the boss approached senior management with greater confidence.

Put It in Writing

If your boss dreads face-to-face conversations, especially performance reviews, send him e-mails and brief documents outlining your key accomplishments and areas of development. This will make it easier for him to engage in a productive conversation with you—rather than coming up with the documentation on his own.

Guidelines can also help your conflict-averse boss work with larger groups. If his glossing over disagreements inhibits your team's ability to air differences, check your perception with your teammates offline. If they also feel that he's squelching productive debates in favor of peaceful chats, raise the issue with your boss in a one-on-one meeting. Propose that a little debate might help stoke the team's creativity and that setting ground rules for such discussions would ensure that they're productive. Volunteer to take notes to

help keep the creative ideas moving along to implementation.

Ease In

If you know that your boss will find a conversation awkward or unpleasant, don't rush into it. Instead, open with a neutral, nonthreatening icebreaker. Cite a recent newspaper article about a common interest. Ask about her child or pet. Once you sense that she's comfortable, ease into the discussion.

Anne Field is a business writer based in Pelham, New York.

Adapted from reprint [Co504A](#).

How to Give Your Boss Feedback

by Amy Gallo

Have you ever wished you could tell your boss exactly what you think of her? That her obsessive BlackBerry use during team meetings is demoralizing? That people roll their eyes about her compulsive control of the smallest details of every project?

You see your boss in a variety of settings—client and team meetings, presentations, one-on-ones, negotiations—which gives you insight into her strengths and weaknesses. But even if your observations could be helpful, is it your place to share them with her? Could frank feedback put your job or your relationship at risk?

Providing feedback to your boss, commonly called **upward feedback**, is a tricky process to master. But if you offer it correctly, your insight can not only help your boss, it can also improve your relationship with her.

What the Experts Say

John Baldoni, a leadership consultant and author of *Lead Your Boss: The Subtle Art of Managing Up*, says that leadership is all about perception; if leaders don't know how others experience them, their performance suffers. And the higher up in an organization a leader sits, the harder it is to get honest feedback. Your input can help your boss see himself as others see him and help him to make critical adjustments in his behavior and approach.

Of course, giving your boss feedback requires careful thought; here are some principles to keep in mind.

The Relationship Comes First

The ability to give and receive upward feedback depends on the level of trust between you and your boss. If you know that she's unreceptive to feedback, is likely to react negatively, or if you have a rocky relationship, don't say anything. But "if your boss is open-minded and you have

a good relationship," Baldoni says, "you owe her the straight talk." As with any feedback, your intentions must be good, and your desire to help your boss should supersede any issues you may have with her.

Wait to Be Invited

Even if you have a great relationship, don't launch into unsolicited feedback. Some bosses will request feedback at the end of your formal review, asking, "Is there anything else I can do to support you?" Or, when you first start working together, he may share his development areas and ask you to keep an eye out for certain behaviors that he's working on. "In a perfect world, it is a manager's responsibility to make it safe to give feedback," says Baldoni.

Of course, this is not how things usually happen. If your boss doesn't directly request feedback, ask if she would like it. This might be easiest in the context of a new project or client. You can ask something such as "Would it be useful if I occasionally check in with you about how I think the project is going?" Setting it up in advance can smooth the process, but you can also give feedback in the moment. Try asking something along the lines of "Can I tell you about something I noticed in that meeting?" Emphasize that you're trying to help her so that the client, project, or company will benefit.

Share Your Perspective

Focus your feedback on what you're actually seeing or hearing, not what *you* would do as the boss. Baldoni recommends saying things such as "I noticed that you were silent when Joe disagreed with your proposal. It can be intimidating when you don't respond to criticism." By sharing your perspective, you can help your boss see how others see him. This can be in-

valuable to a leader who may be disconnected from people in the lower ranks.

Focusing on your perceptions also means realizing the limitations of your standpoint—you're seeing only a partial picture of your boss's performance and all the demands he's juggling. James Detert, author of the *Harvard Business Review* articles “[Why Employees Are Afraid to Speak](#)” and “[Speaking Up to Higher-Ups](#),” says, “Subordinates by and large don't have a full appreciation of [their bosses'] reality.”

Good feedback rules still apply. Your feedback should be honest, specific, and data-driven. Open with something positive and then offer constructive comments along with suggestions for improvement. Avoid accusations.

If Your Boss Bites Back

No matter how thoughtfully you've prepared and delivered your feedback, your boss may get upset or defensive. Sometimes reframing it in terms of what your boss cares most about can help, says Detert. “Point out how specific behaviors [may be] inhibiting your boss from achieving her goals.”

Gauge her reaction to determine how she prefers to receive feedback and what topics are out of bounds. Perhaps she doesn't want to receive pointers on her communication style or a certain high-pressure initiative. Rather than clamming up after a negative reaction, take the opportunity to ask her about what would be useful going forward.

When in Doubt, Hold Your Tongue

If you're not sure your boss wants feedback or if the subject in question is sensitive, it's better not to speak up. Don't risk your working relationship or your job. Instead, look for opportunities to comment anonymously, such as a 360-degree feedback process. If you feel your boss's behavior is putting the company or your unit in jeopardy, follow the appropriate channels in your company—starting with Human Resources or your employee resource manual or wiki.

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Managing Multiple Bosses

by Amy Gallo

The movie *Office Space*, a comedy about work life in a typical 1990s software company, details the saga of Peter Gibbons—a man with eight different bosses. All of them, seemingly unaware of each other, pass by his desk and tell him what to do. Although the film is most certainly a satire, for some, it's not far from the truth. Many of us report to more than one boss, so learning to handle multiple managers is essential.

What the Experts Say

"As you go to a matrixed structure, you can easily have between one and seven immediate supervisors," says Robert Sutton, the author of *Good Boss, Bad Boss*. Adam Grant, coauthor of the *Harvard Business Review* article "[The Hidden Advantages of Quiet Bosses](#)," concurs. "As companies continue to flatten, organize work around specific projects, and use temporary teams to complete projects, many employees find themselves reporting to multiple bosses," he says. Although this is more likely to happen in bigger and more complex companies, it can happen in small organizations and family-owned businesses, too. Having many bosses is complicated, and, as Grant says, "If you're not careful, you can end up letting all of them down."

Here are some guidelines to make your job, and theirs, easier.

Recognize the Challenges

Although working for more than one person can present numerous challenges, there are three common ones to watch for:

1. **Overload.** With several people assigning you work, one of the greatest risks is simply having too much to do. "If you report to multiple bosses who supervise your efforts on different tasks and projects,

it's all too easy for each boss to treat you as if you have no other responsibilities," says Grant.

2. **Conflicting messages.** "The more bosses you have, the more conflicting messages you get," says Sutton. Sometimes this happens out of ignorance—your bosses aren't aware of what the others are saying—or because people are pushing their own agendas. "Different bosses often have different expectations, and what impresses one may disappoint another," says Grant.
3. **Loyalty.** "Some bosses want to know that they're your first priority. If you have more than one boss who feels this way, it's easy to get caught in the middle," says Grant. You may need to negotiate between competing demands for your loyalty.

So, how do you make it work?

Know Who Your Ultimate Boss Is

Although you may take direction from multiple managers, most of us have one person who's ultimately responsible for our careers. Ask a lot of questions about the reporting structure. Find out who completes your reviews and who contributes to them. Who makes decisions about your compensation, promotions, etc.?

Stay Connected

Reporting to more than one person can be complicated further if your bosses are in different locations. When your bosses work remotely (or when you do), you need to overcommunicate to make up for the lack of face-to-face time. Rely on technology to help you. Make your calendar viewable to those outside the office or use a web-based tool such as Google Calendar. This will allow all your bosses to know where you are, even when they can't see you. You can

use the same calendar to indicate what days you're working on which projects. To simulate the drop-by-your-desk conversations, use an instant messaging application to have brief check-ins or ask quick questions. If only one of your bosses is remote, don't inadvertently cater to the boss whom you see more often, and make sure the distant manager knows you're meeting *his* needs, too.

Be Proactive About Your Workload

Let everyone know what's on your plate. Although it may not be in your job description, it will behoove you to negotiate between your bosses. "I would err on the side of taking the initiative to coordinate between them. Most bosses prefer proactive employees," says Grant. You can create a shared document that lists all of your ongoing tasks and projects, or you can communicate these items in weekly check-in meetings.

Get Your Bosses to Communicate

Most bosses appreciate your bringing them solutions, not problems, but this is complicated when you have more than one manager. Whether you need to resolve contradictory directions, reduce your workload, or sort out inconsistent demands, the best approach is to get your bosses to talk with each other, rather than trying to represent one's agenda to the other. "Start by assuming the best. Invite them to discuss the conflicts and get them out on the table," says Sutton. Bring your bosses together in the same place—in a face-to-face meeting or on a conference call—and explain what the conflict is. Enlist them in the problem solving and push for transparency. "If you ask your bosses for advice on how to handle the disagreement, they're more likely to take your perspective and see the challenges from your point of view," says Grant.

Set Boundaries

"The most important skill for staying sane while reporting to multiple bosses is the ability to set boundaries," says Grant. He points to research done by Harvard Business School professor Leslie Perlow. She found that engineers at a Fortune 500 company were constantly interrupted by managers and coworkers. She helped them create norms for quiet time: Three days a week, there would be no

interruptions before noon so they could focus on work. If your multiple bosses frequently come to you with questions or to check in about their projects, establish protected times. As mentioned earlier, you can block out times in your calendar for work on certain projects. Before taking on a new project, remind your bosses that you'll need to assess how it fits into your overall workload. Frame this as wanting to be sure you have enough bandwidth to do a project justice rather than putting the request off.

Get Sneaky if You Have To

The aforementioned advice works best in a *healthy* organization, but yours may not reward transparency and proactive approaches. You may find that your bosses are unresponsive or unwilling to meet with you to resolve conflicts, which requires a different approach. "If you're in a fear-based environment, you have to figure out how to protect yourself. The worse the environment, the sneakier you have to get," says Sutton. Figure out which of your bosses has the most power, and prioritize her assignments. "The smart employee doesn't ask. Instead, do your own calculation of who is more powerful and who would hurt you the least," says Sutton.

Don't Take It Personally

Sutton notes that it's easy to assume that your bosses are out to get you, but usually that's not the case. They're probably just pushing their own agendas, and you're getting caught in the middle. Try not to feel persecuted. Instead, identify the conflicts and work to resolve them.

Reap the Benefits

Despite the challenges, having more than one boss can also be an advantage. For example, you're likely to get more robust feedback. If your bosses come from different parts of the organization, you'll have access to a larger and more varied network. You probably have more autonomy because you don't have one person calling all the shots. "Like a kid playing parents off each other, ask the person who you know will give you the answer you want," says Sutton. Although this may seem underhanded, it's an effective way to align your interests with those of your bosses and the company.

Case Study:**A Monday Morning To-Do List**

Kim Bryant had been in the accounting industry for 15 years when she started with a new firm as a staff accountant. The company had three partners, and Kim was initially hired to work for one of them. But soon she was asked to continue her work for that partner and also help out one of the others. “The most difficult thing about working for two partners was that both had projects that they felt were urgent and it put me in an uncomfortable situation,” she says. Kim had to decide which project to work on first. When she asked one of her bosses for advice, he would say he wanted his project done first. Frequently, one partner assigned her something urgent when she was working on an upcoming deadline for the other. So Kim created a to-do list every Monday morning, prioritized by due date, and shared it with the two partners. “That allowed each partner to be aware of what I had been assigned to do,” she says.

She also learned to watch their schedules, often with the help of their secretary. If Kim had been told that a project was urgent, she could gauge how soon she needed to do it based on when the partner was back in the office. She knew if she got it on his desk before he returned, she would be fine.

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Managing Across

Do you depend on lots of people over whom you have no authority? Are you struggling to motivate colleagues to meet *your* deadlines? To get your IT director's attention when she's juggling countless other projects? To get your cross-functional team functioning?

Many approaches to managing *up*, such as defining clear expectations and presenting solutions to problems, will help you here. But managing *across* your company—with peers, vendors, or external consultants—is more complex.

You don't have a say in their reviews or decide if they get promoted. So you need to use other tactics, such as setting mutually beneficial goals, establishing your credibility, polishing your powers of persuasion, and tapping into your network. The articles in this section will give you these tools.

What Makes a Leader?

A summary of the full-length HBR article by **Daniel Goleman**, highlighting key ideas

The Idea in Brief

Are you so intent on meeting deadlines or hitting financial targets that you're neglecting working relationships? Do you often interrupt colleagues? Fail to ask them what else is on their plates? Have you earned a "my way or the highway" reputation—shutting out others' perspectives and ideas?

If you nodded "yes" to any of these questions, you may have zeroed in on what's getting in the way of your ability to work well with people at all levels, across silos, and with personalities that may be very different from your own. Managing across requires *emotional intelligence*: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skill. Developing emotional intelligence will help you better understand your own—and others'—priorities, pressures, and work styles.

Daniel Goleman is the author of *Emotional Intelligence* (Bantam, 1995) and a coauthor of *Primal Leadership: Realizing the Power of Emotional Intelligence* (Harvard Business School, 2002). He is the cochairman of the Consortium for Research on Emotional Intelligence in Organizations, which is based at Rutgers University's Graduate School of Applied and Professional Psychology in Piscataway, New Jersey. He can be reached at Daniel.Goleman@verizon.net.

The Idea in Practice

The Five Components of Emotional Intelligence

Component	Definition	Hallmarks	Example
Self-awareness	Knowing one's emotions, strengths, weaknesses, drives, values, and goals—and their impact on others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-confidence • Realistic self-assessment • Self-deprecating sense of humor • Thirst for constructive criticism 	A manager knows tight deadlines bring out the worst in him. So he plans his time to get work done well in advance.
Self-regulation	Controlling or redirecting disruptive emotions and impulses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trustworthiness • Integrity • Comfort with ambiguity and change 	When a team botches a presentation, its leader resists the urge to scream. Instead, she considers possible reasons for the failure, explains the consequences to her team, and explores solutions with them.
Motivation	Being driven to achieve for the sake of achievement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A passion for the work itself and for new challenges • Unflagging energy to improve • Optimism in the face of failure 	A portfolio manager at an investment company sees his fund tumble for three consecutive quarters. Major clients defect. Instead of blaming external circumstances, she decides to learn from the experience—and engineers a turnaround.
Empathy	Considering others' feelings, especially when making decisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expertise in attracting and retaining talent • Ability to develop others • Sensitivity to crosscultural differences 	An American consultant and her team pitch a project to a potential client in Japan. Her team interprets the client's silence as disapproval and prepares to leave. The consultant reads the client's body language and senses interest. She continues the meeting, and her team gets the job.
Social Skill	Managing relationships to move people in desired directions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effectiveness in leading change • Persuasiveness • Extensive networking • Expertise in building and leading teams 	A manager wants his company to adopt a better Internet strategy. He finds kindred spirits and assembles a de facto team to create a prototype website. He persuades allies in other divisions to fund the company's participation in a relevant convention. His company forms an Internet division—and puts him in charge of it.

The Discipline of Teams

A summary of the full-length HBR article by **Jon R. Katzenbach** and **Douglas K. Smith**, highlighting key ideas

The Idea in Brief

Managing across is especially challenging when you're leading a group of colleagues. You're not their boss, but on this project, you're their leader. How can you get them to focus on *your* team's work when they also need to tend their own small fires—or meet *their* bosses' demands?

When you instill in your group the **discipline of teams**, your struggles will diminish. You'll be helping your team create a shared vision and then realize that vision with individual and mutual accountability.

Jon R. Katzenbach is a founder and senior partner of Katzenbach Partners, a strategic and organizational consulting firm, and a former director of McKinsey & Company. His most recent book is *Why Pride Matters More Than Money: The Power of the World's Greatest Motivational Force* (Crown Business, 2003).

Douglas K. Smith is an organizational consultant and a former partner at McKinsey & Company. His most recent book is *On Value and Values: Thinking Differently About We in an Age of Me* (Financial Times Prentice Hall, 2004).

The Idea in Practice

A team's essential discipline includes these characteristics:

1. A meaningful common purpose the team helps shape.

Most teams are responding to an initial corporate mandate. But to be successful, your team must “own” this purpose by developing its own spin on it. For example, if one of your company's strategic priorities is to increase customer retention, how might your web team translate that into its common purpose? By committing itself to becoming the online destination of choice for B2C customers in your industry.

2. Specific performance goals that flow from the common purpose.

Developing compelling and measurable goals will inspire and challenge your team, and inject a sense of urgency. Shared goals also have a leveling effect. They require everyone to focus on their collective effort rather than on any differences in their titles or status.

For example, your web team might set the following goals on its way to becoming the online destination of choice for its B2C customers: 1) Increase first-time visitors to the site by 50% over last year; 2) grow repeat site visitors by 25% over last year; 3) boost e-commerce sales by 15% over last year.

3. A strong commitment to how the work gets done.

Your team must agree on who will do what jobs, how you will establish and honor schedules, and how you will make and modify decisions. On a genuine team, everyone does equivalent amounts of real work; all members—even you as leader—contribute in concrete ways to the team's collective work.

Developing these rules of conduct at the outset will help your team achieve its purpose and goals. The most critical rules pertain to attendance (for example, “if you can't make a meeting, send notes or a representative who can speak for you”); focus (“no checking e-mail during meetings”); discussion (“no sacred cows”); confidentiality (“the only things to leave this room are what we agree on”); analytic approach (“base decisions on data, not assumptions”); end-product orientation (“everyone gets assignments and does them”); constructive confrontation (“no finger pointing”); and, often the most important, contributions (“everyone does real work”).

4. Mutual accountability.

You can't force trust and commitment. The process of creating and agreeing upon purpose and goals helps your team members forge their accountability to one another—not just to you, the leader.

For example, as your web team makes progress toward its three goals, everyone becomes increasingly eager to contribute to the team's success. Individuals volunteer their own and others' areas of expertise: The person with the best eye for visual detail prepares the PowerPoint presentation for the next unit meeting; the one who has the strongest relationship with your IT director spearheads delicate conversations about prioritizing the team's technology needs.

A Smarter Way to Network

A summary of the full-length HBR article by **Rob Cross** and **Robert Thomas**, highlighting key ideas

The Idea in Brief

To maximize your and your team's performance, you need resources, information, and expertise from people across your organization. They don't report to you, but they can make—or break—your project.

So you must influence them. How? Build a better network, using these steps:

- 1. Analyze:** Identify the benefits each of your existing network connections now provides. Does one person give you valuable information? Does another have expertise you need but lack?
- 2. De-layer:** Weed out connections that aren't helping you, such as people who burn too much of your time.
- 3. Diversify:** Fill the fresh openings in your network with people who can deliver the additional benefits you and your team need to accomplish your work.

Construct a strong network, and you'll have a wider, richer web of connections to draw on when the next crisis or opportunity lands on your desk.

Rob Cross (robcross@virginia.edu) is an associate professor at the University of Virginia's McIntire School of Commerce.

Robert Thomas is the executive director of the Accenture Institute for High Performance.

The Idea in Practice

When you need help from colleagues up, down, and across the organization, every network choice you make matters.

Use these steps to make your selections:

1. Analyze

Identify the individuals currently in your network.

Determine:

- **Where they're located.** Are they on your team? In your unit? Outside your organization? Are they higher-ups? Peers? Frontline workers? You want a diverse but select web of high-quality relationships with people who hail from several different spheres and levels in your organization.
- **What benefits they're providing.** Do they offer information, expertise, or best practices that can help you lead projects more effectively? Are they formally powerful people who can provide political "juice"? For instance, can they remind lazy members of a task force you're on how important their project is to the organization? Are they informally influential people who can win you needed support among the rank-and-file?

2. De-layer

Make tough decisions about relationships to back away from. Eliminate or minimize contact with people who sap your energy or offer benefits that others in your network already provide. By de-layering, you make room for people who can help you complete projects.

3. Diversify

Fill the new openings in your network with the right people, using this technique:

- Articulate three business goals you plan to achieve this year.
- List the people who could help you reach these goals—and how. Is it their expertise? Their control over resources? Their political support?
- Actively build relationships with these individuals.

Example:

Joe, an investment banker, needed to expand his global client pool. First he identified counterparts in his company's Asian and European operations who had relationships with clients he had targeted. Then he scheduled regular calls with his colleagues to synchronize their selling efforts. In some cases, these calls helped him identify opportunities he could pitch proactively, such as potential clients who were interested in his department's offerings. In others, the calls helped him and his peers appear more coordinated when their bank was competing against other banks for the same clients.

The Necessary Art of Persuasion

A summary of the full-length HBR article by Jay A. Conger, highlighting key ideas

The Idea in Brief

When you're operating outside clear reporting lines, your colleagues may not immediately see why they should collaborate with you. That's when your powers of persuasion come into play. It's not manipulation. Effective persuasion is a learning and negotiating process for leading your colleagues to a *shared solution* to a problem.

Jay A. Conger is a professor of organizational behavior at the University of Southern California's Marshall School of Business in Los Angeles, where he directs the Leadership Institute. He is the author of *Winning 'Em Over: A New Model for Managing in the Age of Persuasion*.

The Idea in Practice

The process of persuasion has four steps:

1. Establish credibility. Your credibility grows out of two sources: **expertise** and **relationships**. If you have a history of well-informed, sound judgment, your colleagues will trust your expertise. If you've demonstrated that you can work in the best interest of others, your peers will have confidence in your relationships.

If you're weak on the expertise side, bolster your position by:

- Learning more through formal and informal education—for example, conversations with in-house experts
- Hiring recognized outside experts
- Launching pilot projects

Example:

Two developers at Microsoft envisioned a controversial new software product, but both were technology novices. By working closely with technical experts and market testing a prototype, they persuaded management that the new product was ideally suited to the average computer user. It sold half a million units.

To fill in the relationship gap, try:

- Meeting one-on-one with key people
- Involving like-minded coworkers who have good support with your audience

2. Frame goals on common ground. Tangibly describe the benefits of your position. The fastest way to get a child to the grocery store is to point out the lollipops by the cash register. That's not deception—it's persuasion. When no shared advantages are apparent, adjust your position.

Example:

An ad agency executive persuaded skeptical fast-food franchisees to support headquarters' new price discounts. She cited reliable research showing how the pricing scheme improved franchisees' profits. They supported the new plan unanimously.

3. Vividly reinforce your position. Ordinary evidence won't do. Make numerical data more compelling with examples, stories, and metaphors that have an emotional impact.

Example:

The founder of Mary Kay Cosmetics made a speech comparing salespeople's weekly meetings to gatherings among Christians resisting Roman rule. This drove home the importance of a mutually supportive sales force and imbued the work with a sense of heroic mission.

4. Connect emotionally. Adjust your own emotional tone to match your audience's ability to receive your message. Learn how your colleagues have interpreted past events in the organization and sense how they will probably interpret your proposal. Test key individuals' possible reactions.

Example:

A Chrysler team leader raised the morale of employees disheartened by foreign competition when he persuaded senior management to bring a new car design in-house. He showed both groups slides of his hometown, devastated by foreign mining competition. Dramatic images of his boarded-up high school and the town's crumbling ironworks shone a sobering light on the aftereffects of outsourcing. His patriotic and emotional appeal resonated with his audiences.

Three Ways Not to Persuade

by Jay A. Conger

In my work with managers as a researcher and as a consultant, I've had the unfortunate opportunity to see executives fail miserably at persuasion. Here are three of the most common mistakes people make:

1. They attempt to make their case with an up-front, hard sell. I call this the John Wayne approach. Managers strongly state their position at the outset, and then through a process of persistence, logic, and exuberance, they try to push the idea to a close. In reality, setting out a strong position at the start of a persuasion effort gives potential opponents something to grab onto—and fight against. It's far better to present your position with the finesse and reserve of a lion tamer, who engages his "partner" by showing him the legs of a chair. In other words, effective persuaders don't begin the process by giving their colleagues a clear target in which to set their jaws.

2. They resist compromise. Too many managers see compromise as surrender, but it is essential to constructive persuasion. Before people buy into a proposal, they want to see that the persuader is flexible enough to respond to their concerns. Compromises can often lead to better, more sustainable shared solutions.

By not compromising, ineffective persuaders unconsciously send the message that they think persuasion is a one-way street. But persuasion is a process of give-and-take. Kathleen Reardon, a professor of organizational behavior at the University of Southern California, points out that a persuader rarely changes another person's behavior or viewpoint without altering his or her own in the process. To persuade meaningfully, we must not only listen to others but also incorporate their perspectives into our own.

3. They assume persuasion is a one-shot effort. Persuasion is a process, not an event.

Rarely, if ever, is it possible to arrive at a shared solution on the first try. More often than not, persuasion involves listening to people, testing a position, developing a new position that reflects input from the group, more testing, incorporating compromises, and then trying again. If this sounds like a slow and difficult process, that's because it is. But the results are worth the effort.

Jay A. Conger is a professor of organizational behavior at the University of Southern California's Marshall School of Business in Los Angeles, where he directs the Leadership Institute. He is the author of *Winning 'Em Over: A New Model for Managing in the Age of Persuasion*.

Excerpted from "The Necessary Art of Persuasion" ([product #4258](#)) by Jay A. Conger.

Harnessing the Science of Persuasion

A summary of the full-length HBR article by **Robert B. Cialdini**, highlighting key ideas

The Idea in Brief

Do you have it—the power to capture your audience, sway undecideds, convert opponents? In matrixed organizations, persuasion trumps formal power. It's essential to getting things done through others.

Persuasion works by appealing predictably to deeply rooted human needs. We can all learn to secure consensus, cut deals, win concessions—by artfully applying six scientific principles of winning friends and influencing people.

Robert B. Cialdini is the Regents' Professor of Psychology at Arizona State University and the author of *Influence: Science and Practice* (Allyn & Bacon, 2001), now in its fourth edition. Further regularly updated information about the influence process can be found at <http://www.influenceatwork.com/>.

The Idea in Practice

Persuasion Principles

Principle	Example	Business Application
<p>LIKING: People like those like them, who like them.</p>	<p>At Tupperware parties, guests' fondness for their host influences purchase decisions twice as much as regard for the products.</p>	<p>To influence people, win friends, through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Similarity:</i> Create <i>early</i> bonds with new peers, bosses, and direct reports by informally discovering common interests—you'll establish goodwill and trustworthiness. • <i>Praise:</i> Charm and disarm. Make positive remarks about others—you'll generate more willing compliance.
<p>RECIPROCITY: People repay in kind.</p>	<p>When the Disabled American Veterans enclosed free personalized address labels in donation-request envelopes, response rate doubled.</p>	<p>Give what you want to receive. Lend a staff member to a colleague who needs help; you'll get <i>his</i> help later.</p>
<p>SOCIAL PROOF: People follow the lead of similar others.</p>	<p>More New York City residents tried returning a lost wallet after learning that other New Yorkers had tried.</p>	<p>Use peer power to influence horizontally, not vertically; e.g., ask an esteemed "old timer" to support your new initiative if other veterans resist.</p>
<p>CONSISTENCY: People fulfill written, public, and voluntary commitments.</p>	<p>92% of residents of an apartment complex who signed a petition supporting a new recreation center later donated money to the cause.</p>	<p>Make others' commitments active, public, and voluntary. If you supervise an employee who should submit reports on time, get that understanding in writing (a memo); make the commitment public (note colleagues' agreement with the memo); and link the commitment to the employee's values (the impact of timely reports on team spirit).</p>
<p>AUTHORITY: People defer to experts who provide shortcuts to decisions requiring specialized information.</p>	<p>A single <i>New York Times</i> expert-opinion news story aired on TV generates a 4% shift in U.S. public opinion.</p>	<p>Don't assume your expertise is self-evident. Instead, establish your expertise <i>before</i> doing business with new colleagues or partners; e.g., in conversations before an important meeting, describe how you solved a problem similar to the one on the agenda.</p>
<p>SCARCITY: People value what's scarce.</p>	<p>Wholesale beef buyers' orders jumped 600% when they alone received information on a possible beef shortage.</p>	<p>Use exclusive information to persuade. Influence and rivet key players' attention by saying, for example: "...Just got this information today. It won't be distributed until next week."</p>

How to Get Your Colleagues' Attention

by Amy Gallo

Do you have to personally escort colleagues to your project meetings to make sure they show up? Does every “urgent” e-mail require phone or face-to-face follow-up to get a timely response? Do you have to hound your marketing partners to prioritize your products when they’re launching new campaigns? These key tasks depend on your ability to **frame your message**—to make crystal clear what you need your col-

leagues to do, when, and, perhaps most important, why.

When you frame your message effectively, your audience will immediately understand the issue at hand and why it deserves their attention.

Here’s how to frame your message to get the results you want, whether you’re making a presentation, sending an e-mail, or talking in private with your boss:

Principle	Example
<p>Start with what you want. Busy colleagues don’t want to wait while you build to the punch line. Provide the most important information up front and ask for what you need.</p>	<p>“John, I need your advice about the product launch. I’ve gotten some new marketing data that may influence which message we lead with. I’ve come up with two alternatives, and I’d like your help deciding which to go with.”</p>
<p>Set the scene. Don’t dive too deep into details, but provide enough context so your audience can follow along.</p>	<p>“To refresh your memory, the event we have planned is a question-and-answer panel on how to connect with today’s modern moms. So far we’ve got five participants signed up to speak, including two CEOs of our top customers. Our goal is to reach as many marketers in the New York area as we can. We’ve sent out 2,500 invites and the initial response has been positive.”</p>
<p>Explain the complication. This is the specific reason for the meeting or your e-mail. What prompted you to deliver the message?</p>	<p>“As of today, the vendor is two weeks late with the prototypes. If there are further delays, we risk missing the deadline we set with the marketing team. We are somewhat stuck because the vendor knows we can’t start over at this point with someone new. We need to figure out how to motivate the vendor and adjust our schedule so we can meet marketing’s deadline.”</p>

continued on next page

Principle	Example
<p>Connect to the big picture. Why should your audience care? Point out what is relevant to them and how it links to their broader goals.</p>	<p>“While eliminating the call checklist may seem like a small issue, it has important implications. It will encourage reps to engage with customers in a more informal way, which has been shown to increase customer satisfaction. This is a critical step toward meeting our unit’s goal of 65% customer retention.”</p>
<p>Make it memorable. People hear news and information all day. Give them something to latch on to such as a metaphor, a key statistic, or a sound bite.</p>	<p>“Our customers feel this is an urgent issue and have told us so repeatedly. The longer we wait to respond, the more it will seem that the house is on fire and we’re busy rearranging the furniture instead of calling 911.”</p>
<p>Refocus your audience’s attention. It’s easy for audiences to get distracted by secondary issues, so you must help them concentrate on the central objective. This is especially useful when you need to keep a large group on track or motivate people toward a common goal.</p>	<p>“Susan, I see that you’re concerned about getting the templates to design by our agreed-upon deadline. We need to make sure that happens. But let’s agree on the right approach first—to be sure we’re handing off a good product—and then we can work backwards to make sure we meet our deadlines.”</p>
<p>End with a call to action. Once you’ve set the context, reiterate what it is you need from your audience.</p>	<p>“Today I need to get your feedback on the presentation. I’d like to know specifically how we should tweak our high-level message to ensure it resonates with the leadership team.”</p>

Amy Gallo is a contributing editor at *Harvard Business Review*. Follow her on Twitter at [@amyegallo](https://twitter.com/amyegallo).

When the Direct Approach Backfires, Try Indirect Influence

by Martha Craumer

How do you get people who don't work for you to *work for you*?

When direct management techniques don't work—especially with those over whom you have no authority—you may have better luck with these, more subtle, approaches.

1. Talk less, listen more. When you try to persuade people, you can spend too much time explaining your position, and not enough time asking questions, listening, and understanding other points of view.

Your colleagues are less likely to resist when they feel you've taken the time to acknowledge their concerns. In *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, Stephen Covey says that the greatest need of human beings—after physical survival—is to be understood, affirmed, and appreciated. He explains that “empathic listening gets inside another person's frame of reference. You look out through it, you see the world the way they [do], you understand their paradigm, you understand how they feel.” It's human nature to want to work with, not against, someone who “gets” us. Ask about your colleagues' challenges or people they're struggling with. This information will help you identify common goals and solutions. And you'll be building stronger working relationships.

2. Make 'em like you. It's hard to say no to someone you like. So how can you increase your likability? Play up similarities. We tend to like people who share our background, interests, style of dress, etc.

We also like people who like us. We're suckers for compliments. If your colleague does a good job leading a meeting, tell him what you liked about the way he ran it. Be specific. Ask another colleague about her weekend and listen—perhaps you'll discover a shared passion for hiking or reading. Then when you

need their help, your colleagues will be more likely to offer their expertise.

3. Make 'em laugh. Ever wonder why so many speakers open their presentations with a joke? Humor is disarming. It makes people root for us. It's hard to feel bad when you're laughing—and hard to dislike a person who makes you laugh.

Humor makes you appear calm, approachable, and in control. It helps your audience feel more relaxed and receptive to change, new ideas, and your influence. Use humor to help soften a harsh message and make it easier to speak freely about the challenge at hand.

But use humor with care. Inside jokes and cultural allusions can be off-putting. And, of course, humor should never be at the expense of the person you're trying to influence—nor should it make light of her issues or concerns.

4. Do a favor—even a small one. Doing something for someone gives you enormous power and influence over them. In his book *Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion*, Robert Cialdini discusses the unwritten rule of reciprocity and how it obligates us to repay what another person has given us.

Cialdini cites a research study involving two groups of subjects and a “plant”—a man named Joe—who was posing as a fellow subject. Each member of the first group received a small “favor” from Joe—a Coke that he picked up for them while out of the room. The second group received no favor. Then, Joe told each group he was selling raffle tickets. The subjects who received a Coke from Joe bought twice as many tickets as the subjects who received nothing. The reciprocity rule overwhelmed all other factors—including whether they even liked Joe. The ticket buyers felt an irresistible need to repay him.

The more you raise your hand to help others, the more likely they'll do the same for you. Volunteer to take notes at a colleague's brainstorming session. Help set out lunch for a big client meeting. Offer to listen to your teammate's dry run of a big presentation.

5. Feed 'em. Pick up an extra coffee for the programmer who's been developing a data feed for your new website. Bring fresh fruit or candy bars to your project launch meeting. Pick one day every two weeks to take a colleague to

lunch. Don't ask your buddy—invite people whom you don't often get to see outside of big hairy meetings, to help deepen your relationships and extend your network. It's simple, but true: we like to be fed.

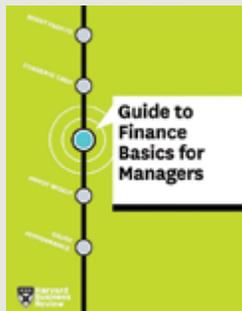
Martha Craumer is a freelance writer based in Cambridge, Mass.

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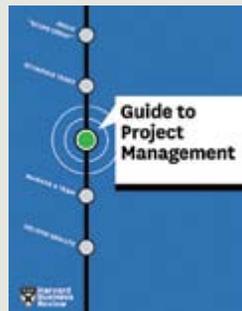
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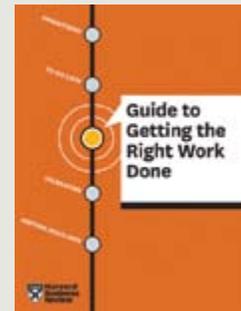
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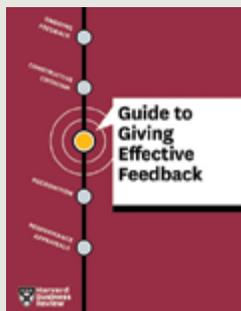
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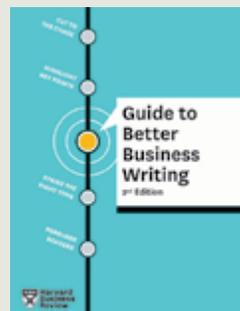
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