Managing Up:
How to Positively Influence Supervisors and Senior Staff to Achieve Positive Results
What Is Managing Up?

*Managing up* is:

A focus on developing a *collaborative relationship* with your supervisor and/or senior staff to obtain the best results for:

- You;
- Your boss;
- Your agency leaders; and
- Your agency/organization.
What’s In It For Me?

Your supervisor often has a better sense of the “bigger picture” for the office and an idea for implementing strategic plans, goals and objectives.

By developing a collaborative relationship with your boss/leadership, this enables them to:

- Give you more interesting and/or challenging tasks;
- Confer on you greater levels of responsibility;
- Assess your skills and assist in addressing/resolving existing skill gaps; and
- Provide better working conditions.
How NOT to Manage Your Boss

Video Clip: The Office, Episode 4x12 - “Did I Stutter?”
HOW DO I MANAGE MY BOSS?

1. Find out what kind of boss you have on your hands. Is he/she:

- A visionary? (big picture thinker, risk taker, creative)
- A worker bee? (detail oriented, project manager)
- A drill sergeant? (authoritative, concise, bottom-line person)
- A former drone? (risen through the ranks)
- A cowardly lion? (has troublemaking decisions)
2. Make sure you know what’s important to your supervisor. Ask yourself:

- What are his/her priorities?
- What are his/her preferences and pet peeves? (i.e., punctuality, data, suspense dates, coffee, etc.)
How Do I Manage My Boss? (Continued)

3. Communicate in the way he/she receives information the best.

- Visual – Seeing is believing
- Auditory – Hearing is enough
- Kinetic – A hands-on approach
How Do I Manage My Boss? (Continued)

4. Don’t surprise your boss; make him/her aware of projects and tasks.

- Overt: Weekly 10-minute meetings, e-mail recaps, pop-ins.
- Covert: Courtesy copy your boss on kudos to team members for a job well done; forward kudos received to your boss.
5. Bring more to the table than problems; be solution-oriented.

- Play devil’s advocate in the planning phase
- Highlight your strategic thinking skills by providing multiple solutions
How Do I Manage My Boss? (Continued)

6. Be honest and trustworthy.

- Don’t fake it to make it
- Ask for what you need to get the job done
- Don’t go over his/her head unless there are mitigating circumstances
7. Listen, observe, strategize and implement.

8. Repeat as needed!
What If I Have More Than One Boss?

As if having one boss wasn’t tricky enough!

Employees today often have to report to multiple managers, which comes with its own set of unique challenges.
What If I Have More Than One Boss?

Group Exercise: Reporting to Multiple Bosses
What If I Have More Than One Boss? (Con’t.)

First, take a look at the positives:

1. **Fosters Diversity.** The office becomes more “democratic,” with varying perspectives weighing in to the decision-making process.

2. **Promotes Growth and Learning.** You have a chance to learn from more than one subject matter expert.

3. **Communication and Exposure.** There is greater cross-collaboration among employees and operational divisions, which can result in networking opportunities.
What If I Have More Than One Boss? (Con’t.)

Next, take a look at the negatives:

1. **Overload.** With more than one person assigning you work, one of the greatest risks is simply having too much to do.

2. **Conflicting messages.** Different bosses have different expectations, and supervisors may not communicate with one another out of ignorance/lack of developed soft skills or because of a hidden agenda.

3. **Conflicting points of view.** A variety of experiences and opinions can prevent quick and effective decision-making.

4. **Loyalty.** Employees may favor one supervisor over another for many reasons; additionally, reporting to more than one person often requires you negotiate between competing demands for your loyalty.
What If I Have More Than One Boss? (Con’t.)

Dos and Don’ts of Matrix Managing Up

1. **DO** know who your ultimate boss is. **DON’T** just guess.

When working for more than one supervisor, be sure to ask a lot of questions about the reporting structure. Also ask:

- Who completes your performance reviews and who contributes to them?
- Who makes decisions about your compensation, promotions, etc.?
- Who approved/disapproves details and training opportunities?

Understanding who holds the most power will aid you in making decisions about how to act. It's important to know from the outset who can help or hurt your career.
What If I Have More Than One Boss? (Con’t.)

Dos and Don’ts of Matrix Managing Up (Continued)

2. **DO** be proactive about your workload. **DON’T** keep your bosses in the dark.

   Be sure all of your bosses know what’s on your plate.

   • Create an Excel spreadsheet that lists all of your ongoing tasks and projects, with columns for status, deadlines, notes.
   • Set up a 30-minute weekly standing meeting with your supervisors to communicate your workload with them and address concerns.

   You’ll impress with your organizational skills and initiative.
What If I Have More Than One Boss? (Con’t)

Dos and Don’ts of Matrix Managing Up (Continued)

3. **DO** get your bosses to communicate, if possible. **DON’T** wait until the situation is dire.

Whatever challenges you may be facing, the best approach is to get your bosses to talk with each other instead of relaying messages.

- Schedule a meeting to discuss the issue.
- Present the case factually, along with potential solutions. Enlist them in the problem solving.

By asking for advice, your bosses are more likely to see the challenge from your perspective.
What If I Have More Than One Boss? (Con’t.)

Dos and Don’ts of Matrix Managing Up (Continued)

4. **DO** set up boundaries. **DON’T** allow yourself to become overwhelmed.

The most important skill for staying sane while reporting to multiple bosses is the ability to set boundaries.

- Establish protected times where you can work without disruptions.
- Don’t respond to e-mails or calls before or after working hours.

Conversely, don’t forget to respect your boss’ boundaries. Work-life balance is important!
What If I Have More Than One Boss? (Con’t.)

Dos and Don’ts of Matrix Managing Up (Continued)

5. **DO** learn how to play the game. **DON’T** be outsmarted.

Understand the politics between your bosses and then make a thoughtful decision about whose request or demand to ignore.

- Fear-based environments (places where transparency, proactive measures and conflict resolution are anything but the norm) need a different approach.
- Figure out how to protect yourself. Find out which of your bosses has the most power and prioritize his or her assignments. Do your own calculation of who is more powerful and who would hurt you the least.

Remember, sometimes it’s a matter of survival: Outwit, Outlast, Outplay.
6. DON’T take it personally. DO learn to shake things off.

It can be easy to develop paranoid fantasies about how your bosses are out to get you, but more likely than not, this is not the case. Chances are they are simply pushing their own agendas and you are getting caught in the middle.

- Try not to feel persecuted, but preemptively identify the conflicts and push to resolve them.
- Dwell on the positives: you likely have more autonomy than if you worked for one person, and you can more easily find ways to personalize your job.
Know When to Go

1. You're getting sick.
   Migraines, insomnia, depression, anxiety, frequent infections or other illnesses may be signs that your job is taking a toll on your physical health.

2. Your values aren't met.
   Your organization may provide products you don't believe in or exaggerates their quality to customers, or its vision is out of sync with your own. Whatever the reason, if your ethics are being violated at work, you'll have a hard time feeling fulfilled with your career.

3. You're not challenged.
   You'd like the chance to use your skills, but you're stuck doing busy work all day. A job that is not challenging you and allowing you to use the skills you've developed may be a hindrance in the long-term.
Know When to Go

4. **No room for advancement.**
   An environment that offers no room for you to move up or take on more responsibility is not a good place to be in for long.

5. **The organization is in trouble.**
   A organization that is constantly reorganizing, downsizing or changing leadership may not be a good long-term choice. The same goes for a company that provides no rules and procedures to protect employees (or provides them but they’re not followed).

6. **Workplace bullying is tolerated.**
   A work environment that is violent, is led by verbally or emotionally abusive management, tolerates mistreatment among employees, or offers no route to resolve disputes and grievances is an unhealthy place to be.
Know When to Go

7. A better opportunity comes along.
   There may come a point in your career when a new opportunity presents itself. At this point, make a list weighing the pros and cons of each position, and if the new job comes out on top, don't be afraid to make the switch.
Takeaways

Do:

• Look for the most common challenges of having multiple bosses so you can proactively handle them.

• Keep a positive attitude and remember that the conflicts are because of the situation, not because of you.

• Find out which of your bosses is responsible for making the decisions that affect your career.
Takeaways (Continued)

Don't:

• Try relay messages from one boss to the other. Get them to talk with each other, if possible.

• Keep your workload a secret; create an Excel spreadsheet, track your projects and keep your bosses appraised.

• Push for transparency if your organization doesn't reward it.
Wrap-Up

Questions or comments?
For more information, contact:

**Glorimar Maldonado**
*Senior Advisor, Strategic Recruiter, & Hispanic Employment Program Manager*
Strategic Programs Office | Human Resources Office
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Telephone: 770-488-1896 | E-mail: gmaldonado@cdc.gov

The findings and conclusions in this presentation are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official position of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.