

Influencing Your Boss

What's the number one reason people leave their jobs? They don't like their boss. So it should come as no surprise if you sometimes have trouble dealing with your boss. Just thinking about a high stakes salary negotiation, a sensitive year-end performance review, or having to deliver some kind of "bad news" to your boss can raise your stress level. It's hard to be at your best in such situations. It will be a lot easier once you've crafted your influence strategy.

Influence strategy: Any time you need to influence upward, clarity is key.

So prepare accordingly. First, get clear in your mind what's working or not working, from your perspective, and what you hope or expect to change. Think just as hard about where your boss is coming from. (If you don't know, then plan to ask.) Envision a conversation that reaches beyond just getting what you want. Get ready to search for mutually desirable outcomes you and your boss can pursue together.

As you talk with your boss, thoughtfully use a blend of the "push" and "pull" influence styles. Clearly state how you see things, and invite your boss to do the same, using your active listening skills to show that you're sincerely interested in his or her point of view. Then, state what you want, taking care to back your proposals whenever possible with reasons that connect to what is important to your boss. Ask your boss to share some of his or her goals, as well. Chances are, your boss will welcome this form of influence because it invites him or her to contemplate appealing possibilities. Throughout the dialogue, search for the common ground between what your boss wants and what you want.

Pursuing such conversations with your boss might not work perfectly at first, but keep trying. While others merely whine or make demands, you'll command your boss's respect by being clear about what you want, and by being sincerely interested in his or her goals, as well. Over time, this kind of interaction will transform how your boss sees you and deals with you.

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