



How early into your supervisory role did you realize how much time and energy you would be spending on successfully managing up?

For most of us, when we become a team leader, manager, or supervisor, we anticipate that our focus will be on our team.

We don't always anticipate how much of our energy will be spent on managing up.

But it's such a huge component of our ability to lead successfully because so much of our work is impacted by those who lead us.

Unfortunately, like a lot of other important things in the work that we do, we're not generally taught how to do this.

There are not as many trainings or workshops or articles about how to do this, so we are mostly left to our own devices to figure it out.

I want to help you out with that today as we focus on managing up to make you as successful as you can be.

Managing up is a really complex thing, and there are many facets to it. Today we're going to focus on managing up as it pertains to performance.

This is important because so much of your work experience is going to be determined and affected by your leadership.

At some point in time you're going to need to ask your leadership for something, or there's going to be an issue or a problem or a misunderstanding that needs to be addressed.

This is true if your leadership team is wonderful, if they're a little bit less than wonderful, or if they're a lot less than wonderful.

Think about what is challenging about this for you.

You might want to focus on your current leadership and what challenges you might be having with them.

It could also be beneficial to look back at your career and see what patterns come up for you and challenges that you have experienced over and over again.

How might you be able to shift your mindset to better serve you?

Your relationship with your supervisor is naturally going to be different from the relationship with those you supervise.

One of the biggest areas of difference is in improvement and growth.



Your role as a team leader is to help your team grow and improve.

That's not your role with your own supervisor.

Your role with your own supervisor is to make sure that you have everything you need from them in order for your own growth and your own development and your own performance. That's the goal. You're not there to help them get better for their sake. You're there to help them get better for your sake.

There are a lot of things to consider when you have these conversations with your leadership.

The first one is, how willing are they to have this conversation?

Not just how willing, but how willing are they to listen and act?

A lot of times we get false hope when our leaders say, 'Oh, thank you so much for bringing this to my attention. I'm so grateful that you are honest with me' but then nothing changes.

Just listening isn't going to help you one bit.

You need listening and then you need action.

Don't assume the conclusion.

A lot of times we avoid these conversations because we just assume that nothing good is going to come out of them.

That may be the case and sometimes it is but you don't know that till you try.

Don't come up with your conclusion before you have the evidence.

Have the conversation and if it doesn't go well, have it again and try again.

Put some effort in.

We know that relationships take time and effort.

How much time and effort it takes until you're ready to give up only you can answer that.

There's not a formula- that you've tried two times and waited three weeks and four.

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Wouldn't it be easy and nice if it worked that way?

A lot of these factors are really going to be based on you and what you need and want for your own job experience.

Always focus on the purpose and the outcome.

You're not there to tell them things that simply annoy you or you wish were better for better's sake.

You're there to have a conversation about what you need to to improve your own performance and meet your own expectations.

How much effort are you willing to put into it?

That's a question for you.

I had a supervisor once who was pretty neglectful. It was very important to me that we meet on a regular basis, so I knew what the expectations were of me and we could work through any issues, but they did not really want to be meeting so frequently. After a lot of effort, we did get a regular meeting on the calendar except then it was scheduled over constantly and when I tried to reschedule there was a lot of resistance.

It really was a lot of effort on my part, sort of forcing my boss to do something they clearly didn't want to be doing.

I gave it about a year and then I stopped doing it and left shortly after.

For you, depending on your boss, depending on you, depending on the situation, it might be a year.

It might be a week.

It might be a decade.

It's based on you.

Speak to them about what they care about.

Realize that there may be a difference between you advocating for yourself and you advocating on behalf of your team.

The lines might be somewhat in a similar place or you might push a little harder if it's on behalf of your team or a little bit lighter.

One thing to think about is, are you focused on getting what you need or are you focused on getting it from them?



A lot of times, we get ourselves in trouble with the should.

*This should come from my supervisor.*

*They should be giving me this PD.*

*They should be giving me this feedback.*

Should, should, should.

It doesn't really matter ultimately because you want to focus on getting what you need.

If you can get it elsewhere, then focus on the fact that you've got it.

Don't get tripped up that your supervisor should have been the one giving it to you.

Anytime you come to your supervisor with something, think about how you can make their lives easier.

Not because you're a nice person- I know that you are- but because you want to make your life easier.

What do they need from you in order to give you what you want?

You need to protect yourself if they're not forthcoming with feedback or checking in or letting you know where you stand. Then advocate for yourself to make sure you're clear on how you're doing.

If you're about to get that next raise or that next promotion or you're about to get fired or wherever you stand, it's important that you know, so you can prepare accordingly.

As with most conversations, be very clear about what you're asking for and articulate what's in it for them.

If you're burnt out, if you have too much work, if you can't get to the end of your to-do list, they might not care about that. They should but that's a should. They might not.

But if you have too much work to do and it's preventing you from bringing more money in or meeting your grant requirements or getting the clients that you need to get or whatever your goals are, then that's what they're going to care about.

Frame it in a way that they care about it, not just sharing how it affects you.

Speak about it in terms of how it affects what they care about.

Know your supervisor.



This is all part of working together and getting to know each other.

They might be a supervisor who wants you to bring the solution to them. If that's the case, do it that way.

If you say, 'I have 10 things I need to do. I only have time to do six. These are the six I'm going to focus on and here's how I'm going to get the other four done next week' or whatever.

But if they're a supervisor who likes to be the one to make the suggestion, then let them do that. 'Hey, supervisor, I have 10 things to do. I only have time to do six of them. What would you like me to do?' or 'which six are your priority?'

You feel that out as you start to establish a pattern and how they operate.

I'm always a big fan of direct communication.

I encourage people to do this when they're first hired and then throughout your relationship with your supervisor.

*If I need your help, what's the best way to ask?*

*Are you a texter or an emailer or a face-to-face person?*

*How am I doing?*

*What should I be doing better?*

*How can I make your life easier?*

*What is something that really frustrates you?*

*What are your priorities for me?*

Keep soliciting to get the information that you need.

You have a much better chance of getting something than changing something.

If you are going to ask your supervisor to change the way they communicate or the way they write emails or the way they lead a staff meeting, that's going to be pretty challenging.

Change is hard.

There's that delicate balance that they are your supervisor.



You're going to have a much better chance of success by asking for something.

You might need some money or you might need a new computer or you might need a new assistant or you might need one more day to meet the deadline.

Ask specifically for what you need.

Don't try to change who they fundamentally are.

It's almost impossible for you to do that.

So, the most important question for you is, what do you need to do differently to more effectively manage up?