MANAGE YOUR BOSS ONE MEETING AT A TIME

If you’re the boss, stop reading this and hand it over to your employees. It’s the first of many steps in allowing them to help you be a better boss.

Most management conversations occur ad hoc — maybe during meetings, even if many present don’t need to be part of that conversation — in sudden emails and voicemails, in passing or when there is a big problem that demands attention. These “management on-the-fly” or “management by special occasion” conversations are usually random, incomplete and often too late to avoid any problem or solve one before it grows large.

If you are working with a boss on a new project or on an event with high stakes, meet more often. If your project involves lots of uncertainty, meet more often.

The last thing you want is to waste your boss’s time. If you make regular meetings a priority, you won’t waste away the hour catching up or explaining a convoluted series of events. Preparation is critical to efficient exchanges. Keep it simple, focused and brief.

Once you’ve established a routine, 15 minutes every week or every other week should be sufficient. Like everything else, it’s a moving target. Over time, you’ll gauge how much time is necessary.

What’s the Point?
The fundamental goal is talking to your boss about your work. It’s that simple. Whether you’re meeting with the event supervisor or the shop owner, it’s your job to determine the focus of the exchange. As you prepare, ask yourself the following: Are there problems that haven’t been spotted or ones that need solving? What resources are needed? Are you fuzzy on any plans or goals? Has anything happened since you last met that the boss should know? Are you still waiting for the manager to answer a question, close a loop or provide an opinion?

At the very least, you need updates on your progress. Get input from your boss while you have the chance. And think about what feedback you should give in return based on your unique perspective from the front line. Strategize together. This is your opportunity to get a little advice, support, motivation and inspiration, while simultaneously helping your boss be a better leader.

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TOP 8 MYTHS ABOUT MANAGING YOUR BOSS

MYTH 1 If you are a high-performer, your boss shouldn’t tell you how to do your job.
REALITY Everybody improves with regular guidance, direction and support.

MYTH 2 To be creative, you need to do things your own way.
REALITY To be creative, the first thing you need to know is exactly what is up to you and what is not.

MYTH 3 If someone else gets special treatment, you should too.
REALITY Figure out what you need to do to earn more of the rewards you want.

MYTH 4 Catering to your boss’s style and preferences leads to success.
REALITY Be aware of preferences, but refuse to be undermanaged.

MYTH 5 Making friends with your boss is smart workplace politics.
REALITY It’s smarter to build genuine rapport by talking about the work on a regular basis.

MYTH 6 Hiding mistakes and problems is a good way to avoid trouble.
REALITY It’s always better to get help fixing mistakes and solving problems while they’re small and manageable.

MYTH 7 Being coached on your performance is bad news.
REALITY Everyone benefits from regular candid feedback and guidance.

MYTH 8 If your boss doesn’t like paperwork, you don’t need to keep a written track of your performance.
REALITY A tracking system benefits you, regardless of whether the boss reads it. It provides a record of your hard work, results and improvement.