



spare change

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My two-cents toward sparking transformation

The 3 "P's" of Managing UP

***"Consider how hard it is to change yourself
and you'll understand what little chance you have in trying to change others."***

Jacob Braude

You're busy leading your team, focused on building solid relationships with your direct reports and meeting your clients' needs. You know that the management and leadership skills you display every day with those you lead and serve are critical to delivering great results for your firm.

It's easy to focus downward and outward. But what about upward? We often forget an important piece of our overall performance: our ability to "manage up." To create a mutually beneficial relationship with our boss that leads to our learning and development and ultimately our career progression.

But that's not always easy. No boss is perfect. In fact, at times, many bosses can be utterly exasperating. I frequently get "the call" or the "tearing my hair out" email from coaching clients who are frustrated with their bosses, unable to have the influence or achieve the outcomes that they desire.

What does it take to manage up in those not so idyllic situations? What does it take to "lead" your boss when he drives you crazy? Over the years, I've discovered "**3 Ps**" that have helped my clients successfully deal with their challenging bosses.

But one note of caution and a premise for my tips: **You cannot CHANGE your boss.** You can only learn to understand him or her: their Pressures, their Priorities and their Personality.



Pressures

The pressure to perform has never been higher. Tight economic times, rapidly changing circumstances, and client demands come at us from all sides. Put yourself in your boss's shoes. What pressure is she dealing with that causes her behavior? How would you behave if you were in a similar situation?

A coaching client's boss was responsible for replacing \$35 million in lost revenue for her company. The pressure of replacing this lost business played out in decisions and behaviors that my client had not previously witnessed in his boss.

This is where the emotional intelligence skill of empathy comes into play. When you are empathic, you are able to place yourself in the other person's shoes. Looking at the situation from another's perspective better enables you to understand the possible reasons for their actions, decisions or behaviors. Broadening out your perspective enables you to see and potentially connect with your boss in a whole new way.

My client met with his boss, expressed his desire to help with the business development efforts and brainstormed solutions to what his boss perceived as enormous pressure and responsibility. A new and improved sense of partnership was formed.

Priorities

Do you know your boss's priorities? From his perspective, what are the **most important** facets of your role and what's expected of you? Are you meeting those expectations and generating the results that are most important to him?

As I said before, we cannot change our bosses. We can only change ourselves. So look in the mirror and ask yourself: Am I performing in accordance with the expectations that my boss has set out. Have those priorities changed over time? And if you don't know, be proactive and take the time to seek feedback and when necessary, realignment.

In their essay, **Managing Your Boss**, Linda Hill and Kent Lineback encourage you to understand "what you should be doing beyond your formal job description that will make you indispensable to your boss and your organization as a whole."



Personality

It's common place in today's world of work to learn about ourselves and our personality type. There are a whole host of instruments like MBTI and DISC that help us to understand our preferred work style and behaviors. What is your personality preference and how similar or dissimilar is it to your boss's? The power of knowing your own type as well as your boss's cannot be over-emphasized.

The MBTI, for example, provides insight and information on your preferred communication style, problem solving approach and leadership style. Understanding where you are similar or different from your boss helps you put your communication and relationship challenges in perspective. The MBTI also provides a TEAM report to enable you to understand your type in the context of your overall team. Great leaders are willing to take a look at personality preferences in order to maximize communication and problem solving effectiveness.

For example, my coaching client Jim, an introverted, detail oriented, logical thinker reports to Paul, an extrovert who is focused on the big picture and strategy. Neither individual is good or bad, right or wrong. They just look at the world through two different lenses. Understanding your own perspective and how it matches with your boss's helps you to try new or different communication approaches or work style solutions to better connect.

Summing Up

Let's face it; your boss is critical to your success, or your failure. Your ability to establish and maintain a mutually satisfying relationship with your boss can lead to more and better leadership opportunities, learning and growth through consistent and constructive feedback and advocacy along the way. Understanding your boss's Pressures, Priorities and Personality can help you be more organizationally agile and politically savvy.

And remember, I'd share these same tips to those who report to you. Unless you're the perfect boss, know that they are faced with similar challenges as well.

About the Author: Mary C. Werner, CPA, MOD is the founder of *Werner Coaching and Consulting, Inc.*, a firm that builds on her more than 25 years of accounting, business and financial consulting experience. Mary is a certified executive coach and provides coaching to individuals and teams as well as organizational development consulting to facilitate individual and organizational change efforts. For more information, visit www.wernercoaching.com or contact Mary directly at Mary@wernercoaching.com