

March 4, 2019



Public Affairs
Council

Managing Up or Down

Susan Askew, International Council of Shopping Centers

Kristin Brackemyre, Public Affairs Council

In [one Gallup study of 7,272 U.S. adults](#), it found that 50 percent of employees left their job "to get away from their manager to improve their overall life at some point in their career."

We've all heard this "tune" play like a broken record: People leave managers, not companies.

Managing Up

Be observant

- Study your boss—what do they care about, what are their goals and highest priorities, pain points, etc.
- Try to mimic their preferences in terms of receiving information, reporting mechanisms
- **Pro tip:** if you're doing your job effectively you should be making their jobs easier. Look for ways to be a resource to them, take things off their plate. Let that be a guiding principle of the way you view your role and good things will often come.



Managing Up

Be honest

- Diplomatically speak your mind. If things aren't working, you feel undervalued, you need more resources. Your boss is not a mind reader.
- There is a measured, diplomatic way to talk about your goals and fulfillment in a measured way.
- **Myth:** "If I work really hard really hard, it'll get noticed and rewarded."

Managing Up

Be aware

- Know when it is time to go.
- Be aware of exactly what you are looking for: is it a mentor, someone to learn from, someone that gives you autonomy, someone to challenge you. Know what you are looking for so you can make that a focus in looking for new opportunities.
- **Pro tip:** Stay at a job as long as you can to get everything you can out of it.

Managing Up

Find a Mentor!

- So important both for when you are managing your relationship with your boss as well as managing staff.
- Have someone you trust you can bounce ideas off of.



Managing Down

Be honest

- Give feedback as in-the-moment as possible. No one wants to be surprised in an annual review that you're unhappy with something that happened months ago.
- Have the awkward conversations. Go on, you have to do it.

Managing Down

Be genuine

- Care about your staff. They can tell if you don't.
- Be transparent about their growth and opportunities as you see it.

Managing Down

Be fair

- Be specific and clear about expectations. Remember, no one is a mind reader.
- Everyone's strengths and weaknesses are different. Empower them however you can.
- Try to establish what is important to you and again, set clear expectations. Working for an unpredictable boss is hard.

Other Career Takeaways

- Your career is a marathon, not a sprint. A jungle gym, not a ladder. Don't be afraid to take a new job or a risk.
- No matter how tough a boss or coworker is, don't burn bridges. There is a right way and a wrong way to leave a job.
- Find a mentor—ask someone about their job, they'll talk forever.



Other Career Takeaways

- When in doubt, work hard! It'll allow you to accomplish great things and take your mind off the things you can't control anyhow. – Greg Knopp, ACEC
- Never shy away from an opportunity to take on more.
- Write the raging email you want to send. Then delete it and write the email you'll actually send.



Contact Information

Susan Askew

saskew@icsc.org

Kristin Brackemyre

kbrackemyre@pac.org



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