LEARNING TO MANAGE UP

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Learning to lead from the bottom

• As a student, you may have held many leadership positions.
• As a new professional, you will likely find yourself at the bottom of the ladder, with little direct leadership responsibility.
• So... how do you lead from the bottom?
What we’ll cover

• What is leadership?
  • Your preferred leadership/communication style

• Managing Up
  • What is it?
  • Methods for effective management
  • Strategies and pitfalls

• Opportunities for managing up
  • Where to find meaningful employment and opportunities for leadership after college
What is leadership?

- Definitions:
  - An act or instance of leading?
  - Providing guidance?
  - Giving direction?
- Leadership is **communication**
  - Verbal
  - Actions
  - The things you say and don’t say
  - The things you do and don’t do
What are possible goals of communication?

• Exchange information
• Cause positive action
• Avoid negative outcomes
• Build rapport
• Influence behavior
• Influence beliefs
What is your communication style?

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Activity: Assessing Your Communication Style
Managing up!

• What is it?
  • Providing leadership from a non-supervisory position
  • Leveraging your fresh perspective and unique skills to inspire and influence organizational leaders
  • Actively managing your relationship with supervisors and coworkers to better serve the organization, your supervisor, and yourself

• What is it not?
  • Manipulating supervisors to get what you want
  • Plotting your own course of action to avoid input of supervisors and coworkers
How to manage up

- Observe and compare
  - How does your supervisor communicate?
  - How does his or her communication style compare to your communication style?

- Anticipate your supervisor
  - Understand the big picture – ask questions so that you can be the most knowledgeable one in the room
  - Think about “what’s next” and how you can contribute
  - Under-promise and over-deliver

- Communicate
  - Plan how you will present your ideas based on communication styles to get buy-in
  - Ask for feedback often and early in the relationship, so that you both expect positive communication as part of your normal interaction
So, I have to be perfect?

- No! In fact, some of the best learning experiences come from mistakes.
- Mistakes are an opportunity to manage up as well
  - Explain to your supervisor the sequence of events
  - Analyze what you think went wrong (and point out what you did right)
  - Ask for advice and establish expectations for the future
  - Put advice into action next time (try not to mess up the same way twice!)
Strategies for managing up

• Avoid passive aggression at all costs
  • Passive aggression is incompatible with all communication styles
  • Although you may be frustrated, keep your frustration in check—if you need to take a moment to yourself to cool off, do this before interacting with your supervisor

• Don’t just offer problems, offer solutions
  • Your supervisors are looking to you for your good ideas and judgment; don’t pass up an opportunity to put these qualities to use
  • Even if your proposed solution is completely off-base, your supervisor will appreciate your initiative and you can use the opportunity to explain your thought process, which may help the two of you get on the same page

• Your boss is your ally
  • Aim to establish a relationship of trust with your boss; the reward is respect for your abilities and further opportunities to lead
Strategies for managing up

• Know your boss
  • Figure out pet peeves and hot buttons – Does your boss prefer formal emails? Does he or she want to be cc’d on all communications?
  • Timing is everything – think about the best time to present your idea; maybe not after a tough meeting or before a looming deadline

• Know yourself
  • If you are frustrated by your boss, consider whether he or she has inadvertently hit on one of your hot button issues, rather than assuming the worst
  • Figure out productive venting and coping mechanisms, and how to manage your own state of mind to handle the ups and downs as best you can
Activity: Managing Up Case Study
Resources for meaningful employment (and leadership)

- New graduates can struggle to find a position that provides opportunities for meaningful employment, *i.e.* a job that you believe in

- Do your homework
  - Consult websites like indeed.com or idealist.com
  - Seek out career counseling and take advantage of the many resources available to you
  - Leverage alumni networks for informational interviews and employment opportunities

- Apply confidently
  - Treat job applications like college applications – read, re-read and re-re-read
  - Practice professionalism at every step – reply promptly, write thank-yous
Resources for meaningful employment (and leadership)

- Ask questions
  - Understand a job offer before you accept – learn about the culture of the organization, talking to employees at your level
  - Evaluate opportunities to manage up

- Consider going out on a limb
  - Look at opportunities abroad like the Peace Corps that will provide leadership opportunities
  - Consider working for smaller or newer organizations and companies, even if less “prestigious” because opportunities to lead may be greater
  - Do what you love! If you’re passionate about an issue, but don’t think there’s a way to pursue your passion professionally, think again!