

# LEARNING TO MANAGE UP

---

Allison Pedrazzi, J.D.  
Scott Vignos, J.D.

UC Davis Undergraduate Leadership Conference  
February 28, 2015

# 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?

High Involvement	High Considerate
Structured	Informal
Involved	Hands-off
Written	Verbal
Learn by asking	Learn by doing
Visual	Auditory

# 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!