



The alchemy of managing up

Collaborate with those who have the power to determine your destiny, and transform what's possible. By Jackie Sloane

Jim's expertise won him a pivotal role in his global firm. But he and his staff constantly fielded urgent, emotional calls from sales and business unit leaders demanding immediate priority for the financial modeling and analysis they provided, vital to winning and maintaining market opportunities in their rapidly changing industry. Everyone wanted everything at the same time. Jim often felt stressed-out and frustrated.

Jenna brought in projects with enormous potential for revenue and visibility for her firm, yet she felt that senior leadership didn't get what she was accomplishing.

Two different leadership challenges. Same strategic solution. Both Jim and Jenna learned to become more masterful at the fine art of managing up, resolving the immediate issue and finding themselves promoted as well.

Some reports may interpret "managing up" as empty self-promotion. Actually, it's proactive self-preservation. Managing up is about taking full responsibility for your own success, including thinking and acting as if you're responsible for the success of the

organization as well as those who make judgment calls that affect you.

Take a bigger-picture view of your role in this area:

Expect that part of your job is to help those above you to be more effective at managing you.

Ask: What do I need to be better at my job? More clarity? Resources? If you have looming deadlines and have just been asked to take on three more emergencies, manage up by determining priorities. Be prepared to recommend what those might be. Ask yourself: What does my boss need from me in order to win with peers and superiors? Coach your people to do this as well, and you'll be a better leader. Both Jim and Jenna, to their credit, had great relationships with their bosses, which made communicating and making requests so much easier.

Be strategically proactive. Don't suffer! If something's not working well, ask: How can I creatively, effectively address it? Consider how things get done now, including whose buy-in you need to make a change and, especially, who might be ticked off if things are done differently. In the first example, Jim realized that a clear protocol for how

urgency is determined would give each business unit more certainty about when it would get what it needed, relieving pressure for everyone. He asked for a joint meeting with business unit leaders to determine that with him.

Communicate challenges and wins, and frame what you say to what really matters to your audience.

Come review time, a contributor's success is often regarded as her boss's as well. And highlighting team member wins is seen as good form in most organizations, depending on how it's done. Jenna had a conversation with her boss about how to get the word out about some recent deals she'd brought in and their potential impact. Her boss asked her to share it in an email and offered to forward it to the top leadership of the firm. Jim made sure his boss knew what he was doing and why ahead of time, so she would support it.

Develop relationships before you need them. You'll have more influence and support. Both Jim and Jenna had cultivated credibility with those most influential to their career success and built up solid evidence to support promotion recommendations. Both worked to develop more goodwill with others. Jim's leadership in requesting collaboration in creating the new process not only solved the issue, but gave him excellent visibility with his supervisor's peers. **ET**

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