
----- WHAT'S UP, DOC? -----

Vol. 4, No. 5; May 2004; Copyright 2004 by A. J. Schuler, Psy. D

"Creating Leadership Solutions for Profit and Growth"

THIS MONTH'S THEME: SEVEN RULES FOR MANAGING YOUR BOSS

This month's edition will be short and sweet, as I'm hip deep in another writing project these days. I've had this topic on my mind for some time, and this past month, I had occasion to coach a member of a client company on some career issues related to this theme. This month's situation made clear what I've seen over and over: it does not matter how much talent you have, for most people, if you can't manage relationships in the office. Even more to the point, if you can't develop a strong relationship with your boss, you either have to get better at "managing up," or you have to find another place to work. In this month's issue, we'll take a look at my "Seven Rules for Managing Up," since I consider "managing up" to be a key career skill.

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THIS MONTH'S QUOTES:

"Language exerts hidden power, like a moon on the tides."

- Rita Mae Brown

"Dignity consists not in possessing honors, but in the consciousness that we deserve them." - Aristotle


"Time is the coin of your life. It is the only coin you have, and only you can determine how it will be spent. Be careful lest you let other people spend it for you." - Carl Sandburg

1. SEVEN RULES FOR MANAGING YOUR BOSS

BE PRODUCTIVE

There's nothing profound here. But if you want to have credibility with the boss, and any desired guidance to help you advance, you have to produce. There's no other way around it. Charm and good looks will only take you so far if you don't create results. Though I've never been blessed with good looks (!), I've certainly seen people – particularly young people – who don't grasp how imperative it is to produce results on a consistent basis. Then, when they complain that the boss is not investing in their growth or recognizing their efforts, they fail to understand why.

BE HONEST AND RELIABLE

If you want to advance your career, credibility is everything. No boss will trust you or build you up if he or she can't trust you. Trust develops as you take responsibility for your word and your actions. People will make mistakes, but it is a person's willingness to own  those mistakes, without confusion or evasion, that really stands out. In offices, we see finger pointing and passing of responsibility all the time. But to win over any boss, you can't do this. When you make a real mistake, don't wait for the boss to find out: go tell her yourself, first, before anything else you do.

NEVER EMBARRASS THE BOSS

The person I consulted this past month had a habit of speaking his mind very passionately and quickly, without reflection. He did not realize that, in many situations, he was doing so during ~~in~~ meetings in ways that undermined his boss. Bad move! If you disagree with a person, or have a question of your boss, go to him or her in private and talk about it. Be curious; ask to understand the boss's perspective. Don't be impatient and blurt things out, especially in front of other people. After all, you would not want to be corrected or singled out for correction in front of your peers. The same principle applies when managing up: don't embarrass or undermine the boss in front of others. A corollary to this rule goes as follows: don't undermine or cast aspersions on the boss to your peers. It's one thing to vent a little frustration from time to time, but there's a fine line when it comes to speaking ill of others. This is true whether you're talking about anyone, let alone a boss. But it's even more insidious and destructive to an organization – and a career – when you can't work out your disagreements with those in authority directly, and behind closed doors. Don't contaminate the pool for everyone else by trashing the boss and creating a negative environment.

BE POPULAR

It's in the boss's interests for people in the office to get along. Sure, I've come along the occasional boss who likes to sow discord, hoping to maintain control by dividing and conquering, but those types are a bit rare. Most bosses appreciate a member of the team who can build morale, keep people loose, and help create a positive environment. If you can't be funny, at least be friendly. Help out whenever you can. Show an interest in your coworkers and help them solve their work problems. This is always good for any career, since advancement in any profession is largely a matter of exercising strong social skills, once credibility in a given profession is established. And in another way, being popular helps create a kind of hidden leverage with a boss when you decide the time is right to ask for some favor or for some room to advance: no boss wants to disrupt morale if it can be avoided. Though the boss holds positional authority, being honest, productive, reliable and popular maximizes your soft power and thereby helps balance the scales. Then, if you use this power to help the boss accomplish his or her ends, your stock goes up even more. That brings us to the next rule . . .

FLATTERY HELPS, IN SMALL DOSES

You know, everyone has an ego. Egos are healthy; egos are good things. Everyone likes to hear, from time to time, that they did something well, or that their work was appreciated. Admit it – you do! Well, so does your boss. Many employees think only about how they wish their bosses took more notice of their efforts, but it works both ways. This is not a matter of being dishonest or manipulative, but don't forget: your boss is human too. A little verbal appreciation or recognition for a good idea or a good decision hurts no one, and it helps to build your relationship with your boss. That's what managing up is all about. Don't be a sycophant. Do be a person who recognizes that we're all human, and all appreciate a good word here and there. If you overdo it, or do it in a dishonest way, your insincerity will become apparent, to your boss and to your peers. Don't jeopardize your credibility. Just don't forget, it's not just the "boss's job" to put a good word in to you from time to time. We're all human, including your boss, so don't be afraid to put in an honest good word of appreciation or praise, without a lot of fanfare, when such praise is due. Fair is fair.

DON'T STICK WITH A BROKEN SITUATION

Sometimes, a relationship with a boss is just not recoverable. Sometimes, the relationship – for whatever reason – deteriorates to the point that trying to recover it would require just too much effort for all concerned. Don't stick with a broken situation. Cut your losses and move on. Be adult about it. It serves no one's purpose to drag out a poisoned relationship. Maybe the break in the relationship was your fault, and maybe it was the boss's fault. Maybe it was really part of a wider organizational problem. Maybe it was some combination of all of the above. Learn from the

situation and resolve to move on. Make your exit in a reasonably prompt amount of time, for the sake of all concerned. Start looking for something else, and do what you can to make your exit on decent terms so that you can find another opportunity. That brings us to our last rule. . .

DON'T BURN YOUR BRIDGES BEHIND YOU

This is Career Management 101, but it bears repeating. If you have to leave a job, leave in such a way that you will be at least liked and respected in your wake. I've seen people do a very poor job of protecting and preserving their reputations when they leave a job for another. Part of managing up means managing and caring for your relationship with your boss, or soon-to-be ex-boss, right up until the end. Even if you don't leave on the best of terms, handle yourself with respect for others, and don't take the falling out personally. Be professional about it. What goes around comes around, and people can have very long memories. On the one hand, former employers may be leery (for legal reasons) of making bad comments when called for a reference, but on the other, they can easily communicate misgivings about you with their tone, even as they keep their words correct. And if you no longer fit in an organization as it exists today, it is possible that time and circumstance may make it possible for you to return at some point, perhaps in another role. You never know, so keep your options open. The manner of your exit from any organization will say a lot about you, and people will remember. So handle yourself professionally.

2. RECOMMENDED BOOKS AND FILMS

BOOK: "Loyalty Rules!: How Today's Leaders Build Lasting Relationships," by Frederick F. Reichheld; Bain & Company, Inc.; Boston, MA; 2001.

A book on leadership from the reigning guru on loyalty and loyalty based marketing. There's nothing very earth shattering here, but it's still not a bad leadership book, if you're in the market for one. The ideas presented are ones you have seen before, but there are some good case studies and checklists for action that you might find useful. Give it a try, if you like.

FILM: "Osama," in limited release, and now available in DVD

The movies coming out these days really seem to stink. Have you seen any lately you like? I haven't. I've been avoiding the movies for a bit,

though I've seen some plays locally of late. But this release, which made the rounds of select theaters in big cities over the last few months, is now available on DVD. It's an original production by a rookie filmmaker in Afghanistan, and it really shows a talent for storytelling and verisimilitude. The site Metacritic describes the plot this way: "A 12-year-old Afghan girl and her mother lose their jobs when the Taliban closes the hospital where they work. Feeling she has no choice, the mother disguises her daughter as a boy. Now called Osama, the girl embarks on a terrifying and confusing journey as she tries to keep the Taliban from finding out her true identity." This is not light stuff, but it is rather gripping. Go for it if it's your cup of tea. Read more reviews [here](#).

3. CHUCKLES

These are (allegedly!) from actual resumes:

"Personal: I'm married with 9 children. I don't require prescription drugs.

"I am extremely loyal to my present firm, so please don't let them know of my immediate availability."

"Qualifications: I am a man filled with passion and integrity, and I can act on short notice. I'm a class act and do not come cheap."

"I intentionally omitted my salary history. I've made money and lost money. I've been rich and I've been poor. I prefer being rich."

"Note: Please don't misconstrue my 14 jobs as 'job-hopping'. I have never quit a job."

"Number of dependents: 40."

"Marital Status: Often. Children: Various."

RESUME BLOOPERS

"Here are my qualifications for you to overlook."

REASONS FOR LEAVING THE LAST JOB:

"Responsibility makes me nervous."

"They insisted that all employees get to work by 8:45 every morning."

Couldn't work under those conditions."

REASONS FOR LEAVING MY LAST JOB:

"Was met with a string of broken promises and lies, as well as cockroaches."

"I was working for my mom until she decided to move."

"The company made me a scapegoat - just like my three previous employers."

JOB RESPONSIBILITIES:

"While I am open to the initial nature of an assignment, I am decidedly disposed that it be so oriented as to at least partially incorporate the experience enjoyed heretofore and that it be configured so as to ultimately lead to the application of more rarefied facets of financial management as the major sphere of responsibility."

"I was proud to win the Gregg Typting Award."

SPECIAL REQUESTS & JOB OBJECTIVES:

"Please call me after 5:30 because I am self-employed and my employer does not know I am looking for another job."

"My goal is to be a meteorologist. But since I have no training in meteorology, I suppose I should try stock brokerage."

"I procrastinate - especially when the task is unpleasant."

PHYSICAL DISABILITIES:

"Minor allergies to house cats and Mongolian sheep."

PERSONAL INTERESTS:

"Donating blood. 14 gallons so far."

SMALL TYPOS THAT CAN CHANGE THE MEANING:

"Education: College, August 1880-May 1984."

"Work Experience: Dealing with customers' conflicts that arouse."

"Develop and recommend an annual operating expense fudget."

"I'm a rabid typist."

"Instrumental in ruining entire operation for a Midwest chain operation."

4. PROMOTE YOUR OWN GROWTH

You don't have to live near the Schuler Solutions main office in Alexandria, Virginia to benefit from my coaching services. Great work can be done for your own growth and development over the phone and through document review via email. To find out more about your coaching options and available coaching plans, just click [here](#) now.

5. ABOUT DR. SCHULER

A. J. Schuler, Psy. D., an expert on leadership and organizational change, provides consulting services, keynote presentations and seminars for client companies. His trademark is highly personalized service that leads to measurable increases in productivity, profit and growth. He also provides personalized leadership education and coaching for highly motivated clients.

Dr. Schuler, President of Schuler Solutions, Inc., has served diverse organizations in the private and public sectors, including The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company, Sony Development, Nomura Securities and the Executive Office for Immigration Review.

A graduate of the Wharton School of Business, Dr. Schuler has successfully led the profitable growth of a dynamic, international consulting firm while serving as Operations Director, and has successfully coached over five hundred CEO's and corporate executives.

6. HOW TO SUBSCRIBE OR UNSUBSCRIBE

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“Make each day your masterpiece.” -- John Wooden

P.S. - Remember to send in your comments and successes, and to forward this newsletter to at least one friend! Thanks . . . AJS