

7 Crucial Behaviors To Master When Dealing With Your Leaders

Written by Neal Whitten, PMP



Your leaders want you to know—need you to know—the behaviors they consistently expect from you.

Just because you have a leadership role doesn't mean you are living up to the expectations of your leaders.

The more you understand what is expected of you, the more you will likely focus on honing those skills, improving your performance and, in the process, helping your leaders look good which helps you look good. Talk about a win-win! So, if you have an interest in enhancing your image, effectiveness and career—and who doesn't—let's get to the first important behavior.

1. Don't Dump And Run

When you have an idea for an improvement, don't transfer that idea to your leader and then wash your hands of it. Be willing to be its champion and become part of the solution. Your leaders have neither the duty nor the bandwidth to personally take on and work every good idea to closure.

Your leaders want and need your ideas but they also expect for your hands to get dirty from time to time. Words don't make companies successful; actions do.

2. Make It Brief

When you're speaking with your peers you can speak in paragraphs. When you're speaking with your immediate boss, reduce the paragraphs to long sentences. But the higher up the food chain you communicate, learn to shorten the sentences—even approaching sound bites. Your leaders don't have the time for the unabridged version. If they need to know more, they will ask you. They respect you more when you can net your messages so they can obtain the necessary information in the minimal amount of time.

3. Don't Complain

People who habitually complain are a bore and a waste of time and energy to those around them. If you're complaining, you're not solving; you're part of the problem. For example, if you complain to Person A about something that Person B can fix, then you just wasted your time and that of Person A's. But if you "complain" directly to Person B who can fix the problem, this is not complaining; it's the first step of moving toward a solution. By the way, if you get a reputation as a complainer, people may stop listening.

4. Bring Solutions With Problems

When you are faced with a problem and need help, articulate both the solution and the specific help required. Tell your leaders exactly what you need from them, such as funding, letter of support, escalation support, lifting the freeze on hiring, or approval of a new tool. You are far more likely to obtain their support when you have a solution in hand and they know precisely what is expected from them to help you carry out the solution.

5. Meet Commitments

Do what you say you will when you say you will do it. Manage your commitments well. If, at times, commitments may need to be reset, then work with the required parties as soon as possible so that any collateral damage will be minimal. But do not create a pattern of missed commitments where there appears to be no end in sight. No one can meet every commitment that they have made but they should be able to meet most of their commitments. The commitments that slip should be carefully replanned and rarely should they slip again. The respect you develop across your organization or company will, in large part, be affected by your ability to successfully and maturely manage your commitments.

6. Promote Dialogue

Don't be a "yes" employee—or more specifically, a silent employee. Don't just take notes, nod, and leave your boss' office. Listen thoughtfully, ask good questions, and raise concerns— if any. Your leaders need your response, your ideas and your participation.

7. Keep Your Leaders Informed

Keep your leaders informed of important news. Don't work in a vacuum. Avoid surprises. However, this doesn't mean you should tell your boss about every problem that comes your way. In fact, don't reveal most problems to your boss. If you did, your boss would cringe every time he or she sees it's you on the phone or at their office door or in an email that just arrived. You are paid to solve problems. Your boss gains no value in knowing all the problems that you face each day and how each was solved. Therefore, be selective and only share those problems that you feel your boss should know about or that you want your boss to know about. And be discreet in how you share bad news with your boss.

The success you achieve with your career has a lot to do with your behaviors in dealing with your leaders. Your career-clock is ticking. Now, become your imagined self!

This article was published in PMTimes.com and BATimes.com by Macgregor Communications in September 2017.