

Managing Your Manager
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Executive Summary

Our managers are our most important 'customers'. While we may wish that some of our managers were different, the reality is that the only behavior we can control is our own. We can control it when we choose how we respond to others. In order to manage our managers, we will choose responses that make it easier for our managers to work with us. We need to understand the meaning of different behaviors so we can better anticipate and prepare for working with our managers. There are two dimensions of behaviors to study. They are assertive behaviors and responsive behaviors.

Assertiveness is defined as how others see us being forceful or directive over people or situations. Our behavior gives clues about our assertiveness. Our voice, movements and body gestures all give clues about our level of assertiveness.

Responsiveness is how people see us as being emotionally responsive (expressing feelings to others); or emotionally controlled. Our facial expressions, view of time, and our hand and body movements give clues to our level of responsiveness.

By combining more and less assertiveness with more and less responsiveness we have 4 different personality styles: Amiable, Analytical, Expressive and Driver. To manage our managers, we must be able to identify their style and create rapport with our manager. By understanding one's own preferred style, identifying a manager's style and flexing or adapting to him or her, a subordinate can create rapport. The secret of 'managing your manager' is to be able to create and maintain rapport at work.

Managing starts with understanding persuasion

How many times during your business day do you find yourself needing to persuade your manager so that you can do your job? We may be persuading our managers to accept our ideas, approve our proposals and realize our contributions at work. We also need to persuade others so that we can do our jobs effectively. When we ask for help, there is no obligation for someone to provide it to us. We've got to develop our ability to persuade others.

By understanding observable behaviors in others, we can understand how to work effectively with them. It begins by understanding their needs at work and

preferences for work style. We can then improve our results by adapting to their style needs when we work with others.

Behavior is Predictable

People's behavior is predictable. If you were to ask a large enough group of people to pick their favorite color, flower and number the answers would be predictable. In 93% of the cases psychologists tell us we pick blue, the rose and the number 3. There are reasons we make these choices. Blue is the most preferred color by men and woman in America today. The rose is a common and positively perceived flower. The number 3 has symbolic meaning. We will use the predictability of people for persuasion.

Hippocrates, the founder of modern medicine, was one of the first people who studied behavior about 2000 years ago. He categorized people by excesses of body fluids. If you had too much black bile, he said you were a Melancholy and tended towards a gloomy state of mind. If you had an excess of yellow bile, he categorized you as Choleric and tended to be angry and ill tempered. If you had too much phlegm, you were Phlegmatic and were apathetic and unexcitable. An excess of blood made you Sanguine and hopeful, confident and cheerful. Since behavior is predictable, we must first determine the observable behaviors so we can predict how our bosses prefer we work with them.

Dimensions of Behavior

Assertiveness

Since body fluids don't apply to business today, we use observable behaviors to categorize people. These categories are useful to understand persuasion and how to manage your manager. The dimensions of behavior that we use to organize behavior are assertiveness and responsiveness.

Assertiveness is defined as how others see us being forceful or directive over people or situations. It is the degree in which others perceive a person as attempting to influence the thoughts and actions of others. It is not how assertive you think you are. It is how assertive you are perceived by others.

There are clues that we give from our behavior that indicate our assertiveness. Assertive people are more forceful in the way they tell you what they think. They are not afraid to give you their opinion. They are direct. They are unafraid to confront people. They have strong eye contact. They tend to be impatient and are extroverted. Their handshakes tend to be firmer. When people talk in a loud volume and a quick pace they are giving clues about their assertiveness. Assertive people are decisive and willing to take risks. The body positions of assertive people when sitting tend to be leaning forward or upright. When assertive people give instructions, they tell. They don't ask. Start looking for these clues when you meet with your manager. These will be the clues you will need to manage them more effectively.

Less assertive people are less forceful in their observed behaviors. They are more reserved and tend to listen. They prefer listening to talking. When they need information, they ask questions instead of making statements. Less assertive people are risk averse. When they do decide, it takes longer for them to make a decision. Decisions are risky and they are uncomfortable with taking risks. They move slower than more assertive people and talk less quickly and speak in a lower volume. When sitting, they tend to lean backwards. They will make less intense and less consistent eye contact. Their handshakes tend to be less firm.

Responsiveness

Responsiveness is how people see us as being emotionally responsive (expressing feelings to others) or emotionally controlled. It shows if our relationships are open or reserved. More controlled behavior is less responsive; less controlled behavior is more responsive. Our responsiveness shows our comfort with things versus people.

Some responsive behaviors are using facial expressions when speaking. Using hand and body movements when talking is also responsive. Responsive people look relaxed in their movements. Responsive people make decisions based on their opinions and feelings. They are more flexible with time. You may notice some people are less rigid with starting and ending times of meetings. They will share personal feelings with others and appear open to others. Relationships are important to them and they focus on them. They will give you more immediate nonverbal feedback when you talk with them. They focus more on people than on tasks or things.

People who are more controlled have less animated facial expressions. Their hand and body movements are controlled and more limited. They look stiff in their movements. They are very disciplined about their time. These people can schedule their time in 15 minutes increments and keep their schedules precisely. They are very concerned if they are off schedule. Relationships are not as important to them as their tasks are. They will be very guarded with their personal feelings and will tend to hide them. They will be slow in giving nonverbal feedback in conversations if they give it at all. Things are more important to them than people. They are more oriented towards thinking and facts rather than feelings. They make decisions based on facts, not opinions.

The Different Personality Styles

By combining more and less assertiveness with more and less responsiveness we have 4 different personality styles: Amiable (Less Assertive and More Responsive); Analytical (Less Assertive and More Controlled); Expressive (More Assertive and More Responsive); and Driver (More Assertive and More Controlled). Each style has preferences for how they work with others. Since we can only control our own behavior and response to others, we need to

determine our manager's style and determine how to best 'manage' or work with him or her.

The Significance of Rapport

People feel comfortable with people who they perceive to be like themselves. They determine their comfort by their perceptions of assertive and responsive behaviors. When both people exhibit similar levels of assertiveness and responsiveness, this leads to a feeling of comfort. This feeling of comfort is rapport. When someone feels comfortable with another person it is because he has created rapport with that person. Rapport is defined as the ability to relate to other people in a way in which you create an environment of trust and understanding. Learning to create rapport is the secret of effectively managing your manager. Your manager will be comfortable with people he or she perceives to be like him or herself.

Creating Rapport

Creating rapport is the opposite of the Golden Rule. The Golden Rule states to do unto others as you would have them do unto you. To create and maintain rapport, instead of behaving as you would prefer to be treated, you must behave the way others prefer to be treated. We create rapport by first understanding our own preferred behavior for assertiveness and responsiveness. We should be aware of our own assertive and responsive behaviors. We have a preference in how we talk. Determine if you speak in a louder tone of voice or a softer tone of voice. We should also know if we typically use facial expressions when we speak or if we speak without using facial expressions. By understanding our own behavior we can begin to learn to create rapport and be persuasive. We should verify that our self-perceptions are correct by asking others who know us if they agree with our assessment. If your assessment is different from the person you ask, use their perception and not yours. Their perception is reality.

After we understand ourselves, we should then look for the assertive and responsive clues that our managers give us. Determine their assertiveness and responsiveness. People are not machines. You will notice a mix of assertive and less assertive behaviors as well as a mix of responsive and controlled behaviors. Just like we use both hands, but are primarily left-handed or right-handed, we are primarily either more assertive or less assertive (and more controlled or less controlled). When you gather all the clues, see which behavior is predominant. To work most effectively with our manager we must create rapport with our manager and flex to his or her behavior.

Flexing to another person means to adopt for short periods of time those behaviors that are more like theirs and less like ours. Your intent is to help improve communication. If we are talking with someone who speaks more quickly than we do, to create rapport with him we would speak faster to this person. If the person we want to create rapport with uses more facial expressions than we do, we would flex and use more facial expressions while talking to him.

Flexing is difficult to do since it puts us out of our normal comfort zone. You would typically temporarily add no more than 3 or 4 behaviors. We should plan what behaviors we are going to temporarily modify to make another person more comfortable. For example, if we need to demonstrate more assertive behavior to flex, we could plan to talk faster, louder and lean more forward. If we had to be more responsive to flex, we could use more facial expressions and talk more about feelings. It is important to be ready with a flexing strategy.

Give each style what he needs

In addition to creating rapport with your manager, you must work to meet his or her style needs. The Driver needs to be in control and likes to get right down to business and not waste time. The Expressive likes to have fun and does not like to get mired in detail before discussing the 'big picture.' The Analytical prefers order, organization and to communicate in writing. They need extensive data to make decisions and love charts and graphs. The Amiable likes for everyone to get along. They don't like to make decisions without the approval of others and want to please others. They need time to make decisions.

Determine the style of your manager and work to meet his or her needs. Get right down to business with a Driver. Don't expect an Expressive boss to attend to all the details. Give an Analytical boss an in depth, detailed report of your activities. Be a team player and help others if you work for an Amiable and don't expect them to disagree with management.

Conclusions

The secret of managing your manager is to understand your own behavior preferences first and then understand your manager's. By adapting to others' observed behaviors you can create rapport. By flexing your behavior you can maintain rapport. Once you create rapport, you can reduce stress at work and more effectively manage your managers so they will be more comfortable working with you.

Biographical Sketch of Author

Maura Schreier-Fleming started Best@Selling, a sales training and sales consulting company in 1997. She works with business and sales professionals so they can sell more and be more productive at work. Her presentations include Secrets of Persuasion: Creating and Maintaining Rapport; Laser Listening: Hearing What People Mean; and Strategic Questioning. She consults to help develop and execute successful selling strategies.

She writes a selling newsletter called the Selling E-letter. It is an electronic newsletter on a range of selling topics. Her articles on selling have been published both locally and nationally.

Maura has been in sales for over 20 years. While at Chevron, she was recognized as one of the top 5 salespeople in the country. She produced over \$10 million in sales her final year at Chevron.

She began her career as a sales engineer for Mobil Oil. While at Mobil she was their first female Lubrication Engineer in the U.S. She sold industrial lubricants for applications as diverse as steel mills, injection molding machines and nuclear power plants. Her job responsibilities included documenting costs savings and lubrication training.

Her clients include MBNA, Fujitsu, Chevron, Fina, UPS, and Volt Services.

Maura received her M.S. from Georgia Tech in Textile Engineering. She earned a B.S. from Cornell University in Textile Chemistry.

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Figure 1. Personality Styles

