

# LifeMap<sup>SM</sup>



"LifeMap is a navigational tool to help you on your path towards personal and professional success. Our belief is that you can achieve a more rewarding career, a more productive organization and a more enjoyable and abundant life."

February 5, 2008

## This Week's Message:

**Managing Your Boss.  
Paths Forward  
Resources**

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## Managing Your Boss.

This edition of LifeMap is about improving the most important relationship you have at work. Learning how to manage your boss can get you more interesting assignments, better and more frequent feedback, may help you achieve a more sane work / life balance and could even put more money in your pocket. Have I got your attention?

A 2007 job satisfaction study conducted by the Society for Human Resources Management showed that a good relationship with supervisors ranks among the top five things employees consider necessary to be happy at work. But anyone who has ever had a boss - good or bad - already knew this.

Some bosses are difficult, abusive or seem downright crazy. I'm gathering some useful information for a future LifeMap on *that* topic. Right now we're addressing the much more common situation where you and your boss just can't seem

to get on the same page; for whatever reason the relationship just doesn't seem as smooth and productive as you want it to be. This is not a matter of blaming him/her or you. This is about taking a good, analytical look at your side of this key relationship and taking some practical, ethical, and non-manipulative steps to improve it.

### Paths Forward

**Get Real.** Sure maybe your relationship with the boss has got you down. Wouldn't it be great if you could magically make her change into someone with whom you could easily work? Nice dream, sure, but wake up and have some coffee. Who is it whose behavior you can control? That's right - you. It's you who has to figure out how to adapt how you act, how you communicate and how you tackle your work responsibilities in ways that attract your boss's increased attention, feedback and support.

**Get on The Same Wavelength.** If your boss is a numbers person report results analytically. If your boss is a big picture person explain how what you're discussing fits the overall goals and strategy. If your boss is a morning person don't wait until late in the day to communicate. If your boss prefers written memos use written memos. If your boss prefers e-mail, voice mail, text messages, hallway conversations, lunch or sit down meetings to get information learn to use her preferred style. To determine this, observe how she communicates most easily and most frequently with you and with others.

**Her Goals Are Your Goals.** A great way to get promoted is to help get your boss promoted. Determine what is important to your boss. It could be exclusively bottom-line, it could be productivity or quality improvements, it could be increased visibility, it could be reduced turn-over, it could be competitive analysis, it could be bringing a project in on-time or under budget, it could be - - - who knows? It is your job to find what matters most to her and what is going to help her to succeed. You can learn this through observation of her behavior, listening closely to her conversations with you and others and, of course, in the right setting you could directly ask. Despite some very supportive verbiage about being "colleagues" never forget that this is the person who you work *for* and tailor *your* efforts to her needs.

**Could You Actually Like Your Boss?** What do you really know about your boss? Do you know where she came from, where she went to school, what she majored in and why? Do you know anything about her non-work life, personal interests, hobbies, or favorite charities? It is much easier to relate to folks with whom we have common interests; this applies to both you and your boss. In workshops and seminars I run I ask participants to introduce themselves and without exception I can find something that I have in common with almost every person. Accept your boss's occasional coffee break, lunch or after work invitation. Showing interest in your boss is not sucking up if it is done

in the genuine interest of getting to know her as a person. Common ground is your friend and it facilitates effective communication. If your boss seems standoffish remember that you have no real idea of the pressures (work-related or personal) under which she is working. Just this one small realization can help you improve your attitude towards your boss.

**Selling is "Managing Up"**. Regardless of whether you are an outside salesperson or someone trying to sell your ideas within your organization the same principles of managing your boss apply. You must take responsibility for managing the relationship, you must learn and support the client or prospect's goals (career and personal), you must observe, assess and, if possible, mirror the client or prospect's communication preference and style, and you must show genuine personal interest. It sounds easy and though it's not, it does get easier with practice.

### **Three Do's, Three Don'ts.**

- Don't ask your boss for an opinion if you don't want it. You'll have to live with and probably use it.
- Don't be a "time drain". Treat your boss's time preciously and it will more likely be there for you when you really need it.
- Don't bury your boss in data. Distill it down to the most salient points so that it becomes useful information.
- Do present possible solutions to any problem you bring to your boss. Otherwise you become the "problem person" not the "solution person".
- Do give your boss a head's up if you see possible bad news approaching. Nobody likes a surprise unless it's from the Publisher's Clearing House Prize Patrol.
- Do realize that relationships don't improve overnight but the same things that will help that process along - your competence, your patience and your positive attitude - will also improve your performance and your reputation as a professional.

**LifeMap** is about thinking strategically about the obstacles before us and then taking action to overcome them in a proactive and humane manner.

## **Resources**

### ***Someone you know job hunting or thinking about it?***

To order the best, concise, all-round job changing guide available. "Winning Job Interviews: Reduce Interview Anxiety, Outprepare the Other Candidates, Land the Job You Love" by Dr. Paul Powers, click the link below.

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**vocation?**

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**Sincerely,**

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