



Week 7: Leading through Relationships

As Jack counsels, leading is not about power and control; leading is about achieving results through others. These "others" include not only your employees, but also your boss and colleagues. Your colleagues, especially in large multinational organizations, can be widespread and may be located in different business units and different countries. Further, in businesses of any size, you may have to exert influence over employees of other companies that are part of your supply chain, or you may have to deal with virtual teams. As such, our focus this week is on achieving results through leading upwards and laterally, and on getting work done in situations where you don't have formal authority.

Lateral Leadership and Persuasion

Lateral leadership focuses on the particular capabilities all leaders must hone to ensure their effectiveness in today's organizations. Johnson (2003) states that the key capabilities include:

- **Networking:** Determine whose support you will need to achieve your current and potential initiatives, and build those relationships.
- **Persuasion and Negotiation:** When bargaining, focus on mutual benefit. This will increase your influence and build solid professional relationships.
- **Consultation:** Talk to people whose buy-in you need for an initiative about the best processes to achieve results, and what will create support for the initiative and its implementation.
- **Coalition Building:** Alliances are more powerful than attempting to influence by oneself, so gather together the people you need to support the initiative.

Honing these skills requires a leader to focus on the organization of the system, rather than focusing on one functional silo. Clearly, all lateral leadership capabilities revolve around a conscious focus on building relationships. Developing solid and enduring relationships is the surest way of building the trust required to effectively influence.

The Art of Persuasion

The key capabilities of lateral leadership are closely tied to effective persuasion. Persuasion is a necessary approach to achieving results in today's flat, multi-generational, team-oriented organization. What you may think of as persuasion – a one-time, hard-sell, well-reasoned, firm approach – is a recipe for failure. There are four factors necessary for effective persuasion (Conger, 1998):



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- I. **Credibility:** To persuade someone, they need to trust you. Be aware that you might think you are more credible than you really are; this factor is about expertise. If you do not have a history of being knowledgeable and making sound decisions, you need to learn more about your position, hire someone who has the expertise needed, or support your position with respected outside sources. Reflect on your relational history and, if there are gaps in your relationships, you may need to meet personally with key individuals or gather groups of allies who have relationships with those you want to persuade.
- II. **Shared Benefits:** It is important to understand your audience and how they will perceive the issue presented to them. This depth of understanding requires asking questions and carefully listening to feedback from those impacted by the issue. Persuasion may transform during this process; some adjustment is a positive step toward a successful outcome. Once the audience is understood, the issue must be presented so that the advantages for your audience are clear.
- III. **Memorable Evidence:** To effectively persuade, present the audience with a story that will make a meaningful impact and be memorable. One of the most effective approaches is to vividly describe a comparable situation.
- IV. **Show Emotion:** Just as Jack advocates for passion as an essential quality of great leaders and good employees, it is also important for effective persuasion. It is essential to show an emotional connection to the issue presented – the audience must feel it. It is equally important to understand the mood and the emotional state of the audience, so you can adjust tone accordingly.

Persuasion is difficult. It takes time, but it is a powerful force that can move an organization forward. Next week, we will explore the topic of “getting results.” Try and weave what you have learned about persuasion into what you will learn about leading an organization that executes to win.

The Five Laws of Managing Up

If you are working, you are either self-employed and the owner of your business, or you have a boss. Just as your lateral relationships are a central focus, so, too, is your relationship with your boss. The most effective leaders know how to make the most of this. They know how to *manage up*.

In an age when you spend the majority of your waking hours at work, bosses can have an enormous impact on your daily life and self-esteem. They hold power over your compensation and career. They can make or break your ability to do your job well in terms of resources and coaching. In sum, a good relationship with your boss can make work not just deeply rewarding, but downright fun. A bad one can cause misery. Either way, remember that upward relationships require special tending. With that in mind, we now turn to five laws for effectively influencing your boss, developed by management expert Michael Feiner (2004).



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1. Make Your Own Bed

You are 100% responsible for the quality of your relationship with your boss. Sure, some bosses care deeply about building a connection with each direct report, but most are too busy managing their own jobs (and their own bosses) to care nearly as much as you do about forging a healthy and productive personal bond. Do not expect your boss to jump in and “own” your relationship. You must jump first. And why not? You most likely have more to gain than lose.

2. Get Behind the Mask

You can only influence your boss when you understand your boss. What motivates them? What are their priorities, objectives, goals, and ambitions? What are their points of contention? And, most importantly, what are their expectations of you? So, how do you find out about your boss? Often, it can be as simple as asking them directly, but careful and dedicated observation also helps. To whom does your boss talk most often? To whom do they listen? What do they read? What makes them laugh? What drives them nuts? Each one of these details will open your eyes to your boss's values and concerns, showing you the path to a relationship that surpasses the superficial.

3. Commit to the Success of Your Boss

This law is easy if you really like your boss. In such cases, of course, you'll do everything you can to assure their admiration and assent. But, even if you do not like your boss, you have to discipline yourself to respect the position that they hold. That's professionalism. That's doing the right thing. Keep your boss continually informed. Meet your obligations. Make sure you are dependable. Nothing is more likely to enhance your relationship with your boss than seeing that their goals were achieved because of you.

4. Speak Truth to Power...Carefully

The most successful supervisors understand that people at high organizational levels are sometimes cut off from what people really think about them and the company. The best leaders do want to hear the bad news along with the good. They know that leaders cannot deliver their best performance if the people who work for them will not relay the information they need to make good decisions. You can confront your boss with unpleasant news by, first, ensuring the information you want to convey is accurate. Next, make it clear that you are not seeking a gripe session or a confrontation, but rather trying to raise important questions or share information you think your boss should have. Lastly, know when and how to begin the conversation.

5. Act Like a Grownup

There will be times in your career when you have done all you can and tried everything you can think of to build a solid relationship with your boss to no avail. It may seem to you that the boss does not care about anything but their own success, that you are regarded as merely a factor of production or some kind of inanimate object. You may conclude that your boss has no interest in your personal growth and professional development. However accurate your perceptions, you cannot feel sorry for yourself. You cannot play the victim. Confront your problem with a healthy and productive mindset, and find an equally healthy and productive solution. And do not quit



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abruptly, leaving your team in the lurch. If you are tempted to quit, remember that you can often learn more from a bad boss than from a good one.

We do not want to leave you with the impression that most bosses bring you down. Indeed, many bosses are good or even great, and, surely, most strive to be. But the quality of your boss's management is something you have little control over. You can only control the quality of your relationship. Own that responsibility, and you're managing up.

Reading Guide

Welch, *Winning*, Chapter 18 – Hard Spots: That Damn Boss

Here, we explore how to survive bad bosses. We have all had them, and we all know that they can be a huge drain on motivation and passion. So what do we do about it? We need to consider the bad boss to be just another problem to solve. Jack presents us with a number of questions to help navigate these treacherous waters. The first of these is to ask why your boss acts so poorly. Consider how to avoid being a victim.

Your Leadership Journey

- If you are new to leadership, learn about why lateral leadership works.
- If you are a team leader, consider how to solidify your boss-subordinate relationship.
- If you are a senior/veteran leader, think about how to ask the right questions of your managers to help them build the skills they need to (appropriately) manage up to you.



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