

Step up by managing up

Margaret Beaton 08 April 20s12

If you want make your way upwards, climb the organisational ladder, build your business or grow your practice, you have to learn to manage up.

The majority of my clients are pursuing careers in organisations characterised by hierarchical levels. As a younger manager or partner for you to move towards the top level you have to develop the skills and confidence to manage your supervisor or more senior partner. Three core elements are involved.

Firstly, you have to ensure the relationship between the two of you is one of respect, openness and trust. You have to understand your superior's life-career ambitions and realities. In turn you have to be willing to share yours – and explore how your and your superior's needs mesh and where they clash.

The second element of managing up is working 'on the job' with your superior to widen and deepen your knowledge and skills. Ensure you are challenged and stretched. Progressively take on the tougher, riskier tasks. Get feedback. Learn. Do more and more. Build in learning loops. Never allow your superior to do something you can do. Push him or her to the highest and best use of their seniority and wisdom, as you progressively step up until you are eventually alongside.

And third, you need your senior to build bridges for you, internally and externally, to help you expand your networks and spheres of influence. Your supervisor is crucial to your organisational and marketplace visibility and ultimate admission to the upper echelons of the organisation.

In summary, for you to succeed you need to work collaboratively with your senior and help them let go while you step up. That is, for an all-round win-win, it's up to you to manage up.

This post was written by Dr [Margaret Beaton](#), a director of [Beaton Executive Coaching](#) and [Beaton Research + Consulting](#). You can also find Margaret on [LinkedIn](#).