



# MANAGING UP BY SPEAKING UP

by [Carlann Fergusson](#) · in [Coaching Corner](#), [Emotionally Intelligent Leadership](#), [Leadership Lessons Learned](#).



## Managing your job and career can be difficult at times. And one of the biggest difficulties for many is managing one element that is often found to be the linchpin in one's career: the boss.

Many people disconnect from this element because of fear, perceived backlash, or they just were never told to do this.

“Managing up” is one of the best ways to ensure a happier, healthier, and more satisfying career because it puts more control in your hands.

### Imagine This:

You're attending a staff meeting and your boss is recognizing a peer for the great work their team did on a pretty routine project. Your team recently successfully completed a very difficult phase of a project but there is **no mention of your team's** accomplishments.

You start that old self-talk in your brain, *“My boss plays favorites. My boss doesn't understand my area and everything that goes into completing a job successfully. They underappreciate me and my team!”*

You're busy pointing the finger at your boss, but in the majority of cases YOU are the owner of the problem.

### Not Managing Up

Many managers make the mistake of **not managing their boss**. They don't think about it or are not clear how to do it. They simply take their own point of view and never give a chance to think how the boss might be thinking. They forget that the boss can also forget.

#### Think about this:

How is your boss supposed to know everything that went into a job to make it successful or how many barriers you had to overcome to finish that project by the deadline if you don't tell them?

Even if the boss had your role prior to being promoted, they probably won't remember all the details about the effort something took. Think back to a project you did several years ago that you are really proud of. Do you remember all the pain points you overcame? Chances are the details of the effort are fuzzy but the results and feelings of accomplishment are vivid.

### I Can't Hear You

One key to managing your boss is how you use your one-on-one meetings with them. Here are some key differences in how two managers share project status:

### The Underappreciated Manager and The Golden Manager

Underappreciated Manager	Golden Manager
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Status to due dates</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Key accomplishments by team members</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Key activities</li></ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Problems and plans to address</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Emphasis of areas that took extra</li></ul>

problems	<p>effort by team members</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Problems or potential barriers</li> </ul> <p>team identified and successfully addressed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Status to due dates with any plans</li> </ul> <p>to either accelerate plan or get project back on plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Recognitions by key stakeholders</li> </ul> <p>of work to date</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Problems and plans to address</li> </ul> <p>problems</p>
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The **Underappreciated Manager** might look at the **Golden Manager’s** approach and feel that the meeting with the boss has turned into a bragging session. It is! But the manager is bragging about how great their team members are or how some key stakeholders really helped them out – not about how great he or she is.

Certainly, there may be times when the manager brags about their own contribution, but the intent is on helping their boss understand the overall effort so they can appreciate the results better.

The Golden Manager recognizes that their performance is measured by how well their team does.

If the team does great, then the manager must be doing something right.

## Tell Me a Story

The tone of these two meetings is also very different. In the **Underappreciated Managers** meeting with the boss, the manager ticks through projects and their status as if they were going through bullet points in a presentation.

In the **Golden Manager’s** meeting there may be some quick updates but key points are told as stories. You hear things being said like: “Kathy did an amazing job of getting the Senior VP of Manufacturing to support our project. She....” and the story unfolds.

[Short stories of accomplishments are powerful.](#) They paint a picture of the difficulties and the accomplishments.

They star your team members as the heroes.

Good short stories engage your manager at an emotional level. The next staff meeting or meeting with his or her boss, your boss is much more likely to remember your story over any bullet points.

Your boss then ends up sharing those same stories with their manager and a very positive impression of you as a leader is formed. Your accomplishments also enable your boss to look good because their success is also based on their direct reports accomplishments.

It's a win-win.

## Don't Forget the Drive-Thru

When you have a really great accomplishment your proud of. Don't wait till the next formal meeting with your boss. Go by your boss's office and say, "Got a minute? I want to share some exciting news with you."

Then tell the short story with pride in your voice. If your boss is hard to reach – send an email titled "Great accomplishment by team" and write that short story.

*Boss's always have time for great news.* [Click to Tweet This](#)

## Ask for Recognition

Ask your boss for recognition. Not for you but for your team. If the team did something major, ask your boss if they'd be willing to send an e-mail congratulating the team members involved. If your boss has been bragging to their boss about your team you will even see that they copy their boss.

Everyone ends up being golden!

Managing your boss is a major differentiator between being a great manager and being a great manager on the succession plan. Unfortunately many managers are so focused on the team and work they forget this critical skill and wonder why they were passed over.

**So, how are you doing at managing your job and career by managing up with your boss? Have you tried this before? Was it more difficult, or easier than you thought? What else have you done to help your job and your team's jobs by managing up? I would love to hear your stories!**

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