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Managing Up: Subtle but Effective Communication with the “Powers That Be”

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Managing Up:

Subtle but Effective Communication with the “Powers That Be”

In learning to communicate with the “powers that be” in our institutions, it is valuable to appreciate and understand the four basic social styles that are presented in numerous works. The more assertive styles are: analytical and driver whereas the more responsive styles are: amiable and expressive. Understanding our style and that of the individual we wish to influence is a vital part of being successful in our endeavors. The article that served as a springboard explained the styles and means of adapting our style to ensure better communication.

In addition to discussing social styles, we touched on: dealing with new bosses, different communication styles, communication problems, chain of command issues and collaboration. Some keys to effective communication are:

- Keeping the boss current via monthly reports.
- Recognizing the culture of the campus as to whether or not the chain of command was followed.
- Have a five minute library moment during faculty meetings.
- Put a newsletter out.
- Pick your battles.
- Have your boss’s favorite candy.

We really had more questions than answers during this session and most in attendance felt that we could continue this discussion at conference in 2007. Some of the issues that arose were:

- When does one go over the boss’s head?
- Inconsistent behavior, underlying concerns and unspoken agenda.
- Sometimes the reporter is not one who makes the decision
- Dealing with unofficial points of contact
- Sometimes managing is determined by the predecessor who may or may not have been affective.

The readings below are varied. Rosanne Badowski in Managing Up: How to Forge an Effective Relationship with Those Above You is very “down to earth” and writes on the topic from her personal experience of working with Jack Welch (General Electric’s CEO) over a period of fourteen years. Managing Up: 59 Ways to Build a Career Advancing Relationship with Your Boss is a very practical instruction manual complete with exercises with each chapter to drive the point home.

Although we didn’t come away with easy answers, our group was unified regarding the importance of this topic and the desire to continue this discussion in upcoming conferences. Meanwhile, let’s be on the lookout for those who are having success in this area and seek to discover their secret. Doing so will not only have an impact on our relationship with our boss but may also affect the welfare of our institutions as a whole in the days ahead.

SUGGESTED READING:


