

Manage Well, Both Up and Down

Mechelle Roberthon



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Managing is a well-known phenomenon that is geared toward effectiveness with your leader (managing up) and with those you lead (managing down). At the core is how well you serve, which entails proper communication, trust, and authenticity. Broken links in any of those areas will disrupt the effectiveness of managing up or down.

A fundamental skill for professionals, communication requires you to use advanced techniques to successfully manage. As a leader, it's crucial that you share your company's overall goals and strategy to achieve them. By doing so, you should be able to clearly show what parts of the company's goals your department is accountable for and give a specific breakdown of your team's individual responsibilities in meeting them. As an employee, required communication skills include your initiative in sharing your needs, challenges, and successes with your leader. You'll need to partner with, and commit to, your organization's goals.

When you're managing up, you realize that serving your leader is serving the organization's goals and subsequently the

customer—whether an internal or external client. When you're successfully managing down, you realize that serving your employees is serving a greater organizational goal for which you're accountable. Accomplishing that goal serves the customer—internal or external. It's less to do with making your supervisor look good and bragging on your department for doing good work and more about whom your actions are helping.

A person is behind every workplace goal. Who does the goal benefit and why? Whether leader or individual contributor, it's critical that you buy into that and see the humility and effectiveness of managing and being managed.

This issue of *TD at Work* is for supervisors and employees, for those leading and those being led. Further, it is meant for talent development managers as a tool they can use and share to improve working relations and regular check-ins. In this issue of *TD at Work*, you'll learn:

- Practical explanations for managing up and down
- Why trust is essential for being effective
- Considerations for communication techniques
- Falsehoods to avoid when managing up and down
- Pragmatic strategies to successfully lead your leader and direct your direct reports

The Management Concept

The words and actions you use to lead your team will reflect what you think about the authority and influence you have. Management is about order and organization. Life requires order for it to be civil, and so does the workplace. Company leaders want to increase revenue, expand the business, and grow their brand. They need people to do that. They designate a select few individuals and entrust them with a team and process to lead, which are vital to the company's success.

Traditionally, management in the workplace has been the responsibility of one person overseeing a group of individuals. The negative connotation with management is having someone micromanage others; giving a little and expecting a lot; not taking the time to develop the team and leading from behind the desk; and, overall, exhibiting ineffective communication skills. This subtext of management has led to a worldwide-adopted distinction between managing and leading.

Leadership, then, is everything management is not. It's giving the team autonomy, grace, and mercy; giving equal or more than the team; investing in and caring for the team's personal and professional development; working alongside team members when needed; and communicating in a way that individuals are receptive to. Whether this is called *authority management* or *leadership*, whoever is entrusted with such power should have the tools to use it well.

At the core of managing up and down is how well we serve.

Rather than one person's responsibility, management has morphed into a shared duty. Now the work world requires employees to take ownership over their jobs, to be resourceful, to ask questions, to bring up concerns, to collaborate with others, to be creative, and ultimately to take initiative. Employees are now invited to lead with their leader. Leaders realize they can't effectively lead without their team's dedicated partnership. That partnership requires employees and leaders to communicate often, honestly, and clearly with one another. The partnership is an understanding about accountability, responsibility, and impact. Leaders are accountable for the employees, and the employees are responsible for performing their duties. The impact of that dynamic working in a positive manner is the company flourishing, which means that the company can continue to meet clients' needs.

Sound like a fairy tale? It's not. You can create this synergy by mastering the concepts of managing up and down.

Managing Up and Down

The significance of perspectives matters tremendously in how well we understand and use the management concept. The strength of managing well is heavily

predicated on how zoomed in we are on our role and duties versus how zoomed out we are on knowing and understanding the business holistically. That could be incredibly challenging if you do not understand multiple aspects of your organization.

Leaders are much more zoomed out on the duties of their entire department and its impact to the organization as a whole. It's equivalent to viewing a long journey from state to state on a map. You can't see the street names because you are not zeroed in on that detail. Likewise, leaders aren't focused solely on one person's duties in the department. They must keep their eyes on everyone's responsibilities.

Employees are more focused on their role and responsibilities, not their teammates' or the department's duties. That's equivalent to viewing street names on a map. To see street names, you must zoom in on a map. That super focus is employees' way of ensuring that they are looking at and completing the specific tasks and projects required of them.

My goal in writing this issue of *TD at Work* is to help make the concepts of managing up and down practical to your everyday work life.

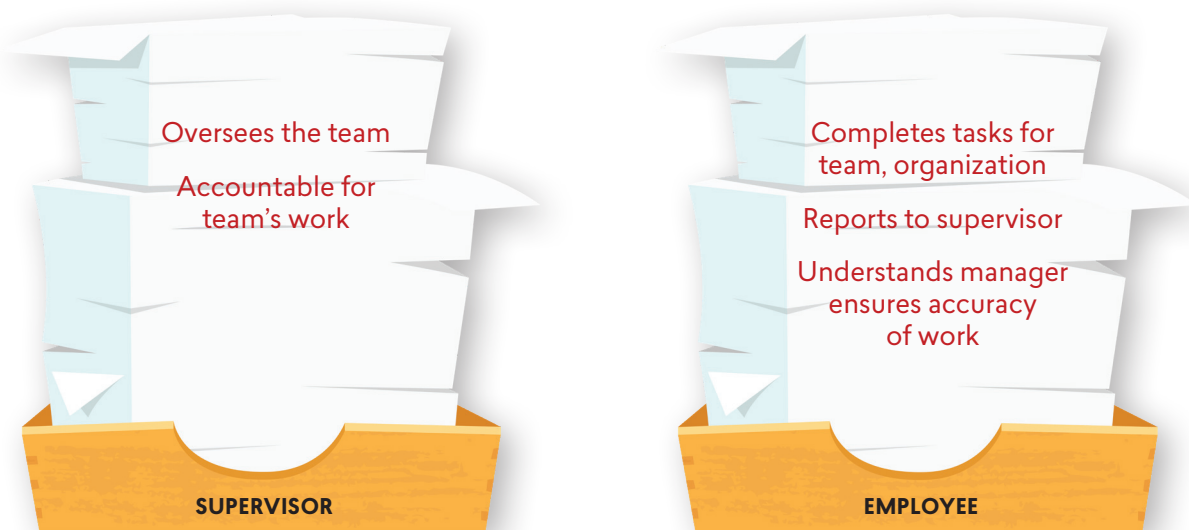
What Managing Up Looks Like

One aspect of managing up involves being responsible for what your supervisor is held accountable for. Are you a responsible employee? Are you completing your assigned tasks? Leading a department or function means that leaders are ultimately held accountable for the quality and quantity of what employees produce. If the department doesn't function well, employees are not typically called into meetings with the CEO to discuss the team's performance—but the leaders are. They are accountable for the team's wins and failures and often receive directives from their leader for the entire work unit.

They then divvy up responsibilities to everyone on the team. It is important to know the areas of accountability your supervisor has in conjunction to your role. Ask yourself these questions:

- Am I clear on my daily responsibilities?
- Do I know how those responsibilities affect my supervisor, my department, and the organization?
- Do I understand that my supervisor is ultimately accountable for the department's and my successes and failures?

Figure 1. Know Your Role



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