



# Working With The Boss: Tips for New Managers and How HR Can Help.

Part 4 in a 12-Part Series on Helping First-Time Managers and Seasoned, But Untrained, Supervisors Transition to Effective Leaders

*“Boss doesn’t equal “buddy” – but it doesn’t mean enemy either.”*

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## About the Supervisory Basics Article Series

The transition from an individual contributor to a supervisory or managerial role is one of the most critical and difficult career moves. Representing the largest pool of management talent in most companies, supervisors prove critical to an organization’s success. Companies that develop superior leaders in these supervisory positions can execute more effectively than their competition.

The boss is the person with the greatest control over a new manager’s success. How well the new manager manages the relationship will, to a great degree, have a critical impact on the new manager’s career aspirations and success at that job.

This article, *Working With The Boss: Tips for New Managers and How HR Can Help*, is based on Module #4 from [The Supervisory Basics Series](#), a 12-Part Series on Helping Individual Contributors and Seasoned, But Untrained, Supervisors Transition to Effective Leaders. The article discusses the importance for new managers to develop a relationship with their boss, how to go about doing that, and how to effectively use that relationship to eliminate obstacles in their growth as a supervisor. We also discuss how Human resources can assist newly promoted managers.



The Supervisory Basics Series consists of 12 individual yet linked two-hour modules, delivered in leader-led or eLearning formats, helping managers understand the management behaviors and tactics required to ensure their own and their company’s success. More information on The Supervisory Basics Series can be found at the conclusion of this article.

Listen to the Supervisory Basics Podcast Series: *Tips for Managers and HR Professionals on Helping Individual Contributors Transition to Effective Leaders*. [Available on iTunes](#).

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## Introduction

Effective managers understand the importance of developing a good relationship with their boss. A good relationship with the boss means becoming a valued resource to the boss. Since the boss is the person with the greatest control over their future as a manager, how well new managers manage this relationship will, to a great degree, have a critical impact on their career aspirations and success at that job.

Human resources can assist newly promoted managers by pointing out specific things a new supervisor or manager can do—at first and then routinely—to become a valued resource to the boss.

*A good relationship with the boss means becoming a valued resource to the*

## Use the Boss as a “Sounding Board”

During the first few months on the job it is tempting for new managers to make suggestions or changes too soon, but there are some very good reasons to be cautious. First, new managers have little to no credibility or supervisory experience at this stage in their new role. Second, the new manager hasn't been around long enough to know the “ins and outs” of why things are done the way they are. Third, their boss might be the one who created what they want to change.

However, if new managers want to make a good first impression with the boss, there are two critical things that they should do: run ideas and/or decisions by the boss, and have solutions, but be willing to get feedback before implementing. Following these two steps allows several important interactions to occur:

- (1) Coaching moments from the boss. The insight, input and lessons from the boss will let new managers get a feel for how the boss likes things done.
- (2) Assurance that decisions are on the right track. Bosses usually like to have things done a certain way. They also have knowledge of what has been tried in the past and what and what has not worked.
- (3) New managers get assurance that they have their boss' support. The last thing new managers want to hear in the early stages of a relationship with the boss is, “Why didn't you run that by me before you went ahead?”

## Get to Know the Boss

Just as the successful manager understands the importance of “being the customer” the new manager understands the importance of “being the boss.” The boss wants the new manager to make his/her work life more productive and stress free. This means working effectively with the boss with a minimum of problems that could easily be avoided by understanding what is important to the boss.

There is one key rule for new managers to keep in mind: Keep the boss informed. Bosses don't like to be surprised by news they believe they should know, especially regarding important information. New supervisors should follow this “No Surprise” rule even if it means giving the boss bad news. It's better to be forthright rather than letting the boss hear about potential problems from others.

Other important points to keep in mind are:

- What specific topic areas does the boss want to know about?
- How does the boss like to receive information? In writing? Verbally? Formally? Informally?
- When is the best time to get some of his or her time? Mornings? Afternoons?
- How do other successful managers interact and deal with the boss? Ask them.
- Watch the boss in meetings. Does the boss have any personal tendencies or quirks when it comes to work, communications, and interactions?
- Get to know the type of questions the boss might ask and anticipate them. Count on being questioned by the boss regarding the reasons or supporting data for holding opinions or making decisions. It's important that the reasons and data supporting opinions and decisions are valid and well thought out .
- Double-check and validate the information received before briefing the boss, especially in the beginning. A faulty thought process or reasoning and invalid data can result in a quick loss of confidence by the boss – and ultimately hinder any autonomy and increased responsibility in the future.

*Don't avoid giving the boss bad news. Always be forthright regarding problems and potential problems.*

## Do Not Pass the Monkey (i.e. Don't Make Extra Work for the Boss)

Upward delegation of work from the manager to the boss when the manager should take the initiative to do the work is a big problem for the boss. It creates more work for the boss. This action is called “passing the monkey.” Some of the more serious consequences of passing the monkey are:

- The boss becomes frustrated with the manager—having direct report responsibilities dumped on him or her.
- The boss loses confidence in the manager—the manager can't handle the job
- A dependent relationship emerges—the supervisor becomes dependent on the boss as the problem-solver and provider of answers. Initiative is avoided.
- Wasted time—the upward delegated work competes for the boss's own job requirements and responsibilities—often delaying important boss-related issues.
- Lack of development—the manager learns little as the boss is doing the work and tackling the issue.

*Upward delegation of work from the manager to the boss when the manager should take the initiative to do the work is a big problem for the boss.*

By keeping work monkeys off the boss's back, new managers show two important qualities that a boss looks for in a good manager: initiative and personal responsibility.

To prevent unnecessary “dumping” on the boss, newly placed managers must remember to communicate problems and difficult issues with the boss before acting. When bringing up an issue, they should provide sufficient background on the problem. This includes detailing consequences of continuing with the status quo or present practice, and providing best-effort recommendations or solutions. Also, new managers should frame issues and suggestions in a manner that benefits the bottom line of the organization. By following these rules, the new manager can earn both the respect and support of his or her boss.

## Conclusion

Good bosses appreciate good managers. By observing the “rules” of boss/manager relationships, a new manager can make tremendous strides in regards to success and career advancement. Good bosses operate not by mysterious forces but by practical needs. Get to know the boss and how he/she likes to operate. Keep the boss in the communication loop and, by all means, keep the work monkey off the boss's back.

Our next article (fifth in our 12-article series), *The Law: Compliance Basics* gives new managers a clear understanding of the rights of employees and includes common topics that apply to most organizations and provides readers with assistance that can make them more effective.

### Did You Enjoy This Article?

If you enjoyed this article please [visit our website](#) to access other articles in this 12-part series on Supervisory Basics.

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## About the Supervisory Basics Series

The [Supervisory Basics Series](#) is based on extensive analysis of the competencies required of transitioning individual contributors and seasoned, but untrained, supervisors. This series provides the knowledge, tools and skills to immediately establish a leadership role and helps participants understand how to avoid the typical traps of new supervisors and managers.

The Supervisory Basics Series helps managers understand the management behaviors and tactics required to ensure their own and their company's success. The result is managers establishing themselves in a legitimate position of power, inspiring superior performance and promoting open, effective communication. Supervisory Basics also helps beginning managers avoid common new manager traps—lack of clarity in expectations, ineffective communications, not establishing personal power and failing to move from “doer” to leader. Such negative behaviors lead to absenteeism, low morale, lost productivity and customer loyalty, as well as increased attrition.

The series consists of 12 individual yet linked two-hour modules, delivered in leader-led or eLearning formats. Companies can choose flexible implementation, including an integrated 3-day series, stand-alone sessions, mix and match, and external facilitator or train-the-trainer

options. Participants will learn to build credibility, establish legitimate position power, earn personal power, “manage up,” understand legal basics and conduct purposeful workplace discussions. [Download the brochure.](#)

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