

Tips for Getting in Tune with Your Boss

Purpose: Use this job aid as a convenient reminder of the ways to align your behavior with your boss's.

To build and maintain rapport with your boss, you need to align your goals and activities with your boss's. There are three primary ways in which you can get in tune with your boss.

Assisting with your boss's agenda

Before you can assist your boss with any agenda, you need to discover what it is:

- Start by determining your boss's public agenda.
- Ask yourself what types of activities and tasks make up your boss's typical day.
- Consider the kinds of demands and pressures your boss is under.
- Study your boss's work life.
- Discover your boss's informal agenda.
- Consider if there are long-term career goals that are important.
- Consider if the personal values or interests your boss pursues are alongside stated duties.
- Consider asking your boss directly about personal aspirations in a nonintrusive way.
- When you know what your boss truly wants, tailor your work to support your boss's agenda.

Keeping your boss informed

To be on the same page as your boss, you need to ensure your boss has all the information necessary:

- Allow the nature of the information and your boss's work preferences to dictate how you provide information.
- Update your boss about important developments, rumors, problems, results, risks, and staff issues that may affect your boss's professional life.
- Don't just assume that your boss knows what you do.
- Inform your boss about problems early enough to allow time for correction.
- Consider your boss's work style and preferences when reporting information. For example, does your boss prefer richly detailed information or brief high-level summaries?
- In general, try to talk with your boss both in formal and informal situations.
- Involve your boss early so the two of you can work together to fix the issue.

Adapting to your boss's working style

Adapt your work style to better fit with the way your boss does things:

- Don't judge your boss's approach.
- Remember that, for the most part, you are the one who must adapt to your boss's needs.
- Don't be offended or take it personally if your boss wants you to change your way of doing things.
- Don't automatically assume that when your boss is moody or grumpy, you're the cause.
- Remember your boss isn't worrying about adapting his behavior to you.
- Determine your boss's hot-button issues and steer clear of them.
- Think about what your own boundaries are and decide how far is too far for you to adapt.
- Get clarification if you don't understand something. Ask for guidance if you need it.
- Try to understand the rationale behind your boss's instructions so you can make better decisions about aligning yourself.
- Cut your boss some slack in high-pressure situations.
- Observe and determine which of the four categories of personality type and work style your manager best fits: people-oriented, work-oriented, procedure-oriented, or idea-oriented.
- Determine how and when you need to meet with your boss to discuss issues.
- Decide the level of detail you need to provide based on how much information your boss needs or likes to have when making decisions.
- Ask yourself whether you and your boss use the same procedures and have the same level of technical training.

