

## **Managing - Upward, Downward And Sideways**

By [Elizabeth Black](#)

The first 30-days in a new management role is critical to survival—yours, your team’s, and your career. How you manage your team’s performance, how you manage your boss’s expectations, and how you manage your own expectations and performance will determine your job happiness and, perhaps, your longevity in this new role.

Managing team performance is all about setting performance goals and holding people accountable, providing feedback and coaching people to high levels of productivity. It is also about mentoring and being a leader your team respects. Many books and articles have focused upon team performance management; it is reasonably straight forward. (For more specific information on managing your team, see my article, “Confessions of A New Manager” on this site.)

Managing your boss’s expectations, however, is not as clearly defined. “Managing upward” has been the subject of several management workshops, but we have a simple three-step process which may make this easier to do.

If you are an experienced hire, your boss will probably not spend much time with you upfront, explaining how he would like to work with you—what he expects, how he would like to hear from you, and what you can expect from him. Despite the fact that this dialogue would be extremely useful to launch new manager/subordinate relationships, it rarely, if ever, occurs. Initial conversations with your boss will, undoubtedly, focus upon business challenges, company or departmental performance and perhaps some interpersonal exchanges about family and home. If that is the case, you can manage your boss’s expectations by suggesting that you and he set aside an hour each month at a predesignated time for your status update. The key, though, is what you do in this hour that you have with your boss. We recommend that you use the following outline and that you prepare your items for discussion in each of the following areas:

- Accomplishments
  
- Landmines
  
- What I Need From You

The Accomplishments section allows you to demonstrate the progress you have made toward your individual, team and company goals. It should be a bullet point list of significant achievements you have made during that time period. Where possible, it should quantify results not just activity. This provides your boss with a list of significant accomplishments he may not otherwise be aware of or may have forgotten. It is also very useful during annual performance review time when he must try to recollect your accomplishments to document them on your review. The time spent on this section may be you explaining some details about each accomplishment or your boss asking for

further information or clarification. This should give him a good idea on where you have been spending your time.

In the Landmines section, you document, again in bullet point form, what trouble you see ahead for your major projects, your team or any barriers to achieving your goals. This section arms your boss with what he needs to know not to be caught off guard on any issues or problems. Here, you will spend more time explaining the situation in each landmine, what you have done to mitigate the situation and what the consequences of each landmine might be. Your boss can ask for additional detail or offer helpful suggestions for some actions you may not have considered. He may also make note of the forewarning you are giving, and he may be able to take some action outside of this meeting. “Forewarned is forearmed” holds true in the business world as it does in other arenas.

The final section of your report, “What I Need From You,” is your opportunity to ask for the help or support you need to accomplish next month’s activities. It demonstrates that you understand where you need others’ help, and it should be a good way to engage your boss in a dialogue about specific things he can do to help you be successful. If you have given him a head start on thinking about how to help you, the dialogue should be very rich and ultimately, help you produce excellent results.

Now that you have thought about managing your team and your boss, you need to give some thought to managing your own performance and expectations. During the “honeymoon period” of a new job, it is natural to expect that you will perform very well, be generously rewarded and manage to keep everything in your life and work in balance. After all, this is a fresh start, and you probably have had time to reflect on the things you want to do differently in this new job. Remember, though, that reasonableness should be the barometer by which you judge yourself and your first 30 days. Rome certainly wasn’t built in a day or even in 30, and you cannot dramatically change multiple behaviors in that time period either. If you work on being the best you can be and calibrating your expectations over time, you will have consciously worked on improving the areas you have noted as in need of improvement, and you won’t have set unrealistic expectations for your performance.

In each management situation, you are in control of what you do and how you do it. If you demonstrate that you have a plan and know how to operationalize it, you will gain the confidence of your team and your boss. You will also allow yourself the breathing room and opportunity to learn from what you have done in the past and to practice getting better at managing upward, downward and sideways.

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