

Is it Appropriate to be Manipulative and Produce Illegitimate Outcomes for Your Boss in Order to Get Good Raises (and Should it be)?

Management Professor Stephen Bushardt says "Yes"

The title above is intriguing, to be sure. However, when you read the article below (available at www.timbersnursery.com) by our own Stephen Bushardt, professor of management, you will have some context for this report's title.

MANAGING THE BOSS

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Learning how to manage your superior can reap recognition and rewards

Are you a high performer, a sciolist like the first author, who does not receive the rewards from your boss that you deserve? Are other managers who don't perform as well as you receiving the recognition that you're entitled to? If so, then it's time for a lesson in managing your manager.

Rewards and recognition tend to go to those who know how to manage their superiors and not necessarily to those who perform at the highest level. "If you work hard enough, you'll work your way right to the top" is an axiom that is in reality a myth.

LESSON 1: *Rewards and recognition tend to go to the manager who can manage the boss, and not necessarily to the manager with the best performance.*

If you feel that this statement is false, then concentrate on learning to accept what your boss gives you, or rather does not give you. If, on the other hand, you feel Lesson 1 is true, read on.

You are always aware that the corporate "goodies" you receive, that is, promotions, pay raises, a secretary, expense accounts, and so forth, come from above and not from below. Since this is true, you should focus your attention on your superiors. Use your management skills to manage your boss. If you follow this strategy, you will eventually get most of what you have been "unjustly" denied. This, of course, is not to say that you should not do a good job managing your subordinates as well.

LESSON 2: *Corporate rewards and recognition come from above and not from below.*

An essential element in management is to tell people what you want from them. Likewise, you must tell your superiors what you want from them. Whether it is a promotion, a pay increase or administrative support that you want, tell the boss.

If the boss does not know what you want, he or she may not give you anything, or, worse yet, may give you something you do not want.

LESSON 3: *Communicate to the boss what you want.*

If the boss knows that you want a promotion or a pay raise, but still does not give these things to you, it is time for a little homework. If your boss is bestowing the cherished corporate goodies on one of your peers, you are in luck. The boss is competent and knows how to give rewards. If, on the other hand, the boss does not bestow the goodies on anyone, he or she may be incompetent in giving credit and recognition.

It is rare to find a boss who does not know how to get and give rewards. After all, he or she knows what is to be rewarded. If you have an incompetent boss who believes that corporate policy will not allow you to have an expense account, for example, naively explain how you thought it was a good idea. After all, your peer, Mr. Smith, has an expense account and is able to catch the difficult clients, even though expense accounts appear to violate corporate policy.

LESSON 4: *Never ask the boss for something he or she cannot deliver. You are halfway home.*

Just as you want certain rewards, so does your boss. The problem is to ascertain what they are. Of course, your superior may be reluctant to tell you outright, so you may have to use other methods. But desire for recognition and promotion can usually be determined by observing behavior.

If your boss desires outcomes which are considered illegitimate by corporate standards, he or she may go to great lengths to disguise that wish. If the boss does not want greater responsibility or more challenge, he or she may go to great lengths to profess to everyone his or her desire for hard work. Likewise, the boss may spend hours complaining about apple polishers, when in reality that is just what is wanted. You must be astute and observant to penetrate the maze of false clues.

LESSON 5: *Convince the boss that he or she can provide what you want.*

A word of caution: Never ask the boss for something he or she cannot deliver. If your superior merely thinks he or she cannot get you the reward or promotion you want, try to convince the boss that he or she can. If the boss absolutely cannot get these things for you, do not ask. Does this mean that you cannot get what you want, but have been denied? No. It just means you have to help the boss to acquire the necessary power and influence so that he or she can provide them.

LESSON 6: *Determine what the boss really wants from his or her job.*

Assuming that you have been successful in identifying what your boss really wants from you, the next step is to give it to him or her. You have to use your creative abilities here. If you have been giving the boss good performance in the past, but are not receiving what you want, then check your list of what the boss

really wants. The boss may want flattery and praise. If the boss dislikes writing memos to you, make sure he or she can communicate verbally.

LESSON 7: *Give the boss what he or she really wants from his or her job.*

The boss knows what you want, how to get it for you, and also has the power and influence to get it for you. The question still remains, "Will the boss provide you with the outcomes that you desire?"

If you give the boss what the boss really wants, he or she should in turn provide you with what you want. If you have followed all the lessons prescribed here, and the boss still refuses to give you the outcomes you seek, review the list to make sure you have not made any errors. If you find none, you are ready for Lesson 8.

LESSON 8: *If the boss does not know how to give rewards, change bosses.*

You say, "All I wanted was a little praise and recognition, not a new job." But how worthwhile is it to work without rewards?