**MANAGING YOUR BOSS – Part 1**

A great many Veterans leave the Armed Forces, get a job fairly quickly, but fail to stay in the position. It happened to me, and a great many others. A very high percentage of Service Leavers do not settle in their first job and often do not stay more than six months! What makes them leave? A great many factors contribute, but this decision to move on, but the core problem is the boss. The aim of this blog is to help Tigers to manage through this disaster and succeed. Its probable that when serving you were already doing a lot of this but didn’t realise it.

An essential factor in achieving results, innovating, taking your company and career forward is knowing how to manage your Boss.

Artifice, flattery and manipulation should not play a part, but they provide clues to aspects of managing one’s Boss.

Specific tasks cannot be performed without the consent and support of your Boss; it is important to understand how to handle him or her. It is not easy to neglect this vital facet of management, and it is worth careful and continuous thought. To manage a Boss, it is essential to be able to:

* Get agreement from him or her on what needs to be done;
* Deal directly with your Boss over problems;
* Impress a Boss so that they are more likely to consider and even accept proposals and place trust in you.

Getting agreement from your Boss is in many ways like getting agreement from anyone else. Case presentation and persuasion need to be good, specifically:

* What does the Boss expect? – Find out;
* Learn about a Boss’s likes, dislikes, quirks, and prejudices;
* Establish how a Boss likes to have proposals presented, and the right time to make an approach, an excellent source of this advice will be the PA;
* Use observation to understand how he or she likes things to be done;
* Ask the Boss advice; everybody loves to give advice;
* Get the PA on your side; they will understand a Boss’s moods, the best circumstances to make your approach, know, and even control, availability, and can be very supportive, to you. PA’s are fantastic allies, or enemies to be feared;
* Decide if support is required in making the proposal to the Boss. It is often better to make the case on a one-to-one basis. There is a lot to be said for standing on your own feet;
* Confrontation just will not work! Get a Boss to agree on what he or she is prepared to agree with, and then deal with problem areas, impress the need to cover every possible angle, and emphasize joint responsibility.
* Always provide an escape route, a route to consent without a loss of face.
* Do not overwhelm with multiple ideas;
* Do not expect to achieve everything all at once;
* Tackle one critical item at a time, and keep it simple;
* Do not fight strong objections, live to fight another day;
* Keep in reserve alternative proposals to the original idea, use them when no progress is being made;
* Bosses can often come up with better ideas than what is proposed (it's usually why they are the Boss) Accept it, everybody likes recognition, but there is no need to flatter, react to the Boss as you would want the Boss to react to you.
* Remember he or she is the Boss and cannot always be convinced. They make the ultimate decisions, and you may have to accept it;
* Be alert to any indication that the Boss might be prepared to have a change of heart – given time and a revision of the proposal;
* Do not press too hard; a Boss can become entrenched in a position, and even believe that the proposal is a challenge to their authority. Retire in good order and re-open the campaign at the right moment.

If things go wrong, mistakes are made, and the support of the Boss is required, the best approach is:

* Keep the Boss informed, never let them be taken by surprise, prepare in advance for bad news. “troubles come not in single spies but in battalions”.
* Do not use the “first the good news then the bad news” line too crudely, don’t be too gloomy, give hope.
* Explain what has happened and why do not make excuses. Suggest courses of action, don’t dump the problem for the Boss to sort out.
* Emphasize that the Boss’s guidance and views are being sought, as well as agreement.
* If the Boss is to blame, never say “I told you so”, you will make an enemy for life.
* Steer recrimination into a positive attitude on what *jointly* can be done to solve the problem.

As a manager proposals are made not just to impress the Boss, nor to make a Boss like you. But more will be achieved, and your relationship with your Boss will be better if you impress. Why make an enemy of the Boss when he or she could be a friend?

The Boss needs to trust managers and staff, rely on them and believe in their capacity to come up with good ideas and make things happen. A Boss does not want to micro-manage, spend time correcting mistakes or covering them up. Succeed without trying too much; it is dangerous to push, but:

* Always be frank and open;
* Never lie, and admit mistakes when they happen;
* Aim to help your Boss be right.
* Respond quickly to requests in a will do / can do manner;
* Do not trouble your Boss unnecessarily;
* Provide your Boss with loyalty;
* Give your Boss “completed staff work”.

In this blog, I have merely referred to the Boss as either male or female. Of course, the Boss is the leader; it can be said that the core elements of leadership are universal. But cultures differ in their understanding of what makes a good Boss and the qualities needed to be considered leaders. Depending on the cultural context, good leadership is mostly *personality in the right place*. The next blog in this series will explore the cultural aspects of leadership. Being attuned to cultural nuance helps to manage your Boss.