Abigail's Podcast Cheatsheet
#010 How to Help Your Boss Help You

Getting Clear on Due Dates

When your boss give you a project and says it is important but doesn't give a due date, you need to ask for one. The boss may respond "As soon as possible." Of course you are already working on stuff so now you face a dilemma. Do you stop everything and work on the new project? Or do you finish what you are doing and then start on the new project?

This is when cultivating a good relationship with your boss is key because you need to know how to prioritize work when working for that individual.

A good habit to get into is to track questions you have for your boss and wait for a good opportunity to clear up those questions. For example, during an annual evaluation or similar meeting simply say something like:

> "When you give me important projects that need to be done as soon as possible but I am working on another project with the same directive how would you like to me to handle that? Should I bring to your attention the other project and have you tell me which is the priority, use my discretion or something else?"

If the boss says to ask, then you have laid the groundwork to ask during those high-pressure moments. Also you refer to the conversation.

> "As per your instructions in situations like this, should I drop project X temporarily to do project Y? Or finish project X then do project Y?"

Create a cheat sheet of these types of questions and answers. Then you have a reference point as to what to do when specific situations arise.

Be sure when having these difficult discussions with your boss that you be as succinct as possible with your scenario descriptions and take notes on your boss'

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response. We are notorious for forgetting things like this, especially when we are in a stressful situation.

Long-Term Projects

Always get a due date as to the expected completion time. Even better get some "sub" due dates, dates that are specific and have measurable outcomes expected. You need to treat these as firm due dates. Be sure that both you and your supervisor note in your calendars the due date and sub due dates. Be responsible for each date and report your progress. Don't expect the supervisor to initiate these discussions. Also these can be brief.

"Just a quick update, as we agreed, phase 1 of project X is complete."

This is also a great opportunity if a question has arisen for you regarding the project to ask if you supervisor has a moment more. If not ask when would be a good time to ask your question.

Accountability helps us perform more successfully.

Repeating Directions in Your Own Words

A good practice to get into is repeating directions when someone assigns you a task. Saying the directions back to them in your own words helps cement the information in your brain and gives them a chance to listen and see if you understand what they want you to do.

While to person is first giving the instructions, write it down in your own shorthand. When they are finished, ask any questions you have. Then comes the re-iteration.

Check Ins

Encourage you boss and/or supervisors to check in with you, that you appreciate it and don't see it as intrusive. Be careful though in your responses to these check ins.

Interact openly and honestly. Be straight-forward, ask questions if you have any and if you are stuck seek help. All the while, showing genuine eagerness and interest in completing the project properly. You are ready to learn but just need a little support. This type of energy is attractive and makes people want to help you.

Be careful to not start explaining why something is not done and sounding like you are making excuses. Be specific where you are hung up and ask for some help or suggestions on how to solve the problem.

The Sandwich Feedback Model

Sometimes you are supervising others or providing feedback. Try using the sandwich feedback model:

<div align="center">

Positive comment
Constructive feedback
Positive comment

</div>

Each comment should be specific. Not "that's really good." Cite specific qualities such as "The way you laid out the graphics makes it really clear what we are trying to accentuate for the client."

Modeling Behavior that Helps You

Always try to be modeling the behavior that works best for you. If positive re-enforcement works better than threats for you, model that behavior. Show by example how you like to be treated. Thank those who treat you that way. It goes a long way in creating the type of environment you work best in.