



# Take Control of Your Career

by Joseph M. Hanna, 2014 Fellow

While “managing up” is important in many disciplines, this learned skill is especially crucial in the legal industry. I credit much of my professional development and success to my ability to embrace the concept of “managing up” and apply it at my firm.

Young attorneys often work for several partners on a variety of assignments. In that context, attorneys must embrace and apply this idea at all times. So what does it mean to “manage up?”

## **1. Understand your boss’s working style.**

How does your boss prefer to communicate — via email, over the phone, or in person? Does he or she like to touch base weekly or daily? What’s his or her writing style — short and to the point or lengthy and detailed? These are some of the questions you should take the time to ask and answer. If you are working for multiple partners, it is imperative that you get to know each of them and tailor your working style accordingly. The more you are able to align your working style with your boss’, the quicker you will be able to build a rapport with them and the more efficient you will be at completing your work.

## **2. Learn what’s important to your boss and help him or her pursue those goals.**

While completing assignments and producing high-quality work are the foundation of a good relationship with your boss, you need to go above and beyond if you want to stand out. Taking the time to understand your boss’ strategic priorities and offering to contribute to them is invaluable.

For example, when I started as an associate attorney, I began working in the Business and Commercial Practice Group (B&C Group). I soon recognized the leader of the B&C Group had a strong desire to grow the Group’s clientele base. To help the practice group leader reach his goal, I volunteered to participate in marketing activities such as giving presentations, drafting articles and blogs, and other forms of client development. Later, I also began assisting in the hiring process to ensure we had the best attorneys and staff to assist our clients. As a result of my efforts, today I am a member of the B&C Group’s leadership, and the group boasts more than 50 attorneys.

### **3. Be proactive and show your engagement.**

Demonstrate to your boss that you are pursuing more than just a job — show that you are pursuing a career. Take an interest in the business and offer ideas to enhance it. When I was an associate, I volunteered to begin working on accounts receivable collections. I was able to collaborate with attorneys that I otherwise would not have interacted with on an invaluable non-legal business aspect of the firm.

Participating in business functions such as accounts receivable helped me gain traction with the firm when I pitched ideas for things I wished to pursue. For example, I wanted to start a Sports and Entertainment Practice Group as well as an internal diversity task force, both of which were initiatives I believed would add value to the firm. Because of the goodwill I had built with my managers by engaging in the business, I was allowed to pursue these endeavors and am currently the chair of both.

### **4. Think outside of the box.**

Once you understand and adapt to your boss' working style, help them pursue their goals, and proactively engage in the business, you may become a regular and trusted advisor to your boss. This position is key because it will give you more latitude to pursue “out of the box” ideas.

For example, I have a strong sense of civic responsibility and created an organization to benefit American armed forces members stationed in conflict zones around the world as well as right here at home. By providing them with golf equipment, the brave men and women in our military can engage in recreation and rehabilitative activities. I saw it as not only a great opportunity to provide our troops with some support while they courageously protect our country, but also as a strategic offshoot of my firm's Sports and Entertainment Practice Group. To date, Bunkers in Baghdad has shipped nearly 8 million golf balls and 600,000 clubs to troops in 60 countries around the world, and to facilities in all 50 states.

Ultimately, “managing up” puts you in control of the direction and progression of your career. It is not something you do on one day or one week of the year — it is a continual process that you must always be working at and building upon.

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# Tips on Managing Up

by John Cu, 2011 Fellow

- Schedule a lunch or meeting with your managing partner, GC, or immediate supervisor at least twice a year. Use the lunch meetings as an opportunity to check in with your superior and to keep him or her apprised of what you're doing, and more importantly, what you are interested in doing in the future.
- Do not be afraid to share your successes and the projects/roles/tasks that you are interested in pursuing.
- Communicate constantly with your superior, especially with respect to your workload, so that expectations are met to the fullest extent possible.
- Don't assume your supervisor knows what you are doing, what you would like to do next, and where you would like to be. Share this with him or her.
- Do your best to get to know your supervisor's weaknesses. We are all human. If your strength complements his or her weakness, this is a tremendous opportunity to enhance the team and your relationship with him or her.

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