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Manage Up to Move Up

By Mary Abbajay, Best-Selling Author of *Managing Up: How to Move Up, Win at Work, and Succeed with Any Type of Boss*



Mary Abbajay

As much as we would love to believe that the workplace is (or should be) a meritocracy, where just being great at our job is all we need to succeed, reality tells a different story. The real (and inconvenient) truth is that all workplaces are social systems—meaning we have to work with, among, through (and sometimes around) other people. And in a social system, relationships matter—a lot.

Positive workplace relationships create positive workplace experiences and results. Poor relationships produce poor results and experiences. At the end of the day, just being good at our job is not enough. We must deliver great work while simultaneously being good at relationships—up, down, and across the organization. This is especially poignant for those early in their career, as they need to build up their portfolio of expertise and experience, and often work on projects where

they have no “official” authority. Therefore, they must depend on their ability to influence through positive relationships to accomplish their goals. While developing effective relationships with all of our colleagues (and stakeholders) is important for career success, developing a positive and productive relationship with our boss is absolutely critical to our success. Whether we like it or not, bosses have a great deal of influence over our career success and trajectory. Our relationship with our manager, and their experience with us, will influence what kinds of opportunities come our way. When we earn our boss’s trust, good things await us; if we incur their ire, we may find ourselves out of the running for promotions and opportunities. Long story short, while all workplace relationships are important—our relationship with our boss can hurt us or help us the most.

Managing Up is Not Sucking Up

Let’s be clear: managing up is not about sucking up, butt kissing or becoming a sycophant. Managing up is also not about working for an abusive or toxic boss—the only way to manage toxic bosses is to leave them. Managing up is about consciously and deliberately developing and maintaining effective relationships with supervisors, bosses, and other people above us (and across from us) in the chain of command. It is a deliberate effort to increase cooperation and collaboration between individuals who have different perspectives and uneven power levels. It is about consciously working with your boss to



Mary Abbajay speaks to UT students, faculty and members of the community at the 2020 Leadership Summit.

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Manage Up to Move Up

obtain the best possible results for you, your boss and the organization. Managing up is about you taking charge of your workplace experience.

Managing Up is About Adapting

Bosses are human beings just like us, and as human beings, they bring their own way of thinking, acting and believing. They have different perspectives, styles, experiences and ways of relating. When our preferences and personalities align, it can be magical. When they don't, it can be frustrating. As much as we hate to admit it, we can't change other people. We can only change how we react and interact with them. This presents us with a choice. We can sit back and complain or develop active strategies to adapt. In short, our empowerment comes from changing how we react and interact—and that's where managing up comes in.

Forget the Golden Rule—Try the Platinum Rule

The golden rule says we should treat others as we would like to be treated. This works great when we all want to be treated the same—meaning we all want and value the same type of interaction. But in the real world, especially in the workplace, people have different needs, goals, personalities, preferences and pet peeves. Some people think fast, talk fast and act fast, while others prefer to take a more moderate, measured, and careful approach to work and communication. Some folks are social and friendly at work and like to get to know their colleagues, while others exhibit less friendliness and may value relationships primarily as a vehicle to accomplish tasks. Some people are very assertive and direct about their opinions, wants, and needs, while others are less assertive and more accommodating and solicitous of other's ideas, opinions, needs and wants. And the list goes on.

Embracing the Platinum Rule means striving to treat others as they want to be treated. If we can understand their workplace personality,

preferences and pet peeves, then we can be more strategic in how we interact with them. For example, if your boss likes project updates to be brief and bottom-lined, then resist the temptation to delve into details—unless she asks for them! We cannot change other people—we can only change how we act, interact and react with them. We can own our contribution to the relationship and take responsibility for making it work.

Solving the Puzzle

Managing up is like putting together a puzzle. Part of the puzzle is our boss, part of it is us, and the rest of the pieces are the strategies we are willing or not willing to try. Some pieces will fit, and some won't. Only we can figure out how to piece together the puzzle of our workplace experience. It's a simple three-step process:

1. Look Outside

Become a boss detective. Take some time to reflect on who your boss is and how she operates. Pay attention to clues she leaves. Notice who works well with your boss and how they interact with her. Look for patterns. Do NOT judge, just gather information. Ask yourself the following questions:

- What is her workstyle personality? How does she interact with others?
- How does your boss like his information? How does he prefer to communicate?
- What are his priorities and goals?
- What are her concerns, challenges and pressures?
- What is his boss like? What does the organization expect from him?
- What does she expect from you? What are her expectations for the team?
- What are his pet peeves?

2. Look Inside

The second step requires taking a good long, honest look in the mirror. Managing up requires being brutally honest with yourself in terms of who you are, what you want, and what you need. It's also about understanding your contribution to the relationship. Ask yourself the following questions:

- What is my workstyle personality? How do I like to interact with others?
- How do I prefer to communicate?
- What are my priorities and goals?
- What are my workplace strengths and weaknesses?
- Do I bring the right attitude, energy and motivation to be successful with my boss?
- Would I want myself as an employee?

3. Assess the Gap and Adapt

Once we have a good sense of the puzzle pieces, now you get to choose how to put them together. You get to choose in what ways you are willing or not willing to adapt to your boss. Questions to explore:

- In what ways are we similar? In what ways are we different?
- In what ways am I compatible with my boss? In what ways am I not?
- Am I willing to make changes to my behavior and/or attitude?
- What could I do more of? Less of? Or differently in order to work well with my boss?

You Get to Choose

Better workplaces happen when we make them happen. Better relationships happen when we make them happen. Sitting back and complaining does us no good. If we want a better workplace experience, then we must take action to make that happen. We get to choose what strategies we want to employ. We get to choose whether or not we are willing—or able—to manage up. We also get to choose when it's time to find a new opportunity. We get to choose to be career victors or career victims.

LEADERSHIP 2020: REACHING NEW HEIGHTS

On Feb. 12, the TECO Energy Center for Leadership at the Sykes College of Business hosted its 2020 Leadership Summit sponsored by TECO Peoples Gas and TECO Tampa Electric. This interactive event brings together a large group of participants composed of leaders throughout the Tampa Bay business community, UT students, faculty and nationally recognized speakers, and panel members. Attendees are able to connect with local business leaders, gain valuable leadership insight and advice, and learn about hot topics in leadership.



Mary Abbajay (second from left) stands alongside influential panelists and UT leaders, faculty and staff at the 2020 Leadership Summit in February.

The Summit, titled Leadership 2020: Reaching New Heights, featured Mary Abbajay as the keynote speaker. Mary Abbajay, author of the award-winning and best-selling book, *Managing Up: How to Move Up, Win at Work, and Succeed with Any Type of Boss*, is the president of Careerstone Group LLC, a full service organizational and leadership development consultancy that delivers leading-edge talent and organizational development solutions to business and government. As a frequent expert contributor for television, radio and print publications where she provides practical leadership and career advice, Abbajay's work and advice have appeared in the *New York Times*, *Harvard Business Review*, *Fast Company*, *Forbes*, *The Financial Times*, *Money*, *Southwest: The Magazine*, *Monster* and the BBC.

The Summit also included a leadership panel discussion with T.J. Szelistowski, president of TECO Peoples Gas; Jessica Muroff, CEO of United Way Suncoast; and Yvette Segura, regional vice president of USAA.



Making Cross-Functional Talent Work for You

By Donna Huska, Ph.D., Director of Talent Management and Diversity, Publix Super Markets Inc.

Employers are interested in taking a deliberate approach to cross-training employees across functional areas of their business in order to grow a more skilled, agile and integrated workforce. The siloed approach of employees staying and progressing within one business area has long been the norm. This model works from a productivity standpoint to create focus, expertise and accountability among employees. In this environment, employees who jump streams from one business area to another are considered the brave, maybe lucky, yet legendary few ("Can you believe the new marketing manager actually started out in accounting?"). Now, businesses



Donna Huska, Ph.D.

also recognize the need to provide employees with a broader frame of experience to better utilize and retain their top talent. Employees want cross-training in order to contribute more to their business, build a stronger resume, and obtain more and faster career opportunities within their current or other organizations. It's become necessary to help employees build a career through winding and varied paths.

The trick is that creating a productive and successful cross-functional training program is much easier said than done. Employers and employees both say they want it, then quickly find out that it might not be what they dreamed it would be. To help

navigate making cross-functional talent programs work for you, here are some tips to leverage the powers and avoid the potential perils of cross-functional training and advancement efforts. These principles apply to business leaders and to individual professionals who are trying to grow talent in more ways than just up the traditional, hierarchical career path.

Time it right. The first principle focuses on the importance of timing. If an employer introduces cross-training too soon in an employee's tenure or at the wrong time in a function's work cycle, it will simply create confusion, superficial learnings and a potential lack of coordination and accountability. In reverse, letting an employee get too settled and comfortable in a routine runs the risks of rigidity, complacency or resistance to alternate viewpoints.

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Making Cross-Functional Talent Work for You

Similarly, trying to cross-train an eager employee into a function that is too set in its ways could create conflict and dissatisfaction among other employees regarding the “the new hotshot” who is perceived as a threat or as creating a lot of waves. The lesson is to think carefully about both the employee’s and the business function’s timing to ensure that it is right for both to maximize the benefit. For employers, this means that a one-size-fits-all approach is less effective for many jobs. While a fully prescribed model is easier to implement and manage, you could miss leveraging the strengths presented in given situations. For example, Publix takes advantage of special projects and events that come up (e.g., fundraisers, community programs) to offer select team members an opportunity to work on assignments outside of their day-to-day duties. From an employee’s perspective, try to effectively gauge when to ask for new experiences. While most know that day one is probably too soon, many wait too long—if at all. Your indicators of personal success (e.g., kudos from co-workers and customers, formal evaluations) will vary depending on your job and values, but once that bell starts ringing for you, talk with your manager about enrichment opportunities. The point is to notice when it is time to start.

Give it purpose. With this principle there are a few related themes. The first and most basic is to make cross-functional assignments meaningful. It should make sense in terms of either building upon existing skills, filling a gap or fostering collaborative teamwork. Consider the data analyst whose manager sends her to cross-train with the aesthetic design team. Why? Perhaps the analyst’s perspective has become lopsided, and she needed help rounding out her skills and mindset. Or, perhaps the design team needed help to structure their workflow. This leads into the second theme of this principle. The first is to have a purpose, better yet, a single purpose, and the second is to communicate it clearly. Nothing creates false hope,

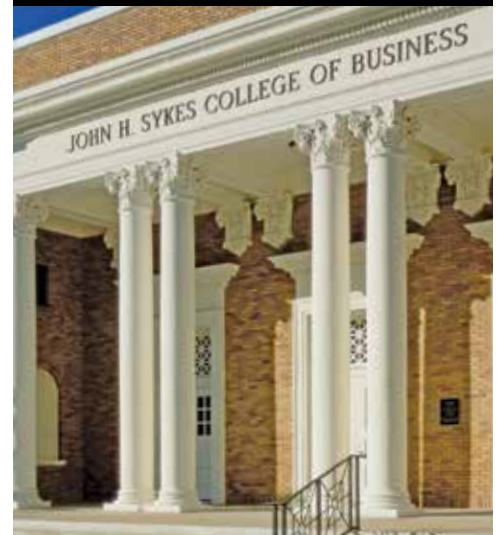
resentment or misalignment faster than confusion in purpose. Employers, explain the intentions and benefits. Employees, make your case and convey thoughtful eagerness, not aimlessness. And finally, it should be personal. Since cookie-cutter plans rarely work past the initial introduction, find the right balance to incorporate individual strengths, needs and interests.

Keep good notes. It’s easy enough to track who has been trained on what topics. It can get a little trickier to track cross-functional experiences. The big opportunities are memorable: “Sally will be spending the next six weeks working with the team over in sales to shadow and learn that function.” Employees should remember to put these experiences on their resumes, and companies should note it in the personnel file. For companies, aggregating and tracking these opportunities over time also informs about short- and long-term outcomes. Are those paths worth repeating or avoiding? In addition, there often are more subtle instances of cross-functional development that don’t make it into the notes, but should. Stop and consider how many times it might take for you to partner with colleagues from another function area (e.g., information systems) before you start to incorporate their pattern of thinking into your own. It happens a lot. At Publix, it happens on large project teams. You might have worked alongside someone from another area so much that you have learned their language and understand their perspective—that too is cross-functional growth. Companies often list the knowledge and skills that we need to get into a job, but they also could list the ones you get out of doing the job. Employees could notice and journal the insights they pick up and make a point of mentioning them in their next performance review, resume submission or job interview.

Making cross-functional talent work for you is a difficult, but necessary challenge in order to thrive in this competitive employment market. While some of it happens naturally through the course of daily business, the rest takes deliberate planning and effort. Defining talent does not have to be a divided choice between having dedicated subject matter experts or multifaceted acrobats. Just find the right balance for your field or company.

SAVE THE DATE

TECO ENERGY CENTER FOR LEADERSHIP UPCOMING EVENTS



Modern Advances in Leadership Certificate Program

September 2020-December 2020

For more information, visit:
ut.edu/cfl/leadershipdevelopment

Leadership Speaker Series

October 7, 2020 | 4:30 – 5:30 p.m.

For more information, visit:
ut.edu/cfl/speakerseries

2021 Leadership Summit

February 10, 2021 | 7:15 a.m.– 1 p.m.

For more information, visit:
ut.edu/cfl/leadershipsummit

Not-for-Profit is a Title Only: We Are a Business

By Bella L. Galperin, Ph.D., Professor of Management, Senior Associate Director of the TECO Energy Center for Leadership

On Oct. 3, 2019, Roger Germann, the president and CEO of The Florida Aquarium, delivered an enlightening presentation as part of the TECO Energy Center for Leadership Speaker Series. While The Florida Aquarium is listed as a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit, the aquarium operates as a business by managing their three main purpose business units including visitation, conservation, and education.



Bella L. Galperin, Ph.D.

statement: “To entertain, educate and inspire stewardship about our natural environment” assists in keeping an eye on the North Star. Germann noted, “Our mission statement really ends up being our business model, that’s how we deliver on that vision and deliver on all the things that we are able to, in order to have a great impact.”

The Florida Aquarium’s business model is effective. Attendance has increased by approximately five percent compared to last year and the revenues have also steadily increased over the last two years. Germann admitted that “it’s a great place to be for a non-profit business. . . . As a non-profit, we invest back into our mission and make sure that we are always educating, entertaining, inspiring, saving wildlife, and doing workforce development.” The mission of The Florida Aquarium is also closely related to the

purpose of business units, including visitation, conservation, and education.

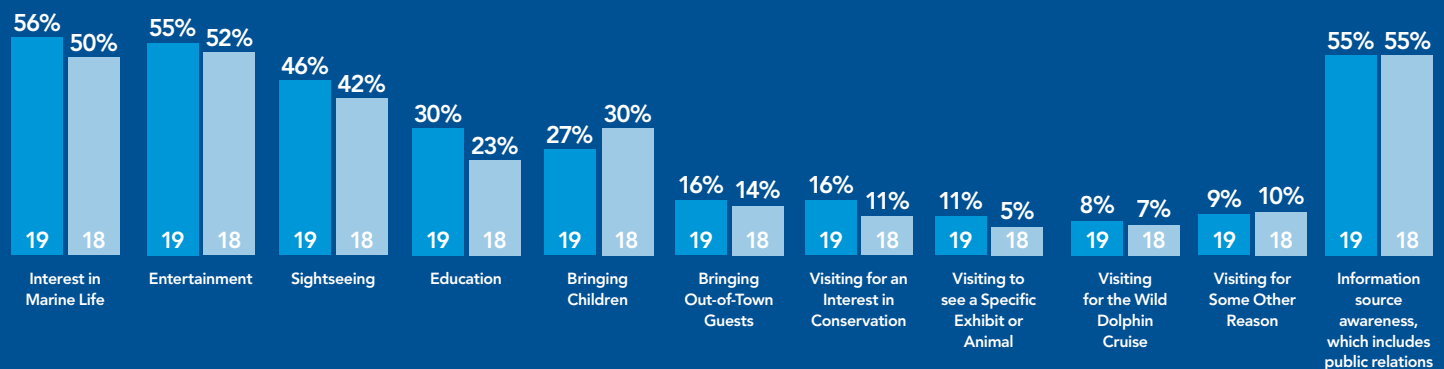
Visitation. One of the main sources of revenue for The Florida Aquarium is visitation. The revenue generated from visitation is used to support the mission of the aquarium. By being a data-driven organization, The Florida Aquarium is attuned to the demographics of their customers in order to offer the best experience for their visitors. The typical Florida Aquarium visitor is relatively young, educated, hard-working and enthusiastic about the experience. As seen in Table 1, 73% of visitors were 44 and younger and the average age was 36 years old; 62% of respondents had a college degree or higher; the median household income was \$58,404; and 86% of repeat visitors rated their overall satisfaction as excellent. Through their marketing efforts, The Florida Aquarium understands their audiences and strives to customize their offerings to ensure that their visitors enjoy their experience.

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The Florida Aquarium Visitor

- **Relatively young:** 73% of visitors were 44 or younger. The average age was 36.
- **Educated:** 62% of respondents had a college degree or higher.
- **Hard Working:** The median household income was \$58,404.
- **Enthusiastic about their experience:** 86% of repeat visitors rate their overall satisfaction as excellent.

Primary reasons for visiting



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Not-for-Profit is a Title Only: We Are a Business

Conservation. The Florida Aquarium's conservation efforts focus on coral reefs, sea turtles and sharks in Tampa Bay, the Gulf of Mexico, the Florida Keys and Cuba. By engaging in scientific diving and research and rescue efforts, the aquarium is a key player in restoring Florida's coral reefs, rehabilitating sea turtles to the ocean, and sustaining the sand tiger shark populations. In efforts to protect and restore our blue planet, The Florida Aquarium recently opened its \$4.1 million Sea Turtle Rehabilitation Center in Apollo Beach. The rehabilitation center rescues sea turtles from around Florida and beyond, and rehabilitates the cold, stunned sea turtles during the winter months. In line with its mission, The Florida Aquarium has already helped rescue and rehab more than 150 threatened or endangered turtles.

The conservation efforts not only align with the aquarium's mission, but Germann also noted that "the return on investment (ROI) on our conservation programs is huge. Now The Florida Aquarium is serving the greater good." For example, The Florida Aquarium's conservation efforts in the coral reefs can have an economic impact as high as \$8 billion by attracting tourists not only to the Tampa Bay area and the Florida Keys, but also to the state of Florida.

Education. The Florida Aquarium also recognizes the importance of educating the next generation of warriors to ensure the protection and restoration of our blue planet. The Florida Aquarium's educational department offers various camps, programs and field trips, which support the aquarium's mission. The educational camps are offered in the summer and during the school year. In line with The Florida Aquarium's mission



Roger Germann, the president and CEO of The Florida Aquarium, speaks to UT students, faculty and members of the community at the fall 2019 Leadership Speaker Series.

and vision, the educational programs involve the community to protect and restore our environment. Finally, the experiential field trips allow its visitors to get up-close to the animals.

In line with its business perspective, The Florida Aquarium invests in their products and

"You know, we may be a not-for-profit, but we invest our business dollars into making sure that we are walking the talk as well as connecting with businesses."

— Roger Germann

infrastructure. In order to deliver world class experiences and programs, the aquarium's investment in product—that is, animal welfare—is a top priority. "Adding a unique layer into our particular non-profit organization, we care for animals. Animal welfare is a top, top, top priority," Germann said. "We care about animals like nobody cares about them." In addition, since aquariums are an expensive asset, it's important to invest in infrastructure.

In sum, The Florida Aquarium, a cultural icon in our community. The Florida Aquarium has much to celebrate during its 25th birthday as the aquarium has increased its revenue and contributed to the conservation of the Tampa Bay blue waters and beyond.

TECO ENERGY CENTER FOR LEADERSHIP

For program details, contact the TECO Energy Center for Leadership
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