

How to get on the same page as your boss

Fred Kniggendorf, president of Gravyloaf, LLC., a training and consulting company in the Kansas City area, explains how to get on the same page as your boss.

Many people complain, "My boss doesn't have any time to spend with me." Most people have worked for someone who has said to them at some point, "As long as you're on the right track, I won't bother you. The only time I'll talk to you is when you screw up." The only kind of feedback they're getting from such a supervisor is negative feedback. And what this person is doing, inadvertently, is training his or her employees to avoid him or her. But getting on the same page as your boss is not as difficult as people might think it is. It involves structure and communication, as is necessary in any relationship. Here's how to fix these problems with your boss:

Schedule an eight-minute meeting with your supervisor once a day, perhaps from 9:00 to 9:08 in the morning. It's very important to schedule this meeting. You don't want to just walk by your boss and say, "Hey, before you leave today, I need to talk to you about something." Because that's not scheduling a meeting — that's a drive-by. You're going to make your boss think "Oh, what does he or she want from me? Is there something bad going on that I need to know about?" And you're going to lose your boss's attention for the rest of the day because they're going to be very concerned. Instead, you should say, "We need to talk about a few things. It's nothing threatening, but I do want to find out what it is you're looking for me to do for the rest of the day."

During the meeting, you should give your supervisor any hot potatoes that might be out there. You don't want your boss sitting in a meeting with his or her boss two weeks from now and discover something you knew was going on, but you just didn't have the guts to sit down and tell him or her.

There may be some things your boss is having trouble articulating to you or has never thought about, or maybe it's difficult for him or her to confront you about the things that you're not doing enough of. That's why, during this eight-minute meeting, you should ask your supervisor, "What would you like to see more of from me?" Also ask him or her, "What do you want me to do more of?" "What am I doing now that you would like me to do less of?" and "What am I doing right now that I'm doing just right and you'd like me to continue doing?"

In a nutshell, that's all it takes to get on the same page as your boss. It does take a little bit of communication, and you've got to structure the communication. This will get you and your boss on the same page, and it will also open up a dialogue between you both.