

Customer # 1: the new boss



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Dealing with a new boss is challenging regardless of the situation, but it's even more difficult these days when studies show the average job lasts no more than 3.7 years. Whether it's you or your boss who is making a job change, this means you're probably going to be in a major transition mode every year and a half, so it's important to develop some strategies to make the relationship successful for both of you. Keep these rules in mind:

1. Your boss's success is your success!
2. The 2,000 lb. elephant sits wherever it wants to sit.
3. If someone is going to change, it's going to be you.
4. The day the new boss walks through the door, it's a whole new world.
5. Be sure you understand the question before you provide the answer.
6. Research, research, research: Know your new top customer.
7. Remember, you only have one chance to make a good first impression.

Samuel Coleridge had great advice: *“If you would stand well with a great mind, leave him with a favorable impression of yourself; if with a little mind, leave him with a favorable impression of himself.”*

In those first days of getting to know each other, it should become pretty evident how your boss wants to give and receive information. Is her primary focus facts, ideas, concepts or people? Long-winded explanations or cut to the chase? Then, there is the whole issue of authority vs autonomy. Are you going to be expected to take charge and make decisions within your level of responsibility as long as you keep her informed or would you be wise to check everything out first?

Determine which projects, issues and goals are most important to your boss. This may include broad areas such as cultural change, innovation, productivity and customer relationships. On the other hand it may be as specific as helping her get the next promotion! Set up a meeting early on to give her an overview of the current status of projects within your portfolio, what’s on the radar, and potential blocks down the road. Be sure to provide executive summaries of reports and don’t forget to include your own resume of experience, expertise and accomplishments.

Don’t assume anything. The new boss will come in with perceptions that may or may not be accurate. However, recognize they may reflect the opinions and priorities of your boss’s boss, so don’t be too quick to state your opinions until you know which way the wind is blowing. Your new boss is customer #1, #2, 3, #4 and #5. Never forget it.

A new boss always opens up the possibility of new alignments. You have to be prepared to move on and most often it will have little or nothing to do with your productivity, personality, or potential. A new boss is genetically disposed to believe they need to create their own team, to compete with the last regime rather than continue it. So, activate your network, update your resume and research the marketplace, but in the meantime, think positively, use this opportunity to learn and grow and you may well find YOURS is the next promotion!