

CEO Peer to Peer Report – April 2011
How to Manage Your CEOs—Lessons Learned From CEO Direct Reports
With an abstract from Melissa Raffoni

The following was extracted from a roundtable discussion within our Key Executive (KE) Group Program. Our KE program is comprised of a select group of Executives that were recommended by their CEOs as those with the significant potential to make a strategic impact on the business. These successful executives are comprised of CFOs, VPs of R&D, Presidents, and VPs of Business Development

Plant Seeds/Don't Surprise them

- Prep significant decisions and or ideas 6-12 months in advance to allow CEOs to noodle on it.
- Lay out longer term plans to set expectations- so, you are not creating fire drills.
- No surprises, keep them informed

Be Mindful of Timing

- Be attuned to when is a good time to have key discussion. Be sensitive to the mood they are in on a given day or time. Frankly, don't broach a difficult discussion when their agitated, distracted or overwhelmed.

Bring thoughtful solutions that drive specific results

- Don't just bring problems—bring solutions
- Try to be one step ahead- as they are
- Seek to use data as back up or evidence to present your case

Take the time to organize effective communications

- Orchestrate meeting & communication structure, for example – use the same report time over time- to show trends
- Communicate at an executive level communication – i.e., the challenge, proposed solution, and data to support.
- Avoid the temptations to ramble. If you bring open ended problems, they feel they need to drive it to a solution and you now, have given your job back to them.
- Know what you want to get out of interactions before you have it- be strategic.
- Follow up in writing- but keep it tight (use sound bytes)

Understand the Personality Styles

- Allow time to let them process out loud. It typically ends up being productive
- 2 hour blocks of availability
- Know the type:
 - a. Visionary entrepreneur (bold, innovator),
 - b. Bootstrap entrepreneur (incremental),
 - c. Operator (drive the P&L) ,
 - d. Salesperson (meet the #),
 - e. Engineer (let me think, give me data, new technology is fun)

Have Empathy

Meeting Tips

- Set meeting expectations & objectives in the meeting invite—i.e., to brainstorm, get a decision made, et

Take your feedback properly

- Don't respond immediately- take the point, respond later

Managing your CEO- View from The Outside (Melissa's View)

1. Ask Focused Questions to Understand Direction and Set Expectations

- If we were to accomplish one thing—what would it be?
- In your mind, what is success?
- What's the biggest thing you want me to change?

2. Schedule time with them and lead a structure working sessions

- They are busy, work to get them to work with you on the spot.
- Use a visual to get alignment. Edit a document together, use a white board, create a document live
- Let them talk and help them by write their thoughts down as you collaborate

3. Find empathy- their job is really hard

4. Make their job easier—get stuff done + push results

5. Accept the double standard out of the gate (i.e., they can be late- you can't)

6. Blessing and curse: keep in mind that there is something that's made them successful which is a curse and a blessing. Recognize it and mitigate it.

7. Back up and support them with staff. Then, let them know about it.

8. Before approaching a project, always agree on the scope. Examples would include an outline of a document or agreement on key milestones for a project.