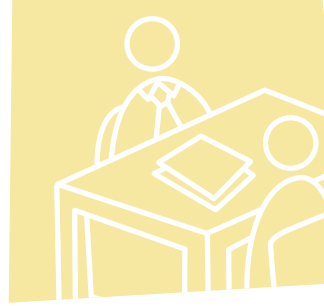


# MANAGING up



**First-time news directors can become so focused on the newsroom that they forget to look up. You may be faced with improving the product, learning a new market, hiring people for vacant positions, and creating a new disaster plan. But the most important focus of your new job is managing your relationship with your new boss. How can you do that well?**

## **Invest time**

Spend time with your new boss inside and outside of the office. Ask if you can take him or her to lunch instead of waiting for an invitation. Get to know the boss as a person: background, likes and dislikes, what the general manager does for fun. Listen more than you talk. Even though you may be disinclined to swap time in the newsroom schmoozing with time in the GM's office schmoozing, it's probably a wise idea to visit the boss every so often when nothing is going on.

## **Learn to communicate**

Find out how your general manager wants to interact with you. Will you meet every day, and if so, where? Does the GM prefer to get information in writing, on the phone or in person? When should you use email, when should you "drop in" the office to talk, when is it appropriate to schedule a meeting? Does the boss prefer to discuss big concerns in the morning, at lunch, or in the afternoon? Ask the boss and ask anyone who might have useful insights, like an administrative assistant or human resources director.

## **Outline expectations**

Talk with the GM frequently to clarify the mission and objectives he or she is counting on you to fulfill. Schedule time periodically to ask for feedback and an assessment of how you're doing. Get a clear idea of how much the GM wants to be involved in what you do. What decisions are you empowered to make alone? Which ones does the boss want to be called about?

“New news directors sometimes have a tendency to underestimate the power of the relationship between the news director and the general manager. It is one of the strongest relationships in the building.”

Angie Kucharski • Station Manager, WBZ-TV/WSBK-TV • Boston, MA

### Be candid

Be completely honest with the boss. He or she needs to know that you're always being honest, and you always need to know that you have his or her trust. Learn quickly how to respectfully disagree, or at least how to voice your concerns when you do not agree in a manner that will not put the boss on the defensive. At the end of the discussion, make sure the boss knows you will execute as expected, regardless of your personal feelings.

### Get ahead of surprises

Don't make the mistake of thinking that it's a sign of weakness to share information with the general manager. "You may think you have a situation under control, but someone else will see the GM in the hall and talk about it," warns WBZ's Kucharski. She advises telling the GM as early as possible, "here's something that's on the radar, here's what I'm doing about it, but I don't want you to be blindsided."