

halfway more than half of the time. If this sounds unfair to you, then look at it from a selfish point of view: the person who is benefiting most from your extra communications effort is you.

The one channel of communication not yet discussed, number 6, leading from your superior to you, presents more problems than the others. It is on this channel that you stand the least chance of exerting some appreciable measure of control. Obviously, you do not have positional authority to help you in this relationship; in fact, the reverse is true. Your communicating relationship with your boss, then, deserves special attention.

Getting Your Boss to Communicate

You may be able to skim through these few paragraphs and worry not at all about what they contain if your immediate supervisor is a conscientious practitioner of the art of effective communication. On the other hand, you may have sufficient problems with this particular relationship to make these few words worth considering.

Once again, how you are communicated with is to some extent a reflection of how you communicate. The following are a few ways in which you can "tune up" your communications along line 5 in an attempt to stimulate more effective communication along line 6.

Be Selective in What You Communicate

Do not expect your boss to do your job for you and take care of your problems. When something comes up and your initial impulse is to turn to the boss for information, advice, or assistance, before doing so make sure it is something you cannot take care of yourself. One of your legitimate functions as a supervisor is to be a "problem filter" for your boss, screening out those matters that should be resolved at a lower level.

Do Your Homework

It has been said that the existence of problems is one of the major reasons for the existence of managers. No manager really needs more problems than are already present. Sufficient problems make themselves felt at all organizational levels, so what your boss needs are solutions. Even though many problems you encounter might be beyond the range of your decision-making authority, you can do more toward solving them than simply passing them one block up the organizational chart.

Remember that you are just one of several people reporting to the same superior, and what may look like a trickle of trouble to you may strike the boss as a flood of grief. Rather, when you must pass a problem up the line, you should do so having analyzed it, assessed its implications, prepared perhaps two or three alternative solutions, and possibly recommended the answer that looks best to you. In short, instead of saying, "Here's a problem. What do you want me to do?" you should be saying, "Here's a problem; here's why it's a problem; here are one or two (or however many) possible solutions; here's the answer I think is best, and here's why."

channels of communication is to assure that

employees. Some of this report to you, so

degree of success in this is where assignment can manage in a

ted communication and expect it. of information you complaints, claims of at cannot be man-

d information only showing through y, honestly, and in

om employees con-takes you make. If-tively, that a deci-be heading in an

aching you by wayments to you. You or you. Because of-rtly with some of numerous others. ple has to be based

icate and the ability else truly needs matter of informa-

to go more than adequately or not

Structure Your Communications

This is a variation of the previous point in which you were advised to do the spadework necessary to make decision making easier for your superior. When you need information, especially small bits of advice or minor decisions, put your questions in writing in such a way that they can be answered in one or two words. To cite an example, a staff education director was having difficulty obtaining a few minutes of discussion time with an extremely busy administrator on a matter of great concern to the director. Unable to get time with the administrator, the director reexamined the situation, expressing the problem in the form of three concise questions. After typing the questions on a single sheet of paper, the director left them on the administrator's telephone. The next morning the answers were on the staff education director's desk (see **Exhibit 29-1**).

Make Yourself Available

Some bosses are thoughtful enough to say something like, "The best time to get me is first thing in the morning before the telephone starts to ring," or "I'm likely to be free between 4:00 and 4:30." Even without such assistance, however, you may often find you are in a position to know your manager's comings and goings and develop a sense for the better times to try for a brief audience. Although a conscientious manager will try to be available to someone with a problem, this conscientiousness may not be particularly visible to you, because, as noted earlier, you may be but one of several supervisors reporting to this manager and the activity you see may be only the tip of the iceberg. So make yourself available to the boss, and in doing so strive to consume as little time as possible. This latter point concerning time is raised not because we are claiming the boss's time is valuable, although it certainly may be, but because your time is valuable. Most of your time belongs to your department, not to your boss.

Exhibit 29-1 A "Structured" Communication

Mr. Johnson:	1. Can I go ahead with the Trustee Program as we discussed?	Yep!
	2. Will I have at least an hour with the Board at the September meeting?	Yep!
	3. Will you be available to handle the introduction?	Nope! (Sorry)
	Kate R. 8/16/14	CJ 8/17/14

THE G
What
formal si
known o
the relat
as every
cation. Ir
with wh
tion. Fur
informal
numerou
accorded
You he
three no

own boss
many bo
tion that
most or
without
vidually
understa
Multi
such ar
ment its
can mak
manage
more on
Unfor
of three
vice pre
ing to e
finance
ing rela
more an
multifa
Multi
mon in
second,
the bas
more th
shots m
lines of
ple quit
"Too
When i

When the Boss Is More Than One

"Too many bosses" has sometimes been cited as one of the reasons why people quit jobs. The multiple-boss situation can exist in two distinct ways: hazy lines of authority under which one is unclear as to who is actually calling the shots much of the time, and assignments that legitimately call for reporting to more than one manager. The first, the hazy lines of authority, is contrary to the basic principle of unity of command and is in fact never legitimate. The second, that of split or multiple reporting relationships, is becoming more common in healthcare organizations.

Multiple reporting relationships have proliferated as multidepartment, multifacility, or multilocation assignments have increased. It is becoming more and more common for an individual supervisor to have to balance reporting relationships with two and sometimes even three bosses. Consider the finance director assigned to two facilities within a large health system, reporting to each separate facility's chief executive officer as well as to the system's vice president for finance. This individual must legitimately balance the needs of three bosses.

Unfortunately, how well multiple boss arrangements work often depends more on the behavior of the bosses than on the shared supervisor. The higher manager who behaves as though his or her needs usually supersede all others' can make life miserable for the supervisor and eventually destroy the arrangement itself. Higher management has as much to learn about functioning in such arrangements as do the supervisors subject to them. Multiple-boss arrangements work best when all parties at both levels fully understand the others' needs and understand what is expected of them individually. The supervisor who works in a successful multiple-boss assignment—without taking advantage of the freedom afforded by the usual remoteness of most or all superiors at any given time—is often rewarded with the satisfaction that comes with autonomous functioning. That is, rather than feeling like many bosses are demanding things of you, it is possible to feel more like your own boss than ever before.

THE GRAPEVINE

What we know as "the grapevine" may be more accurately described as *the communications network of the informal organization*. Every organization has a formal structure, a network of reporting relationships describable by the well-known organization chart. Your formal lines of communication follow many of the relationships suggested on the organization chart. However, you also have, as everyone in the organization has, a number of informal channels of communication. Informal relationships with friends, acquaintances, relatives, and others with whom you speak in the work organization lead to the flow of communication. Furthermore, many of these relationships at least partially describe the informal organization, which is that implied structure that exists based on numerous related effects of respect, acknowledgment, deference, or prestige accorded various individuals primarily because of personality impact. You have seen the informal organization at work when a certain two or three nonsupervisory employees happen to stand out from the group, perhaps

advised to do the
r superior. When
or decisions, put
swered in one or
having difficulty
y busy adminis-
get time with the
ing the problem
ions on a single
a telephone. The
ector's desk (see

The best time to
s to ring," or "I'm
assistance, how-
anager's comings
a brief audience.
someone with a
to you, because,
reporting to this
iceberg. So make
me as little time
because we are
y be, but because
partment, not to

ng?

8/16/14
7/14