

# 'Managing your boss' can lead to good working relationships with managers, research reveals

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Research from Florida International University's College of Business (FIU Business) shows that a key way to foster trust, loyalty and better

results in the workplace involves employees learning how to manage their bosses.

Published in *Personnel Psychology*, the research suggests that "managing your boss," or MYB, is linked to a better working relationship with a supervisor, which in turn is associated with managers giving their [employees](#) better performance ratings.

MYB centers on employees taking the initiative to proactively manage their relationship with their managers by understanding their boss' goals, needs or work styles and adapting their job priorities and actions accordingly.

"Our conceptualization of 'managing your boss' recognizes that employees can feel empowered to take action to establish a good relationship and to make the relationship operate smoothly," said Ravi Gajendran, professor of global leadership and management at FIU Business, who led the research. "Employees can be proactive by making an effort to understand their manager's priorities and style; adapting themselves so they are in sync with their boss."

Until now, little had been done to define and measure managing your boss. Gajendran and his co-authors developed a theoretical model on why, how, and when MYB matters in organizations.

The researchers conducted four studies with 1,313 respondents to establish an MYB scale that was used to test their theory. Later, in a matched sample of 200 employees and managers, employees rated behaviors including MYB, job routinization and laissez-faire leadership while managers rated [employee](#) job performance.

Gajendran noted that MYB matters because in a changing workforce, many managers juggle many responsibilities and lack time. This

sometimes results in employees feeling out of sync with changing expectations. If the employee can anticipate their manager's goals, plans, priorities and weaknesses, they can take actions that align with managers' expectations.

Findings also indicate that MYB is important in more unstructured work, situations characterized by employee's jobs that aren't standardized and absence of leadership from [managers](#) who provide no direction or feedback. This provides direction to companies when investments of time and effort in coaching employees on MYB are necessary and likely to yield higher returns, Gajendran noted.

"If the job is clearly specified—for example travel expense management—and there isn't much deviation, MYB may not be as valuable," he added. "If it's more creative, with changing dynamic proactive roles, the employee initiative matters more and so does the ability to craft the job to be in sync with the manager."

The study's findings can be translated into efforts of coaching and training, as well as investments of time, which provide guidance to employees on how to engage in MYB. While the rankings can help identify those who are already engaging in high levels of MYB so that they can potentially act as [role models](#) and mentors to others in the organization.

**More information:** Ravi S. Gajendran et al, Managing Your Boss (MYB) as a proactive followership behavior: Construct validation and theory development, *Personnel Psychology* (2022). [DOI: 10.1111/peps.12545](https://doi.org/10.1111/peps.12545)

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