

THREE WHAT'S

Managing Up



What

"Everyone needs a Willie"

Margaret Thatcher famously declared that all leaders need a trusted confidante. 'Willie' Whitelaw was committed, canny and unwaveringly loyal. He was an old school number two. At some point in our professional lives, we will be a number two and find ourselves managing up. Managing up is not sucking up. It's a key role. Without a savvy number two a boss can be vulnerable to their own ego, the demands of the role and pressures from others.

So What?

Managing up requires the application of skills which prepare you for different roles in life. The *caddie* carries the load, provides the data and offers a strategy. The *roadie* makes sure everything is in place for the boss to perform. The *bodyguard* deals with the messy stuff that detracts from the job. The *inquisitor* asks the hard questions. The *truthteller* speaks truth to power. The *consigliere* gives loyalty and adds value. Suspend your ego! Managing up means being in any of these roles as its needed.

Now What?

Start by answering important questions about your boss. *What is driving their behaviours? What does success look like for them? Who do they have to please? What is important personally and professionally for them? How do you fit in and add value?* Now try these strategies:

- Add value by adjusting your 'roles' according to the answers to the five questions above. If you remain locked in one role your value is limited.
- Play your part in crafting *their* success and thrive in their job.
- Model the behaviours your boss needs when he or she has to manage up.
- No business owner, leader or boss wants, or needs, surprises – keep them in the loop. Good news soon, bad news sooner!
- Lift the load by taking stuff off them. Go armed with solutions. Reframe their problems.
- Adjust how and when you ask questions to how they prefer to think – some like cold-calling, others are ruminators, some like dialogue. Choose your moments.
- Stay close, especially in the hard times; communicate constantly but do so in their preferred medium- formal or informal, face to face or remote.

You can learn more about topics related to managing up though our ThreeWhats Playbooks.

www.threewhats.com