



## Courtroom Classics

Let me get this out right up front. *I'm a lawyer.* (Okay, I'm recovering...but it's still in my blood.)

Though it isn't the path I've chosen for the rest of my career, I must admit that I had some very interesting experiences in my days of practicing law. But, there's one that is forever burned into my memory.

I was in family court, appearing before a judge I knew well. My client's case had some challenges. However, there was an infrequently used provision that, if applied, could bring about a resolution that met everyone's interests in some way (which, in family court, often is the best option).

Did I mention that this was an *infrequently used provision*?

So, I stepped out there. I presented my recommendation. The words barely came out of my mouth before the pouncing began. Now, some pouncing is expected in a courtroom; it goes with the territory. In this case, though, opposing counsel went ballistic -- posturing, ranting, and even accusing me of making up law. (*Really?*)

For a while, the judge just sat; then, finally, spoke, quieting my flustered colleague. To my dismay, the judge voiced the skepticism that, to that point, had only registered on her face. She too expressed unfamiliarity with the provision I was offering, and she noted concern whether the provision, even *if* it existed, could be applied in an instance such as this.

That's when I knew I needed to play my trump card. *"But, Your Honor, I trust that you know me. You know that I would not intentionally waste the Court's time with a frivolous recommendation, and you know that I would not intentionally harm family members just to win an argument."* And, thankfully that was the type of person whom the judge had come to know. Because of our history, she was willing to give me the benefit of the doubt. She didn't rule immediately as I requested but, at least, recessed so that research could be done and more thought could be given to this novel alternative.

Oh, so what happened? The judge found that the cited provision, indeed, was on the books and agreed that it made sense in this instance. (*Vindication is sweet!*)

I share this story because frequently we are called upon to *manage up*. That is, we must find a way to

## Quick Links

[EA Home Page](#)

[About Us](#)

[Strategy Support](#)

[Process Improvement Support](#)

[People Development Support](#)

[Contact Us](#)

## Quotes

*"In my own work, I've tried to anticipate what's coming over the horizon, to hasten its arrival, and to apply it ... in a meaningful way."*  
~Paul Allen

*"No matter how much success you're having, you can't continue working together if you can't communicate."*  
~Matt Cameron

*"No one, to my knowledge, has cast doubt on [his] personal integrity...-- no one -- and we certainly don't."*  
~John Danforth

*"If a man has the kind of personal honor, personal integrity, and personal courage that he has demonstrated, it argues that perhaps the charges in this trial are not correct."*  
~Mike Farrell

*"If we want more brotherhood and goodwill, more intelligence, more clear thinking, more honesty and sincerity, more tolerance and human*

shape impressions, treatment, and sometimes even habits of those higher on the food chain than we are. And so, that's our topic for this month's edition of **EA Insights**, and I hope you find it helpful!

All the best,

June

June Melvin Mickens  
Executive Advantage, LLC



## Managing Up

June Melvin Mickens  
Executive Advantage, LLC

When you think of the task of *managing*, what's the first thing that comes to mind?

For many of us, the automatic image of *managing* involves someone in a supervisory or other position of authority within an organization. Managing is what that person does in relation to the people and programs in his or her area of responsibility.

That's true, but it's only half of the story. As much as management occurs from the top down, there also is a good deal of management that goes on in the other direction. I can tell you (and the people who have been my direct reports over the years can concur) that team members have done as much shaping of me as I have of them.

Consider *managing up* as interacting in an intentional way with your supervisor, and sometimes with other more senior people in the organization. The intent is to enable you to work at your best for yourself *and* so that you contribute to accomplishing their unit, department, or organizational goals. Some view managing up in a negative light, but that need not be the case. Managing up really is making yourself a valuable part of the team by understanding *you* (strengths, desires, patterns, etc.), by appreciating company goals, and then by working with leaders to maximize fulfillment on both sides. It's a staff member moving from being a passive employee to being an active participant in achieving not only individual interests but also the goals of his or her supervisor and organization.

How do you manage up? How do you take a more active role in shaping the way your supervisor and others relate to you?

### Manage up through integrity.

Again, managing up is about discovering ways to work effectively with organizational leaders. Doing so will be difficult, if you're known as a person whom people can't trust. Managing up starts with integrity.

You build integrity through honesty. People need to know that you can be counted on. Things that seem small (like punctuality, dependable attendance, meeting deadlines, submitting correct expense reimbursements, or avoiding workplace gossip or politics) over time help you to construct a

*understanding, we must concentrate upon cultivating these qualities within ourselves.*

*\*\*\*There is no substitute for personal integrity.*

~Howard W. Hintz

*"I try to be as efficient as possible."*

~Richard Jefferson

*"We need participation from [them] because ... they know it better than anyone. We want them to share that knowledge with us so we can be as effective as possible."*

~Brenda Johnson

*"It sounds so trite but in relationships, you have to communicate."*

~Peter Krause

*"There's always going to be some unknown work that comes up. Then it's just a matter of communicating with your people and letting them communicate back what they can and can't take on at that time."*

~Anne Lang

*"He relates to everyone and has the ability to work effectively with people from all walks of life."*

~Richard McGrath

*"Loyal and efficient work in a great cause, even though it may not be immediately recognized, ultimately bears fruit."*

~Jawaharlal Nehru

*"If I stumbled badly in doing the job, I think it would have made*

history of integrity. Don't take this lightly. People are watching -- supervisors, peers, and reports.

### **Manage up through concern and communication.**

As a leader, it's rewarding to work with team members who care. It completely changes the dynamic, when those around you demonstrate their concern about the collective mission; about creating a positive work environment; about making you and the team look good; and naturally, but not exclusively, about contributing, shining, and growing as individuals. It's easier to work with folks like this, and it's satisfying to build into them because the return on investment is evident.

Communication also is an essential part of managing up. Managing up entails keeping your supervisor informed at a level that's comfortable for both of you. You gain by relaying information that's necessary to keep your work moving, to share accomplishments, and to receive needed assistance with problems. He or she gains by receiving information that affords an adequate and timely sense of work status; that permits assistance to you, as needed; and that allows periodic evaluation of your performance. To accomplish both sets of goals, learn your supervisor's communication preferences. What method(s) work best -- an informal face-to-face chat, a scheduled appointment, a quick phone call, email, or some combination? How often should you connect? How much information should be relayed, and how? Grasping what constitutes *effective* communication for the leader(s) around you enables you to work well together.

### **Manage up through your work.**

If you want to be successful at managing up, seek to make the job of your supervisor easier.

- **Work effectively.** That is, do your job, and seek to do it well. Your supervisor will appreciate your diligence.
- **Work efficiently.** That is, don't waste your own time, that of other people, or other valuable resources. Your supervisor will appreciate your stewardship.
- **Work expectantly.** That is, don't always wait to be given instruction; do your best to anticipate needs and to find ways to meet them. Look for opportunities related to your or your team's work and that of other company units, clients, or stakeholders. Your supervisor will appreciate your partnership.

You manage up well by making yourself an indispensable team member. You and your supervisor will be happy if you do.

If becoming more comfortable managing up would help you, [\*\*reach out to Executive Advantage today\*\*](#). We're here to partner with you in your career growth and development.

©2014 Executive Advantage, LLC. All rights reserved.

*life more difficult for women, and that was a great concern of mine and still is."*

~Sandra Day O'Connor

*"It's not only what we have here today, but it's what we anticipate we're going to have."*

~Vicki Phillips

*"It will validate that what we're doing is positive or it will give us ideas for improvements.*

*If they can find ways we can be more efficient or save money, it's a win-win situation."*

~Walt Rulffes

*"I always try to be reasonable and effective."*

~Ian Smith

*"Anticipate the difficult by managing the easy."*

~Lao Tzu

*"Mine has been a concern for the people, a concern to maintain stability, a concern to get people working together[.]"*

~Walter Washington

## **About Executive Advantage**

At **Executive Advantage**, we are committed to providing results-based business and management consulting, leadership development, and coaching support. We partner with business leaders to build healthy, well-functioning organizations, where goals are met and people thrive. We also partner with individuals to create professional (and personal) lives with clearer direction, improved results, and greater balance.

To learn more about **Executive Advantage**, contact us [online](#) or at (301) 280-5950.

View our profile on [LinkedIn](#)



Join Our Mailing List