

## Quick Guide: Getting the Boss to Agree

Staff often complain that problems submitted to their managers get overlooked, forgotten or relegated to the bottom of the in tray. This usually happens because the implications of the problem have not been thought through or presented properly, and the manager does not see it as a priority item or have the time to spend on it. So here are the **top ten tips** to help think things through before presenting it to your manager:

1. **Think things through systematically** to help ensure your proposal gets fair consideration. Follow the rules of ABC: accurate, brief and clear.
2. **State the problem.** Make sure it really is the probably you are stating not a symptom. For example, 'the post is often late arriving on my desk' could be a symptom of poor organisation in facilities.
3. **State the problem objectively**, avoiding personal emotions and opinions; even though you may be emotionally attached to the proposal you are about to share.
4. **Identify the adverse effects and disadvantages.** Try to quantify the effects, where possible, in terms of time lost, unnecessary cost, materials wasted, low output.
5. **List possible solutions** (if more than one). Consider listing pros and cons in two columns so as to make them easily comparable. If appropriate, attach supporting evidence and in visual form if possible, eg graphs, diagrams, tables, flowcharts.
6. **Make sure you include WIIFMs** (What's In It for Me) in the possible solutions so your manager has personal benefits too. This adds weight to your proposal.
7. **Make your recommendations.** State what you have decided is the best solution and why (the benefits in cost, time, morale etc) and ask for your manager's agreement.
8. **The benefit to your manager** is they do not have to do any investigation: the options are there, ready for evaluation; the decision is simplified; and the decision is usually limited to agreeing or disagreeing.
9. **The benefit to you** is that you will have done all your homework, analysed the problem and thought through how best to deal with it. This saves time in the long run.
10. **The overall benefit** is that managers value more highly those individuals who can demonstrate the ability to work out problems for themselves, rather than those who just present problems for someone else to handle.

**Compiled by Des Whitehorn**