



Seven Ways to Drive Your Ideas Upward

By: [Joel Garfinkle](#) on June 17th, 2013 at 1:30 pm

Being able to influence upwards allows your ideas to be heard and implemented. This directly enhances your value because you are the owner of that idea. Yet how do you break through the layers of bureaucracy to find advocates for your ideas? Diane McGarry, Xerox's Chief Marketing Officer, says, "Success at a big company such as Xerox requires an understanding of the many layers of office politics as well as the confidence to put your best ideas forward. You have to know which people you need to get your ideas in front of in order to get those ideas advanced..."

Here are the seven ways to drive your ideas upward:

1. Know what's important to your boss. Have a clear picture of what is important for your boss. Keep that as a priority and make sure these priorities are met. It's not about trying to meet your needs, but thinking about how your ideas are beneficial for your boss. Part of your role is to support your boss for his/her goals.

2. Get other stakeholders on board. To buy into your ideas the right stakeholders must be on board. This might require going upward and across the organization to build coalitions. If your stakeholders believe the ideas you are suggesting are what they want to support and invest in, this can influence a decision in your favor.



3. Articulate a clear and defined agenda. Focus on why your idea is so important and should be considered. This may take a lot of preparation, but in the end your idea will be accepted due to your preparation.

4. Use facts and data. How many dollars will be generated by your idea? How will it reduce costs or improve customer service? Facts like these are how you achieve buy-in to your ideas. Spend time researching and providing information based on data so it will have a greater chance of being accepted.

5. Be prepared to answer questions and respond to criticism. Anticipate how others might question or challenge your proposal. Consider submitting a list of "frequently asked questions" with your idea. If you're presenting in person, rehearse your sales pitch to fine tune your approach and build your confidence.

6. See yourself as the "owner" of your ideas. See yourself as being self-employed, even if you work in a large company. Your mind-set should be similar to an entrepreneur who is the owner of his or her ideas. Be confident, and enthusiastic about your idea.

7. Don't give up. Don't be discouraged if someone slams the door on your terrific idea. Maybe your timing wasn't right or you didn't consider some of the objections. Take stock in your approach and ask for feedback. If your idea has merit, its time will come. And so will yours.

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Joel Garfinkle is recognized as one of the top 50 leadership coaches in the U.S. As an executive coach, he has 17 years of executive-coaching experience working with companies such as Google, Amazon, Starbucks, Deloitte, Cisco Systems, and Ritz-Carlton. He is the author of seven books, including "Getting Ahead: Three Steps to Take Your Career to the Next Level." More than 10,000 people subscribe to his Fulfillment@Work newsletter. If you sign up, you'll receive the free e-book "41 Proven Strategies to Get Promoted Now!"