



# Raymond A. Mason School of Business

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## EPISODE 85: MARGARET LIPTAY – MANAGING UP, REDEFINED – PART 2

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### Ken White

From the College of William & Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia. This is Leadership & Business. The weekly podcast that brings you the latest and best thinking from today's business leaders from across the world. We share the strategies, tactics, and information that can make you a more effective leader, communicator, and professional. I'm your host Ken White. Thanks for listening. Well, last week on the podcast, we shared the first half of our conversation with leadership coach Margaret Liptay on managing up. Liptay explained how your relationship with your boss can be more meaningful than the usual supervisor-subordinate relationship. She said when you position the boss as the organizational parent, you place unnecessary limits on the partnership. Well, this week, in the second half of our discussion, Liptay explains how you can reframe the relationship so it becomes more complementary, which leads to better results for you, your boss, and the organization. In addition, she says the concept of synergistic relationships can be applied in all of your interactions. Here's the second half of our conversation with leadership coach Margaret Liptay on how properly managing your relationships can create results and growth for everyone involved.

### Ken White

The timing of you being here is very interesting. I've had recently. It seems conversations with folks toward the earlier parts of their career being frustrated with the boss. You know I want him to know more. He doesn't want to know it. I'm really frustrated, and okay, he doesn't want to know it. That's probably okay.

### Margaret Liptay

It might be okay. There might be a time when that's a conversation that you need to manage. What I would suggest in that case and we can talk about a few other scenarios that we both have been exposed to. But if you're not talking to your boss, they're never going to know what you're doing or what you're not doing. So you do have to find a way to have that conversation, even if it's a 10-minute conversation. Even to do a check-in, and we'll get to that in a second, but you can't expect your boss to be thinking about you all the time, either. So you have to manage your own career to some extent.

Ken White

Sure.

Margaret Liptay

And that's why you also reach out to other managers because the beauty is if other managers are people you can communicate with and are people that enjoy talking with you, they'll know your work. They'll tell your boss. So that's why this linear one-on-one isn't really the best approach for your own career development. Let people know gently, subtly what you've done. Let them see you. Let them see how you work. Let them see how you operate. Then they'll give praise to your boss, and you're off the hook. You don't go in there like you're patting yourself on the back. And he finds out about it anyway.

Ken White

Right, or when they leave the organization due to a promotion, they're looking for people to take along with them.

Margaret Liptay

Exactly.

Ken White

No, we've heard that we have so many instances of that where somebody moves on, and wow, she went with him. I don't even know those two interacted that much.

Margaret Liptay

Exactly.

Ken White

Yeah.

Margaret Liptay

Exactly.

Ken White

Interesting.

Margaret Liptay

So there's lots of ways to approach this. And what I'm trying to also emphasize is that it's not a manipulative, it's not a calculating, cunning, you know my move and the next move I'm going to make, just do the work, be in the moment, enjoy what you're doing. Bring your full self to it, your best self, your whole self, and then influence as many people as

you can along the way positively about your results. Because, at the end of the day, that's what it's all about.

Ken White

And the goal is with the two of you working together, everybody wins.

Margaret Liptay

Exactly.

Ken White

And all that ability is multiplied.

Margaret Liptay

Exactly. And that's the beauty of the one plus one is three.

Ken White

Right.

Margaret Liptay

Also because if every relationship is one plus one is three, we're not just everybody working in their own little world anymore. But one of the things I did want to mention that I think has been very successful that the feedback I've gotten has been quite good. And this is this concept of engaging in what I call wellness check-ins. So if we look at the fact that your manager is not just a manager, he's a collaborator with you. He's a partner with you. You and he creates synergy together. I don't think it's inappropriate, possibly once a month. That would be ideal to say I would like 15 minutes to half an hour of your time. I'd like to do a wellness check-in. I'd like to see how well we are doing and if we are well together. And here are some of the questions that I would ask in that meeting if I were the person being managed. I would ask how am I doing how are we doing as a team. How do you think we are doing? You and me are we on track against our results? Are we clear on our goals? What do you think the next steps are? Here is what I need from you and why. This is what I missed this month. This is what maybe we could work on together next month. Ask your manager for a teaching moment. Ask him what challenge or something that he encountered during the course of that month that he would share with you so that you would have a learning opportunity and a teaching moment with him and then say well, I would like to share something with you. There was this issue. I handled it this way. You didn't need to get involved. Is this the way you would have done it, or would you have done? Would you have done it another way? That's another way to share learning. Everybody loves that. Every manager loves that.

Ken White

That's an interesting point. Here's what I need from you and why. Not many people say that to their boss.

Margaret Liptay

No. And I think that's a challenge to say it, but I think if you articulate what you need. In other words, do you need resources because you're floundering and you're dying, and you're worried about the work product or the deadline that has to be fulfilled? Or I need a little bit more of your time on this one issue. Can I do it Tuesday morning? Can we do it together Tuesday morning, or I need for you to talk to Mary Lou? I'm worried about her. She's an at-risk employee. Would you mind doing that? Those are the kinds of things that you need. So that the you just to wrap it up. I think another important question that probably should come up in every relationship. Are we aligned? Are we marching together in the same direction? And I believe if you do this wellness check-in. A you'll know where you are. A he'll be reminded that he's got a responsibility or she for your career and that you are looking after your career. It's also an opportunity to share in a very subtle way again something that you've done that's been a success. And I think that has a lot of merit in that, again, you're not running in there like a child saying, look what I did. Look what I did.

Ken White

Sure.

Margaret Liptay

You've set aside the time to talk and these wellness check-ins. Can you know being what, however, periodic nature you want them to be? But now everyone knows what's expected, and you can set them up, and you can explain this is what I'd like to do. This is what I call a wellness check-in to see how our partnership and our collaboration is going.

Ken White

And I think that's critical to spring it on the boss in your weekly meeting. I don't think. That's just not going to fly. That doesn't give them time to reflect or to think.

Margaret Liptay

Exactly.

Ken White

But to build that in and say when we meet in two weeks.

Margaret Liptay

Yes.

Ken White

This is what I'm going to ask.

Margaret Liptay

Exactly.

Ken White

I think I know as a supervisor, I would greatly appreciate the opportunity to think.

Margaret Liptay

To think.

Ken White

A little bit.

Margaret Liptay

Yeah, and to be helpful and to give you what you need.

Ken White

Right.

Margaret Liptay

This need thing. The boss sometimes needs things too from you. Sometimes they just want they want talk therapy.

Ken White

Sure.

Margaret Liptay

So if that's what they want. That's what you give them.

Ken White

We'll continue our conversation with Margaret Liptay in just a minute. Our podcast is brought to you by the Center for Corporate Education at the College of William & Mary. The Center for Corporate Education will once again offer its popular certificate in business management program this fall. The five-day program targets professionals who are poised

for promotion, a move into a leadership role, or for those who simply want to be better prepared professionally. Each day is dedicated to one facet of business, including managerial accounting, strategy, operational effectiveness, leadership, and communication. If you are interested in learning more about the certificate of business management, visit our website at [wmleadership.com](http://wmleadership.com). Now back to our conversation with leadership coach Margaret Liptay.

Ken White

What does the manager owe the professional?

Margaret Liptay

Well, I think I mentioned that it has a reciprocal relationship. And what I mean by that is it can't be you giving and getting nothing. So in an ideal world, and Lord knows it's not ideal. The manager should be giving you what you need, should be listening to you, should be thinking about synergy. How is that manager going to help you? How is he going to help you help himself get to three? One plus one is three. So when in an ideal world, the manager embraces these wellness check-ins. The manager is interested in what you are doing all the time and checks in and says do you need anything. Do you need help? Sometimes the reverse can be true. You can say to your manager is there anything I can do to help you.

Ken White

Right.

Margaret Liptay

But the manager can say the same thing to you. And I think they forget. I think when you're very talented and your high performing, you just keep going. And as I mentioned earlier, I think that can be very, very dangerous. So there is an expectation on managers that they also do the reciprocal of what I'm suggesting that you do in service of your manager.

Ken White

Whether you're the manager or someone who reports to the manager, hearing how can I help you. That sounds pretty good.

Margaret Liptay

Yeah.

Ken White

Right.

Margaret Liptay  
It's powerful.

Ken White  
It is powerful and rare.

Margaret Liptay  
Exactly.

Ken White  
I'm assuming, and yeah.

Margaret Liptay  
They respect that. That person actually wanted to help me. Is there something I can help you with that will lighten your burden, right, even if they say no? They know that you asked and you were sincerely asking not for any other reason but to help them get to one plus one is three.

Ken White  
Which it seems then they are able to see this is not a supervisor-subordinate relationship or whoever says it. It's more about teamwork.

Margaret Liptay  
Correct.

Ken White  
What happens? It sounds great. It's it is an interesting way to, and managing up doesn't even sound fair. I don't know how what we call it other than one plus one equals three. I guess it's a good way to frame it.

Margaret Liptay  
Synergy.

Ken White  
What if your manager just doesn't? It just doesn't. It's not working. This is not someone who communicates. This is just not someone who is buying in.

Margaret Liptay

Well, okay, there's several strategies around that. What I've always tried to do with my managers and in giving people advice is say to them if you had an external client that was difficult, what would you do. Almost treat your manager in that case like a client. Now my clients were precious to me, and I would move heaven and earth to try to retain them and keep them and make them happy. But I had to make a lot of adjustments in my own personality sometimes. Sometimes they were very analytical. Sometimes they were different type of person. Sometimes they wanted things in a way that was really difficult. But I had to do my very best to adjust to them. So I think one approach your first approach should not be to go screaming off to HR and say I can't get along with my boss it's awful. You know he's terrible, she's terrible, she doesn't listen, she doesn't talk to me first try to look at them objectively look at them as if this was a tough client what would you be doing. Then you try certain strategies. It might work it might not work. I don't think you should avoid it. I don't think you should disparage he or she. I don't think you should throw them under the bus to all the other people that you communicate with, and I don't think that you should go hide it in your office. I think the best thing to do is put it out there on the table. There is an elephant in the room and put it out on the table, and that person may think you have a great relationship. It's just your perspective on the relationship. So if you could at least get that person to say we're doing fine. I have my style. You have yours. Let's coexist. And then you go happily along to all these other managers and people that you can build relationships with, and that will speak for themselves. It's impossible and impractical to think that every single manager you have will be one that will be a perfect relationship. It will not be.

Ken White

Well, I love the idea of if it's not working, make adjustments in your own personality. Consider that. I'm not so sure everybody thinks of that at all if, especially not one of the first things. One of the first alternatives.

Margaret Liptay

Exactly. But if it were a client. If it was your biggest client in your office, would you be thinking that?

Ken White

That's great approach.

Margaret Liptay

So that's the way I always looked at it, you know, and I think if you have a mindset that you actually enjoy difficult people. I think that you should embrace it. So my boss is difficult. Let me figure it out. It's a puzzle. I can figure this out.



Ken White

Yeah. So for someone who is listening and says I like this. This is good. I want to give it a try. Where do they start?

Margaret Liptay

Well, first, they have to start understanding what they are trying to accomplish. Do you have to look at the goals of the firm? There's no ifs, ands, or buts about it. So that's where you start. You start understanding where you fit in in the goals and the results of the firm. And then from there, you really do have to go build those relationships across a broad array of people in a broad array of locations, and that is work. Don't get me wrong, and being a middle manager is exhausting, but it's exhausting and benefit of yourself. So this is an investment in yourself, and if you don't do it in a, you know, as I said, a very calculating and manipulative way and you do it in a subtle way, it becomes natural, and it becomes easier and easier. I think it's very important to establish that relationship with your manager because, at the end of the day, that manager probably does have a lot of influence on your career. And that's scary as it might seem. That's where you need to start. You need to do your wellness check-ins, and you've really got to come at it as one plus one is three. We are better together than we are two people individually.

Ken White

And everybody can win.

Margaret Liptay

And everybody wins, and the results are there, and you get promoted.

Ken White

That's our conversation with Margaret Liptay, and that's our podcast for this week. Leadership & Business is brought to you by the Center for Corporate Education at the College of William & Mary's Raymond A. Mason School of Business. The Center for Corporate Education can help you, and your organization meet and exceed your goals with business and leadership development programs that specifically fit your needs and get results. If you're interested in learning more for you or your organization, visit our website at [wmleadership.com](http://wmleadership.com). And finally, if you have a suggestion or comment pertaining to our podcast, we'd love to hear from you. Please connect with us via email. Our address is [podcast@wm.edu](mailto:podcast@wm.edu). Thanks to our guest this week, Margaret Liptay, and thanks to you for joining us. I'm Ken White. Until next time have a safe, happy, and productive week.