UNLOCK YOU
COACHING

What Type of Manager Do You Work For?

A Self-Assessment Exercise Based on Managing Up by Mary Abbajay

About This Exercise

This exercise is designed to help you identify the management style of your current (or most recent) manager, based on the archetypes described in Mary Abbajay's book Managing Up: How to Move Up, Win at Work, and Succeed with Any Type of Boss.

Answer each question honestly, choosing the option that best reflects your actual experience. There are no right or wrong answers — the goal is self-awareness and practical insight.

The six manager archetypes covered in this exercise:

- The Micromanager
- The Political Animal (Narcissist)
- The Aggressive Manager (Bully)
- The Conflict Avoider
- The Absentee Manager
- The Collaborative / Visionary Manager

> **How to use this exercise**
>
> Circle or check the letter (A, B, C, or D) that best matches your experience for each question. When you are finished, tally your answers using the scoring key on the last page.

Part 1: The Questions

Question 1: How does your manager typically communicate priorities and direction?	
A	They rarely give clear direction — I'm mostly left to figure things out.
B	They change direction frequently; what's important today may not be tomorrow.
C	They set clear goals but give me significant freedom in how I achieve them.
D	They provide very detailed instructions and check in constantly.

Question 2: When you make a mistake, how does your manager typically respond?	
A	They're unavailable or seem unbothered — I handle the fallout myself.
B	They get visibly upset or blame me in front of others.
C	They see it as a learning opportunity and coach me through it.
D	They step in to fix it themselves and remind me of the 'right' way.

Question 3: How does your manager handle conflict or difficult conversations?	
A	They avoid conflict at all costs and never address issues directly.
B	They escalate quickly — conversations can become tense or personal.
C	They address issues directly but respectfully, focusing on solutions.
D	They engage but often make it about protecting their own position.

Question 4: When you bring your manager a new idea, what typically happens?	
A	They seem uninterested or distracted — I rarely get real engagement.
B	They take credit for the idea or dismiss it without much discussion.
C	They're enthusiastic and encourage me to develop it further.
D	They want to control how it's executed and second-guess every step.

Question 5: How does your manager support your professional development?	
A	They rarely invest in my growth — I develop myself mostly on my own.
B	Development conversations are mostly about what benefits them or the team's image.
C	They actively mentor me, share opportunities, and advocate for my growth.
D	They want to approve all my activities and can be controlling about opportunities.

Question 6: How would you describe the overall feeling of working for your manager?	
A	I feel unsupported and on my own most of the time.
B	I often feel anxious, tense, or like I need to walk on eggshells.
C	I feel trusted, empowered, and energized.
D	I feel watched, second-guessed, or unable to work independently.

Question 7: How does your manager relate to the rest of the team?	
A	They're rarely present or visible — hard to read the team dynamic.
B	There are clear favorites, and the team feels competitive or divided.
C	They foster collaboration and treat everyone fairly.
D	They track everyone closely and get involved in details others would leave alone.

Part 2: Scoring Key

Look at your answers and count how many times each letter appears below. The letter you selected most often points to your manager's dominant archetype. Many managers blend two or more styles — note your top two letters for a fuller picture.

If you chose mostly...	Your manager is likely...	Count
A	The Absentee Manager (Invisible)	_____ / 7
B	The Aggressive Manager or Political Animal	_____ / 7
C	The Collaborative / Visionary Manager	_____ / 7
D	The Micromanager	_____ / 7

Note: If you chose mostly B, look at which scenario resonated more — intimidation/aggression points to the Aggressive Manager, while image-consciousness and credit-stealing points to the Political Animal. See descriptions below.

Part 3: Manager Archetypes & Managing Up Strategies

The Micromanager

Your manager wants to control the details of your work — they check in often, question your decisions, and find it hard to delegate. This often comes from anxiety rather than distrust. They care deeply but struggle to let go.

How to manage up:

Build trust through proactive updates. Anticipate their concerns by reporting progress before they ask. Frame your independence in terms of shared outcomes, not personal autonomy.

The Political Animal

Your manager is driven by image, status, and self-interest. Conversations often circle back to them. Credit-sharing is rare, and they manage upward as much as they manage their team.

How to manage up:

Connect your work to their goals and public image. Make them look good. Document your contributions carefully. Seek allies and mentors outside your immediate reporting line.

The Aggressive Manager

Your manager leads through intimidation, criticism, or emotional volatility. Working for them can feel stressful and demoralizing. This is one of the most challenging dynamics to navigate.

How to manage up:

Stay calm and professional. Avoid power struggles. Document interactions. Set quiet limits on what you'll accept. If behavior is severe, escalate to HR or a skip-level manager.

The Conflict Avoider

Your manager sidesteps difficult conversations, delays decisions, and keeps the peace at all costs. While not malicious, their avoidance can leave you without the direction or feedback you need.

How to manage up:

Bring solutions, not just problems. Make it easy for them to say yes. Ask for what you need explicitly — they won't volunteer hard conversations. Build a track record that reduces their need to intervene.

The Absentee Manager

Your manager is largely unavailable — whether due to competing priorities, disengagement, or simply being stretched too thin. You're mostly self-directed, which can be freeing but also isolating.

How to manage up:
Take ownership of your own direction. Establish regular check-ins (even brief ones). Identify other mentors or senior colleagues for guidance. Celebrate your autonomy while advocating for more support.

The Collaborative / Visionary Manager

Your manager values teamwork, input, and shared ownership — or is big-picture oriented and inspires bold thinking. They trust you to execute and invest in your growth.

How to manage up:
Lean into collaboration — bring ideas, engage actively in team decisions, and give credit generously. For visionary managers, align your work to their strategic goals and communicate results in terms of impact.

Part 4: Reflection Questions

Use the space below to reflect on your results and identify one action you can take this week.

1. What archetype best describes your manager? Were any results surprising?

2. What is one behavior of theirs that has been most challenging for you?

3. Based on the managing up strategy, what is ONE thing you will try differently this week?

Ready to go deeper?

If this exercise opened something up, I'd love to help you explore it. Coaching gives you a confidential space and a thinking partner to turn what you noticed into a clear next step. Reach out at **danah@unlockyoucoaching.com**.

Based on Managing Up: How to Move Up, Win at Work, and Succeed with Any Type of Boss by Mary Abbajay (Wiley, 2018).
This exercise is for educational and personal development use.