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## [Thank You...Humility...Thank You...](#)

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The successful manager can never be too humble or too cordial and there is no such thing as saying 'thank you' too many times. No matter how powerful your position, avoid using power. Seek to accomplish your resource acquisition or service goals by being more knowledgeable, better prepared and more thankful and respectful than the person you are approaching for resources or services.

For example, there is a significant drainage problem on the soccer field. The athletics director goes to the head of buildings and grounds to ask for his or her assistance in solving the problem. The athletics director should go to this meeting with the following plan:

- Thank the person for his or her time
- Express how much you'd appreciate their help and advice in solving an athletic facility problem
- Provide a detailed description of the problem that includes a discussion of the following:

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- how much rain produces the problem
  - how much of the playing field is affected
  - how many practices or competitions had to be cancelled because of the problem
  - how moving teams to other areas affects other programs (i.e., intramurals cancelled because athletics practice takes priority)
  - the cost of such cancelled programs such as officials being paid cancellation fees, renting of water vacuums to alleviate the condition, re-sodding costs, etc. or the cost of rescheduling such as rental fees for indoor or outdoor space
  - how the condition affects the safety of coaches and students
- Detail what actions have been taken to date by the athletic director to address the problem
  - Express that you understand how tight the facilities budget must be, but that you are worried about the safety issues of trying to play on wet facilities and the unacceptable cost of injured athletes or litigation
  - Ask if there is any way that you can help get the resources necessary to resolve the issue
  - Listen
  - Agree on the next step, including, if the person says nothing can be done to alleviate the problem, who you might meet with next to try to get the problem addressed
  - Thank the person again for his or her time
  - Ask the person to let you know if there is anything you can ever do to help him or her

Follow up with 'thank you' notes, a popular head coach coming over to a Buildings and Grounds Department staff meeting to give a talk about the importance of "team, t-shirts from coaches to groundskeepers, good seats at games, etc.

If the person responds positively with a plan to address the problem, follow up with a 'thank you' note expressing your appreciation for what was specifically promised and asking him or her to call you if there's any way you can provide further assistance. Create a memo for your files that reiterates all the above as a record of the meeting.

If the person said that he or she can do nothing to solve the problem, follow up the meeting with a formal written communication to the person you met with that reiterates all of the above, thanks the person for recommending that you schedule a meeting with the superior who was suggested and concludes with a 'thank you' for his or her time and assistance even if the meeting was not cordial or the person not very helpful. This is the memo that you would use to start the meeting with the person's supervisor.

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If the person you met with is so obstinate that you can't get him or her to recommend a next step, state that you hope that he or she would not object if you go to your boss (who is hopefully not his boss) to ask his or her advice in handling the matter. Never say anything in a threatening tone. Always ask (rather than tell) the person if he or she would object to you consulting with someone who is more powerful than either of you.

If the above approach appears to be extraordinarily humble and cordial, that's exactly the point. Influencing people is about developing positive human relationships. The kind of image and reputation that every athletics director should want is to have someone say, "Our AD is extraordinary, the most humble and competent person you'd ever want to meet. He/she really does his/her homework, always listens to the other person's side of the story and never tries to 'muscle' people." Even though a manager has power over people, try to never need to use it.

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