

DO'S AND DON'TS OF SKIP MANAGEMENT

Skip management occurs when a layer of management is skipped in the communication between two or more people. It can occur in two directions. Assume for a moment that I'm your boss and you work for me. If I skip over you and give direction to one of your subordinates, that's downward skip management. Alternatively, if one of your subordinates skips you and comes to me, that's upward skip management.

In the absence of clear rules around this kind of communication, both types of skip management can erode trust. Skip management can undermine the authority of the person who has been skipped. It can cause embarrassment. It can waste an enormous amount of time and energy as everyone tries to explain what happened and repair the damage. Even a simple cc on an email can be an example of skip management unless rules have been established ahead of time.

The simple rule is this: Pay attention to the chain of command and communicate your ideas, recommendations, or issues to the appropriate layer of management in an orderly way. The only exceptions should be: a) when it is a routine communication and the practice has been clearly established that it's okay to skip manage; b) when policy clearly requires it (for example, when reporting instances of harassment); or c) when circumstances leave you no alternative (and a reasonable person would do the same thing).

When skip management does occur, it's important to explain the context (why did it occur) and repair the damage right away. If you initiated it, apologize and include the appropriate people right away. If there's a recurring pattern of skip management, take the time to define clear expectations around communication and establish rules around when skip management should – and should not – occur.

Skip Management in Action

