



TRANSCRIPT

Episode # 4: How to Leverage Emotions to Become More Persuasive

Well, hello everyone! Today, we're going to talk about one of the big elephants in the room of our work world. There's a couple of those.....something big and important and yet everyone seems unconscious that it exists. In fact, they often argue that not only isn't it there....it shouldn't be there.

The problem with unseen elephants, however, is that they still have an impact on everything around them, no matter how much people insist they aren't there. If you run into an unexpected nasty surprise in the work world, chances are you've run into an invisible elephant.

For example, have you ever had this experience? You're pitching an idea to someone, and you're fully prepared. You have the data and the analysis, your proposal is aligned with best practices, and your argument is logical and

bulletproof. And yet somehow, the actual discussion gets completely derailed. Despite the fact that you seem to be bulletproof, you get shot down. And for the life of you, you can't figure out what just happened. You've run into the elephant in the room, the one that no one can see.

On the other hand, imagine if you had a pair of glasses that, when you put them on, allowed you to see what no one else can see, the fact that there is an otherwise invisible elephant. Well then, you would have an unexpected advantage over everyone else, wouldn't you? You would have a secret advantage. Not only could you the avoid running head-on into that elephant.... you might even actually get that elephant to work for you.

The elephant in this case is the hidden world of other people's emotions and feelings. And later in this episode, I'll have a few simple tips for you that will allow you to start taming that elephant and getting it to work for you vs. against you. But first let me tell you about one of my clients who had the experience running into an unseen elephant. Seeing what happens to other people is a great way of not making the same mistake ourselves.

A few years ago, I was working with a highly accomplished leader—let's call him Tom. Tom was running the division of a well-known company and was just kicking it—tens of millions in revenue, year-on-year growth in a strategically important

sector, a motivated and devoted team. Just someone with a natural flair for leadership in the business world. Tom and I had been working together for about 6 months to get him ready for a likely big promotion in the near future. At this particular meeting, we were looking at what we had accomplished to date and deciding whether we needed to target any additional goals going forward.

After we had been talking a while, Tom said, “Kathy, I know I get good feedback on my communications style. People always compliment me on how direct and clear I am. But I’m feeling that I’m still not as good as I’d like to be. Maybe I could be even simpler or clearer in my communication. Somehow others don’t always seem to “get” what I’m saying.”

Well, I was surprised and a little puzzled. The feedback seemed pretty accurate. Tom did have a very clear and direct communication style. So why was he feeling that others didn’t always “get” what he was saying? I asked him to walk me through a few real-life examples to see if I could spot what might be going on. And once he did, I could see a pattern that might explain Tom’s perception.

I noticed that when he was presenting or pitching an idea to someone, he always very logical and data driven. He never once mentioned his own feelings (whether good or bad), and he never acknowledged or referred to his listeners’ feelings. So why was this important?

Well, Tom, with his excellent leadership instincts, was sensing one of the blind spots that most of us have in our work life. We're often told that the path to greater and greater clarity is through facts and logic.

I've never been in a workplace that didn't have that belief... that clarity in decision-making comes solely from a foundation of facts, data and logic. But here's the problem. It just isn't true. In fact, it's never true.

Sure, facts, data and logic play an important role in good decision-making. But emotions...our feelings.... are also an important and even necessary part of decision-making. In fact, there is strong neurological evidence that human beings are incapable of making decisions without having emotion guide us.

We've known this since the 19th century when a railroad construction foreman named Phineas Gage had an iron rod driven through his head in an explosion gone wrong. Miraculously, Phineas not only survived this accident, but he went back to work 4 months later with little apparent injury other than the loss of an eye.

But soon it became apparent that the brain injury had changed him in some curious ways. The accident had damaged the section of Phineas' frontal lobe

responsible for emotions. And because he no longer had his emotions to guide him, Phineas could not make decisions. He could look at the facts and reason his way through his various options. His ability to analyze remained unimpaired. But he was missing a crucial and necessary ability.... the ability to actually make a choice and own it. Instead, Phineas would dither back and forth among his options and never actually choose.

Since then, multiple neurological studies have confirmed the truth of what was first learned from the Phineas Gage case. As human beings, we struggle to make decisions without having some degree of emotional input or reaction.

So, let's get back to the workplace which somehow hasn't yet caught up to science and where people still believe that emotions and feeling have no place in decision-making. If you accept what you're being told and you're trying to convince other using solely data, facts, and logic, you effectively are making presentations or pitches with one hand tied behind your back.

That's what Tom was experiencing. He was speaking clearly, factually, and logically to his team and to his peers. And yet somehow they didn't always "get" him or end up on the same page. That's because he was ignoring the emotional subtext.... their feeling, his own feelings....instead of addressing the emotions in a way that would ensure complete alignment.

So, you might be saying at this point, “OK, Kathy—I get it. But who has the blanking time to be constantly paying attention to the emotional subtext?! My job is complicated enough as it is!” And I get that. The point of this episode is not to insist you develop the skills of a therapist on top of the job you already do.

Instead, I want to give you a few quick and easy tips on how to address emotions when you’re making a pitch or presentation. That way, you won’t be in the position that Tom was in, making presentations with one hand tied behind your back.

So, here’s tip #1: Ask people how they’re feeling in advance of a presentation.

The process of simply asking a colleague how he or she feels about something is just so simple, but also so powerful. Once you know their feelings, you can address and resolve those in your presentation.

If they say they’re nervous about a particular risk, then you can talk in your presentation about the precautions that you’re taking and the feeling of security those precautions will give. If they are enthusiastic about a new strategy, you can point out in your presentation how the idea that you’re pitching will increase the odds that the new strategy will be successful.

Now at this point, you may be saying, “Well, of course, I always check in with colleagues before making an important presentation to them.” To which I say. “Yeah, but are you really?”

Because there’s a great likelihood that when you check in with them, you are asking them the question that smart, high achievers typically ask in the workplace. You’re probably asking, “Hey, Mary, what do you think of this?” That’s not a question that often leads to emotions and feelings getting discussed.

Instead, a better question is “Hey, Mary, what do you feel about this?” Asking how someone feels about an idea can give you all sorts of info about their emotional state. And you can use that info to better connect with them later when you’re making your pitch or presentation.

Now for Tip #2: Don’t just reassure of positive quantifiable benefits of your idea. Reassure of the positive emotional benefits as well.

We’re pretty accustomed to pointing out the logical and quantifiable benefits of the idea we’re pitching... the cost savings, or the creation of more value for the customer, or the more productive workforce, etc., etc. What we’re less accustomed to doing is pointing out the positive feelings that will result from our

idea.... for example, less worry about unexpected compliance issues, or more enthusiasm about a challenging project.

But it's pretty easy to simply include those emotional benefits in the list of all the other quantifiable benefits that will come if your proposal is adopted. Simply think about how an affected group will be feeling—perhaps employees or peers or customers or shareholders, or perhaps even the Board.

Better yet, think about how an important decision-maker will be feeling.....less stressed or a greater sense of ease, for example...and be sure to mention that as a benefit in your presentation. If a decision-maker knows that he or she will end up feeling good as a result of supporting your idea, they again will be more likely to give you that support.

One thing I sometimes like to do is point out to a decision-maker that if they take the action I'm proposing, they will look like a hero. It's an absolutely true statement, and again they better understand that approving the idea will end up making them feel good.

And finally, Tip #3: Say and embody the emotion you want decision-makers to be feeling when you make a presentation.

One of the many interesting things about emotions is that they are often contagious. What do I mean by that? Well, if a co-worker is consistently cheerful around you, it's likely to make you feel more cheerful when you see him. If a peer is consistently impatient with you, it can make you feel impatient as well. So, if you are emotionally infectious when you make a presentation, you're likely to make decision-makers feel a little like that too.

How do you do that?

Well, here's an example. If you want your audience to feel relaxed and confident about your idea, then you should show up in a way that conveys relaxed confidence. Your body language should be professional but relaxed, and somewhere towards the beginning of your presentation, you might say "I'm feeling pretty confident about this idea because...."

Or here's another example....If you want your audience to feel curious and exploratory, you might say in your presentation, "I got curious about this situation, so I decided to explore it and this is what I found." And you might organize your presentation into a series of questions that you explored and what you discovered.

Shaping the emotional climate in the room this way means that many of your listeners will be on the same page emotionally with you. That means that you've already done half the work to win them over. Now, all you have to do is make the logical business case for your idea in order to win their full support.

So, there you go.....3 quick and easy ways to weave feelings and emotions into your presentation or pitch to increase your persuasiveness! If you start using these tips consistently, presentations and pitches will not only start to feel easier.... you'll also see your win rate increase.

Alright, my friends, here's to a week ahead for you with some good wins, and I'll see you in our next episode!

We're celebrating the launch of the podcast here, and I'd like to include you.

I'm going to be giving away AirPods Pro to five lucky listeners who follow, rate, and review the show. Now, of course, you don't have to give the show five stars, although that would be awesome and I do hope you love what you've heard so far. But I'd also love your honest opinion and feedback as well as your questions so I can create a show that's a valuable resource for you.

So visit [significagroup.com/podcastlaunch](https://www.significagroup.com/podcastlaunch) to learn more about the contest and how to enter and I'll be announcing the winners on the show in an upcoming episode.

Thanks for listening to this episode of Mastering The Power Skills. If you like what was offered in today's show and want more insights and resources from Kathy, check us out at www.significagroup.com.