



## TRANSCRIPT

### **Episode # 12: What Gets In Our Way**

Hi there, everyone!

Now if you listen to this podcast regularly, you're going to end up with an incredible toolbox filled with some very useful tips, techniques, and tactics on influence, persuasion, and presence.

But sometimes it's not enough to have a fantastic toolbox. It's also worth giving a little thought to the things that get in the way of using those tools effectively. In this episode, we'll identify some of those common challenges so that you can be sure to avoid them.

Now the top answer I get from clients when I ask what gets in the way of them growing their influence, persuasion and presence skills, is time. And I absolutely

get that. I've been involved in the corporate world for a long time now, and the demands and complexity have been steadily growing over the years.

That's why I tend to focus on tips and strategies that are quick and easy. People who have multiple demands on their time are more likely to use tools that are simple vs. complex.

However, how to incorporate these tools in your day-to-day life in a way that's efficient, simple, and effective is something best covered in a future podcast episode. In this episode, we're going to explore the issues that can lurk inside ourselves and sabotage our ability to be skillful in growing our influence, persuasion and presence.

These are the habits, the mindsets, and the assumptions that unfortunately work against us when we're trying to acquire influence or persuade others. Let's start first with the habits.

Our habits aren't necessarily bad behaviors. We often have perfectly understandable reasons for why we rely on them. However, the problem with habits is that we tend to overdo them. And when that happens, our habits can keep us from reaching our full potential.

Habit #1 is lack of curiosity.

Curiosity is the hallmark of someone who is good at influence, persuasion and presence. You want to understand what makes the business tick. You want to understand what makes your colleagues tick, and you want to understand the interpersonal dynamics of the workplace...or what we often call politics.

But we all know what happens. You have so much work to do in such a short amount of time and before you know it, your natural curiosity goes out the window. You feel like you don't have time for it.

But it's important to remember that curiosity is your friend as you navigate the workplace. Exercising your curiosity will ultimately make your work easier, faster and better. It can even make your work fun.

And if you keep on remembering that, you'll find ways of integrating curiosity into your daily work life in ways that won't feel like a burden. In fact, if you listen to this podcast regularly, you'll hear a lot of strategies where simply asking a curious question provides you with a great return on your investment.

Another habit that gets in the way of using the power skills effectively is Habit #2, Binary Thinking.

Binary thinking is “either/or” thinking. It’s our old habit of separating the world into two.

I can choose either this or that or...my colleague is either a good person or a bad person or...there’s only a right answer or a wrong answer to the question in front of us.

Binary thinking can actually be a useful skill. It helps you make rapid decisions when time is of the essence or when you have to make dozens of decisions a day.

But it’s not so useful when you’re trying to pick up nuance or broad perspective or when you’re trying to understand people who are different from you. In those situations, you need to keep an open, inquisitive mind vs. artificially narrowing our focus to an “either-or” judgment.

Binary thinking in the workplace is one of those overused strengths. It can help us to move fast and decisively. But we can get stuck in the habit of doing that and lose the ability to read the room and respond creatively. It can keep us from

making major leaps forward in our ability to influence and persuade and in our ability to grow our power.

So, these are very common habits we can get hooked on in the workplace. Let's now look at a common mindset issue that can get in the way of our ability to be effective with our influence, persuasion, and presence skills.

This is the “lack of an ownership” mindset.

Put another way, it's the tendency to just do your job description on a particular project or issue vs. ensuring that others are meeting their responsibilities as well and have the support and information they need to do so.

You might be collaborative with your colleagues as you offer your expertise. But you don't feel responsible for driving everyone to a successful outcome. And you don't feel responsible for making sure that nothing falls through the cracks.

There are many reasons why we might not show up with an ownership mindset.

We might be under the mistaken belief that demonstrating ownership will be misinterpreted as controlling vs. helpful. Or we might subscribe to a view of ourselves as detached experts vs. engaged “do-ers.”

That’s something that can show up for those of us who are functional experts like lawyers, or IT wizards, or even HR professionals. Sometimes our allegiance is more to our profession than to the real-time work of rolling up our sleeves and helping make things happen in the business workplace.

Or we may simply feel too busy to check-in on how others are doing and determine whether additional action from us is required for a successful outcome.

But whatever the reason for not having an ownership mindset, it’s a mistake to feel this way. Lack of an ownership mindset is the antithesis of empowering yourself. It’s the antithesis of leadership.

In fact, you are disempowering or sidelining yourself. When you do that, the impact of your influence, persuasion and presence skills will be weakened as well.

Viewed from that perspective, lack of an ownership mindset is really a form of self-sabotage. You want to be a central player. But instead to some extent, you're merely a spectator watching others make the meaningful decisions that will shape the organization.

Finally, let's turn to an incorrect assumption that gets in the way of us using the power skills to create alignment.

I call this assumption the Intent-Behavior Conundrum, and all of us as humans can make this assumption pretty regularly. In fact, our tendency to do so may be a crucial part of our brains.

So, here's what the conundrum is. We observe the behavior of others, and we automatically assume what intent they have from seeing their behavior.

Some classic examples used to illustrate this are the assumptions we make of others while driving. In heavy traffic, if someone cuts us off and speeds on ahead, we usually assume bad intent. And if we come to a four-way stop sign at the same time as another car and that driver waves us on, we often assume good intent.

But study after study shows that while we believe we are good at reading the intent behind behaviors, we often aren't.

For example, the driver who cut us off and sped ahead? That could have been a parent racing to the hospital with an injured child. And the apparently nice driver at the stop sign? That might have been a kidnapper who was trying to avoid any rude behavior that could attract attention to him.

In fact, there are countless other motivations that might have caused those two behaviors. The reality is that we really don't know the intent of those two drivers. We just assumed we did, despite the fact that we couldn't see inside their heads.

You can see the problem this creates in the workplace, of course.

If we don't really know what's driving or motivating someone, but we assume that we do, we're at risk of using the power skills in an ineffective way.

We might choose the wrong tactics and fail to create alignment because we've assessed the personalities and the issues incorrectly. We're convinced we're reading the situation clearly and we aren't.

So, what's the solution? It's that important thing we talked about at the beginning of this episode...using active curiosity vs. making assumptions.

We want to act like scientists, not know-it-alls. I guess we could treat this as a moral issue and say we should be curious because we should be humble, not arrogant.

But personally, I want to be objective because...well, you know what? I like winning. I like to be super accurate in reading the room so I know how to navigate it well and get my ideas heard and accepted. And being arrogant and quick to make assumptions gets in the way of winning. And by the way, I want you to win too!

So how do you avoid the Intent-Behavior Conundrum?

Well, first you observe the visible behavior of the other person, and you might even make a hypothesis about it just the way a scientist would.

But then you test that hypothesis, and you remain curious. You want to explore what the true intent and motivation of that other person is. You want to put your emotions and your ego aside because there's something bigger at stake.

That bigger thing is knowledge. You are going to learn something that you can probably use.

And when you do that, you better equip yourself to use the right influence and persuasion skills. You're better positioned to steer that person in the right direction to understand the ideas and initiatives that you're trying to move forward.

If you'd like to see an infographic depiction of the Intent-Behavior Conundrum, and how to avoid it, be sure to see the link we've put in the show notes for this episode.

So, there you have it, some of the more frequent hurdles that get in the way of us using our influence, persuasion and presence skills effectively. If you take care to avoid them, you'll be creating a strong foundation that will allow you to empower yourself more and more as you build your skills.

OK, everyone.... thank for joining me today. I hope you have an awesome week ahead, and I'll see you in our next 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](http://www.significagroup.com).