



TRANSCRIPT

Episode # 8: 3 Tips For Landing A Good-Fit Role

Hi there, everyone! In prior episodes we've talked about how the power skills of influence, persuasion and presence can help you in the workplace, and I've shared a few of the hundreds of tips that I have for you on those skills.

In future episodes, I'll even explain how applying the power skills to yourself can make you a more powerful leader.

But today we're going to look at a scenario that is not the workplace and not yourself. It's one that comes up for us at various points in our careers. It's the new role; the one that looks like a perfect fit.

And as you might expect, the skills of influence, persuasion and presence can be as helpful to you in landing that role as they are in your day-to-day workplace.

Let me first tell you why I started to think about this issue of landing a good fit role. Of course, most of my work is as a leadership coach. I get hired by companies to work one-on-one with high-potential leaders to help accelerate their readiness for C-suite roles and then support them in those roles. In that context, it makes a lot of sense that we would be thinking about what works as well as what doesn't work in landing that C-suite role.

But I also started to encounter this issue when I saw the opposite situation—executives who had been hired into the company from the outside and who were now wondering whether what looked like their dream job might in fact be a bad-fit role. The reasons why they might be wondering were varied, and included culture issues, interpersonal dynamics, and lack of resources.

And in case you're wondering, the skills of influence, persuasion and presence seldom remedy a bad-fit role. These skills might make things incrementally better, but they seldom turn things around completely. Really, the only thing that meaningfully solves for a bad-fit role is to leave that role and find a new one.

So, this raised some questions in my mind. Maybe the power skills can't help you much when you're in a bad-fit role. But can they help you in avoiding bad-fit roles? Can they actually increase the odds of you landing a good-fit job, something closer to that dream job we all want? And if so, what would that look like?

Well, I love a good challenge like that, and together with some collaborative and adventurous clients, I came up with a process that uses the power skills to give you a competitive edge in avoiding bad-fit roles and attracting good-fit roles.

In fact, at Significa Group we offer an online course on that several times a year where I walk you through the process step-by-step and also provide you with multiple coaching sessions to support you as you build your strategy. If you stick around to the end of this episode, you can find out how to get more details on that.

But today, I'd like to share with you 3 specific tips to keep in mind if you're considering a role that looks like a very good fit, and you want to increase the odds of you landing it.

Some of these are likely not tips that you've heard or seen elsewhere. And yet I've seen them work many, many times to help candidates be truly "seen" by decision makers in an appealing way.

In fact, once candidates land roles using these tips, decision makers often specifically call out the use of these tips as something that had a positive impact.

And of course, let me confirm again, that these tips work just as well when you're applying for roles within your current company as they do when you're applying for roles outside your current company. How and when you use them might vary depending on the circumstances, but they always enhance how you're being perceived by decision makers.

So, let's get started on those 3 tips.

TIP #1: REFRAME YOUR ACHILLES HEEL INTO AN ASSET.

So, let's get real. No matter how qualified you are for a role, there is always going to be something about you as a person or about your experience that will raise a question in decision makers' minds.

This isn't unfair, of course. It's a normal part of the interview process, and it's something you've done yourself if you've been an interviewer. At some point, you say to yourself, "This person has great experience, but I wonder how his personality will play to the board?"

Or you instead might say, “This person is a great fit for our culture and will build strong relationships. But I wonder how we should prioritize the candidates who have even deeper experience?”

Now these questions might get resolved in favor of the candidate, of course. But they’re a bump in the road of the interview process, and if you’re a candidate trying to land a dream job, your goal is to smooth away all those bumps.

So, how do you handle an Achilles heel? Well, first be very objective with yourself. Say to yourself, “If I were to disqualify myself as a candidate, what one reason would I use?” We all have that one thing, right? It may not be big, and it may not be a flaw at all. But we know that people who don’t know us well might get overly fixated on that one thing.

The next step is to own that Achilles heel before any decision maker identifies it themselves. That can feel like a risky move, but it’s also a gutsy move. Your interviewers are going to notice it anyway, so you get respect and brownie points when you acknowledge it to them before they do.

But when you acknowledge your Achilles heel, you're also going to reframe it so that they understand it's not such a big deal after all. In fact, what initially looked like an Achilles heel might actually be an asset.

Let me give you a few actual illustrations of this.

I had a client...let's call her Kate.... who was a compliance officer at a large, heavily regulated company. Kate was being considered for a promotion to the C-suite where she would frequently appear before the board.

Now Kate was highly accomplished and effective, but her demeanor was reserved and soft-spoken. So, she decided her Achilles heel might be board members worrying if she would be firm and decisive enough in this new and very important role.

How did Kate acknowledge this potential worry but re-frame this?

In the bio that she wrote to support her candidacy for the role, she described herself as thoughtful enough to build bridges, but strong and steady in speaking truth to power. And after doing so, she got the job without anyone raising any concerns about her demeanor.

Sure, Kate could have waited to use that answer until a board member actually asked her the question. But the fact that she was gutsy enough to raise the question herself before anyone else was a much more powerful move for her.

Here's another example. Ed was a client who was in the running for a CEO role against two other peers who had at least 10 years of experience on him. The fact that he was younger and arguably less seasoned than the two of them made him a distant 3rd in the race.

In fact, the retiring CEO and the board acknowledged that while Ed was clearly going to be a CEO somewhere, someday, the only reason for including him now was to demonstrate courtesy to a young, talented performer.

However, during the year or two before the board decision, Ed continued to impress everyone with the quality of his leadership. And as he headed into the pivotal board meeting, he started wondering about how should he respond to any question about his lack of seniority and tenure? Should he argue that he had every bit as much experience as the other two peers in the running?

Well, you can guess the answer to that question. Ed decided to own and acknowledge his Achilles heel.... the fact that he was earlier in his career than the

others. Not only that, but Ed raised that fact himself rather than wait for someone on the board to ask him about it.

But Ed also reframed his career status. He pointed out how his great capacity to learn quickly and master new skills was what had brought him to this point so early in his career. And he tactfully pointed out that given his track record, there was every reason to believe that his leadership capability would continue to grow at an accelerated rate.

Wouldn't the board prefer a CEO who just kept getting better and better vs one that was technically ready now but unlikely to grow as fast?

Well, yes.... in fact, the board did. And by acknowledging his Achilles heel and reframing it as an advantage, Ed went from being a distant runner-up to being chosen as CEO.

So, now let's shift from the bold move of owning and reframing your potential Achilles heel, to one that's much simpler.

TIP #2: SUBSTITUTE VIVID WORDS AND PHRASES FOR OLD, TIRED CLICHES

So how many times have you seen a resume or LinkedIn profile that says things like “strategic thinker” or “collaborative team player” or “analytical problem solver?”

The problem with this language is not just that it’s corporate jargon. It’s that everyone else is using the same words and phrases. And when you’re pitching yourself for a new role or job, the last thing you want to do is look exactly like everyone else.

You don’t want the eyes of the person reading your resume or profile to glaze over. You instead want to look like the distinctive and special candidate you are.

I don’t know...maybe we use this language over and over again because we think we’re supposed to. If that’s true, then it’s pretty strange, isn’t it? It means I’m using language that bores you and tells you nothing because I think that’s what being a qualified leader looks like.

Now, of course, I'm not telling you that you shouldn't talk about these concepts--merely that you should look for fresh ways of talking about them. For example, if you truly are a strategic thinker, pull out a thesaurus and chose another word or phrase to say that.

Or add a descriptive phrase to say how you're a strategic thinker. Are you the sort of strategic thinker who figures out where the market is going before everyone else does?

Are you the type of strategic thinker who knows how to align people, processes and structure to drive strategic goals? There are dozens of ways to be a strategic thinker, and the more specific you are about your brand of strategic thinking, the more distinctive and memorable you'll be to decision makers.

An even more powerful way to avoid tired cliches is to come up with an analogy to describe what makes you special. If you remember way back to your grammar lessons, you know that an analogy is a comparison between one thing and another to show how they're alike and to create greater understanding.

So, one example of an analogy is to compare a fast-moving and important project where everyone is doing it for the first time to building a plane while you're flying

it. Another example might be the famous quote from the movie *Forrest Gump*, “Life is like a box of chocolates. You never know what you’re going to get.”

When you use an analogy to describe a special aspect of yourself, you make clear what value you have to offer in a compelling and memorable way.

For example, one of my clients is very skilled at getting different parts of the company and different personalities all on the same page. When she’s describing that talent to others, she says she’s like a translator who helps everyone understand each other and move forward, even though they speak different languages.

That image is what I call a “sticky” one. It sticks in people’s heads, and they never forget it. Imagine how much more boring and forgettable she would sound if she simply said she was collaborative.

Here’s another example of how a former client describes one of his defining characteristics. He’s a highly seasoned CFO who has a great ability to grow and develop his team.

He could just say that, but the fact of the matter is there are a gazillion people out there who say they grow and develop their teams. Instead, he calls himself the Coach K of the finance world, a reference to Mike Krzyzewski, the long-standing coach of the Duke basketball team.

He goes on to say that like Coach K, he's mentored and coached rising talent who then have gone on to become highly successful CFO's themselves. That image makes the point so much more vividly than simply telling people he's good at growing and developing others. It's an image that makes people smile and nod vs. just looking at him blankly.

So, my final tip for landing a good-fit role is simple, but you may raise your eyebrows.

TIP #3: FIND ONE MILDLY HUMOROUS WAY OF DESCRIBING YOURSELF.

Now don't worry.... this is not a tip that will take you out of your comfort zone. I'm not talking about broad or inappropriate humor, and in a minute, I'll give you a few simple examples of what this looks like.

But first let me tell you why this is such a good thing to do when you want to land a job. Put yourself in the shoes of the decision makers.

If the search team or recruiters have done their job well, the decision makers are looking at a small number of resumes or bios or LinkedIn profiles where everyone looks approximately the same overall. In other words, while the candidates might have a variety of different experiences, they all are pretty much equally qualified.

So, if that were you and you were looking at equally qualified people, how would you decide who interested you the most? There are a lot of answers to that question, of course, but one very common answer is that we gravitate to people who we like.

And in the workplace, we generally like other people who can be a little light-hearted and don't have huge egos. People who may care a lot about their work and their role, but who don't take themselves too seriously and who create a pleasant and occasionally fun environment.

Using a little mild but unexpected humor in the way you describe yourself is a way of signaling that you're that kind of person. For example, I once was coaching

a biotech CEO who was being considered for board roles at other companies. The professional bio that she created for that purpose reflected the polished, articulate and experienced leader that she was. But her bio also said (and I quote) that at heart she was just a nerd who was passionate about exploring and understanding the science.

Now that's not a particularly hilarious way of talking about yourself. But that unexpected phrasing made people smile and nod. They felt that if she was the sort of person who could tease herself, she would probably be good company as a colleague on a board.

And I love what a friend of mind did with her resume. She was known for her boundless energy and ability to crisscross the country and even the globe. So, she inserted a bullet in the intro where she called herself an "inexhaustible traveler and the favorite photo at a company meeting was a pair of my shoes with holes in the soles."

Needless to say, she made her point, but in a way that made people chuckle and look forward to what she would come up with next.

So, there you have it...3 highly effective but little-known tips that will help you create a great impression when you want to land that role that's a great fit for you.

I've put these tips in a simple infographic for you, so you can file it away and retrieve it in the future when you might need it. You can grab a copy for yourself by clicking the link in the show notes for this episode.

And if you want to have some more inside tips to put in that file, I actually have two more resources for you.

The first is that online digital course that I mentioned, where I walk you through a step-by-step strategy for attracting good-fit roles. We're offering that course soon, and if you check the show notes for this episode, you'll find a link that will give you more information on that. I highly encourage you to check that out.

This is the same process that many of my senior management clients have used not only to attract their dream opportunities, but to show up as compelling and confident as they navigate their way to an offer. You'll learn all sorts of power skills that will not only serve you well in today's job market, but for years to come.

The second resource you might be interested in is a free copy of our latest white paper.....3 Mistakes To Avoid When You Want A Role That You Can Thrive In.

Remember how I told you at the beginning of this episode how I first started thinking about applying the power skills to career moves when I saw leaders ending up in bad-fit roles? They thought that they had found their dream jobs, but instead they ended up in companies where the culture or the personalities were a bad fit.

That's a pretty demoralizing situation to be in, and I wanted to be sure my clients and audience are never in that position. The 3 Mistakes To Avoid paper will give you insight on these common mistakes and guide you to solutions that increase the odds that you are attracting only good-fit roles. We'll include a link to that paper as well in the show notes.

Well, all right, my friends... I hope you enjoy all these resources, and they serve you well. Here's to an awesome week ahead, and I look forward to seeing 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 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.