

#13: Cultivating a Powerful Presence with Danielle Schulz



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Kathy Dockry

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You are listening to Episode 13 of *Mastering The Power Skills*. When the stakes are high for us as leaders, for example in an important presentation or speech, we not only want to be authoritative, we want to have a powerful presence that conveys that authority. We want to have leadership presence. So how do we do that? Join us today for some fresh perspectives and useful tips from someone whose job is all about conveying strong presence, New York Metropolitan Opera dancer, Danielle Schulz.

How much more could you accomplish if you were 25% or even 50% more influential and persuasive? Welcome to *Mastering The Power Skills*, the podcast that provides you with the tips, strategies, and the inspiration to grow your own power and win support for your ideas. And now here's your host, C-suite leadership coach Kathy Dockry.

Hi there everyone. Now, if you've listened to earlier episodes of this podcast, you'll remember that I promised you occasional interviews with experts on the power skills of influence, persuasion, and presence. And I also promised you experts from outside the traditional corporate world.

Now, it's my belief that if we want to excel and flourish in our corporate careers, we can't afford to have tunnel vision. There are great insights for us all in the worlds of the performing arts, of sports, and of science. And often those insights can be game changers for us.

Instead of dutifully following the same advice all our other colleagues are following, we suddenly understand things in a new way. And with that sudden understanding, we're capable of taking our performance to a new and higher level.

In today's episode, I'm going to be talking about the topic of powerful presence with one of those non-corporate experts. Danielle Schulz is a professional ballet dancer with an amazing career that has led her to dancing at the New York Metropolitan Opera, performing in iconic productions like *Aida*, *Don Giovanni*, *Turandot*, and *Parsifal*.

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Conveying powerful presence is something Danielle has to think about all the time in her job. And like me, she believes presence is not a mysterious thing that some of us are born with and others are not. Presence is something that each of us can actually learn and grow. And Danielle has some really useful tips and insights for us on how to do that.

By the way, while Danielle knows a thing or two about conveying a powerful presence in the world of performance, she also has some insight into our corporate world as well.

In addition to her performance commitments at the Met Opera, she's also the owner of The Triangle Sessions, a corporate wellness company that specializes in providing virtual and in-person experiences that build teams and morale. Clients of The Triangle Sessions include Google, Meta, First Republic Bank, among many others. That's a nice client list.

Danielle has a special gift for creating both fun and restorative experiences for high performing teams. And we'll also be talking during our interview why that focus on mind and body is especially important today. So let's jump into my conversation with Danielle, we're in for a treat.

Kathy: Welcome, Danielle. I'm so happy to have you on the show today. And I just got finished talking to the listeners about these two sides of you. On one hand we've got a creative performer, and on the other hand you're a business owner and you have a special focus on wellness and morale in the corporate environment.

So you're someone I've always thought of as having this innate feel for both the creative and the corporate side of things. And I love people who are multifaceted in that way. I've got a client who's a COO of a major health company and she's got a highly strategic business mind. In fact, that's the first thing that everybody always talks about with her.

But what a lot of her colleagues don't realize is that she actually was a professional opera singer before she started her corporate roles. And she's

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just got this ease about her ability to navigate various situations and different environments. And it looks like you have that sort of ease as well. So where does that come from for you?

Danielle: So, first of all, I don't think that the two worlds are all that different. All businesses need an element of creativity in order to stand out and to grow.

Kathy: Yeah.

Danielle: And all creatives, all performing artists need a businesslike mindset in order to succeed. So actually, I find that the two worlds complement one another rather well.

Kathy: That makes so much sense to me. I went, of course, and snooped around on your website and there's a phrase in your bio that I just loved, where you said you grew up as a serious ballet dancer. And you were shaped by a world rooted in discipline, dedication, and camaraderie.

And the reason why I like that so much is when I saw that phrase, I was thinking, you know, when we're working at our best in a corporate environment, that's exactly the world that we're operating in. We have discipline, dedication, accountability to these high expectations that are set. But also that camaraderie and that ability to work together and support each other in what we're doing and trying to achieve.

So yeah, that makes a lot of sense to me. But I also know something more about your past, and I sometimes wonder whether that ability to navigate different environments comes from someone who travels a lot. And that's something that you've done as well.

Danielle: Yes. So I graduated in 2009 with an arts degree. So already a terrible time to be graduating from college, and then was graduating with an arts degree on top of it. But I had an interesting experience or opportunity present itself, and that was performing on a cruise ship.

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So I was in my early 20s and walked away with all of these wonderful memories. But probably the biggest takeaway was that I was 21 years old and I was in this environment where I was not only working, but living in close quarters with 50 different nationalities.

Kathy: Wow.

Danielle: Yes. And very quickly you had to learn how to adapt, when to speak up, when to take a step back. And it was basically a crash course in how to navigate all of these different dynamics, all while holding your own.

Kathy: Oh my gosh.

Danielle: So it helped set the stage navigating different dynamics, both in the creative world and in the corporate world. So no experiences are ever lost or wasted.

Kathy: That is for sure. And we're going to be talking a little bit about not only your performance side of things, but your corporate side of things too. And I'll be curious to hear a little bit more about how you've applied that experience with all the different personalities and backgrounds that you meet in the corporate world too.

So let's dive into what we're talking about today, which is how to convey strong presence. And there are a lot of definitions for that, I often tell some of my clients, we could get really scholarly about it, and we don't most of the time.

So instead I give them a working definition and I call presence being the signals that you send. And we're sending signals all the time, through your behavior, through your body language, and through your mindset as to who you are.

So when I'm talking to my clients about the power skills of influence, persuasion and presence, presence is the thing that sort of supports the

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other power skills. It creates that alignment between what you're trying to achieve and who you are and who you need to be in that environment.

But I know there are a gazillion definitions of presence. So how do you describe presence when you're talking about it with people?

Danielle: Well, first of all, I love your definition. I think that's fantastic. There is so much to unpack with what you've just presented. But for me, I define presence as this understated, yet beaming confidence from within.

Kathy: Oh I love that. That's very consistent with what I sometimes coach my clients on when we're talking about the goal, say in a really important presentation to a board of directors or a leadership team. And there's a tendency we have in that to be sometimes excessively formal. You know exactly what I mean, right?

Yeah, we're like awkwardly sometimes playing the part and we're being very earnest about it too. And there's nothing necessarily wrong about that. But that doesn't create this presence that other people find compelling. And for me, when I see it when it's working well, it's this great combination of relaxed confidence.

So there's this strength involved in it, but it's also relaxed. You know, like the old, what they used to say about the old astronauts. They used to call that having the right stuff, that sort of calm, confident, relaxed demeanor where you know you're in the hands of someone who knows their stuff, but they're not necessarily getting too formal or agitated about it.

Danielle: Exactly. I love that analogy. Having presence is not only how you carry your body.

Kathy: Yeah.

Danielle: It's also how you own the space around you. But then being sensitive or aware to the space around you.

Kathy: Yeah.

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Danielle: And when you are aware of that space, when you're aware of your environment you can relax into your body. You can be in the mindset to allow for these authentic connections with people and set the stage, so to speak, terrible pun, but for a powerful rapport or for a persuasive rapport as well.

Kathy: Love that. Yeah, and I'm thinking about how we normally are when we're in those settings. You're talking about being aware of the space around you, a lot of times that's exactly what we're not aware of where we're all in our head, right?

That's what we do when we want to perform well, particularly in a corporate setting. You're thinking about all the things you need to say and do. And you're feeling overwhelmed by all of this and you haven't grounded yourself in the space around you.

And you're right, when you feel connected in that way, you can relax. You can take yourself seriously.

Danielle: Exactly.

Kathy: You're not going to take your eye off your performance, but you can relax some.

Danielle: Yeah, I think many people confuse presence with this idea that you walk into a room with a puffed up chest and that you command people and boss them around.

Kathy: Right.

Danielle: But presence actually has a humility to it. And, again, confidence in yourself, that understated but beaming in our confidence that you can exude. But at the same time relaxing, grounding into your body to be able to think on the fly, to respond and flow with maybe somebody else's agenda in order to make meaningful impact.

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Kathy: Oh, that's so true. That's great. So as a performer, when did you first become conscious of presence and the need to have it and the role that it played?

Danielle: Well, I think for all of us there are things that we're naturally good at and things that we need to work on. And for me, I had a natural sense of presence, but plenty of things to work on technically.

But that natural presence started to plateau maybe in my upper teens and early 20s. And it wasn't till an experience in my mid 20s that served as a turning point in order to help the trajectory of the next stage of my career.

Kathy: Yeah, and I'm interested about how you talk about hitting the plateau, because that's an experience that a lot of us have when we've got an innate talent but we kind of take it for granted. It's just the thing that we do.

And that's great. It's an advantage for us up to a point and then we go, "Oh yeah, now I have to become a little bit more intentional and deliberate about taking this strength if I want to take it to the next level."

Danielle: Exactly.

Kathy: So what happened to change your plateau?

Danielle: So basically I had this opportunity to work with a wonderful choreographer. And one of the cast members was and still is this legendary dancer. She was a performer in Alvin Ailey, she has starred in numerous Broadway shows. I had watched this woman for years and I could never take my eyes away from her when she was on stage.

And here I was day one of rehearsal, she walks into the room, I am utterly starstruck, completely intimidated, I feel out of my element. But once I got everything together I took this as an opportunity to learn from her. And again, this woman had this ferocious but understated presence.

So here are my two biggest takeaways from working with her.

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Kathy: Yeah.

Danielle: First and foremost, she had this awareness of her body that was unparalleled to anybody else. When she moved it was like she was aware of every cell and every fiber of her being.

Kathy: Oh my gosh, wow.

Danielle: Yes. And number two was that she had this consistent use of eye contact without being intimidating. So it was a combination of this amazing awareness of her body and this use of her eye contact, on top of being a technically gorgeous dancer, that really set her apart in her field.

Kathy: You know, I'm noticing something that you're saying about presence that really highlights things I think we need to understand. And it's this ability to draw people in, isn't it? It's less of that, what you were talking about before, that puffed up command. And more this sense of engaging people so they just feel almost like you're a magnet, you draw them into you.

Danielle: Absolutely. And this woman could have absolutely been a diva, she has earned her right for that status. But like you said, she was the exact opposite. She was so warm and genuine, and she inspired people to come up to her level.

Kathy: Yeah.

Danielle: Well, once that opportunity was complete, I wanted to take these skills that I learned about presence to try to get to the next level. And I started booking job after job after job.

Kathy: Wow.

Danielle: Ten months later I finally landed, after numerous attempts, a contract at the Metropolitan Opera and continued using those techniques around presence to establish myself there and continue performing in more roles.

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Kathy: Yeah.

Danielle: I was the same exact dancer technically, but with a different approach. And that approach changed the trajectory of my career.

Kathy: Wow. And I think it can have that effect for a lot of people in other careers as well.

Danielle: Absolutely.

Kathy: And one of the things I've always thought about that is it's within the grasp of anyone to do that. Now, some of us are going to be rock stars at doing it, like the dancer you saw. But all of us can get really a lot better to the point where other people even notice it.

It just involves taking stock of a number of different techniques, but nothing that's outside of the range of possibility for any of us, I think. And that's one of the reasons why I use that working definition of presence to talk about body language, and behavior, and mindset. It implies that it's actionable, right?

It's not some sort of mysterious trait that someone either has or doesn't have. It's a series of just a couple of different things that you can do that have an impact on everybody else and upgrades the strength of your presence and brings those people into you.

Danielle: Yes, absolutely.

Kathy: So what did you do in particular to grow and cultivate your presence? What were the things that you were thinking about for yourself that you noticed in this person?

Danielle: Well, this is where it may get a little bit hippie-dippie, but with that caveat, in dance there's this idea about opening up your back space. And you may have heard it in yoga as well.

Kathy: Yes.

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Danielle: A lot of time we are very presentational, we are forward facing, we are always obsessed about what is next. And we really ignore what's going on in the present or value the present. And same goes with dancing, especially in ballet. It's very audience-centric, it's very forward facing, it's very presentational.

But in order to have a more holistic view of any movement, you want to have this 360 approach.

Kathy: Yes.

Danielle: So yeah, it's presentational but also being aware of your back space in order, quite literally, I should say. So back of the legs, your back, back of the shoulders, back of the head, kind of ignites your body and allows you to be fully present in the space and to be able to use every fiber, every cell to convey your message.

Kathy: Wow, I love that description. And I don't think it's actually hippie-dippie at all. In some ways it's the exact opposite about it because, again, we're talking about physicality, really.

Danielle: Yes.

Kathy: You know, taking ourselves out of our minds and our mind's idea about what we should be doing. And using, tapping into our body instead and using our body entirely as the instrument.

And I remember seeing people doing presentations where they would be leaning forward like that, leaning in. And on one hand, in theory, you think well that should be what you're doing, you should lean in. But in fact, it gave you the impression of someone who was a little bit off balanced and a little bit, someone who was over eager and not grounded and strong in themselves.

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So it created a great sense of enthusiasm sometimes, but it didn't really convey strength and power. Which is something that keeps grounding yourself.

Danielle: Yes.

Kathy: So I know you have some very specific tips for the listeners today about how they can ground themselves in that way and convey both strength but relaxation. So why don't we dive into that? I'll chime in every now and then with some observations.

Danielle: So when it comes to conveying presence I like to do a three point checklist. So this is something that you could keep in mind for giving any type of in-person presentation. It can also apply to a virtual or Zoom presentation, but it really kind of captures an in-person event.

Kathy: If I could just interrupt a little, I suspect what you're going to tell us is also good for difficult conversations, which is something that we face a lot of in the corporate world. So grounding ourselves for those and conveying strong presence in those is also a helpful thing to know.

Danielle: 100%. Also for difficult conversations, also for first impressions.

Kathy: Oh, yeah, that's good. Yeah. So three point checklist.

Danielle: So the three tips, we're going to start from the ground up. So I basically like to start with my feet. And I like to pick up my toes and open up the surface area of my feet in order to maximize the connection with the floor.

When you maximize that connection you can feel grounded in your posture. I also highly recommend having a slight bend to your knees, that will help you keep weighted as well.

Kathy: Oh, good. Yeah.

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Danielle: Number two is to think about pulling your spine out of your pelvis. So you can do that by drawing that navel in. Oftentimes the tailbone will fall down and then you'll have the ability to breathe into the sides of the ribs. When you have the ability to breathe into the sides of the ribs, it takes away those superficial chest breaths and you could breathe into the sides of the ribs and then feel more grounded and calm.

Kathy: And that makes sense to me because I often see speakers who are nervous. And by the way, this was me very much so during the first half of my career. What would happen is that I would start breathing very shallowly in the top part of my body. And that sort of breath is the same breath we use when we're anxious.

So it's like this vicious circle where you're breathing in a pattern that's actually creating anxiety for you, even beyond any anxiety you might normally feel. So it's the opposite of feeling grounded, you feel like completely ungrounded at that point.

Danielle: Exactly. By controlling the breath it's one of the quickest ways to manage anxiety because once your brain tells your body to breathe a specific way, you're getting out of your head into your body. And then it has a calming sense on the nervous system.

Kathy: Oh, that's great. And I also like this bottom part of what's going on, where you bring your navel back in and you drop your pelvic bone. And for listeners, I suggest you might want to experiment with this a little bit just to get the feel of it. But that's something I stumbled across probably because I was doing yoga, I think. I realized all of a sudden I, again, felt stronger just by that simple shift.

So just to be clear, this isn't like tightening your abdomen the way you would to do sit-ups, right? It's a much more subtle thing where you're tightening your navel, but also elongating the bottom of your spine.

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Danielle: Exactly, when you drop that tailbone it's also great for your low back health. So it's a win win altogether.

Kathy: A little massage before your presentation.

Danielle: Yes, exactly.

Kathy: Okay, so there's a third point too.

Danielle: So for the third tip I like to think about creating space between my ears and my collarbones.

Kathy: I love that.

Danielle: So posture is very important, it can be a very powerful tool. But a lot of times people are told shoulders down or shoulders back. And you could feel very stiff and it doesn't feel natural. And if you feel stiff and unnatural in your presentation, you're going to make your audience feel uncomfortable.

Kathy: Yeah.

Danielle: So you want to just to think about relaxing the shoulders. And an easy cue is to think about maximizing the space between the ears and the collarbones. And that way the shoulders just glide down the back, relax in a natural slope. And then you still have that ability to breathe and move in your upper body.

Kathy: That is great. So overall, as I think about this list, I'm sort of doing it a little bit in my chair as we talk here.

Danielle: So am I.

Kathy: But I'm feeling, again, sort of this rootedness and groundedness in the bottom half of my body. But this lightness in the top half that really conveys relaxation, but in an appropriate way. Not in a, you know?

Danielle: Yeah, not in a lazy type of way.

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Kathy: Right, exactly. Yeah.

Danielle: What you described is perfect for a presentation. To use an analogy, it's a bit like yoga in the sense that your feet, or opening up the bottom of your feet serve as the roots. And then your torso is like the tree, and then your limbs or your head, upper body, it's like the branches or the leaves swaying in the wind.

So you are rooted, but you have this effortless quality that can go with the flow, and it makes your audience feel relaxed. When your audience is relaxed, they're receptive to your message as well.

Kathy: That's right. I think it also creates sometimes a sense of safety in the audience.

Danielle: Yes.

Kathy: So we want them relaxed and almost like they're in your hands, you know? We can relax because she knows what she's doing. She's strong and confident.

Danielle: Exactly. And you mentioned a speaker that was leaning forward.

Kathy: Yeah.

Danielle: Yes, they may be enthusiastic, but if the audience doesn't feel secure, they're not going to be open to what you're trying to convey.

Kathy: That's exactly right. Yeah, it's a subtle distinction for some people, but it's an important one.

So we've talked some about body language and how to use our body as an instrument in conveying strong presence. Something that I also think about when I'm thinking about presence, is my mind set. And by that I, for me, at least, and it might be different for other people. I like to get clear on the role that I'm playing and what energy I need to bring to it.

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So I'm thinking about my audience or the person I'm talking to and I'm saying to myself, "How do I need to show up?" You know, what is my mindset about who I am in this situation, so I can really bring the energy that's needed and that will be helpful to whatever the goal is here.

And of course, as a performer, you're thinking about that as well, what role you're playing. How do you think about that? And how do you get your mindset ready to play that role?

Danielle: Mindset is huge. So three suggestions when it comes to mindset.

Kathy: Okay.

Danielle: First and foremost, don't underestimate preparation. And I guess this goes just beyond the mindset. Sometimes you could wing it and you can get lucky with your presentation. But a lot of times you could get unlucky and completely wrong.

So a way to mitigate risk is by simply practicing running your presentation in your own house for your friends, for your family, for your cat, it doesn't matter. Just practice because the more you practice, the more it's in your body, and then your body can relax and you're getting out of your head.

Kathy: Yeah, very true. And getting out of your head is important for another reason, because how you show up should be, to some extent, more about what you want your audience to experience, rather than what you're thinking about yourself.

So when we're in our heads, often we're thinking I need to look important, right? Or authoritative, or commanding, or whatever it is. And that is not necessarily bad, but it has nothing to do with the audience. The role you need to be playing is how the audience needs to see you, right? Versus how you want to see yourself.

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Danielle: Yes, and that actually is a perfect segue into point two, which is cultivating a sense of calm prior to you going on stage. So that could be doing your three point checklist from the ground up.

Kathy: Yeah.

Danielle: That could be some type of meditation, or some simple breathing exercises, or some type of visualization.

Kathy: Yeah. For our listeners, there's a couple of others that I would throw in there as well. Some of you may be familiar with the work of Amy Cuddy, do you know that Danielle? Do you know who she is?

Danielle: I do know her, yes.

Kathy: All right. And so I won't go into all the research that she did, but she definitely says how you're going to feel in terms of your presence has to do with doing little exercises ahead of time.

And she actually recommends, of course, you probably need to go into the bathroom to do this one, but that victory stance where you sort of mimic what runners do when they're crossing the finish line. They have their hands in the air and they're extending them and they're opening themselves up. That's a really great way to, again, prepare yourself, prepare your mindset for going into something.

And then there was a famous English actor, I can't remember who it was. Sir John Gielgud or, anyhow, he used to have this practice, which I've actually used a couple times before going into presentations. And of course, no one can see me while I'm doing this. Before he would go on stage he would put his hands against the wall, he'd extend his arms, and he'd push as hard as he could. So almost like he was pushing the wall down if he could.

And then he do that for about a minute and then he'd just release. And again, that was a great way of putting himself in the right relaxed mindset

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as he came on stage. It took the tension out of his upper body. And that sounds so easy to do, so any of you guys out there who are listening to this, just try that sometime and see what it does to your body.

Danielle: It kind of goes back to this idea of getting into your bodies to get out of your head.

Kathy: Yes, yeah.

Danielle: And you relayed some great techniques or some processes, figure out what works for you. Trial and error, it's going to take some experimentation, and learn your process.

Kathy: Yes.

Danielle: And what you need five minutes before, an hour before, the morning of, the day before, whether it's a workout, or having certain foods. or eating right before or not eating right before, everybody is different. You also may need something at a different time of day if your presentations in the afternoon versus first thing in the morning.

Kathy: Oh yeah, of course.

Danielle: So doing this reflection and a little bit of trial and error to learn what works for you will help give you the confidence to have more presence and power moving forward.

Kathy: Yes. And don't wait until important presentations to figure that stuff out.

Danielle: Exactly.

Kathy: Because in the old days I used to do stuff like that because I just was so worried about my anxiety over doing the presentation, I kept on pushing it off and pushing it off.

And the fact of the matter is, there are plenty of safe spaces to start noticing this stuff, right? There's all the day to day meetings that you have

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one on one with someone or with your team or whatever. These are safe environments, just test the things out a little bit so you can see what works for you or what doesn't work for you.

Danielle: No, you're so right. Yeah, don't wait until the big one. Practice, even if it's at home or with family. We're going into the holiday season, these are also maybe great opportunities to play.

Kathy: Exactly. Okay, so anything else on mindset? Or have we covered all your tips there?

Danielle: No, I think that's it when it comes to mindset for the listeners.

Kathy: Good. So let's talk a little bit about the other side of your work life, The Triangle Sessions. And this is something I really find very intriguing. Again, when I was on your website, I loved this expression that you used, which was wellness with a twist.

It's this great combination, your programs have this great combination of a little fun, some learning, which is also interesting, and something that's good for the body as well. So for listeners, if you check out Danny's website, Danielle's website, and I highly recommend that you do, there are titles like Stretch and Sake, which is some stretching and a Sake tasting, is that what it is? Yeah.

Danielle: That is it, yeah.

Kathy: And Foam Roll and Fizz, which is learning how to do some foam rolling and also, is it champagne?

Danielle: Well, it depends on the price point. So we can do a Prosecco tasting. If it's in your budget, we will absolutely send you a bottle of champagne. Or we could send both and do a side by side tasting.

Kathy: That sounds good to me.

Danielle: Right?

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Kathy: Yeah. And the other one that I really like, although maybe it requires a little more coordination than I have. But it's the terrarium making, you know where a whole team, an entire team gets shipped the materials that they need to create their own terrariums.

Danielle: Yes.

Kathy: So that's really interesting.

Danielle: Yeah, well we basically, rather than just having adults making a succulent terrarium kit, we put together a class that connects self-care with plant care. And fun, it's interactive, we talk about tequila. It's a pretty holistic class, we've hosted it for Google, for Deloitte, for Meta. It's been a best seller the last couple of months.

Kathy: That's great.

Danielle: Yes, no, it's been going well. Maybe I can mention how The Triangle Sessions came to be and why this wacky idea made sense in my mind?

Kathy: Absolutely, that was what I was going to ask you next, yeah. And it's really, you know, how did it come to be? And who are you serving and why? I kind of intuit that from what I saw, but it's a bit of a pivot, right?

Danielle: Yes, so I've been at the Met Opera for the last eight years. I love it, dream job. A catch is that it's not full-time. So every single dancer there has to supplement their income one way or another.

And for me, I worked in corporate wellness, I helped organize corporate retreats. And then when the pandemic hit, that was the end of performing, end of corporate retreats, my husband was in school, it was a disaster. So very quickly I had to figure out how I was going to support myself.

So I initially tried to sell these corporate wellness classes, yoga, stretching, meditation. Early on in the pandemic, nobody wanted them. Nobody cared,

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couldn't sell them at all. And actually now companies are incorporating them more and that side of the business is doing just fine now.

At the time, they only wanted alcohol. They just wanted to drink, they just wanted fun things. So I had to figure out how to combine wellness with some type of alcohol happy hour.

Kathy: I remember those first days of the pandemic.

Danielle: Exactly.

Kathy: There were a lot of happy hours.

Danielle: A lot of happy hours, and those happy hours still exist. But one thing that we pride ourselves on is that yes, we have the wellbeing component where you're learning something and how to take care of your body. So whether it's HR specialists or director of people, they can kind of say box check. But then the employees actually show up because we're shipping them alcohol, or non-alcoholic beverages are an option as well.

Kathy: Yeah.

Danielle: And they enjoy that aspect about learning about what they're drinking. And we'll always do some type of structured social for people to relax, to get to know one another, and really curate an experience to help both remote and hybrid companies capture a sense of morale and camaraderie, and celebrate wellbeing even when they are not in the office.

Kathy: I love that. And that actually is a question that's come up for a lot of the clients that I work with, because they have these remote teams now, which happened during the pandemic and still exist to some extent. And members of the team who have joined while being remote, so some of them have never actually met each other in person yet.

And it's been really difficult for them on their own to create experiences that mimic what the real life experience used to be of, you know, all getting together and going out to dinner or doing some sort of activity in real life.

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And I know you also do activities in real life, but more and more we're existing online. And the question is, how do you create morale and motivation and a sense of connection and wellbeing? That's a pretty tall order to get it all in one.

Danielle: I know, right? But we're working on it. But that is a great question. I think that many companies have hired an individual to be in charge of helping create this culture online. And it's a whole new ballgame, new world out there that everybody is trying to navigate.

Kathy: Yeah.

Danielle: If it's not in your budget or if you want to test the water you could always hire a company, like The Triangle Sessions, to maybe survey or assess what your company wants, what they need, what interests them. And then do some type of monthly or quarterly event to bring people together in the virtual space, almost as a placeholder, but to emulate some type of company culture.

Kathy: Yeah.

Danielle: The flip side, and this is what we're working on now, that nothing beats in person interaction.

Kathy: Yeah.

Danielle: And these remote companies are realizing we have to get together in real life from time to time. Whether it's annually, semi-annually, quarterly, whatever it is.

So now, the flip side to the virtual experiences in the interim is that we are putting together these highly curated retreats or off-sites in desirable destinations.

Kathy: Oh wow.

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Danielle: Yes, we've done one in Nashville. We have one coming up in Charleston, one in Boston. We're waiting for an international one somewhere fabulous, I'll put that out there now,

Kathy: Okay, we're getting the word out. Someone who's listening internationally, you've got to go hire Danielle and The Triangle Sessions.

Danielle: But then putting together these experiences, working with local vendors to really bring together with purpose in real life, while maximizing the authenticity of the location that everybody is visiting.

Kathy: Yeah, wow. So you really have some great ideas for expanding not only the business, but the level of offerings that people can take advantage of.

And, again, one of the things that I think, I don't know if it makes you unique, but I think, certainly think it makes you special is this focus and realization of the fact that a certain amount of body work is an important aspect of this.

Again, particularly in corporate environments where we tend to live in our heads all the time, you know, yeah, alcohol can take us out of our heads. But also it's good to remind ourselves that there are physical practices that we can do, that can take us out of our heads and re-ground ourselves and re-balance ourselves, especially when people are feeling burnt out.

Danielle: Exactly. I can do some stuff, I can't do everything. So I was speaking with a hypnotherapist to try to have her work with a group of remote employees to do some interesting work that way. Also working with a former opera singer who does sound bath and sound therapies.

So trying to then find these people in their specialized fields to come in and host these really unique, cool experiences that do capture wellness for the team members. Which is becoming more of a priority, especially for the younger generation and the incoming workforce. And having that being part of our offerings as well.

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Kathy: Oh, wow. So I'm sitting here and I'm thinking I really have to get one of my current clients to hire you so I can sit in on one of these sessions.

Danielle: Well anytime, Kathy, on the house.

Kathy: Thank you, Danielle. And thanks so much for spending some time with us today. I think it's sort of, I hopefully captured exactly what your sessions do, which is we learned a lot about how to convey presence. But I also had a lot of fun in talking to you.

Danielle: I had fun too, this was great.

Kathy: Yeah, and I hope that we can have you back at some later point in time and hear how things are going with your offerings.

Danielle: Thank you so much, Kathy. And still performing this fall and spring too, at the Met Opera.

Kathy: Oh my gosh, yeah, tell me more about that. Yeah, what are some of the productions you're going to be in?

Danielle: So still have my foot in the door, not ready to retire yet. I will be in Aida both this fall and spring and in Der Rosenkavalier this spring 2023.

Kathy: Oh amazing. So the next time I'm in Manhattan I'm going to have to see if I can attend. I haven't seen Der Rosenkavalier ever before.

Danielle: It's long.

Kathy: Is it long?

Danielle: It's long. It's beautiful but it's long.

Kathy: I'll take a nap that afternoon. Thanks again, Danielle, and take care.

Danielle: Thank you, Kathy.

Well I love both, Danielle's very specific tips on conveying strong presence and her deep understanding of the overall goal. That's to create a space

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where you're both strong and relaxed, so that others gravitate to that space and are focused on you.

If you were listening to this episode while on the go, I encourage you to download the transcript later from our show notes so you can start practicing some of the physical tips right now. I think you'll immediately feel their impact, even though you're just practicing. And in time, they'll just become second nature to you.

And be sure to check out The Triangle Sessions, we're going to put the website link in our show notes. It's quickly becoming the resource of choice for both virtual and in-person team meetings, as all of us are exploring how best to keep our teams motivated and energized, versus unconnected and burnt out.

So our next few episodes we'll shift the focus back to me. But I'll also continue to have guests on the show at least once a month. I'm especially eager to chat with our next guest in a few weeks.

She's a longtime member of the State Department and a highly seasoned and well-traveled diplomat, often working in the front lines of some of the most volatile regions in the world. I bet she has some great tips for us on the power skill of persuasion, as well as how to navigate complex and challenging environments.

Well, that's it for now, guys. Here's to an awesome week ahead for all of you. 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.