MASTERING THE POWER SKILLS
PODCAST

How To Grow Your Credibility and Influence
At Work

TRANSCRIPT

Episode #25: Where Do You Get Your Power?

You are listening to episode 25 of *Mastering The Power Skills.* We all have an intuitive sense of what earns respect and credibility in the workplace, right? Roles, job titles, and experience come to mind. And who our boss is also seems to play a role.

But what if we actually are focusing most of our efforts on the wrong things? What if we're missing out on the more important and even easier ways to grow our power? Join me in this episode to learn more about which sources of power are highly effective and virtually unlimited and which are not.

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 everyone. If you've been following this podcast for a while, you know that we're usually talking about the power skills of influence, persuasion, and presence. In particular, I share some tips, tactics, and strategies so you can grow your own skills and get great results for yourself in the workplace. But every now and then, it's helpful to stand back and remind ourselves why we want to grow these skills in the first place.

Why is power so important to our jobs as leaders? And why are the skills of influence, persuasion, and presence one of the very best ways to empower ourselves? It's especially helpful to ask these questions now because this episode is airing at the start of the year. Many of us are setting the goal of being a better, more effective leader by the end of the year.

And we also like the idea of not just being an effective leader but also feeling that the job is easier and that we feel more comfortable and confident in our capabilities. And I'm absolutely certain, after decades of being in senior leadership roles and in coaching some amazing senior leaders, that the secret to becoming a more effective leader and to experience greater ease and confidence is to work on growing your power.

Now, when I used to say this 10 or 15 years ago, I have to admit that some people looked at me in horror. I had to walk them through this very carefully so they could see the connections, how A led to B, led to C, and finally to the issue of personal power.

Nowadays, so many people get this right away. In fact, they see this as the missing piece, the secret that they knew pulled everything together. They were just waiting for someone to put a name on it and to provide some guidance about how to grow and strengthen it.

In this episode, I'm going to walk you through that roadmap again so you have a super clear understanding of why growing your own power is so important. First, we're going to review what power is in the first place and how it's actually very different from the common understanding of that term.

Second, we're going to explore all the different possible sources of your power. In other words, there are a lot of ways that you can acquire power, but some don't actually help you out too much. If you want to grow your own power, you want to be sure that you're investing more time in the right things versus the things that are limited.

And finally, we're going to talk about how knowing the right sources of power to focus on makes growing your own power a much easier and achievable task than we sometimes think it to be. So let's get going on walking through that roadmap.

Just what is power anyway? Now, if you want a more in-depth exploration of that question, be sure to listen to episode one of *Mastering The Power Skills*. However, for our purposes today, the important thing to remember is that true and effective power is not about command and control. It's not about enforcing a rigid hierarchy. And it's not about the pursuit of self-interest. All these things might be seen as aspects of power, but if they are, then they're symptoms of power being used badly as opposed to true and effective power.

These are all things that end up being ineffective in the long run. They can work in the short term, of course. But ultimately, a price is paid, and there are consequences that undermine that kind of power. It's not something that endures, that is sustainable, and that renews itself over and over again. And I would go even further and say that none of these things are really power at all because, at least in the original meaning of the word, power was defined as something very different.

When we look at the origin of the word, we can trace it back to the Latin word potencia. And the correct translation of that word is to get things done. It's the same root word for our modern words, potential, for example, and potent. In other words, the true meaning of power is that it's kind of neutral. It's the capacity to accomplish things.

Power is a generative force, much like electricity or other sources of energy. With power, things can happen. Without it, nothing much can be accomplished. And the things that we try to do without power are harder, take longer, and are often less effective.

So you can see whenever a person or an organization wants to get things done, when you, for example, want to be effective and make a difference, when you want people to take you seriously and support you, whether you have power or not becomes an absolutely critical question. The more power you have, the more you can make things happen.

So, if that's true, how do we actually acquire and grow our power? Because, of course, we don't magically show up at the workplace with undisputed power. Even CEOs find themselves constrained by the board, by shareholders, by competitors, and of course, in the long term, by the employee population itself.

And, of course, those sorts of constraints are even more true for all of us at the lower levels of organizations.

Well, for all of us, there are basically five sources of power available to us in whatever role we occupy. Let me walk you through that list now, and then I'll explain which ones work the best and which ones are the least helpful.

First, our credentials and expertise give us power. If we're a lawyer or an engineer or have any other area of expertise, for that matter, we come into the organization with a certain degree of power that we can leverage based on our experience and training.

Next is the power that we get from our title and our job description. In a large complex organization, we usually have a defined role in the hierarchy, and that requires other people to at least treat us as if we're empowered by that title.

Thirdly, we're indirectly empowered by the authority of our boss and his or her own place in the hierarchy. There's a reason why so many of us, at one point or another, have told others in the workplace they need to help us out because our boss wants us to do it. When we do that, we're cloaking ourselves with the

power of our boss to get other people to cooperate with us, especially when we ourselves feel we don't have much power at all.

Next, we can be empowered by our teams when we have them. Our ability to get things done is so much greater when we have a good team supporting us. And when we don't have the right team, well, watch out. Things get done too slowly, or they don't get done right, and our own personal reputation and credibility start to suffer. I've had clients tell me that the experience of not having a good team feels like wading through mud, which always has struck me as a great description of the sensation we have when we're losing power.

And then, finally, we have the ability to empower ourselves through the power skills of influence, persuasion, and presence. We'll talk more about that in a few minutes, but I'd like to take notice immediately of one of those things that make the power skills so attractive to me. And that thing is that unlike all of the other sources of power that we've just described, you aren't dependent on someone else giving it to you. A skill, like the power skills, is something that you give yourself. It's not something that others give you or that they gave to you in the past.

So, which of these five sources of power is a weak form of power, and which are strong sources of power? Well, I'm pretty sure you know where I'm going with

this, but let's look at each of them in turn because I think it's helpful in creating some clarity in our mind.

The first two sources of power, your title and your expertise or your credentials, are something we rely on all the time to "prove" that we're worthy of respect and credibility. But the reality is that they are also our weakest sources of power. Now, sure, they're helpful and even foundational to do the work that we do. We wouldn't have gotten the job in the first place if we didn't have these.

But really, all that they do is get us in the door. They give us initial credibility with our peers and with our subordinates, but without other things going for us, they don't get us very far. I suspect everyone listening to this podcast gets that. We've all had the experience of trying to get people to listen to us and falling flat on our faces when we trot out our title or our credentials.

When other people are resistant or unconvinced, our title and our credentials actually mean very little to them. And yet how many people do you know who just keep doubling down on that, even when it's clearly not working for them? It's so painful to watch because they end up losing power and credibility versus gaining it.

The third source of power is your boss. And often, this can be a lot more helpful than your title or your credentials, at least in the short term. If your boss is regarded as powerful and influential, you will usually have a much easier time navigating with peers and other colleagues, and you can get more done. However, this is only true if your boss is, in fact, seen that way. If he or she is seen as weak or ineffective, that's going to cause problems for you as well.

And here's a less obvious reason for not wanting to depend solely on the power of your boss to ease your way. When you're relying on your boss's power, you're not growing your own. And your boss won't always be around. If he or she moves on, you're going to be especially vulnerable because you won't be perceived as having sufficient power and credibility on your own.

The last two categories of power, your team for one, and then your influence, persuasion, and presence skills are by far and away the strongest sources of power available to you. I really can't emphasize that enough. And why is that? It's because, unlike all the other sources of power, these two aren't limited. In fact, they're potentially unlimited.

No matter how good your team is and no matter how good you are with the power of skills, they can always be better. You can always make your team better and better. And you can always make yourself better and better. And what does

that mean in terms of your power? Well, it means your power is never capped. There is no inherent limitation.

Every time you make your team better or your power skills better, your own power always grows as well. It's really the gift that keeps on giving. And you need to be focusing your time and attention on these two areas.

So far, in the *Mastering The Power Skills* podcast, we haven't spent a lot of time talking about how you can grow your power through the means of your team. However, you can look forward to more and more episodes that discuss that topic. And it's truly an awesome thing because when you invest in your team, all boats rise. The team itself becomes more powerful, both as individuals and as a team, and when that happens, you become more powerful. And together, the amount of value and credibility you all have grows and grows.

If you've ever had the privilege of being on or leading a team like that, I can tell you it's one of the most rewarding high points of your career. However, growing your power through your team is time-consuming. And you also may encounter resistance elsewhere in the organization in terms of the hiring of the right talent, the investing in their development.

Now, there are workarounds to these challenges, of course. But the bottom line is that building an amazing team is not always an easy task. But you know what's a lot easier? That's growing your power by working on yourself. The tools of influence, persuasion, and presence are always available to you. And these are the tools that will empower you. They'll enable you to move your valuable ideas forward and create support and alignment around those ideas.

These skills, these tools, they can level the playing field for you when you're in a hierarchy so that you have a voice at the table regardless of where you are in the hierarchy. And as I've said many times before, these skills, the skills of influence, persuasion, and presence don't have to be complicated or challenging.

There are a lot of experts out there who have developed sophisticated and nuanced systems for communicating. And these systems can be great contributions to the thinking on these topics. But the fast pace of the work world makes it highly unlikely that any of us have the time to even learn these systems, much less apply them.

You know, that's why people like me exist. To be honest, I am a nerd at heart. I love studying the domains of neuroscience, linguistics, psychology, and many others so that you and my clients don't have to. I'm on a mission to make life

easier and more effective for us in the work world. And to accomplish that mission, I'm always collecting tips and strategies that meet three criteria.

First, they have to be simple, or else people just won't bother to implement them. Secondly, they have to be highly, and I mean that, highly effective. I never take someone else's word for granted on that. Instead, any tip or strategy that I share with you or others is road-tested multiple times to ensure that it has a high chance of producing the right outcome and a low risk of producing a negative outcome.

And thirdly, they have to be a good fit for who you are. We all want to be natural and authentic in our roles, and there are some tips and strategies that just won't create that feeling for us. That's why I like to share a wide variety of different tips so that you and my clients can choose the one that works best for you.

Now, this doesn't mean that you shouldn't try something out that might scare you or that you feel is too small or insignificant to work. In order to grow our skills and our power, we will always need to test our boundaries a bit and get out of our comfort zone. But in order for that change and growth to be meaningful, in order for you to truly become an extraordinary leader, you should never be using strategies that are in conflict with who you truly are.

Okay, okay, I know I may sound like I'm making a pitch for you to listen to this podcast. And I guess, in fact, I am. But here's the truth, I'm making this pitch because I know for sure that learning influence, persuasion, and presence tips and strategies can make an enormous positive difference in your career.

If you can only choose one means of growing your power, it's by far and away the most effective source. And listening to this podcast is also the easiest path to empowering yourself that you'll ever encounter. These tips are meant to be actionable, and they're free. Just a modest investment of time to listen occasionally during your commute or at lunch.

We've even made it easier for you to move into action on these tips by ensuring that there's a downloadable transcript of all episodes. So what are you waiting for? This is the year you can take your credibility, your impact, and, yes, your power to the next level.

All right, my friends, if you're interested in an infographic on the different sources of power in the workplace, be sure to download the document that we have in our show notes for this episode. In it, we sort of color-code the various sources of power, and we clarify the benefits and limitations of each.

And be sure to join us next week when we discuss a variety of ways to guide and intrigue other people when you have to persuade them to support an idea. Persuasion is actually one of my favorite topics because the payoff and using a few simple strategies here and there can be enormous. And if that's an interest of yours as well, you don't want to miss this next episode. But for now, I hope you have an awesome week ahead. And I'm looking forward to you joining us in our next episode.

Hey there, would you like some personal guidance about how to use the power skills of influence, persuasion, or presence on a particular situation in your workplace? Well, if so, we've got your back. Just send us a note explaining your situation to powerskills@significagroup.com. We'll drop that email address in the show notes. We'll feature your inquiry in an upcoming episode, keeping your identity anonymous, of course, and make sure you have some tips and strategies to help you navigate your particular situation skillfully.

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.