



## TRANSCRIPT

### Episode # 30: Bad-Fit Roles and How to Avoid Them

You are listening to episode 30 of *Mastering The Power Skills*. Did you know that according to an article last fall in the Wall Street Journal up to 75% of people who left their old jobs for new jobs in 2022 were having second thoughts or even regretted their decision?

Whether you're contemplating a job move now or sometime in the distant future, you definitely don't want this to be happening to you. Join us in this episode and I'll explain how you can use a different approach to the job search and interview process, one that dials down the risk of landing a bad-fit role and dials up the likelihood of a new role that you can flourish in.

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. You might be wondering why the topic of good-fit and bad-fit roles are in a podcast about power and the power skills of influence, persuasion, and presence. But, here's how I see it: anytime there's a need to create greater clarity, a need to make it easier for people to see and understand each other, a need to avoid major misunderstandings, the skills of influence, persuasion, and presence are valuable tools. Used properly these skills get us all aligned and on the same page.

And if there ever was a process in the work world where there was an obvious need for greater clarity and understanding, it's in the arena of job search and interviewing. I mean, we all know that, don't we? We've all been job candidates, and many of us have been decision-makers as well in the hiring process. And we've all experienced those head-scratching moments when we're saying to ourselves, "What the heck is going on here? Why can't this work better?"

Now, I'm not equipped to improve the entire field of job search, there are many better-qualified experts in that arena who continue to work on that goal. But I have been giving a lot of thought to a particular corner of that arena, and that's the issue of bad-fit and good-fit roles.

It's been top of mind for me for two reasons, actually. First, the number of people landing in bad-fit roles seems to be increasing. For example, Statista recently observed that at least 26% of those who left their jobs last year for new ones actually regretted their decision.

And that Wall Street Journal article that I mentioned in the intro to this episode certainly suggests the number is or will be much higher. After all, when these surveys get done, many new hires are still in their honeymoon period and they're kind of in denial about the warning signs they might be seeing. Those signs start to emerge and get picked up by the surveys later.

But an even more compelling reason why I've been thinking about the issue is because I've personally been seeing it up close in real-time for at least five years or more now. I've heard from former clients who took new jobs and are beginning to wonder, or sometimes they are actually convinced that they made a bad decision.

And I've seen current clients who have hired in promising new people, only to see that new talent fail to deliver on their anticipated value when they turned out not to be a good fit for the organization. The issue of bad-fit job moves is a very real and all too frequent phenomenon in the workplace for both employers and employees alike.

So if you know me, you also know that I hate to see unnecessary pain and lack of alignment in the workplace. It's not good for us as people and it's not good for the organization. When I see a problem like good-fit or bad-fit in hiring, I can be a bit relentless in tracking down what is causing that problem. And also kind of relentless in generating ideas to reduce it.

So let me walk you through the three questions I asked myself to get a better handle on how my clients can reduce the risk of bad-fit jobs and increase the likelihood of good-fit roles.

So, the first question is, what are we talking about in the first place when we say something is a bad-fit role? Because if you're a smart and talented person it's not as if you're walking into an obvious problem, in fact, many times the opportunity seems like your dream job.

It's a named company or it's in an industry where you've always wanted to work. Or the role appears to give you the chance to make a difference or to have an impact in the way you've always wanted. But then, after those first few heady months in the job, some dark clouds or warning signs start to appear.

Somehow you're finding it hard to align with the culture or with a particular key stakeholder, maybe even your boss. Or people are acting strangely reluctant about the changes you were asked to lead. Or you realize that you're lacking the team or the resources required to deliver the results that are now expected of you. And the adverse consequences to you start to mount.

You normally take pride in handling roles that other people find stressful, but the stress in this role is beyond your expectations. For the first time in your career, you're finding it hard to convince other people of your good judgment and your value. And you're struggling to achieve and deliver what's always come easily for you before.

And this is the point when you start asking yourself, how did I miss these signs during the interview process? Or were there any signs at all? Because after all, you probably asked all the right questions and did your due diligence, well, at least as much as you could. And the search firm was there to facilitate the match, right? And it's unlikely that your new company was trying to deceive you.

So what happens next? Well, your confidence and your normally good insight and judgment is starting to get shaken. You've started to lose a little trust in yourself, and also you're pondering what do you do now. Each day

that you stay is a reminder that things didn't go to plan. It's another day where your energy and drive continue to decline, where you're not you.

But leaving now is also a concern, of course. How will you get your career trajectory back on track? And how will you explain the detour you took in a way that doesn't reflect on your judgment?

So, I don't mean to be raining on everybody's parade, but that's a pretty accurate summary of what a bad-fit position is and the career conundrum that it puts you in. And, let's be honest, once you're in a bad-fit position, the skills of influence, persuasion, and presence are not going to solve your problem for you. Sure, they can make things more productive and less frustrating, but the real solution to a true bad-fit situation is to find a new opportunity somewhere else.

So, let's go onto the second question that I asked myself, which is, how does this happen in the first place? How do smart, talented people end up in this situation? Now, if you listen to some experts, they put the blame on the job candidate. They argue that bad-fit roles don't happen when you do your due diligence during the interviewing process. But that doesn't make sense to me, and I bet it doesn't make sense to you either.

Instead, it's more likely that the typical interview process is not designed to make it easy for anyone to see these issues clearly, whether they're the job candidate, the hiring company, or the search firm. I mean, think about it, you're approached by, or working already with, a search firm. The person you're working with has his or her attention split among numerous candidates and numerous client companies.

How deeply can they get to know what makes you tick? How deeply are they going to understand the internal interpersonal dynamics of the hiring company, its politics and its culture? That search person may or may not be savvy, but they have limited time and motivation to do deep dives. For the most part, they are simply brokering a transaction, really.

Yet you're highly reliant on that person to describe you accurately to the hiring company. And you're also highly reliant on that person to describe the hiring company to you. You've effectively outsourced a great deal of your due diligence to a third party. And it's a third party who has a limited understanding of you.

So, as a result, you're hoping to get some good clues about the fit of the hiring company when the interview process actually starts. But again, think about it, most people tend to be on their best behavior during this stage, whether they're the job candidate or someone in the hiring company. And people tend to hold their cards close to their chests, whether rightly or

wrongly. They tend to avoid discussing their own quirks or the quirks of the company.

So this is the point where people say to me, well, what about doing your own external due diligence, then? And yes, that can be helpful if you're lucky enough to have people in your network with accurate inside knowledge of the hiring company. But how often is that the case for most of us? And in any event, you're probably going to be cautious about talking to too many people who are outside the search and interview process because, after all, you don't want word getting back to your current employer too soon.

So what happens next? Well, if you're like a lot of people, you hope that the longer the process goes on, the more insight you're going to develop on whether there are any hidden red flags that would make this a bad-fit opportunity. But that's likely wishful thinking because suddenly, things start to accelerate and often you get an offer before you have any real certainty.

Now you're facing a deadline, with very little time to really dig deep on the fit issue. So, instead, you ended up being the optimistic, high achiever you've always been. It looks good, it feels good, and you trust your gut. You decide to go for it, after all, a lot of other people would see this as a dream job. And things have never gone wrong for you before, so why should they go wrong now?



I hope this walkthrough of the typical job search and interview process really gives you a feel for what a challenge it can be to spot the red flags of a bad-fit opportunity. The process is simply just not designed to make that easy for you, no matter how bright and insightful you already are.

So let's move on now to the third question that I asked myself. How can you greatly minimize the risk of ever landing a bad-fit role? How do you avoid being one of the 75%, who the Wall Street Journal says either are having second thoughts or who actually regret having left their original job?

Well, I think I've developed a short but powerful process that helps people do just that. Over the past three years or so I've been testing it out on former and current clients, and the feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. Here are some of the actual comments that I got back.

“It gave me clarity on what are good-fit opportunities, and the ability to express that in a compelling way.” Or here's another comment, “It made it easier for the right employers to see the real me.” Someone else said, “It energized me and it made me show up better in interviews.” And a fourth person said, “It gave me greater ease and confidence in navigating the interview process.”

So, as you can imagine, I'm very pleased with the outcome and the fact that I can now provide my coaching clients with meaningful support in assessing whether a new opportunity will be a good fit for them. And just as an aside, we've also decided not to limit this program, this process that we've developed to simply our one on one coaching clients.

We're going to take the experience that we've gotten from this, and we're going to turn it into an online program that anyone can take. In that program, I'll teach participants step by step exactly how they can attract good-fit opportunities versus bad. And they'll receive plenty of coaching and personalized feedback as they put together their personal strategies.

It doesn't matter if they're currently looking for a job or simply think they will be doing so at some later point in their careers. The goal for the program, the online course, is to give them a repeatable process. One that they can use to optimize their opportunities for years to come over the entirety of their careers.

Given how many other specialized programs that we're developing this year, this particular online program probably won't be offered until later, likely September of this year. However, if that sounds like something that would interest you, you can send me an email to ask to be put on the waiting list. I'll then send you further details once we pin down the dates.

You can email me at [info@significagroup.com](mailto:info@significagroup.com). And we'll also include that email in the show notes for this episode, so you can get it there. And that email again is info, I-N-F-O, @significagroup.com. However, you can also keep on listening to this current episode because I'm going to give you some guidance that will help you if you're going to be in the running for a new job or a new role before September of this year.

Now, there's not enough time in this podcast to cover all the material in the course, and I obviously can't give you the hands-on feedback and coaching that's included with that course. But I can give you the basic essentials of this process so that you can create your own roadmap if you aren't going to have the opportunity to take the course.

So the core concept is this, instead of having the issue of good fit being something that gets sniffed out towards the final stages of the interview process, what if it gets defined at the beginning of the process in a professional way that showcases the candidate is someone who is valuable and interesting?

Defining good fit early on means all the conversations become clearer and focused, and the risk of misunderstanding is greatly decreased. Defining what good fit means early on also results in candidates who are more

confident and energized, and who thus both attract a greater percentage of right-fit opportunities and then show up strong when they're in interviews for those opportunities.

So what's step number one? It's to identify what makes you unique and special. In our online program, we'll have a step-by-step process that helps each person do that, along with plenty of examples from other people to help guide and inspire the participants in the course.

We look at this issue of uniqueness through many different lenses. But perhaps the most important lens we use is a concept of value. All of us are special in the particular value we can contribute and how we deliver that value. In fact, if I were to interview the people who work with you now, I could quickly deduce your special value and the manner in which you deliver it. Yet, for some reason, we ourselves often struggle to see that value in ourselves.

In fact, I often have very smart and insightful clients who are really surprised at what other people see as their unique and special value. And I can only guess as to why that is, but my guess is that often what makes us valuable comes so easily to us that we just kind of take it for granted. It's nothing special to us, but it is something special to others.

Now, here's the problem. The problem with not being able to see your own value is if you can't see it, you can't articulate that clearly to others. That means you're going to struggle to articulate that clearly during interviews, or when you're positioning yourself for a promotion. So in the online course we'll be offering, we have several fun exercises that really help you dial this in and get very clear on what your value is.

But you don't have to do those exercises to at least start getting clearer in your own head about what your value is, you can do your own research. My favorite way is to talk to a variety of people who know you, at least say, four to five. And ask them to tell you what are the one or two things, and I'm serious here, just one or two things that make you especially effective in your current role.

You're probably going to see a theme emerge that will help you better identify and express your value. And once you begin to get clearer on that value, you'll want to be able to express it in a clear, attractive, and compelling way. I have a formula that you can use to do that.

And if you're interested in getting that formula, check out the show notes for this episode to download a PDF that I put together for you. It's called, **What Do You Do Is A Trick Question**, kind of a catchy title, right? And it includes some good advice on how to get better at identifying and expressing your value to others.

Step number two in this process of identifying and articulating what is a good fit for you is similar to figuring out your unique value, but this time you focus on the type of environments where you do your best work. Again, we have some exercises in the course that help you get very clear on that. But as we're talking now, notice that when I mentioned that, I said, "What is a good fit environment for you?"

I'm not talking about the environments that you enjoy the most. When you get overly focused on that, you run a much greater risk of getting into a bad-fit situation. Just because a work atmosphere is pleasant, doesn't mean that you will have the impact and influence that you need to do satisfying work and to make the difference that you want to make.

In fact, a culture that is overly focused on niceness can end up being very dysfunctional. There's actually a statistically higher chance of lack of accountability in the organization, or lack of trust, and a higher rate of passive-aggressive dynamics. Someday I'll talk more about why this is so in a future episode of this podcast.

But the bottom line is very clear, if you're a high achieving talented leader, you're often going to feel frustrated, and thwarted even, in an environment

that is overweighted in the direction of niceness and “I say we are all family here,” those sorts of companies.

Even if those phrases sound very attractive, those sorts of companies have the highest percentage of new employees that have second thoughts about having joined them. That’s why it’s very important to get objective on what criteria need to be in place in an organization for you to do your best work. In environments like that, you’re going to flourish, you’re going to feel energized, and you’ll be recognized for the value that you have.

Now for step three, you’ve done the work of identifying what makes you unique and special. And you’ve done the work of identifying the environment where you do your best work. Now, how do you put that together in a tool that will help you during the search and interview process?

In the online program that we’re developing, we’ll be sharing a special one-page template that tells you what to put in each paragraph. It’s a formula I developed for my coaching clients that takes what makes you special and turns it into a compelling and attractive story. The story shows what makes you interesting, but it does it in a very professional and low-key way. So it doesn’t sound salesy or self-promotional at all.

Now, each client's story is unique, of course, but I've collected plenty of sample one-pagers to inspire my coaching clients. We've also developed a menu of sample phrases and words so that they can pick the ones that most accurately describe them, versus using all the old, tired cliches we often see in resume after resume.

The result is a document that is very polished and compelling. I'll be providing the same resources to you if you end up taking the online program later this year. Plus, in that program, you'll have coaching support. However, if you need to get started sooner, the concept is still one that you can apply to yourself.

What you should do is look at the entire arc of your career to date and identify the common themes as to who you are, what you do, and how you do it. So ask yourself questions like, why did I make the decisions I made at key points in my career? Or ask yourself, what's the one thing that always motivates me? Or also ask yourself, what type of challenges most appeal to me?

In your one-pager, you're going to tell your story by talking about the themes that show up in your answers to those questions I just mentioned. You'll also weave in the work you did on your unique value and the types of environments where you do your best work.



**What you don't do is make your story all about your many credentials and experiences. Sure, you want to mention the most important ones. But use only some of them and use them more as illustrations for your story and the themes about what makes you you, not as the main topic.**

**There are going to be lots of opportunities for people to check out your credentials. During the interview process, it's an endless routine of doing that. Your resume and the info that the search firm compiles on you are going to take care of that in abundance. But a resume is merely a glorified list, it's not a story.**

**And a story is what brings you to life and helps other people see you more clearly. A story is what attracts good-fit opportunities. And a story dials down the risk of you being presented with bad-fit opportunities.**

**So, finally, let's move on to step number four. How do you use this one-pager to attract those good-fit opportunities, and also to elevate yourself above the competition when those opportunities come your way? Well, there are so many fun ways to do this. And in the online course, we'll be sharing all those various strategies with you.**

**In particular, we're going to talk about the role of search firms in the process, and how you can use this document to get your fair share of control over the narrative about you. Now, search firms are a valuable player in the process and I have the highest respect for them.**

**In fact, some of you may know that I spent time at Spencer Stewart in their leadership advisory division, where I consulted on CEO succession and other leadership assessment and development issues with the rest of my colleagues. It was a great experience because I got to see the inside of how a search firm operates, and what that means for candidates and for client companies.**

**However, the typical search process often inadvertently gives the search firm most of the control over the narrative of who the candidates are and whether this is a good-fit opportunity for them. And when I say it's necessary for you to get your fair share of control over that narrative, I mean I want you to be the primary storyteller, not just the person who supplies pieces of data to the search firm.**

**And you need to become the primary storyteller early on in the process, otherwise, the risk of misunderstanding between you and the hiring company increases. And when that happens, the risk of a bad fit increases as well. So you can think of it this way, it's like a game of telephone where people pass a message along from one to another. The chances that the**

information will get distorted or shaded in some way substantially increases, no matter how diligent and well-intended the players are.

And that's what can happen time and time again in the search and interview process. If you're lucky, the misunderstanding gets cleared up before you accept an offer. But if it doesn't, then the probability that you end up in a bad-fit role goes up.

The strategies for using in your one-page story when a search firm is involved are too time-consuming to share here, but at the very least you should share your one-pager with the firm, the search firm, at the same time that you provide your resume.

And here are two other tips for using your one-pager. First, consider revising the introduction section of your resume and also consider revising the about section of your LinkedIn profile so they are more consistent with your story. And secondly, use your one-pager to prep for your interviews. It will help you be more focused and appealing in your responses, and it will also help you identify what questions you want to be asking as you figure out whether this opportunity is truly a good fit for you or whether, in fact, it might be a potential bad fit that you want to avoid.

So, there you have it, not only do you hopefully have a better understanding of what bad-fit roles look like and how they can happen even to smart and talented people like you, but you also have a sense of the process that you can use to avoid a bad-fit role and to greatly increase the chance of a good-fit role.

And, of course, if you're interested in learning this process and all the strategies in-depth, along with the templates I've developed, I highly encourage you to check out the online course that we'll be offering. It covers many more tips and strategies than I can include in a podcast. It has lots of those templates and examples that I talked about that can guide you and inspire you. And there's plenty of opportunity for personal coaching and feedback as you develop your own unique story and strategy.

Again, we probably won't be offering that program until September, but you can get on the waiting list now and we'll send you more details when they become available. Just check out the show notes for this podcast and you'll see the email address to get on the waiting list. But, for now, I hope you all have an awesome week ahead and I'll see you all in our next episode.

Hey there, would you like some personal guidance about how to use the power skills of influence, persuasion, or presence in 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](mailto: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](http://www.significagroup.com).