



Working Together

to innovate, influence and win

with
Debbe Kennedy

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WORKING TOGETHER PODCAST SERIES with Debbe Kennedy

Helping You Put Differences to Work to Innovate, Influence and Win

Boosting Success with Leadership Sponsors

Developing support for change is, at best, guided by a well thought-out process. But make no mistake; its *success* is driven by *influence*—*influence* that reaches inside your organization and the people in it. It is *influence* that sometimes is inspiring, sometimes persuasive, most often quiet.

Since leaders and sponsors play a significant role in setting the tone and are catalysts for mobilizing change, it is important to figure out how to reach them. To assist you in your ongoing learning and practice, here's a summary of ideas shared in **Boosting with Leadership Sponsors**:

1. **Appeal to the pragmatist.** You can go farther faster with a practical approach than with an emotional appeal for diversity and inclusion. Use facts and figures to help enlighten your leaders and sponsors. Build your case by first pointing out current realities in your environment. Select data from organizational surveys, feedback received, demographics or the facts that most relate to the bottom-line. Use stories or situations to bring the need for change to life. Search back issues of well-known publications to find supporting information and articles that support your premise. Use examples of what others are doing. Pique interest with facts and information and a few practical recommendations how your leaders can help.
2. **Know what you want.** Engaging leaders and sponsors is easier if you clearly know what you want from them. Unfortunately, more often the approach is to take *problems* to the leader or sponsor, begging for help. To get the help you need means doing your homework. Think through your mission, purpose and specifically what you want. Spend enough time that you feel sure and confident. Make your appeal one no one would want to turn down.
3. **Seek acceptance from those with clout and influence.** To move your message of change will require the engagement of people of influence. They may not initially be people who are advocates for the cause. They may just be people who can get things done. More important is finding and engaging leaders and sponsors who have

connections and who you know are achievers—individuals who are what they say and do what they say. Once you have found the right people, your job is to educate them and persuade them to help. Advice and counsel and involvement from people of influence in your organization or community can make a big difference in accelerating the momentum for acceptance of your new idea, program or initiative.

4. **Use leaders and sponsors for impact.** This means your wish list should be refined down to one or two high-leverage actions that will ignite energy into your initiative(s). Omit any requests that can be done by someone else in the organization. Keep your wish list short, with only a couple of seemingly simple and compelling requests. The success of a few easy-to-execute actions will fuel the next phase of your initiative. Leaders and sponsors will be glad to identify themselves with a successful initiative, especially if their initial contributions made a difference. This step-by-step approach with leaders and sponsors is effective, because it is built on simple actions they can take that have a big influence. Leaders and sponsors are more likely to help when they can see its value. This approach helps build trust, interest, conviction and confidence.
5. **Use your influence.** *Who, me?* Yes, you! Here's a technique: Arrange for a brief appointment with the leader(s) or sponsor(s) you need most. A 20–30 minute meeting or portion of a meeting may be just enough time to gain initial buy-in. The following outlines a sample dialogue sequence for your first meeting with an individual leader/sponsor. It also works well for a presentation with an entire team of leaders: 1) "We have some issues where we need your help." 2) "They are important enough to our organization that we have outlined a few proposed next steps and a couple of specific ways you can have a big impact. We would like to briefly walk you through the situation and our proposed plan of action." 3) "We are interested in what you think and would like to benefit from your insights—and we would welcome your support." Present your case. Remember—most people like to help; this approach works far better than one with a more accusatory or telling tone.

Like other relationships, building understanding, acceptance and ownership for a new idea, program or initiative among leaders and sponsors takes time and ongoing nurturing. Also, like other phases of change, it takes a perpetual cycle of action to shore up support and keep momentum alive.

Your feedback, experiences and questions are welcomed and encouraged! You can write to me at workingtogether@globaldialoguecenter.com. Your ideas and stories will be used in future programs.

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