

Quadrant II Newsletter

Research shows that the difference between leaders who derail in their career and those that soar to great heights is social skills. Social skills appear in the second quadrant of Stephen R. Covey's Importance-Urgency matrix: social skills are important to a career but not urgent (Covey is author of the top-selling business book *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*). Quadrant II provides an opportunity for business and technical professionals to learn and try out new social skills based in science.

8Jun2016, author: Valerie Patrick, PhD, *How Context Helps Your Career*

Quotable (*Key Message*)

The power of context, through the technique of framing, allows you to express disagreement in the workplace without penalty to your career.

Quantify (*The Science*)

A representative from VitalSmarts (<https://www.vital-smarts.com/>) presented some of their recent research results at the Association for Talent Development 2016 Annual Conference and Exposition (see session TU204 at http://www.atdconference.org/?_ga=1.70492048.1059720401.1462369507). The research involved close to 8000 participants across gender and cultures. Participants were asked to view videos of people in a workplace situation.

In the first study, the videos involved each a man and a woman, judged to be similarly attractive, expressing disagreement in a team meeting. In the videos, three different levels of disagreement in terms of forcefulness or emotional arousal were portrayed by each the man and the woman while the script remained the same. Participants were asked to rank the person expressing

disagreement in terms of career potential. The results showed that there was a career penalty for both the man and the woman but the penalty was larger for the woman than for the man for all three levels of forcefulness. The career penalty, as expected, increased with increasing level of forcefulness for both the man and the woman. The interpretation was that society in general is quicker to label a woman as angry and out-of-control than a man because of the stereotype that women are nurturing.

VitalSmarts was interested in exploring ways for women to appear strong in the workplace without violating social expectations. Therefore, they conducted a second study in which they explored the use of framing as a technique. Framing is a form of cognitive bias, in which people react to a particular choice in different ways depending on how it is presented. For their study, VitalSmarts looked at three different frames: a behavior frame, a value frame, and an inoculation frame. The behavior frame is about first letting people know what you are about to do before expressing your disagreement. The value frame is about first expressing why you are about to express your disagreement. Finally, the inoculation frame is a prompt that reminds others about gender bias, whether conscious or not. VitalSmarts found that frames are equally effective for men and women. In addition, the inoculation frame was the most effective, followed by the values frame and then the behaviors frame.

Qualify (*Put into Practice*)

Try using framing the next time you need to make a strong statement of disagreement or dissatisfaction in a group work setting. For a woman needing to express a strong statement of disagreement or dissatisfaction in a group work setting, preface your remarks with one of the following examples of behavior, value and inoculation frames:

- Behavior frame: “I’m going to express my opinion very directly and I’ll be as specific as possible.”
- Value frame: “I see this as a matter of honesty and integrity.”
- Inoculation frame: “I know it is risky for a woman to speak this aggressively, but I’m going to express my opinion very directly and I’ll be as specific as possible.”

Men can also use these same frames with a slight modification to the inoculation frame such as: “I know it’s risky for me to speak this aggressively....” It may be easiest to start with the behavior frame and then work your way up to the most effective inoculation frame. Remember that the inoculation frame has been found to be the most effective in minimizing any career penalty associated with strong disagreement for both men and women.

Quip (*Fun*)



When we say framing, we are not talking about making a framed picture of someone as Gerda (played by Alicia Vikander) does here of Lili (played by Eddie Redmayne) in the Danish Girl - we’re talking about providing context before you speak.

Quest (*Resources*)

Dr. Valerie Patrick, author of the *Competent Collaborator* blog and host of the *Science of Success: Social Secrets* podcast, is a thought leader in the science and practice of human interaction in the workplace. Dr. Patrick has also written numerous white papers on creativity, social skills for career success, collaboration, change management, innovation, and environmental sustainability. During her 25-year corporate career and now as President of Fulcrum Connection LLC, Dr. Patrick delivers speeches that are inspirational, entertaining, and thought-provoking. Some of the topics Dr. Patrick has spoken on include women in leadership, collaboration, creativity, innovation, high-performance teamwork, and environmental sustainability. Contact Valerie at 412-742-9675 or valerie.patrick@fulcrumconnection.com to discuss upcoming speaking needs.

Fulcrum Connection LLC believes that barriers to working together can be eliminated. To do this, Fulcrum studies and applies behavioral and cognitive science to our products and services (see www.fulcrumconnection.com).

Listen to the interview with Beatrice Briggs in Episode 16 of “Science of Success: Social Secrets” podcast here:

<http://scienceofsuccess.libsyn.com/podcast>. Also available on iTunes and Stitcher Radio and all are comments welcome and encouraged!

See also the latest *Competent Collaborator* blog post called “The Art of Truth-Seeking through Consensus” here: <http://fulcrumconnection.com/blog/art-truth-seeking-consensus/>.

About Fulcrum Connection LLC

Fulcrum Connection specializes in instructional design, training, speaking, facilitation and consulting to develop skills in leadership, innovation, sustainability, troubleshooting teamwork, and managing technical professionals.