

## The Big Cat—Effective Strategies\*

“The Big Cat” focuses on the challenge of dealing with the Big Cats in our professional lives. It is a challenge because our skills have to be practiced and our definition of success sophisticated. At the same time, dealing with cats is a fine opportunity because once their loyalty is gained, that loyalty is often greater than a “dog’s” loyalty; and besides, they will kill our rats. Their loyalty is worth the effort required to foster a working relationship with cats...even the big cats.

First, a summary of some *Charisma* strategies, then some advanced strategies. For most of us, dealing with the cat is both a challenge and an opportunity.

### Charisma Strategies

We use the strategies found in this book, namely:

#### **Two-point vs. Three-point Communication** (page 76)

If the content is positive, then making eye contact is fine (two-point). If the content is volatile, then looking and pointing at the information on a paper is suggested (three-point). However, even if you offer the information in the third point format, the larger issue is how to get the cat to consider you as worthy enough to offer.

#### **Catnip: Pause and Look Intelligent** (page 54)

Since cats are attracted to quality, the more intelligent you appear to the cat, the more likely it is that you will have

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permission to offer the third point communication. To appear intelligent to the cat, do the following:

1. When listening and you are standing, keep your forearms in one of the following three postures:
  - both forearms at your side,
  - or both forearms parallel to the ground (optional: lightly clasping your fingers in front of your waist),
  - or a combination of one forearm at your side and the other parallel to the ground.
2. When talking via third point with volatile information, pause frequently with a frozen hand gesture. Keep your head, lips, and gesture still until you are ready to speak again.

Pause and Look Intelligent mesmerizes the cat. Since the cat doesn't know why he is attracted to your delivery, he is even more intrigued... and cats love to be intrigued.

### **Profiling** (page 69)

Telling a cat something about himself that is not public knowledge intrigues the cat. This is especially true when the level of insight is mental habits and thinking styles. The cat internally muses, "Well, if you know this about me, what else do you know that you are not telling me that would be helpful?" The cat is very interested in improvement. If you are a source of insights that result in the cat's improvement, you could be given the key to the cat's city.

### **Decision-making Process** (page 39-45)

Recognize the phase that the decision-making process is in and adopt a physiology that is appropriate. During the

gathering phase, be more dog, flight attendant, and approachable, and use two-point communication. During the evaluating and deciding phases, shift your non-verbals to cat, pilot, and credible, and use three-point communication. This will keep you as a valuable contributor throughout the process.

### **Calibration** (page 72)

Adapt the cat's style. Cats don't like softeners such as *may*, *might*, *could*, *perhaps*. Cats don't have time for tap dancing. Say what you mean and mean what you say. And for heaven's sake, get rid of wanting to be liked. Realize that the cat doesn't have to like you for your interactions to be effective. As a university president once remarked, "If you want approval, get a puppy."\*

At the same time, recognize when the cat is showing a crack in his credible veneer and match it by being a pinch more vulnerable. Yet, don't be surprised when the cat suddenly slams the door to his sanctuary.\*\*

### **Linguistic Neuro** (page 77)

When you need information that is not forthcoming, make several statements that could be the information you need. Pause after each statement. The statement that the cat reacts to is the door that has powerful information behind it.

## **Advanced Strategies**

### **Congruency** (page 60)

Dogs and small cats respond well to the strategies just mentioned. Big cats disdain "gimmick strategies" unless they

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\*Walker p. 46

\*\*A great scene in "The Devil Wears Prada" illustrates this point.

are done with high congruency and great comfort. Congruence is displayed with our control of our own non-verbals, our non-blinking delivery, and emotional comfort as evidenced by our abdominal breathing.

### **Focus on Yourself**

Essential to successfully working with a big cat is resisting our urge to control, manage, or change the cat—an improbable task. Instead, we focus on controlling, managing, and changing our self. For example, we control when and where we look. We control our voice pattern, our posture, and our gestures. Most importantly, we control our breathing; we stay relaxed. The extent to which we can control our self determines how likely it is that we will be able to influence the cat.

### **“Eyes Wide Open” (page 61)**

To operate with the big cat, we have to modify the axiom, “Use a third point when delivering volatile news.” Cats want us to look them right in the eye and say what needs to be said.” The cat is impressed when we do eyeball-to-eyeball communication with congruency—without blinking. Here why.

The average human blinks six to eight times a minute when talking. Typically, humans blink to access the next set of words/concepts they want to say. By memorizing what we want to say ahead of time, we increase our ability to deliver a message with our eyes wide open. The cat won’t consciously know why it is impressed with you, and that delightfully fascinates the cat. Hey, a real cat sleeps 20 hours a day—our congruency wakes the cat up. You have something that the cat can’t identify but wants, and that makes the cat even more intrigued.

There are some sophisticated byproducts of the non-blinking technique. (Oh, how cats love anything that has the word, “sophisticated” associated with it.)

1. We mentioned previously that the frozen hand gesture during a pause kinesthetically holds the listener’s attention and that moving the gesture during the pause detracts from the quality of the message. A blink is the visual equivalent of the gesture moving during the pause. Learn to keep your eyes open when talking to a cat.
2. The cat seeks the highest level of development possible. Competition helps the cat to such heights. Cats sharpen their own tools by engaging with high quality opponents. This explains why trial attorneys can go head-to-head with each other in court and then afterwards socially go out with each other. At a boxing match, during the introduction the two fighters are nose to nose as the referee recites the rules. Neither boxer blinks. Keeping your eyes open is interpreted by the cat as, “This is a worthy opponent.”

### **Abdominal Breathing** (page 57)

We know we are comfortable when we breathe low. What might be the reason for us not breathing low? Usually, high breathing shows a lack of permission with our self. Most of our interactions with reality are a reflection of our inner reality. How much permission do I give myself when using the various strategies? If I am breathing high/shallow when using the strategies, my permission with myself is low. Literally, I am negotiating with myself in front of the cat; I am asking myself, “Am I really comfortable doing this? Have I stretched myself too far outside my comfort zone?” When I breathe high/shallow, the cat may well be reacting

to my own incongruence instead of responding to the strategy. Cats have a good nose for smelling uncertainty; our ambivalence allows the cat to eat us for breakfast.

To increase our ability to breathe low and keep our eyes wide open, we rehearse what we want to say ahead of time. We practice several variations ahead of time so our flexibility will be greater.

We need to understand the mechanics of abdominal breathing. When you are breathing abdominally, notice how the *exhalation* elongates. When you are breathing from high in the chest, notice how the *inhalation* elongates. By practicing how to breathe abdominally with an emphasis on exhalation, you will prepare yourself for future situations with cats. Why does this work? It's because the needs optimum oxygen to function at its highest level. With plenty of oxygen, we are more relaxed, able to listen, think, and respond. Besides the benefits to ourselves that abdominal breathing provides, there is an effect on big cats—the cat will be duly impressed with us. It is our new sense of confidence that the cat respects.

You can practice abdominal breathing by lying on the floor, back against the wall, and bending over like athletes do during timeouts.

Having experienced abdominal breathing in a structured posture, the trick is to maintain this breathing while upright, while talking, and while moving. By holding one forearm parallel to the floor with your hand in front of your mid section, you'll notice that each expansion and contraction of the abdomen pushes the forearm farther away or closer to the body. Feeling your forearm move is a feedback system indicating you are breathing low.

Another suggestion is to stand in front of a mirror and see what abdominal breathing looks like. Abdominal breathing isn't the most flattering view of oneself (so much for vanity), but accepting a slight paunch is a small price to pay for effectively working with a cat. Truthfully, the cat won't notice.

### **Ask a Question**

When interacting with a cat that is your superior, it is wiser to ask a question than to make a statement. Sometimes we find ourselves in a situation where the boss is about to implement a decision without having all the pertinent information. Yet you wonder if the boss is receptive to necessary information—things you know that he doesn't know. To increase the boss' openness to information, you have to access the cat's values. For example, if the boss values prestige then, "We certainly can carry out that decision. The larger concern is if enough information has been gathered to insure that this decision will add to your reputation rather than detract."

An example of answering a question is the scene from "The King and I" where one of the king's wives approaches the English school teacher and informs her that foreign dignitaries are coming and the king would appreciate assistance on how to appear modern. The teacher replies, "Oh, so he wants me to tell him how to act." The wife rushes to reply, "It must not sound like that."

### **Asking Questions that Access the Cat's Values**

Instead of making statements that the cat can dismiss, offer structured questions. The structure accesses the cat's highest held values. Structure the question so that the cat is in a bind with herself.

For example, Sally has eight people who report to her. She is about to launch a project that would have three of these subordinates working side-by-side. On a “competency” level the teaming makes sense. However, you know that the dynamics will likely be troublesome. You know that one of Sally’s highest values is her belief that because she has been with the company longer than anyone else, she knows how to be successful. You might structure your question, “Sally, you have formed more teams than anyone else in the company. What, *besides competency*, is needed to make a team operate successfully?”

Your question does two things. First, you have hooked her into her pride of experience with the wording, “. . .formed more teams than anyone else. . .” Secondly, the question takes away her “ready” answer of “competency.” If you can “leave” the question with her, the question’s poignancy is increased. After the question is presented, don’t be present so that she has to think instead of speak. Examples would be leaving a message on voice mail, sending an email, or asking the question as you are leaving her presence. For example, “Sally, I am late for my 11:00. The next time we are together, I want to ask your advice. You have formed more teams than anyone else in the company. Besides competency, what is needed to make a team operate successfully?” Then you leave immediately.

### **Asking Questions that Force the Cat to Go Outside Itself**

Cats are self-selective; they decide their own reality. This includes deciding what is important and relevant. Often a cat needs to consider information and perspectives that we have, but the cat arrogantly believes it already has the needed

information and that it knows what is best for others. The cat is oblivious to external reality. We need a work around.

There is a great example of this in the 2007 movie, *The Queen*. The prime minister of the UK wants the queen to acknowledge Princess Diana's passing. The queen has been adamant that Diana's death is a private matter—not something that the royalty need to engage in. During a pivotal scene, she says to Tony Blair, “I doubt there is anyone who knows the British more than I do. . . .” Wisely, Tony started that conversation and subsequent conversations with, “Have you seen the papers today?” Instead of the dialogue being between the queen and the prime minister, Tony is using the newspapers as a third point. The external evidence of the newspaper finally leads the queen to question herself as the best source of knowing what her people need.

The equivalent in everyday life is to ask someone who is not likely to budge from a preset belief the following series of statements and questions. “There are two possible approaches we can operate from. You are very clear that (*mention the possibility favored by the cat*) is endorsed by you. The other possibility is (*mention the alternative*). What external, observable evidence would appear that would support the first possibility? And, equally important, what is the external, observable evidence that would support the second possibility?”

### **Accessing Heroine**

Since cats invented arrogance, they tend to bristle at any hint that others expect them to contribute to a common cause. However, the cat is equally prone to want to ride the white horse to rescue people. So the next time you need a cat's assistance, one strategy is to say face-to-face, “This project

doesn't have a ghost of a chance of being successful without your support and contribution." Similarly, "We are hurting. The project is at a standstill. It can only be resurrected if you would be generous enough to..." Simply, you have switched the focus from the cat being a contributor to a *common* cause to the cat being an *uncommon* contributor.

My sister talks to college presidents by explaining a project and then saying, "But it will never work." After a long pause, she adds in a whisper, "...unless, of course, you decide that it is worthy of your attention."

#### **"You Would Know Best."**

Sometimes we don't have the luxury of "asking a question," because by duty we need to speak up and make a statement. Using the preface of, "You would know best" in front of the suggestion allows the cat to focus on the suggestion. Otherwise, the cat might not be listening because he is preoccupied with, "Who does this person think she is...?" and more importantly, "Does this person know who I am?"

"You would know best" can be used with anyone who thinks they are superior to us. The person's perception of his superiority might be based on age, gender, education level, experience, wealth, ethnicity, nationality, accent, or success.

Preface your remarks with, "You would know best," then say what you were going to say. The preface acknowledges the listener's self perception of superiority. In using "You would know best," you are taking care of the issue of superiority so that the focus can be on the content of your message.