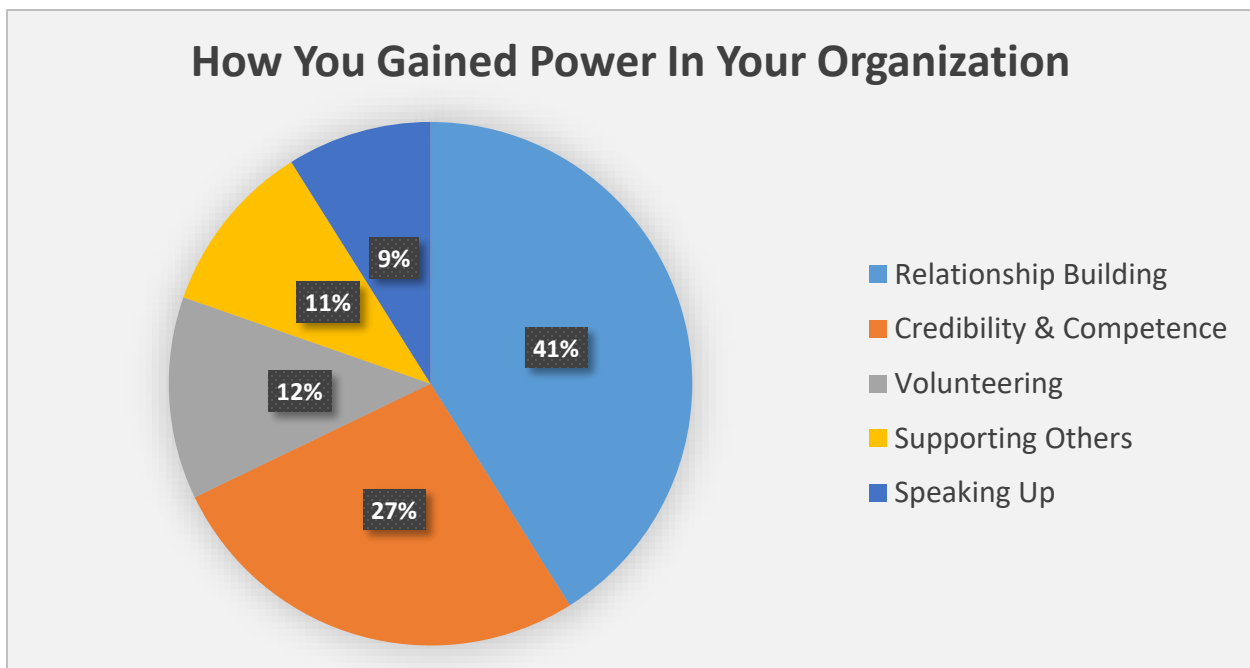




Women Helping Women: Gaining Power in the Workplace

In October, *The Leader's Edge/Leaders By Design* held an event on *Harnessing Your Professional Power: How Women Gain and Lose Influence in the Workplace*. We surveyed the 150 women leaders in attendance asking them the question: "what have you done to gain power in your organization?" The attendees were very forthright in their responses which we analyzed in order to identify top trends in building power or influence at work. Below is a summary of most common themes that emerged with some additional comments to help you build your repertoire of skills in influencing and motivating others to enact change or move a project forward.



The top responses from this informal straw poll included: relationship building, credibility and confidence, volunteering, supporting others, and speaking up. The above chart shows the breakdown of these responses.

For each of the top five trends, we shared select comments from the event attendees to provide practical examples of how female executives were able to strategically gain influence in the workplace. It's important to note that the attendees came from a variety of industries in the Greater Philadelphia region. Sample representative companies included AstraZeneca, Comcast, GlaxoSmithKline, JPMorgan Chase, Independence Blue Cross, and PECO.

#1 – RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

- “Think broader than yourself and your team, and be strategic in your interactions when they present themselves.”
- “Built relationships across the organization which has given HR a seat at the table and enabled me to be a business partner.”
- “I have positioned myself with the correct alliance. I work directly with the only woman in the C-Suite.”
- “I built a coalition of internal and external champions.”
- “Leverage relationship building skills to get buy in on upcoming decision I felt passionately about.”
- “Listen, learn and be there for others; and when you need them, they most often times will be there for you.”
- “Develop strategic relationships with people that can advocate for you and assist in getting you access.”
- “Focusing on relationship building and the idea of really knowing the colleagues you’re trying to influence.”

#2 – CREDIBILITY AND COMPETENCE

- “Establish credibility through expertise and leadership.”
- “Earn credibility – influence and power will follow. Credibility is earned by authenticity, thoughtfulness, hard work and a strong knowledge base.”
- “I continue to educate myself. I obtained my Master’s Degree while employed and I try to align myself with intelligent people.”
- “I have met and exceeded goals.”
- “Rotate into multiple business areas. Prepare for meetings, inclusive of talking points.”
- “I’ve always worked really hard to know my facts which brought folks to my door and allowed me to then influence decisions.”
- “Knowledge – Take the time to learn, stay current and share.”
- “Requested to be part of a team that I was not familiar with. Wanted to gain knowledge of it and be able to influence in faulty situations.”

#3 – VOLUNTEERING

- “Take the Initiative to volunteer in areas outside of my comfort zone that will show my willingness to grow and learn.”
- “Joined and led many volunteer organizations, projects, etc. to show my passion and leadership skills to improve my influence.”
- “Volunteer for projects, especially the tough ones.”
- “I took on a stretch assignment.”
- “Volunteering to help support high visibility projects or projects no one really wants to work on. I seek out the job I want.”

#4 – SUPPORTING OTHERS

(MENTORING/TRAINING/COACHING)

- “Listen, gain trust, and help others develop professionally. People invite you to lead if they believe you are looking out for their interests.”
- “By recruiting key personnel.”
- “Ask for the opportunity. Support someone else in their success – especially women.”
- “Hired more people to do things I used to do, so I can grow strategically in my professional career.”
- “Informally mentor others.”

#5 – SPEAKING UP

- “Think about the people I want to influence and tailor my communication base for his or her personality, style, and temperament.”
- “I speak up in meetings and with my supervisor and VP. I ask for what I want, a promotion, a title, and negotiate offers.”
- “Speak up – Be willing to say what needs to be said. Demonstrate your interest in the person you are trying to influence. People are more willing to be influenced if they believe you are in their corner.”
- “Share my story, goals, and where I would like to be.”

ADDITIONAL INSIGHTS

In addition to the top five strategies used for gaining power or influence in the workplace described above, there were some additional leadership skills that were noted by the event attendees. They did not come up in the response cards often enough to be considered a top trend, but they were significant enough to mention below. These additional leadership qualities that were cited as helpful in building workplace power included: authenticity, visibility to decision makers, self-awareness, accountability, and likeability.

If we examine these attributes further, additional insights and value can be found on enhancing your power and influence:

Being **authentic** will set the groundwork for which your subordinates, colleagues, and leaders in the organization trust your words, actions, and the value you bring.

Having **visibility to the decision makers** in your company will allow you to have a greater voice and ability to influence up, down, and across functions.

Increasing **self-awareness** of your leadership style will provide the opportunity to sit back and reflect on how you can properly influence a situation.

Taking **accountability** for your actions and the actions of your team will increase a sense of pride and engagement among the people who work alongside you.

Being **likeable** will ensure that people in your organization will want to work with you on projects and be willing to advocate for you.

Many of these leadership qualities will require you to step outside of your comfort zone, meet with people in different functions, and think strategically when it comes to your influence.

Practicing these leadership qualities in partnership with the top five strategies/trends – relationship building, increasing credibility, volunteering, supporting others and speaking up – will assist you in gaining influence and increasing the level of contributions you make to your organization.

MAXIMIZING YOUR INFLUENCE WITH *THE LEADER'S EDGE*

Need some additional insight on your leadership and influencing style? [*The Leader's Edge/Leaders By Design*](#) has been helping C-suite, executive and high-potential leaders for over 15 years to build the skills necessary to become powerful and valued contributors. If you are interested in participating in one of our programs or would like to speak with someone about working with an executive coach, contact Shelley Potente at 610-247-7317 or spotente@the-leaders-edge.com.