

Transcript | How to Get What You Need from Senior Leaders

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00:00:11.500 --> 00:00:17.100

Jessica van Onselen: Hello, everyone! Hi! You're in absolutely the right place. Welcome, welcome.

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00:00:17.270 --> 00:00:28.930

Jessica van Onselen: We're just gonna give everyone a second to join. Hi! We've got our speakers joining us, lovely. We're just gonna give everyone a second to do the digital commute, as we used to say during COVID, and get here.

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00:00:29.450 --> 00:00:31.519

Jessica van Onselen: You are where you should be.

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00:00:31.790 --> 00:00:35.209

Jessica van Onselen: Welcome. Really looking forward to today's session.

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00:00:36.240 --> 00:00:41.510

Jessica van Onselen: Hi, hi. You can see all our beautiful speakers who I will introduce just now.

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00:00:41.860 --> 00:00:44.080

Jessica van Onselen: We're just giving everyone a second to join.

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00:00:44.450 --> 00:00:45.800

Jessica van Onselen: Fantastic.

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00:00:47.190 --> 00:00:58.739

Jessica van Onselen: Hello, and welcome to this panel on how to get what you need from senior leaders. Let me introduce myself. My name is Jessica Van Otzeln. I'm the Director of Marketing and Communications here at Apolitical.

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Jessica van Onselen: It would be great to hear from all of you, so do post in the chat, don't be shy, open up the chat and post in there where you are joining us from today, and what organization you work for. It's always wonderful to get a sense of who's in the virtual room and where we're all joining from.

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00:01:13.620 --> 00:01:29.409

Jessica van Onselen: Today, we're going to be covering how to communicate more effectively with senior leaders, so you can get the clarity and support you need. We'll explore what makes requests land, what causes them to get lost, and how to frame your message so it resonates at the right level.

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00:01:29.410 --> 00:01:45.299

Jessica van Onselen: You'll hear candid insights from experienced government leaders on the patterns they see every day, and what they kinda wish more colleagues knew when reaching out. And by the end, you'll have practical tools to make your conversations more productive and your relationships with senior colleagues stronger.

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00:01:45.600 --> 00:01:59.950

Jessica van Onselen: For those of us who are joining us for the first time, well, a special welcome to you. APolitical is the world's largest network for global government, used by over a quarter of a million public servants and policymakers from more than 170 countries.

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00:01:59.950 --> 00:02:11.399

Jessica van Onselen: Our mission is to make government smarter, and we do this by equipping public servants worldwide with the knowledge and the skills that they need to really lead that change. So, that's a little bit of an introduction to us.

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00:02:11.400 --> 00:02:36.399

Jessica van Onselen: I'm gonna read some introductions from the chat, one of my favorite parts. So, hi! We have someone join... we have Muhammad joining from Bangladesh, we have Raluka from Ottawa, always amazing Canadian representation, hi, more Ottawa, fantastic. We've got Brian joining from the Cabinet Office in London. Welcome, Brian. We've got Paris also joining from London... Paris joining from London. Well, welcome, Paris. I'm probably not the first person to make that observation.

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00:02:36.400 --> 00:02:47.249

Jessica van Onselen: We have Columbia, Ohio, how fantastic. Oh, you love apolitical. We love you too, Matthew. We have some Cape Town representation, fantastic. I, myself, am South African-born.

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00:02:47.250 --> 00:03:09.639

Jessica van Onselen: Plymouth, love Plymouth. Oh, we've got some Quebec, fantastic. In York... Lucy is in beautiful York in the northern UK. We've got Portugal. Oh, Margarita, send us a picture of what the weather's like there. Maybe that's just a stereotype, and it's raining there, too. We've got Wales, fantastic. You keep introducing yourselves, you are absolutely in the right place. It is so fantastic to have you with us today.

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00:03:10.090 --> 00:03:24.939

Jessica van Onselen: I want to extend a special welcome to all of those of you who are already members of Apolitical's life and government community. If you are not already a member, we're thrilled to extend an invitation to connect with today's speakers and your peers across the global public service.

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00:03:25.040 --> 00:03:36.510

Jessica van Onselen: It's a space to share questions, ideas, success stories, practical advice about all aspects of life in government, you know, from the really serious right down to the, like, slightly less serious.

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00:03:36.540 --> 00:03:50.450

Jessica van Onselen: You can join via the link my colleague Callie is going to post in the chat, and we're going to be continuing the conversation started at today's event in the Life and Government community. So please click through and introduce yourself, we can absolutely keep the party going.

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00:03:50.730 --> 00:03:55.249

Jessica van Onselen: I'll get a few technical notes out of the way before we get into today's conversation.

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Jessica van Onselen: This event is recorded for on-demand viewing on the apolitical website, so please don't record it yourself. Contact details for any privacy concerns are in the apolitical homepage footer. If you go to our website, scroll down to the footer, you'll find them there.

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00:04:10.090 --> 00:04:16.409

Jessica van Onselen: Closed captions, for those who want them, they are available, and they can be toggled on or off in your screen settings.

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00:04:16.950 --> 00:04:33.069

Jessica van Onselen: Alright, I am so excited to introduce our speakers. I fangirl over all of them, but before we get there, we're going to run a few quick polls to get a sense of where you are coming to today's conversation from. So, let's have a look at the first poll. The question here is.

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00:04:33.070 --> 00:04:39.920

Jessica van Onselen: What's your biggest worry when reaching out to a senior leader? What kind of niggles you when you make that ask?

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00:04:39.930 --> 00:04:56.070

Jessica van Onselen: Is it not being clear enough about your message? Delivering your message with confidence? Is it maybe not being clear about what their priorities are? What are they working on? Maybe it's just not hearing back from them, being ghosted. It's not just for Tinder anymore, can be in the workplace too.

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00:04:56.070 --> 00:05:16.779

Jessica van Onselen: Maybe it's something else, and if it is something else that we haven't covered here, feel free, open up that chat, pop it in there, always great to hear what we haven't thought of there. What is your biggest worry when reaching out to a senior leader? I know I certainly get that little twinge of anxiety when you're sort of asking a board or a CEO something, you know, a permanent secretary, how do you frame that?

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00:05:16.870 --> 00:05:22.900

Jessica van Onselen: Alright, I think we've got a lot of votes in, we're gonna share the results shortly. Okay.

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00:05:23.190 --> 00:05:24.280

Jessica van Onselen: So...

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00:05:24.480 --> 00:05:32.230

Jessica van Onselen: Having a look here, we have a clear winner, actually, and the clear winner is not being clear enough about my message, or your message.

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00:05:32.230 --> 00:05:56.410

Jessica van Onselen: That's coming in with really a big chunk of you. Not far behind, not delivering my message with confidence is interesting, and a close tie there, not hearing back from them, oh dear. So ghosting is a real problem. Not so many of you feeling that not being clear about their priorities is a major concern. I'm gonna check the chat as well and see. No, Connor says not delivering the key information succinctly. I think, Connor, that's what a lot of people feel.

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00:05:56.420 --> 00:06:04.370

Jessica van Onselen: And Matthew's saying not being understood or heard. Interesting. Yeah, okay, fantastic. Really useful to get a sense of that kind of perspective here.

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00:06:04.470 --> 00:06:23.569

Jessica van Onselen: And moving to a second poll, this one is, what's one skill that holds you back when communicating with senior leaders? So if you reflect on your own style, is it writing effectively? You want to be clear, you want to be concise, maybe it's about speaking with confidence. Are you staying calm? Can you articulate in the moment?

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00:06:23.570 --> 00:06:29.700

Jessica van Onselen: The art of active listening, that's tuning into what leaders really care about, what's on their mind.

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00:06:29.700 --> 00:06:33.540

Jessica van Onselen: Maybe strategic thinking, connecting your message to the bigger picture.

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00:06:33.650 --> 00:06:47.130

Jessica van Onselen: Then there's systems thinking, which, you know, we think about so much in government, understanding how your issue fits across teams and priorities and departments. Again, maybe it's something else, pop it in the chat, always love to hear what we haven't sort of thought of here.

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00:06:47.130 --> 00:07:03.439

Jessica van Onselen: So yeah, so we've got some votes rolling in here. What's one skill that most holds you back when communicating with senior leaders? I don't want to predict this one too early, but we have got a very clear winner here that is emerging. But you keep voting, and we'll give it another few seconds, and then I will share the results.

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Jessica van Onselen: Final votes ticking in... alright, I think we might want to share the poll here. So, clear winner in this one, the main skill that's holding folks back here, speaking with confidence. That's so interesting that it's about, you know, staying calm and articulate in the moment, really being able to put your point across.

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00:07:21.130 --> 00:07:33.379

Jessica van Onselen: Second here, but not really, you know, I wouldn't say it's a close contender, is that strategic thinking piece, connecting your piece, your message to the bigger picture can be really hard when you're under pressure, where you're trying to, sort of.

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00:07:33.380 --> 00:07:51.339

Jessica van Onselen: share with folks. Also, systems thinking. Sorry, I have... systems thinking, in fact, before strategic thinking. In government, it's often so important. You have, you know, whole departments, you have missions in some cases. Are you thinking across all of those elements? Fantastic. Thank you for participating in Poll 2. All right.

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00:07:51.500 --> 00:07:54.609

Jessica van Onselen: Now we get to, like, the really exciting part,

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Jessica van Onselen: I'm going to introduce our speakers. So we are fortunate today to have 3 brilliant guests. They are truly brilliant. I've heard two of them speak before. It's a complete joy.

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00:08:03.020 --> 00:08:15.749

Jessica van Onselen: First, I'm going to introduce Gautam Raghavan, we have Ryan Hun, and we have Gabrielle Sezweh joining us today. I'll do a quick intro for each of them. Gautam Raghavan is a partner in True's non-profit and social impact practice.

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00:08:15.750 --> 00:08:38.460

Jessica van Onselen: Bringing two decades of experience across the White House, the Pentagon, Congress, philanthropy, and advocacy. He was most recently served as Director of the White House Office of Presidential Personnel, leading recruitment of 7,000 Biden-Harris presidential appointees. Gautam, I get tired just thinking about recruiting 7,000 people. That must be enormous.

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00:08:38.679 --> 00:08:45.609

Jessica van Onselen: Ryan. Ryan is the Chief Client Experience Officer and Associate ADM at Employment and Social Development Canada.

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00:08:45.610 --> 00:09:04.269

Jessica van Onselen: Over the past 10 years, Ryan has introduced human-centered design, behavioral science, and data science to policy and program delivery. He was named Canadian Public Sector CIO of the Year, and Public Sector Disruptor of the Year. That is the coolest title, Ryan, that I've had on an event for a while.

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00:09:04.450 --> 00:09:29.440

Jessica van Onselen: Gabrielle Cesve served as Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's head of speechwriting. She wrote speeches in English and in French for more than four years, worked two federal election campaigns, and led Prime Minister Trudeau's speechwriting team during his second mandate. She now serves as a strategic readiness lead at TikTok, and Gabrielle is, in fact, in London. I mistakenly placed her back in Canada, but yeah, she's joining us

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00:09:29.440 --> 00:09:40.470

Jessica van Onselen: from London today. You can read the full bios by visiting the resources tab at the bottom of your Zoom screen, and we're heading to the speakers section there if you want to revisit anything that I just read.

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00:09:41.370 --> 00:09:56.039

Jessica van Onselen: So, before we jump into today's panel, I thought we could start with a quick icebreaker question, just to get us warmed up. Okay, so hopefully our speakers have had a chance to think about this. So, Gautam, Ryan, Gabrielle, if you could ban...

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00:09:56.480 --> 00:10:12.490

Jessica van Onselen: forbidden one phrase from work emails forever, what would it be? I'll give you a moment to think. Everyone else, I pose the same question to you, and I'd love you to share your answers in the chat. If you could ban one phrase from work emails forever, what would it be?

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00:10:12.490 --> 00:10:20.019

Jessica van Onselen: Let me come to you in this order. I'm gonna ask you first, Gautam, then Gabrielle, then Ryan, in the order of my screen. Go for it, what's forbidden?

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00:10:20.020 --> 00:10:34.010

Gautam Raghavan: I think the word I would ban is the word urgent. If it's urgent, it probably doesn't require an email. If it's urgent, I want you to swing by my office, or give us a phone call, or contact somebody right away, so that would be my top pick.

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00:10:34.010 --> 00:10:42.509

Jessica van Onselen: Oh, very good, very good. Urgent, yeah. Written in capitals, and then you get the six... yeah, yeah, yeah, urgent, great. I've locked myself out my account, etc. Gabrielle...

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00:10:43.050 --> 00:11:00.779

Gabrielle Cesvet: I think for me, it would be the word just. I just wanted to ask, I just... I just thought... just a thought, I think for women especially, and speaking of confidence, I think that this is one that I make that mistake to this day myself, but I'm really trying to ban it from my own vocabulary, and I'm just...

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00:11:00.780 --> 00:11:10.429

Gabrielle Cesvet: Using it right now. So, but I... I would... I wish people were more direct in the workplace, generally speaking, and I think just is one of those that drags you down.

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00:11:10.430 --> 00:11:26.280

Jessica van Onselen: I am a serial just offender, and I have learned in my own self-reviews to do a bit of strip-out of it, but it's a horrific and often gendered insertion into language. Great, great point. Ryan, what is on your strict list? It's out in When Ryan Rules the World.

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00:11:26.890 --> 00:11:37.050

Ryan Hum: I hate the word innovation. Innovative, innovation, without defining it, without telling me why you are... yeah, innovation.

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00:11:37.110 --> 00:11:48.950

Jessica van Onselen: Yeah, innovation often misused, right? Just... and everything is innovation. I'm gonna just insert myself into the conversation and say that I have become an increasing curmudgeon about the word key.

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Jessica van Onselen: Because everything is key, and ChatGPT is encouraging everything in the whole... it's a key point, key idea, key place, key moment. I'm like, it can't all be key, there can only be one or two keys.

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00:11:59.980 --> 00:12:24.969

Jessica van Onselen: So, yeah, that's definitely banned when I rule the world. Fantastic. Should we just check if we have any bugbears in the chat? Okay, close of play. Definitely. I have to just say that there are a lot of egregious Close of Play offenders, in my past work history. Hope you are doing well at the start of an email. Mupumi, I will say that I have met some people where if you say to them, I hope you're doing well, they sort of lose

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00:12:24.970 --> 00:12:25.899

Jessica van Onselen: It's all professional.

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00:12:25.900 --> 00:12:50.150

Jessica van Onselen: respect for you from the minute they read that email. It's just so cliché. One quick thing, it's never quick, says Lucy. Fair. This is called hedging, and Dr. Alice Ashcroft has written a lot about it. That's Beth, I think, responding to you about the use of the word just, Gabrielle. Hope this finds you well. Also drives Gemma completely crazy. Matthew's saying engagement. We need that engagement on this initiative, okay?

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00:12:50.250 --> 00:13:10.649

Jessica van Onselen: And Brian is annoyed by Agile. Oh, these are fantastic. Do you keep them coming? Ryan, you're putting in... I will fight you on the M-Dash any day of the week. Yeah, I, it's going the way of the Rinderpest. The M-Dash's days are over. I'm excited to say... no, I'm kidding. We could have a whole event. Oh, look how sad Gabrielle is. We can have a whole debate on that later.

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00:13:10.650 --> 00:13:27.969

Jessica van Onselen: Fantastic. Let's get this panel started. You want to hear from the speakers. So, we're going to start first with an exploration of really understanding the senior leader's mindset, right? Everyone on this call has a boss, everyone here is working for someone, or working for an organization that's trying to make an impact.

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00:13:27.970 --> 00:13:39.699

Jessica van Onselen: Gautama, I'm gonna come to you first. So, you've worked at, like, the very highest levels of government, from the White House to the Pentagon. What do you wish more people understood about how senior leaders actually make decisions?

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00:13:39.700 --> 00:13:58.739

Gautam Raghavan: Yeah, it's a great question, and let me just say, to start with, thank you for having us, and thank you to all of you for your service wherever you are. Especially here from Washington, D.C. I think it's more important than ever to acknowledge the service of all of our public servants. So, it's a great question. I think where I would start with is by saying that for senior leaders.

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Gautam Raghavan: it's usually the case that they're working with two very scarce resources, and those are time and information, right? It is rare, in fact, mostly impossible, that as a senior leader, you have the luxury of being able to make a decision with every single piece of information or data you'd like to have. You don't always get to consult all the stakeholders you want to consult. You definitely don't get to do it on the time frame that you'd like to do it.

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00:14:19.280 --> 00:14:44.269

Gautam Raghavan: And so, when you're trying to get information, or make a decision, or convince somebody, I think the more you can share information succinctly, and really, like, start with the top lines, then include supplemental information if it's necessary, I think that helps a lot. So I was... I was happy to see in that first poll that there were a fewer number of people who were worried about their ability to deliver information concisely. The other things I would say are, one, I think it's important to learn

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00:14:44.270 --> 00:15:09.210

Gautam Raghavan: your senior leader's decision-making style. I'll give you a very specific example. I worked for... I was in the White House for President Biden for all four years. I worked for two chiefs of staff in that time. One of them was super responsive by email. So if I... I knew if I needed a quick decision, I could send them a note, I get a response within... probably within minutes. If it was bad news, it would be in all caps. The other one did not like the email. They wanted, like, the drop by the office.

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00:15:09.210 --> 00:15:17.729

Gautam Raghavan: or, like, the 5-minute sync in person. And those are very different kinds of decision-making styles. You just have to know what that... what they are expecting, and adjust yourself

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00:15:17.730 --> 00:15:20.969

Gautam Raghavan: to that. And then the last thing I would just say is,

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00:15:21.090 --> 00:15:29.219

Gautam Raghavan: no surprise, but sometimes senior leaders make bad calls, and what you have to figure out then is, what do you do in that moment, right? Do you...

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00:15:29.220 --> 00:15:52.980

Gautam Raghavan: how do you reach out to them or their teams? How do you flag that they made an error or a remission? You know, sometimes it means you go directly to them, sometimes it means you go to a deputy or a chief of staff. That's all case-by-case, but it's important to figure out, and I will just say, I have a lot of respect for folks who've worked for me, worked on my teams before, who have pointed out when I made a big mistake, and helped me get in front of addressing it. So, some quick reactions from me.

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00:15:53.780 --> 00:16:05.040

Jessica van Onselen: Fantastic. Thank you so much. Yeah, I definitely feel my team has no issue with pointing out when the call hasn't been the right one, which hopefully speaks to a strong culture, but yeah.

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Jessica van Onselen: Gabrielle, you spent years as a speechwriter for a sitting Prime Minister, right? No one is more busy than a sitting Prime Minister. What did that close-up view teach you about how senior leaders set their priorities?

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Gabrielle Cesvet: I think it was interesting for me to see how that's changed over time, because I was with Mr. Trudeau from the very beginning, when he started, his mandate, and then to see how much that evolved to kind of the COVID period, which is around the time that I left.

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00:16:33.290 --> 00:16:35.120

Gabrielle Cesvet: And I think that there is...

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00:16:35.130 --> 00:16:54.649

Gabrielle Cesvet: when you're the Prime Minister, everything is so urgent, right? Like, you have so many advisors, and I think I really echo, you know, my last panelist's words in terms of how precious the time resource is, and the urgency that everybody will come and tell you and say, this is something you need to look at it right now, right now, right now.

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00:16:54.650 --> 00:17:07.970

Gabrielle Cesvet: I think a good leader is all about balance. It's someone who can really conciliate, you know, long-term objectives, short-term objective, and can really weigh in the different evidence that will be presented to them on a daily basis. And so I think that it's...

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Gabrielle Cesvet: really... and again, it comes down... it's also a very personal point. I've worked for decision makers who had a very different style. I think Mr. Trudeau was very,

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Gabrielle Cesvet: someone who liked to bring a lot of people around the room to help make decisions, and liked to hear all of the views before he made a decision, and I think that that's what made him, you know, able to rally the troops behind the decisions that you make, because as Prime Minister.

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Gabrielle Cesvet: more than a president, it's really a team sport. Like, politics is really a team sport, and I think that that's something that he taught me in that capacity.

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Jessica van Onselen: Yeah, inclusive, inclusive decision-making, that's a great insight.

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Jessica van Onselen: Ryan, coming to you, as someone who's worked closely with senior leaders, like, across government, right, top to bottom, what have you learned about how to get their attention, and also what causes them to disengage? You say something and they just zone out. I mean, what have you seen?

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00:17:57.790 --> 00:18:03.040

Ryan Hum: Oh, I would say... know your staff.

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00:18:03.240 --> 00:18:17.020

Ryan Hum: Right? If you're going in to see a senior leader, like, know your stuff inside and out, backwards and forwards, practice beforehand, you know, study beforehand, it's all about the prep that went into the meeting, and not just the meeting itself.

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00:18:17.150 --> 00:18:34.640

Ryan Hum: Storytelling is really, really big, I think. I think depending on the archetype of the decision maker, but people absorb stories a lot better than they absorb statistics and facts, right? Easier to remember. And know when you're not the best writer.

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00:18:34.830 --> 00:18:50.560

Ryan Hum: So, I'll give you an example. There was a memorandum to cabinet that was going up. I was kind of out of the process for that, because I was leaving government, and I couldn't be part of the decision. And...

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00:18:50.770 --> 00:19:06.600

Ryan Hum: I found a newspaper article about some event from a couple years back, and all I did was take that newspaper article, put a sticky note on it, and said, this could happen again. And I sent that out.

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00:19:07.670 --> 00:19:20.950

Ryan Hum: Right? Super succinct, right? Got their attention, and a journalist is a way better writer than I am, despite the fact that I actually think I'm a good writer, right? Like most of us here. But know when your strengths are...

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00:19:21.300 --> 00:19:24.019

Ryan Hum: Overshadowed by someone else's, and use theirs.

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00:19:25.210 --> 00:19:32.720

Jessica van Onselen: Such a great tip, actually. I think I'm gonna start cutting up newspapers to illustrate points, that's real. Sending a good old URL.

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00:19:32.720 --> 00:19:53.659

Jessica van Onselen: I actually want to sort of pull through that point about storytelling. You're getting some love from Gautam in the chat there. And Gabrielle, I'm going to come back to you. Let's talk a bit more about, like, narrative. I mean, what role does narrative play in persuading decision makers? Maybe you can build on Ryan's point. Can you share an example of when a story changed the direction of a conversation or a decision that you experienced?

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Gabrielle Cesvet: I'm gonna say something that's annoying, but it's never a single story that changes the course of a decision. That happens in a movie.

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Gabrielle Cesvet: I think that narrative is not just stories. Narrative is about logical flow, it's about argument, it's about presenting things in the right order, and making the right links. And it's interesting that in the poll, we were talking about strategic thinking.

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00:20:19.640 --> 00:20:31.939

Gabrielle Cesvet: And I think that there is this need, especially in communications sometimes, because it's true what Ryan was saying, you know, a story will stick way better in someone's head than just stats. Like, stats without context mean nothing, really. But...

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00:20:32.020 --> 00:20:54.779

Gabrielle Cesvet: it's not... there's also this impulse sometimes to just jam a story, to have a story, and that's not necessarily the best way to go. I think a good example of a time where the narrative is very important was very early on in my career. We wrote a speech for the French National Assembly. It was a very big moment for the Prime Minister. It's just about, I think, the biggest stage you can have in the French-speaking world.

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00:20:54.810 --> 00:21:11.289

Gabrielle Cesvet: And I had been... everybody and their mom had commented on this speech, and it had gotten so lost, like, the argument was completely lost. And what really... and I don't know where I got, you know, the impulse to do this, because again, I was really early in my career.

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00:21:11.290 --> 00:21:22.700

Gabrielle Cesvet: was the kind of take a step back moment, where you ask yourself, and I asked the Prime Minister, I said, you know, we were kind of going through, this was, like, 2018,

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00:21:22.710 --> 00:21:38.000

Gabrielle Cesvet: And so, you know, people who are not thinking like Justin Trudeau were starting to become quite popular, and I said, this speech needs to be about what we're for. Like, Canada's a country at this point where it's... we define ourselves by being for the environment, for women.

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00:21:38.000 --> 00:21:41.819

Gabrielle Cesvet: for, you know, economic justice. And this is what

101

00:21:41.820 --> 00:22:06.260

Gabrielle Cesvet: that's what your brand is all about, right? It's a positive person who likes to, you know, tell a positive story. It's who the Prime Minister is. And it wasn't about justifying a specific story and say, this is the story that changes the speech. It's about really taking that step back and saying, wait a second, how does this moment fit into who you are as a public person, and the vision of the world that you would like to promote? And that's something that needs to be optimistic, that needs to be positive.

102

00:22:06.480 --> 00:22:19.200

Gabrielle Cesvet: And that shouldn't be getting lost in all of these very technical details for this specific stage. And I think that, you know, got the right idea in front of the right people. It's probably one of the speeches that, you know, I enjoyed the most writing.

103

00:22:19.200 --> 00:22:35.070

Jessica van Onselen: But yeah, but I don't think it's ever a single story. If the story is good, the story will tell itself. So, yeah, that's what I would say. So that's sort of a call not to get too lost in the weeds, right? You have to always have your North Star, you know, what you're trying to achieve there. Yeah, yeah, absolutely.

104

00:22:35.070 --> 00:22:42.769

Jessica van Onselen: Ryan, coming back to you, you know, when you're approached... when you... I mean, you're a senior leader yourself, when you're approached with a new idea, or a request.

105

00:22:42.770 --> 00:22:55.749

Jessica van Onselen: what helps you decide whether to act, maybe to delay or defer, or just ignore it? I mean, some things have to slip off the to-do list, right? How should civil servants think about that decision process themselves?

106

00:22:58.450 --> 00:23:01.759

Ryan Hum: Oh, wow, I... can you say that all over again?

107

00:23:01.760 --> 00:23:18.010

Jessica van Onselen: Yeah, yeah, so just, you know, you're a senior leader, you're kind of getting these decisions in on your daily basis, you know, do you have, like, a triage system,

really, where you're like, I'm gonna act on that, I'm gonna defer that, and that I'm just not doing? Like, any tips to sort of help folks think about that themselves?

108

00:23:18.810 --> 00:23:22.340

Ryan Hum: Yeah, so I would say that for...

109

00:23:22.630 --> 00:23:39.919

Ryan Hum: I actively demonstrate my way of thinking to our team. I tell them that I have ADHD, that I love juggling, like, 17 different balls up in the air, and I say all this because I'm actually worried that people will emulate me.

110

00:23:40.100 --> 00:23:49.749

Ryan Hum: And I don't want to force this upon other people, right? So, usually the case is.

111

00:23:50.180 --> 00:24:04.100

Ryan Hum: especially the team that reports directly to me, they're very careful about what they share with me. They're very cautious of it, because I'll want to jump on it quite quickly. So...

112

00:24:04.280 --> 00:24:19.379

Ryan Hum: if you're gonna come to me with an idea, you better be clear that you could implement it very quickly afterwards, right? Or that you have the next steps there, because my tendency is to say, okay, that was great, you started last week?

113

00:24:19.550 --> 00:24:25.000

Ryan Hum: Like... So, that's one thing. The second thing is, if...

114

00:24:25.630 --> 00:24:40.389

Ryan Hum: the articulation of the idea isn't clear, or not well thought out, those are times where, you know, someone was saying, oh, I don't hear back from the senior leader. It's probably because of that.

115

00:24:41.140 --> 00:24:41.580

Jessica van Onselen: You're awesome.

116

00:24:41.580 --> 00:24:42.040

Ryan Hum: Probably be...

117

00:24:42.040 --> 00:24:43.590

Jessica van Onselen: Like, clearly crafted, yeah.

118

00:24:43.590 --> 00:24:58.630

Ryan Hum: Exactly. Yeah. Or that it's, like, the value proposition isn't really there, or the email was 5 pages long, there was no TLDR at the front, it wasn't very articulated, well articulated.

119

00:24:58.630 --> 00:25:05.210

Jessica van Onselen: That next logical step is not apparent, either for the leader to agree with or disagree with.

120

00:25:05.210 --> 00:25:30.140

Jessica van Onselen: Ryan, I love... I love this idea of you as being, like, a hyper-responsive senior leader, and that's, you know, first of all, pulls in the opposite direction from, like, the cliché of a lot of senior leaders, which is that, it goes into a hole, but I think there are lessons there about if you're making an ask of a senior leader, like, you have to be prepared for them to do it, like, immediately. Galvin, coming back to you, so you have significant experience selecting senior

121

00:25:30.140 --> 00:25:46.440

Jessica van Onselen: and advising top leaders, what communication habits tend to build trust and credibility with them? And which ones have the opposite effect here? So we're almost talking about, like, it's not the one-off ask, it's the discipline of something that happens over and over and over again.

122

00:25:46.440 --> 00:26:04.079

Gautam Raghavan: Yeah, great question, and I'll emphasize what Ryan was just talking about, which is responsiveness is so important on both ends, from senior leaders, from staff. One of my biggest pet peeves is when I ask someone something, I don't get any kind of answer back, and then I'm the kind of person, like, my wheel starts spinning, and I wonder, well, what's happening? Is something going wrong?

123

00:26:04.080 --> 00:26:23.839

Gautam Raghavan: Are they not paying attention? So I would think I'd say a couple things. One is, you know, my biggest piece of advice is never surprise your boss. Like, no one likes a

surprise. I think that means a couple of different things. I think that means really doing your diligence as a staffer to make sure you've mapped out what are the various courses of actions, what are the consequences.

124

00:26:23.860 --> 00:26:48.159

Gautam Raghavan: I also think it means asking questions along the way. You know, it's important to understand the assignment, right, as soon as possible, so you're not far along, and then you realize, oh, this is not actually what they're looking for. In an ideal world, whoever your senior leader or decision maker is will explain that at the front end, but they don't always do that. And so, if they don't, I think it's important to really probe for what's vision, what's your success, what are you looking for.

125

00:26:48.160 --> 00:27:00.680

Gautam Raghavan: and ask those questions sooner rather than later. Look, I also think that, you know, speaking of surprises and mistakes, if you make a mistake, own it, right? Like, own up to it, and flag it sooner than later. Mistakes

126

00:27:00.680 --> 00:27:09.759

Gautam Raghavan: Happen all the time. And sometimes for reasons that we can't control entirely, but what we can definitely control is how we show up when we have a mistake or something unforeseen.

127

00:27:09.980 --> 00:27:15.389

Gautam Raghavan: And then I would say a couple more things. One is, as I mentioned earlier, you know, in terms of figuring out,

128

00:27:15.390 --> 00:27:32.509

Gautam Raghavan: the decision-making style of your senior leader or principal. I also think it's figuring out, like, what is their, like, regular cadence for decision-making, right? Like, I had a very specific preference when I was leading a team where I'd want to have standing meetings, which are sort of at the team level and at the individual component level.

129

00:27:32.510 --> 00:27:47.209

Gautam Raghavan: which were really about thinking about long-term strategy, sharing updates on sort of ongoing tasks, but if something is urgent or time-sensitive, I think that does not fall into the context of that meeting. In fact, if I were going to go into a standing meeting and present it with something, like.

130

00:27:47.210 --> 00:27:54.790

Gautam Raghavan: that's about to blow up, that would be off-putting to me. And then the last thing I would just say is I think this is, again, just really about getting to know

131

00:27:54.790 --> 00:28:07.809

Gautam Raghavan: your leader over time is anticipating what questions they're going to ask. Most people are pretty predictable, and so you can kind of figure out, alright, like, this person is really going to care about the optics, they're going to care about how this is received in the press.

132

00:28:07.810 --> 00:28:17.900

Gautam Raghavan: this person's really going to care about the internal equities, right? Is there going to be pushback from stakeholders or staff? And so I think the more you can anticipate that and get in front of it, the better off.

133

00:28:18.840 --> 00:28:34.769

Jessica van Onselen: Yeah, I got a good piece of advice earlier this year on, building a predictive model of your manager. So, feeding any data points... I mean, you could do it with AI, they were talking about doing it manually, right? Just, like, a couple of consistent feedback styles or points so that you can kind of run

134

00:28:34.770 --> 00:28:42.110

Jessica van Onselen: big decisions through that rubric ahead of time. It's not perfect, but it helps you kind of predict the kind of questions they'll ask.

135

00:28:42.130 --> 00:28:51.409

Jessica van Onselen: Great, so we've sort of been exploring how to hone the ask, understanding the mindset of senior leaders. Let's spend a little bit of time in, like, building trust and long-term influence.

136

00:28:51.410 --> 00:29:03.660

Jessica van Onselen: Let's do a rapid-fire round here, and I'll whiz through all three of you. So, what patterns have you each noticed in the people who consistently build trust and influence with senior leaders over time? I mean, maybe you want to name...

137

00:29:03.700 --> 00:29:19.339

Jessica van Onselen: you know, a mentor, or a hero, or maybe, you know, a sort of workplace enemy, but they were hell of ineffective. What did they do that really helped them get their stuff done at work? I'll come to you in... let's go Ryan Gabrielle Gautam.

138

00:29:22.710 --> 00:29:24.930

Ryan Hum: I was hoping for a different order.

139

00:29:25.560 --> 00:29:26.890

Jessica van Onselen: We can come back to you.

140

00:29:26.890 --> 00:29:28.640

Ryan Hum: It's not an exam.

141

00:29:29.490 --> 00:29:31.770

Ryan Hum: Reading the room, I think, is really, really key.

142

00:29:31.770 --> 00:29:32.310

Jessica van Onselen: down.

143

00:29:32.310 --> 00:29:38.159

Ryan Hum: understanding, you know, what Gabrielle was saying, you know, a consensus-building

144

00:29:38.510 --> 00:29:42.000

Ryan Hum: Team, right? Where you could have dissent.

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00:29:42.130 --> 00:29:48.849

Ryan Hum: Right? In that room. Versus a leader who wants a...

146

00:29:49.320 --> 00:30:00.070

Ryan Hum: concise storyline, you know, flow through one person, and know that they engage everyone beforehand. I use the word engage.

147

00:30:00.210 --> 00:30:03.960

Ryan Hum: So, just knowing how the room operates, and then...

148

00:30:04.130 --> 00:30:16.819

Ryan Hum: the work that you did beforehand. So, if you needed to get 5 people on your side before the meeting, get them before the meeting, right? So, I... I feel like those are the people that

149

00:30:16.960 --> 00:30:20.599

Ryan Hum: Most effectively navigate to a decision.

150

00:30:21.440 --> 00:30:23.120

Jessica van Onselen: Amazing. Gabrielle?

151

00:30:25.270 --> 00:30:37.449

Gabrielle Cesvet: Yeah, maybe we all got the wrong order, because I think there's gonna be some overlap with what Ryan just said, but I think for me, there are the people who, one, doing the work, like, there's no shortcut to doing the work.

152

00:30:37.690 --> 00:30:47.099

Gabrielle Cesvet: And the second thing is about being a team player and using your colleagues, honestly, to get the right outcome. Like, when we talk about confidence, especially.

153

00:30:47.100 --> 00:31:01.210

Gabrielle Cesvet: you will feel 100% more confident going into a room if you've spoken and challenged your ideas with other people that you work with. And I think that I have learned... I work a generalist role, I've always been kind of in a generalist position.

154

00:31:01.210 --> 00:31:02.270

Gabrielle Cesvet: And...

155

00:31:02.300 --> 00:31:25.020

Gabrielle Cesvet: I am the least, you know, experienced person in a specific topic in almost every conversation or topic I've worked on. And my ability to deliver and get what I need out of the senior leader comes from me first relying on my colleagues, being honest about what I don't know, and sorting it out before I go into the meeting and having allies, whether it's literally in the room.

156

00:31:25.020 --> 00:31:29.480

Gabrielle Cesvet: Or if I know that I've already consulted them, I think that's really, really important.

157

00:31:29.480 --> 00:31:31.039

Gabrielle Cesvet: In doing well.

158

00:31:32.630 --> 00:31:33.550

Jessica van Onselen: Gautam, what about you?

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00:31:33.550 --> 00:31:52.380

Gautam Raghavan: Well, this is gonna segue nicely, because... and there's a bit of a backstory here, which was, back in the summer of 2020, we were building, President Biden's transition team, so the team that had to hire a bunch of people for... between Election Day and Inauguration Day, and we essentially had to hire about 1,000 people in about 78 days, and so we went to.

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00:31:52.380 --> 00:31:57.070

Gautam Raghavan: a bunch of folks who had done hiring at scale, and one of them was a guy named Laszlo Bach.

161

00:31:57.070 --> 00:32:15.480

Gautam Raghavan: who was the first chief people officer at Google, and he gave us great advice, and one of the things he said was, the most important quality you can optimize for when you hire is humility. And so, back to Gabrielle, the point you made about, like, knowing what you know and what you don't know, and being self-aware, and sort of,

162

00:32:15.830 --> 00:32:40.060

Gautam Raghavan: developing your case or your argument based on that, and then showing up in a way that is very humble, I think is incredibly important. And I think that there is an instinct, I think, in a lot of folks to want to be the expert and want to show off what they know, but I think what's equally impressive, if not more impressive, is when someone says, I don't know the answer to that, but I'm going to find out, and here's how I'm going to go do it. So, I think that builds trust with senior leaders in a pretty big way over time.

163

00:32:40.430 --> 00:32:56.610

Jessica van Onselen: And I wonder if, sort of, a theme running through all of your answers here is just also expecting senior leaders to interrogate you. This is part of their job, right, is to sort of put you through your paces. Why have you reached this? What are the risks? Have you thought about all of these things?

164

00:32:56.610 --> 00:33:14.410

Jessica van Onselen: And I think it can be a slightly different mode from, like, mid-level or junior managers, where often the role is correctly sort of more support and nurturing. Senior managers and senior leaders have just a higher, sort of, fiduciary responsibility, and that often looks like interrogation and getting comfortable with that, absolutely.

165

00:33:14.410 --> 00:33:37.630

Jessica van Onselen: We've got time for a few more questions, but I really want to get stuck into the Q&A, so if you have questions, please, like, pop them in there. We're going to come to your questions shortly, they're in the Q&A tab there, you can submit them. What advice would each of you give to someone who had one shot at a 5-minute briefing with a senior leader? How should they prepare, and what should they avoid? So,

166

00:33:37.650 --> 00:33:41.449

Jessica van Onselen: Gabrielle, what would you say? How would you... how would you prepare them?

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00:33:41.710 --> 00:33:48.099

Gabrielle Cesvet: First, be really clear, I think, about what is the goal of this interaction. Yeah.

168

00:33:48.100 --> 00:33:49.330

Jessica van Onselen: What do I need to get out of it?

169

00:33:49.650 --> 00:33:52.460

Gabrielle Cesvet: But also, what do you need them to understand?

170

00:33:52.670 --> 00:34:14.609

Gabrielle Cesvet: And in terms... I mean, there's not enough preparation, especially 5 minutes is, like, a crazy short amount of time, but I think also doing the work, again, going back to leveraging your team to understand what does this person already know about this topic, and trying to anticipate where they are and what's their starting position, because this will help you

171

00:34:14.620 --> 00:34:18.900

Gabrielle Cesvet: anticipate questions and lines of questionings. I think, to your point.

172

00:34:18.900 --> 00:34:43.549

Gabrielle Cesvet: I am constantly being challenged on a lot of things that I say, and oftentimes it pushes... I know, for example, I'm, you know, I was a speechwriter, so yeah, I'm a more qualitative person than a quantitative person, and I know this about myself, and I always make sure that I kick the tires with people who are more quantitative-driven, so I'm able to anticipate that. And so I think, like, also understanding where your blind spots might be, and do

173

00:34:43.550 --> 00:34:58.969

Gabrielle Cesvet: that preparation in advance, and then be very clear in terms of what the goal of the meeting, what are you going to talk about, and what... if you have outstanding questions or decision points, make sure that that's very, very clear, and the next steps are very clear, so there's no drop in the loop.

174

00:34:59.850 --> 00:35:16.190

Jessica van Onselen: I feel there's a consistent theme here, Gabrielle, which is, like, you're always just keeping that laser focus on, like, your ultimate objective, right? Which I really love. Gautam, what about you? What advice would you say? They've got 5 minutes with, I don't know, a president, or, like, the head of the Pentagon. What do you suggest to them?

175

00:35:16.190 --> 00:35:23.799

Gautam Raghavan: Yeah, well, I agree with everything Gabriella just said. I think that's all great advice, and I think one, like, some very specific tactical things in addition, I would say.

176

00:35:23.860 --> 00:35:38.570

Gautam Raghavan: It is usually the case that there is someone who is a peer who works around that person who can give you some good advice on, like, how they want to be briefed, and what their pet peeves are. You know, I've had bosses who want a memo, like, two days, oh, there's a cat!

177

00:35:38.570 --> 00:35:46.500

Jessica van Onselen: I am so mortified by this cat. I'm actually trying to, like, manage my own little crisis in the background here. Gink, do you want to participate in this webinar? Please continue, Gavin.

178

00:35:46.500 --> 00:36:10.129

Gautam Raghavan: No, no, of course. I love the pet cameos. So I think, figure out, like, do they want information in advance? Do they want a memo? Do they want it all, like, verbally delivered? I've had bosses who really love a slide deck. So you have to sort of know that piece of information. And then the other thing, and this goes back to, I think themes that both Ryan and Gabrielle have touched upon as well, is be mindful of who else is in the room, right?

179

00:36:10.450 --> 00:36:30.270

Gautam Raghavan: I think if you're briefing with colleagues, don't be the guy, it's usually a guy who talks too much and talks over people. I think you don't have to be the expert. I think it's useful when you're briefing as a team, especially, to sort of bounce off each other and have a game plan for who's going to say what. So that's... those are some specific ideas.

180

00:36:30.670 --> 00:36:38.689

Jessica van Onselen: Yeah, great tactics. Ryan, what about you? 5 minutes with, I don't know, you know, the head of the world. How do you prep them?

181

00:36:40.360 --> 00:36:44.239

Ryan Hum: Hide? I don't know. Head of the world. That's a lot.

182

00:36:45.330 --> 00:36:46.990

Jessica van Onselen: Then my progression framework.

183

00:36:47.210 --> 00:36:58.450

Ryan Hum: I love that last point around knowing who else supports that person, right? So talking to the EA, talking to the Chief of staff, knowing how they receive things. Also know that they probably got pre-briefed.

184

00:36:58.590 --> 00:37:00.960

Ryan Hum: beforehand, right? So...

185

00:37:01.310 --> 00:37:11.970

Ryan Hum: how... why are you in the room? Why was it exciting? Why was it important for that person to know? Right? And then know that that information has already been conveyed.

186

00:37:12.120 --> 00:37:13.310

Jessica van Onselen: Right, so...

187

00:37:13.450 --> 00:37:21.200

Ryan Hum: you know, that shortens the time a lot, and that... the other thing that I would say is, don't take 4 minutes or 45 seconds.

188

00:37:22.710 --> 00:37:34.499

Ryan Hum: Right? So, you know, tell your story concisely, rely on the people that pre-briefed already, and it could... if you have 5 minutes and you were meant to be there.

189

00:37:34.500 --> 00:37:43.089

Ryan Hum: it's oftentimes questions, right? Like, I want to say yes, I want to say no, I want to drill down, right? And so, really, really know your stuff beforehand.

190

00:37:44.000 --> 00:37:53.800

Jessica van Onselen: I love that point about if you have 5 minutes, don't... don't take 4 minutes 45. That's, that's such a... it's so obvious when you say it. Alright, so panelists, we have got...

191

00:37:53.920 --> 00:38:13.959

Jessica van Onselen: so many questions, I'm like, it's amazing. Audience, you're incredible, you're just on fire. So, what I'm gonna do is let's try and get through as many of these as we can. So I'm gonna fire these to sort of each of you, but I think let's try and keep your answer... I mean, give it a full, proper answer, but we're gonna... let's go for, like, as many of these as we can possibly do. We've had a couple of...

192

00:38:14.070 --> 00:38:22.010

Jessica van Onselen: We've had a chance to answer things quite in-depth here, so let's do a few of them. Alright, I'm gonna start up with Brian. He's directed his question to you, Gautam.

193

00:38:22.010 --> 00:38:34.389

Jessica van Onselen: You mentioned drop-in to an office, which I would use before email if possible, but since COVID, more people are working remote, and it's not an easy thing to do. Any suggestions on how to sort of get that face-to-face time?

194

00:38:34.600 --> 00:38:59.559

Gautam Raghavan: Yeah, and look, I don't know if this is an unpopular view, but I think it's very hard to build relationships and culture in a remote setting, so I am fully for in-person work environments. Realize that's not the hot thing these days, but I think, right, it's a great question, and I think you have to find ways in a system to sort of compensate for that. So, for example, I now work remotely, because my firm is based elsewhere in the country.

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00:38:59.690 --> 00:39:10.950

Gautam Raghavan: But we have Slack that we use for that sort of, like, like, hey, we have a random question, can I get a quick answer on that? So you have to find... I think most workplaces have figured out

196

00:39:11.070 --> 00:39:29.140

Gautam Raghavan: other forms of communication where you can't do the walk back from the meeting, or you can't do the drop by the office. So, whether it's Slack, or it's... maybe it's texting somebody, that to me is a little bit more urgent, like, that means I need your attention right now. But that's my best advice, is to try to find some sort of tech solution that will help compensate for that.

197

00:39:29.510 --> 00:39:31.059

Jessica van Onselen: Okay, great.

198

00:39:31.060 --> 00:39:56.019

Jessica van Onselen: We've got a question from Zarian Syed, and I'm... Zarian, I'm gonna impose a little layer... I'll read it first, and then I'm going to impose a little layer on your question. So, the question is, did you ever get imposter syndrome early in your career? Now, this is often a gendered question, because, imposter syndrome is not, on the whole, something that's usually applied to men. It's something that often, you know, is, expected and spoken about, it's sort of about

199

00:39:56.020 --> 00:40:14.790

Jessica van Onselen: women in early career, and so for that reason, I'm gonna pose it to you, Gabrielle, because it is a jib, but acknowledging that this is not something I find young men get asked a lot, is like, do you have imposter syndrome early in your career? Although they may have it. So, Gabrielle, you know, take that question in its full complexity, an easy one to start, go.

200

00:40:15.830 --> 00:40:16.500

Gabrielle Cesvet: Yeah!

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00:40:16.770 --> 00:40:24.159

Gabrielle Cesvet: Absolutely, and I still... I still get it in my current career, and I think for different reasons. I think that...

202

00:40:24.470 --> 00:40:32.419

Gabrielle Cesvet: the way to overcome the imposter syndrome is to prove to yourself first that you can do it. I became a speech charter very, very young.

203

00:40:32.420 --> 00:40:47.080

Gabrielle Cesvet: And, and I felt all types of ways about that, but at the end of the day, no one could take away the fact that I wrote every single one of those words. And that was just a fact. And I think that you have to kind of acknowledge

204

00:40:47.080 --> 00:41:09.190

Gabrielle Cesvet: that that's what you're feeling, and recognize that that's, I think, a very valid feeling, and somewhat healthy as well, to have a bit of questioning in terms of, am I the right person to do this? But then you... I'm very much of the mindset of putting that aside, and just focusing on what the job actually is, and getting it done. And I felt the same way when I transferred from the public service

205

00:41:09.190 --> 00:41:28.830

Gabrielle Cesvet: to, the private sector, and all of a sudden, people were speaking a language around me that I felt like I did not understand. And of course, the first couple months of doing anything that you haven't done before is awkward. But then, you know, you wake up one day, and you've been doing that for... you go, you know, meeting by meeting, or objective by objective, and then you realize, you're like, wait a second.

206

00:41:28.830 --> 00:41:32.450

Gabrielle Cesvet: I can talk to an engineering team. It's... it's not that deep, you know?

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00:41:32.450 --> 00:41:33.499

Jessica van Onselen: It happened, yeah.

208

00:41:33.500 --> 00:41:48.050

Gabrielle Cesvet: It's happened, and so I think it's, like, really collecting the small wins that eventually will help you build that confidence in yourself, and also focusing on your own stuff, you know? Take pride in your work, and make sure that you're giving your best effort.

209

00:41:48.060 --> 00:42:02.019

Gabrielle Cesvet: And slowly but surely, you will hopefully build that confidence, and you should, and you should take pride into those little wins, and one day, I hope you also wake up and thinking, okay, I too can have a conversation with an engineering team at a big tech company, right?

210

00:42:02.020 --> 00:42:11.200

Jessica van Onselen: Yeah, I've done it. Ryan, I saw your comment in the chat. Do you want to add anything to the sort of imposter syndrome question as well?

211

00:42:12.260 --> 00:42:21.929

Ryan Hum: Just to say that racialized leaders feel it as well, too. I remember talking to an Indigenous leader, and he said something like.

212

00:42:22.160 --> 00:42:26.630

Ryan Hum: I grew up with no aunties and uncles that were in these big towers.

213

00:42:26.810 --> 00:42:34.800

Ryan Hum: Right? So you don't even think that you could get in those spaces, either. So oftentimes you'll have imposter syndrome, too.

214

00:42:35.140 --> 00:42:47.080

Ryan Hum: I would say a couple things. One is listen to your sponsors and your mentors that help you get into those spaces, so you realize that you deserve to be there. And then the other thing is.

215

00:42:47.320 --> 00:43:00.110

Ryan Hum: that humility is a little bit of a superpower, too, right? So, it's off-putting sometimes when people are hyper or overconfident, to the point of detriment, and...

216

00:43:00.180 --> 00:43:16.209

Ryan Hum: that superpower you probably used over and over again, which is how you got into those rooms, right? You worked harder, you studied harder, you did more background homework, you, you know, you did the things that you were passionate about, etc. That's probably what got you into the room, too.

217

00:43:16.660 --> 00:43:40.499

Gautam Raghavan: Can I just... with one other thought, which is, I know we talk about imposter syndrome a lot, and we should, and I think, like Ryan and Gabrielle, I feel it... I've felt it my entire career, too. But there is an opposite to it, right? There is a counter to it, which is the folks who come from privilege and have been mediocre their entire careers, and just sort of coast, and you can spot that, too. And, like, it eventually does catch up with them. Maybe not as much as I'd like it to, but...

218

00:43:40.500 --> 00:44:00.070

Gautam Raghavan: I do think that there is a... if imposter syndrome isn't necessarily going to go away, I think to the points that my colleagues have made is, like, leverage it, if you can, to your benefit, to keep yourself sharp and self-aware and constantly striving, while also, like, finding some balance for pride and reflection on what you've been able to accomplish.

219

00:44:00.480 --> 00:44:19.389

Jessica van Onselen: What, soulful answers to that question. We've got so many questions here, but I'm gonna... I'm gonna hone in on a question from Rebecca, and Ryan, I'm gonna come back to you on this first. Rebecca asks, can you give any examples where anticipation of a senior leader's behavior has not met your expectations? How do you adapt under pressure? So.

220

00:44:19.390 --> 00:44:33.489

Jessica van Onselen: Rebecca, I'm interpreting a bit here, but you go into the meeting, you make the ask, and you suddenly get, like, unexpected behaviors back. Maybe the response isn't as, sort of cordial as one might have thought. How do you adapt in that situation, Ryan?

221

00:44:34.990 --> 00:44:36.800

Ryan Hum: I think you have to listen.

222

00:44:37.390 --> 00:44:56.740

Ryan Hum: Right? I think you have to be humble, I think you have to listen, I have to... I think you have to react to that. So don't double down, don't get defensive, don't, you know, attack

back. I think you have to accept where things are going, and then if you need to redirect, or if you need to...

223

00:44:56.930 --> 00:45:08.819

Ryan Hum: tack in sailing, and still go in the same direction, like, do that, but, like, take that hit, or make that little... that change if necessary. The other thing is.

224

00:45:09.030 --> 00:45:09.740

Ryan Hum: you know.

225

00:45:10.290 --> 00:45:23.059

Ryan Hum: take that as a lesson, right? That's how this leader makes their decisions, that's their viewpoint, or... or even realize, like, sometimes it's not about you, right? You know, you could...

226

00:45:23.320 --> 00:45:25.229

Ryan Hum: You could be talking to your partner.

227

00:45:26.240 --> 00:45:32.180

Ryan Hum: And, you know, what happened during that day impacts the way that they respond to you, right?

228

00:45:32.190 --> 00:45:46.729

Ryan Hum: you know, know this. Know that timing is really, really important as well. There's a policy window for something, right? Maybe you got the policy window wrong. But I think it's time to go back and, like, take the...

229

00:45:47.060 --> 00:45:55.109

Ryan Hum: take the comments, and then rethink about what it is, and don't fall in love with your idea. I think reiterate on it.

230

00:45:55.770 --> 00:46:05.069

Jessica van Onselen: Yeah, yeah, and without sort of, again, you know, obviously, no one is talking about inexcusable behavior in the workplace, but that pushback and,

231

00:46:05.150 --> 00:46:21.289

Jessica van Onselen: sort of challenge is not uncommon with senior leaders. Gautam, we've got an interesting question here, which kind of flips something we were talking about earlier. So, we've spoken a lot about, like, prepping for the meeting, knowing your stuff, but there is the opposite, right? So, you get into a meeting with a senior leader, and this is from Anonymous.

232

00:46:21.290 --> 00:46:30.779

Jessica van Onselen: How do you manage situations when you're having to think on your feet, and reacting to those senior leader responses, and maybe you don't have all the facts, or you don't quite know what to say?

233

00:46:31.090 --> 00:46:38.580

Jessica van Onselen: Yeah, or sometimes they're asking the wrong questions, or they don't know what they're talking about. I mean, it's hard, like, it happens all the time.

234

00:46:38.580 --> 00:46:58.820

Gautam Raghavan: Look, I think Ryan said this earlier, I think the more you can... you can prep and anticipate, the better, but every now and then, you're gonna get... you're gonna get a total curveball, and you have to adapt to it. I think in those situations, you just have to say, I don't know the answer, but I'm gonna do the research and come back to you. I'll get back to you by the end of the day, let me check in with X, Y, and Z to find out more. I don't think you can...

235

00:46:58.820 --> 00:47:16.250

Gautam Raghavan: I think the mistake, in my view, would be to try and, like, pretend like you know what you're talking about, or, like, make something up, or respond in the moment, and then you're sort of boxed in with a specific perspective and view. I think most senior leaders would respect someone who just says, I need to think more about that before I get back.

236

00:47:16.860 --> 00:47:27.709

Jessica van Onselen: Yeah, and I will get back to you within 24 hours. I need a week, I need 2 weeks to get that data, you know, just like, this is what you can expect from me to solve that. Yeah, yeah.

237

00:47:27.710 --> 00:47:44.129

Jessica van Onselen: We've got a question here, Gabrielle, I'm gonna come to you about bad news. What advice would you give for situations when you have to give information or news that you kind of know your senior leader's not gonna like? That project failed, that person you loved quit, we've lost something... how do you do that?

238

00:47:45.710 --> 00:48:01.500

Gabrielle Cesvet: I think you have to be honest. I think... but I think you have to come with a bit of a solution. Like, you need to be honest about what is bad. You need to also have the right diagnosis as to why it's bad, and what went wrong, and as much as possible to explain

239

00:48:01.730 --> 00:48:22.089

Gabrielle Cesvet: yeah, the... very clearly where the mistakes were made, in a way that obviously is collegial. Like, I give bad news all the time, but you do... to say that something has gone bad, the next question is going to be, okay, well, how did we get here? So you need an answer for that. But then, you need to have already thought about how we're going to make it better.

240

00:48:22.330 --> 00:48:31.089

Gabrielle Cesvet: And that's what I would suggest, essentially, is to be able to balance that, but there's no getting around it, and so I think you have to remain very calm.

241

00:48:31.170 --> 00:48:47.300

Gabrielle Cesvet: I think that there's no need to add to the panic, back to the, this is urgent. Like, the first rule of any crisis, I think, is just to take a beat, take a breath, and then look at what you have in front of you with a clear head, and say, okay, where do we go from here? And provide options.

242

00:48:47.300 --> 00:49:06.749

Jessica van Onselen: And thinking in scenarios, the ability to present scenarios, I'm... just because I see a question here about building a predictive model for one's manager, I just want to share that. So there's a wonderful leader called Wes Cow, based out of California, who

243

00:49:06.750 --> 00:49:31.729

Jessica van Onselen: talks a lot about strategic influence. She comes from the tech world, but all of her principles could be applied in the government space at all, you know, for sure. And she talks about building a predictive model of your manager, which is just the idea that they may feel unpredictable or unknowable, but in fact, over time, you will learn what they prioritize by, you know, keeping a conscious record of the questions they ask you, which decisions sail through, which ones meet light resistance

244

00:49:31.730 --> 00:49:55.989

Jessica van Onselen: and which ones they don't want to pursue. And if you're intentional about kind of gathering that data, you can start to build a predictive model of your manager so that you can kind of run how they will respond with something ahead of time. It takes time, it's not something one can necessarily do if you're with a manager for a short period of time, but she runs an excellent free substack, so that's a recommendation for anyone looking for sort of strategic influence there.

245

00:49:56.360 --> 00:50:10.189

Jessica van Onselen: I'm gonna ask a question from Tanya, Tanya Megison here, because this, I think, a lot of folks in government will relate to. So, Tanya says, what advice would you give to risk teams in situations where senior managers have amnesia?

246

00:50:10.410 --> 00:50:14.219

Jessica van Onselen: Resulting in teams being blamed for not preparing for the board.

247

00:50:14.230 --> 00:50:39.229

Jessica van Onselen: In her case, this is usually following an extensive discussion in emails with the relevant senior manager. How do you engage senior leaders when they are reluctant participants? So, Tanya, I think that sort of under... you have a specific sort of frustration in your particular context, but amnesia and senior leaders who are, like, drowning in tons of information and maybe can't retain everything, or have that all top of mind, is probably, like, a universal issue.

248

00:50:39.230 --> 00:50:46.770

Jessica van Onselen: Ryan, what do you do when you're briefing a senior leader and they may have kind of forgotten what happened in previous episodes?

249

00:50:50.890 --> 00:50:52.609

Ryan Hum: I think you have to be polite.

250

00:50:52.750 --> 00:50:59.070

Ryan Hum: I think you have to realize that a lot goes through their desk. I think you...

251

00:50:59.190 --> 00:51:13.279

Ryan Hum: Could take that as an opportunity, too, to... if you didn't like that decision, you know, go for a home run instead of going for a, you know, a single, if you don't have to.

252

00:51:13.520 --> 00:51:18.900

Ryan Hum: Yeah, I... I don't know, I...

253

00:51:21.320 --> 00:51:24.259

Ryan Hum: Yeah. I mean, it happens all the time.

254

00:51:24.470 --> 00:51:26.459

Jessica van Onselen: It happens, it happens.

255

00:51:26.680 --> 00:51:42.690

Jessica van Onselen: And I'm thinking, I mean, Ryan has always got this call towards, like, grace and generosity and giving people the benefit of the doubt, but Gautam, I'm gonna come to you. I mean, what if sometimes they just... you told them 50 times, they've forgotten about the conversation, how do you remind them?

256

00:51:42.870 --> 00:52:07.839

Gautam Raghavan: I mean, I think it happens all the time, and it is one of the most frustrating things, because especially if you've been doing a lot of work, and you're, like, you're in a situation where, like, are you kidding me? You don't remember, like, this back and forth? I think it's a situation where it's worth, like, figuring out who else can you lean on to be an ally in that conversation? Like, do they have a deputy or chief of staff, or is there someone else who could pull into the meeting who can just keep them on track, maybe in a way that you can't

257

00:52:07.840 --> 00:52:15.610

Gautam Raghavan: But I agree with Ryan. It's... this is a very hard one to adjust for. There's not, like, an easy answer to this, so that's... that's just one idea.

258

00:52:16.440 --> 00:52:23.430

Jessica van Onselen: Fantastic. Gabrielle, you were nodding a lot there. Do you want to add anything to amnesia in government? You must have encountered it at some point.

259

00:52:23.430 --> 00:52:26.940

Gabrielle Cesvet: Yeah, I think that... you...

260

00:52:27.250 --> 00:52:38.450

Gabrielle Cesvet: also have... I think it's actually... yeah, I agree with everything that was said. I think that also finding other people that are part of the wider picture, who can help support what you've said.

261

00:52:38.480 --> 00:52:50.379

Gabrielle Cesvet: obviously, having started my career as a speechwriter, I write a lot of things down. I keep receipts of things, so people often don't read, which is really a problem, I think.

262

00:52:50.380 --> 00:53:06.240

Gabrielle Cesvet: But usually having a paper trail as well can be helpful when you have some of these kinds of recurring conversation and sending kind of a note to say, this is... just so we're clear, this is what we've discussed, this is what we've aligned on. And so if there is an issue, you can at least have a bit of...

263

00:53:06.760 --> 00:53:24.799

Gabrielle Cesvet: yeah, a slight pushback if there's a case where, you know, that's appropriate, but I think also there are situations where you do have to learn to let go, and assume that this is... that you did your best, and you, you know, raise that, and if someone wants to make a different decision, then at the end of the day.

264

00:53:24.800 --> 00:53:30.959

Gabrielle Cesvet: that's, you know, that's the way that the cookie crumbles sometimes, and so I think that maintaining a certain

265

00:53:31.330 --> 00:53:49.869

Gabrielle Cesvet: like, a healthy degree of separation with some of these situations is good for just your own mental health and your own mental well-being, you know? At the end of the day, did I do my job? Did I do it as best as I could? And did I cover my team? And was I, you know, yeah, did I do my best work? And I think that if the answer to that is yes.

266

00:53:49.870 --> 00:53:54.410

Gabrielle Cesvet: Then, hopefully, you can find a little bit of peace in an otherwise very frustrating situation.

267

00:53:55.230 --> 00:53:59.869

Jessica van Onselen: Yeah, I think that's, and maybe just norming that...

268

00:53:59.870 --> 00:54:17.139

Jessica van Onselen: it sounds like you have a particular situation, Tanya, that you're dealing with, but that I think some amnesia is certainly the norm for senior leaders, and it's not often personal, it's just the reality of the volume of emails that we're kind of dealing with. We are sort of coming up to the final...

269

00:54:17.140 --> 00:54:17.750

Ryan Hum: One more.

270

00:54:17.750 --> 00:54:19.170

Jessica van Onselen: Yeah, yup, these dude.

271

00:54:19.360 --> 00:54:37.860

Ryan Hum: I think another... I was just thinking about when I do it, right? When I forget about a conversation, and I wonder whether or not some of it is the way that I receive information, or... so as I'm interrogating, you know, there are times where I'm brainstorming live.

272

00:54:38.020 --> 00:54:53.909

Ryan Hum: And asking questions so I could better understand, and those can be misinterpreted as, that is the direction that I want to take, versus me trying to better understand the situation, or trying to get more information, right? So...

273

00:54:54.120 --> 00:54:57.000

Ryan Hum: I will... there are times where I think that the...

274

00:54:57.320 --> 00:55:04.719

Ryan Hum: team goes down a rabbit hole, only because I kind of... that's the way that my brain was operating that day.

275

00:55:05.040 --> 00:55:07.360

Ryan Hum: And it... it wasn't actually

276

00:55:07.990 --> 00:55:13.050

Ryan Hum: me asking them to go down a specific direction, if that makes sense. And so.

277

00:55:13.050 --> 00:55:30.700

Ryan Hum: having debriefs of meetings afterwards with, you know, your bosses or whoever it is around the room, just to say, okay, did I hear this correctly? Is this a path? Is this why we're going down this path? This is the spirit of the questions that they were asking. I think that's

278

00:55:30.700 --> 00:55:34.250

Ryan Hum: Important to do after any sort of major meeting.

279

00:55:34.450 --> 00:55:46.799

Jessica van Onselen: Yeah, like an after-action replay. The chat's on fire, you're getting so much love here, but I... I've been remiss, I see here, looking at my little prompts here, which is that I have not reminded all of you, so, so...

280

00:55:46.800 --> 00:55:57.759

Jessica van Onselen: I want to let you know that we've created a great follow-on resource from today's topic that we think you might find useful. We're giving you access to a teaser lesson on unlocking the psychology of influence.

281

00:55:57.760 --> 00:56:05.120

Jessica van Onselen: from one of apolitical's most popular courses, and remember, everything apolitical does is specifically for life and government. That course is called

282

00:56:05.120 --> 00:56:24.799

Jessica van Onselen: a lesson is called How to Influence Upwards in the Public Service. Those of you who joined us for our September event, How to Influence Without Formal Authority, may have already received this wonderful resource. To receive your link to the course teaser, go to the Life and Government community after this event, and leave a comment on the post pinned at the top of the page.

283

00:56:24.800 --> 00:56:44.520

Jessica van Onselen: we'll send you the resource later this week, and my colleague is going to post that link in the thread to the chat so that you can seize this. And I should have mentioned that before we got into our wild Q&A, but I was just too excited to jump in, so I've definitely done that. I just want to read a bit of love you're getting in the chat here, my three amazing speakers.

284

00:56:44.760 --> 00:56:59.110

Jessica van Onselen: Someone said, I'm getting a lot out of this session, I'm enjoying it so much, I'm not even reading my emails, which I think in public service is, like, the highest, the highest praise, so, everyone seems to be enjoying the conversation very much. Fantastic.

285

00:56:59.110 --> 00:57:09.259

Jessica van Onselen: Okay, we've had some incredible wisdom from our speakers. I'd like to ask all of you to join me in giving Galtham, Ryan, and Gabrielle a virtual round of applause.

286

00:57:09.260 --> 00:57:30.619

Jessica van Onselen: And most importantly, thanks to you, busy public servants, the attendees are investing in your learning and being so engaged in this topic. The team is going to pull up a quick poll to find out how you felt about today. That helps me and us continue on to improve our content, and we really appreciate your responses. So the question is, on a scale of 1 to 10, we won't share this back, you can be honest.

287

00:57:30.620 --> 00:57:47.970

Jessica van Onselen: Rank your agreement with this statement. This event was a valuable use of my time, one meaning that you found it completely useless, completely disagree, and 10 meaning that you completely agree. Please, erase all memories of my cat, which might, shape the voting in a negative way. I apologize for that.

288

00:57:47.970 --> 00:57:59.410

Jessica van Onselen: Before you go, and while you're responding to the poll, I want to share a few more events that you can register to join us with again, if you enjoyed this one. If you're not available to join us live, remember that you can always register for the event.

289

00:57:59.410 --> 00:58:03.910

Jessica van Onselen: in order to get sent the recording to catch up on whenever suits you. So, coming up...

290

00:58:04.190 --> 00:58:13.310

Jessica van Onselen: We've got why government needs to show up on social media next Thursday, where you'll learn how governments can build public trust where it matters most.

291

00:58:13.320 --> 00:58:23.790

Jessica van Onselen: In two weeks' time, we've got AI for Policy Making, the next session in our AI Skills Lab series with James Ansell. I'm a huge James Ansell fan, obsessed with his LinkedIn.

292

00:58:23.790 --> 00:58:48.709

Jessica van Onselen: Head of Futures and foresight at the Cabinet Office. That is going to be unmissable, AI for policymaking. And next month, we'll be exploring how to build foresight into everyday decisions, where you'll learn how to improve your daily work through futures thinking, including maybe building a predictive model of your manager. Okay, that is all we have time for today. We hope you found it helpful. We want to say a huge thank you to our speakers, to everyone who's made today happen.

293

00:58:48.770 --> 00:58:54.680

Jessica van Onselen: And to you for taking time out of your busy days. We know how busy life is in government, so we super appreciate it.

294

00:58:54.770 --> 00:59:05.139

Jessica van Onselen: Keep an eye out for the email coming your way soon with today's recording and resources, and we really hope to see you on another chat again soon. Thank you, everyone, have a wonderful afternoon.

295

00:59:05.940 --> 00:59:07.000

Jessica van Onselen: Bye!