



## 5 reasons 'manipulation' is not a dirty word

by Kathryn FitzGerald

February 2015

*I have a secret. After many years of hiding it, I've decided, yes...it's time I told the world. So here it is; I am what I like to call a Master Manipulator. And here's why you should want to be one too...*



Hello, my name is Kathryn and I've been a manipulator for almost 35 years. I realised fairly early on in life that one of my strengths is my ability to 'sway' others. Some prefer to call this '**influencing**', '**persuading**' or '**engaging**', creating a positive spin around the heart of what making someone see or do that they would not ordinarily do.

At first I hid this fact. I was, for some reason, ashamed of the fact that more often than not I could get people to do what I wanted. Manipulation was such a dirty word.

Now however, in all facets of my professional and personal life; as a Consultant, a Director of a business, and an ever-aspiring 'expert' in recruitment, I realise that **manipulation is beautiful**. It is an art, a gift and any negative implication can be argued away as semantics.

The only thing standing in the way of 'manipulation' being a valued, respectable and even strived-for trait, is its association with **negative intention**. That is, do you use your powers of manipulation for good or for evil? This question is key.

Manipulation with genuine win-win outcomes in mind is the best possible starting point for any person interested in engaging, creating and building anything or anyone. Not just in recruitment (though it certainly is an asset in my field) but in anything and everything you do.

Here's my top 5 reasons why.

### 1. Allows you to connect with more people, more genuinely

As human beings we have an innate need to connect. Once Maslow's basic survival needs are met the next common driver in all of us is to find human connection. Ironically, in today's busy world of information and social media we are 'over connected'. So more and more we find our defenses triggered, protecting ourselves from unwanted connection; believing we are saving ourselves wasted time and energy as we try to preserve our existing connections by blocking new ones.

The truth is, your capacity to manipulate others changes not only the sheer volume of people who **allow** you the opportunity to connect, but it also diversifies the types of people who will **want** to. To be able to tailor your approach to an individual in such a way that they withhold judgement and remain open, allows you the opportunity to understand them.

---

*'Manipulation' with genuine win-win outcomes in mind is an art that can be used very positively.*

---

Being able to identify what value they may derive from a potential connection with you **before** they make a decision is critical to have even the *opportunity* for success.

In a world where people make lasting judgements and decisions within 10 seconds of meeting someone, your capacity to manipulate how those 10 seconds are perceived is the difference between yes and no, engagement and detachment, interest and apathy.

## 2. Enables you to open *others* up to connecting with *each other*

My job is reliant on my ability to get other people to connect. If a prospective employer says yes, but the prospective employee says hell no, I walk away unsuccessful. And vice versa.

As always, there are other factors at play. I need to do my homework, assess what both parties want and ensure that the deal-breaker criteria for each are achievable.

But beyond that, my manipulation skills are all that stands between a **no** based on bias and misperceptions and a **yes** because I can show either or both that they are closing off opportunities for successful connections unnecessarily. The opportunity may not **look** the way they expected but that doesn't mean it isn't right.



## 3. You can get candidates to tell you what they really want...*really!*

Ok candidate, it's interview time. You have your pre-prepared, carefully selected 'strengths' (excellent team player, highly efficient, etc) and 'limitations' (I work too hard, take on too much of other people's work etc) ready to go. And if you get a disinterested or just unskilled interviewer, that's all they'll hear.

*...enter the manipulator*

As a Recruitment Consultant who interviews for a living, my ability to make candidates feel relaxed and get them to open up is essential to understanding what they *really* want and how they'll *really* perform in the role. Candidates don't tell the whole truth. Not that they lie or mislead intentionally, but their version of the truth is just that; a version. And you need them to give you all the information so you can effectively assess where the truth may lie.

Often, candidates don't even know what they want. They may tell you they want to work for a particular type of company but if you don't understand *why*, then you may actually get it all wrong anyway. As an objective third party recruiter I am in a unique position to assess the *why*.

A classic example is when interviewing for any part-time role. Some candidates apply simply because they just want a job. They may even want *this* job, but unless they want *this* job with *this* company working *these* hours, then they may still not be the best candidate. So how do you verify these aspects? Understand **why**. What hours do you want to work? Why? If they are unable to convince me that they actually want to work part-time, they are most often a ticking time bomb as they continue to look for the same or a similar role that will pay full time wages.

Getting a candidate to not just tell you what they want and need, but getting the real answer to the all-important *why* is dependent on your ability to get them to trust you and understand that you are actually on their side; that being honest with you will ultimately make them happier in the end.



The best people for the best people

© Dixon Appointments Pty Ltd 2015.

This material is copyright. You may display, print and reproduce this material in unaltered form only for your personal, non-commercial use or for use within your organisation.

#### 4. You understand more people more easily

Intrinsically related to my manipulator traits is a natural curiosity to understand who people are and what motivates them. When an individual behaves 'badly', why? In the moment to them they were behaving in a way to either send a message or achieve an outcome.

As the great Stephen R Covey tells us in the **7 habits of Highly Effective People**: 'Seek first to understand...'

Once you understand why someone says or does something that you wouldn't do, everything is easier.



#### 5. You can change other people's perspectives and motivate them to achieve their own goals...as well as yours

Ever met anyone with preconceived ideas about...well...anything?

The key to changing anyone's perspective is actually about first understanding theirs (see point 4) and then finding a common ground they can relate to or that challenges the way their logic works in that given situation.

With a carefully framed question or hypothetical; one that doesn't offend or have the potential to be perceived as aggressive, you can change another person's 'take' on any situation. Get them to walk in someone else's shoes, even if they didn't really want to try them on!

*Try it...use your powers for good and embrace your inner-manipulator!*



The best people for the best people

For further information about Dixon Appointments contact Kathryn FitzGerald on 03 9629 9999 or email [kfitzgerald@dixonappointments.com.au](mailto:kfitzgerald@dixonappointments.com.au)