



Roundtable Member,
Kaitlynn Furse,
Director of Corporate
Communications at CAA
Club Group shares her
tips for navigating a
complex leadership
environment to keep
projects on track.

Mentoring **MATTERS**

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I work within a heavily matrixed organization and have to get the buy-in of multiple senior leaders in order to get anything done. I'm finding that the senior leadership team is not aligned on the strategy which means I'm regularly being pulled in two (or more) different directions. How can I navigate this complex leadership environment and actually get work done?

Navigating the world of highly complex, matrixed organizations is something that can take time to master. Depending on the culture of the organization it can also heavily depend on the strength of your relationships and your ability to bring people together. Moving projects forward is rarely a black and white endeavour and can require passion, flexibility and above all, an open mind.

Below are five steps you can take to build your influence and effectiveness in the workplace.

Exercise patience and compassion

By and large, everyone is doing the best they can to do good work. It can be easy to get caught up in a negative tone of 'this shouldn't be this way'. If you can accept things as they are and go from there, you will create the space you need to identify opportunities and influence change. Your mindset as you approach situations can make a big difference in the outcomes you create.

Set out a strategic vision for your role

We all have many competing priorities from various leaders, and it can be challenging to determine what is most important or necessary at any given time. Take some time to think about the purpose of your role or department, your areas of strategic focus and the tools you use to execute. Establishing these core drivers will give you a strong lens to assess competing priorities and which ones will enable you to bring the most value to the organization.

Pull out the organizational chart and identify key collaborators

One of the most overlooked actions you can take to be more effective at work is reading and understanding the organizational structure. Spend some time studying the structure of your organization so that you know how various departments function and work together. Identify who are the key decision-makers in each department and who are the individuals who you need to have strong relationships with to effectively do your job. Make a list of key people and prioritize them into three groups: core collaborators, occasional collaborators and your broader network.

Engage in informal discussions

Check the pulse of people's priorities and perspectives before you need something specific. People tend to wait to build relationships with others until they need to get something done. A better approach is to work through your list of key collaborators and find opportunities to build relationships with them before you have a project or ask. For example, who do you have more affinity for, the neighbour who popped by to say hello when you first moved in or the one who never said a thing to you until they needed to borrow your lawn mower? Get to know people and understand their worlds and they will have more interest in understanding yours and helping you get things done as well.

Put something on paper

Leaders are people who can cut through the noise and coach people to map out where they want to go or what they want to achieve. If you see a lack of alignment within an organization, chances are, there may not be a clearly documented plan in place. This is an opportunity. Take what you know and start to put things down on paper. Engage the senior leaders who are involved in the project and ask questions to fill in the blanks. Often this type of dialogue will help to uncover some of the gaps that might exist, and you will gain more clarity on what people are thinking. Best case scenario you emerge as a catalyst on the project, playing an important role that brings all the essential pieces together. Worst case, you have the information you need to finalize a plan for your specific involvement. With a plan on paper, that others have been involved in developing, you can then get sign off and move forward with confidence.

However you go about navigating your organization, if you keep relationships at the forefront and keep your eye on how you can add the most value, you will begin to align on strategy, be more effective when connecting with teams and their senior leaders and ultimately get the buy in necessary to get your work done.



A communications and media relations professional, Kaitlynn has worked with some of Canada's leading brands to bring corporate storytelling to life. Having worked in both agency and corporate settings, Kaitlynn takes an insights-led approach to developing aspirational and practical communications strategies.

As the director of the corporate communications team at CAA Club Group, Kaitlynn leads the organization's internal communications and public relations initiatives and serves as a media spokesperson.

In her spare time Kaitlynn likes to stay healthy with regular cycling and yoga, she leads the 10th Toronto Girl Guides unit and is in the process of writing her first novel.



Glain Roberts-McCabe is passionate about the art of leadership and supporting ambitious mid-career leaders. She created **The Roundtable** to provide emerging leaders with the navigational skills, tools and savvy needed to manage increases in scope, pressure and leadership complexity.