Presenting to Influence Stakeholders

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I would use self-awareness to help persuade senior leadership to adopt my recommendation. I would concede to them that I am an outsider and that I don’t have experience working within the company, which may make them think that I don’t fully understand the situation. However, I would then explain that being an outsider allows me to have an objective view on the situation. Having an objective view puts me in a unique position to know what the best solution is since I have no bias toward a certain outcome. Showing senior leadership that I have the self-awareness to address my own faults would help reassure them that my recommendation has been thoroughly contemplated.

One question that senior leaders may have for me would be “What if getting to know someone makes me dislike them rather than becoming a friend? Not everyone you meet becomes a friend.” To which I would respond by explaining that this can happen but there are tactics to help mend these difficult relationships. One thing you can do is look back at the positive history in the relationship, usually people have at least one positive interaction with each person they meet. Another thing you can do is look at yourself. You could have started the negative relationship by something you did, maybe you were impatient, got angry, or demotivated them which caused them to reflect the behaviors back at you. A simple apology and request to start over could help resolve a situation like this. Lastly, you can find a mutually beneficial goal. People that work together toward a shared goal tend to build a strong relationship because working well together benefits both parties. Overall relationships can become negative, but you can also work to mend those relationships and come out even stronger on the other side.

Another question they may ask would be, “How does building a relationship with someone make the work from home policy successful?” To this I would answer that it makes them more comfortable with each other. If Michael was friends with the senior leaders, then it is more likely that he would have wanted to meet with them to discuss the policy one-on-one. Another possibility is that the senior leaders would have been more comfortable voicing their concerns with the policy with Michael rather than giving a thumbs up. If either side had felt comfortable communicating with each other, then the policy rollout could have at least been improved. Whether this could have been through adjustments to the policy itself or pushing the deadline back depends on the senior leadership’s issues with the policy. However, the first step is building a strong enough relationship with each other so that all parties involved feel comfortable voicing concerns.