

8 KEY TAKEAWAYS

Magnetic Advocacy: Influencing Construction Project Outcomes Without Using Formal Authority

[Brian Gaudet](#) (Kilpatrick Partner) and [Colleen Bear](#) (Kilpatrick Talent Management Senior Manager and Coach) recently presented on the topic of "**Magnetic Advocacy: Influencing Construction Project Outcomes Without Using Formal Authority**" at the **ACC Houston Construction Law Practice Group**. Construction projects involve complex contracts, tight timelines, and multiple stakeholders. Often, success requires influence rather than authority—whether guiding project teams on risk allocation, securing cooperation from other parties without invoking formal remedies, or navigating change orders.

This CLE provided in-house counsel with practical strategies to foster collaboration and resolve issues without relying on formal authority. Key takeaways from the presentation include:

1

Charisma Is a Skill, Not a Superpower.

Anyone can boost their influence—just show up, listen deeply, and let your presence do the talking. Focusing on presence, power, and warmth turns everyday lawyers into magnetic advocates.

Walk In with Presence and Confidence.

Start every interaction—meeting, call, or hallway chat—by putting away distractions, standing tall, and giving your full attention. A confident, attentive approach signals respect, builds trust, and actually changes how others see you (and how you see yourself).

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Show Warmth with Genuine Curiosity.

Ask about more than just the contract—show real interest in people, not just their problems. This turns “Legal” into a business partner, not just a gatekeeper.

Anchor Advice in Industry Trends and Peer Practices.

No one wants to miss the boat. Reference what’s happening at peer companies or in your industry to make recommendations more compelling and harder to ignore.

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Get Public Buy-In—and Celebrate It.

Visible agreement—whether a show of hands or a roundtable endorsement—boosts accountability and momentum. Celebrate these wins to reinforce positive change.

Involve Others and Frame Change as Growth.

Don’t just hand down policies—invite teams to help design solutions and highlight the opportunity to become the “go-to expert.” Co-creation builds ownership, reduces resistance, and turns change into a growth opportunity.

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Connect Legal Work to the Big Picture.

Tie compliance and legal initiatives to the broader mission: “This isn’t just a rule; it protects our clients and our reputation.” When legal work aligns with company values and goals, it’s more meaningful—and memorable.

Motivate with Autonomy, Mastery, and Purpose.

Drive true engagement by giving teams ownership (autonomy), chances to learn (mastery), and always connecting back to the “why” (purpose). This inspires commitment and action, even when you don’t have formal authority.

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