Power and Influence: Getting It – Keeping It

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Table of Contents

Overview

"The difference between someone who can get an idea off the ground and accepted in an organization and someone who can't isn't a question of who has the better idea. It's a question of who has political competence. Political competence isn't something you're born with, but a skill you learn. It's an out-in-the-open process of methodically mapping the political terrain, building coalitions, and leading them to get your idea adopted."

Samuel Bacharach, a Cornell University professor (Bacharach, 2005, p. 93)

As the Baby Boomer generation begins leaving the workforce and is replaced by their children, the current job market is seeing large numbers of fearless and ambitious, yet unseasoned twenty-somethings flooding the managerial job market.

These new managers are taking positions traditionally reserved for battletested pros who understand from experience the ins and outs of gaining power and influence. An ever-increasing amount of employed 20- to 34-year olds hold management positions. These young, inexperienced managers report difficulties managing "up" – getting their bosses to respect them – as well as managing "down" – getting their older subordinates to respect their position. (Fortune magazine)

This course is written for those new managers (or people who just want to be more valued within their organizations) who must learn how to map the political terrain of their workplace.

It will explore the foundations of personal power and influence in the workplace and provide guidelines on developing these skills for career success.

The focus is on acquiring, increasing, and using the small bits of influence and power available to anyone to enhance their career development – not on the types of power leading to illegal actions of powerful officials who abuse their positions.

Learning Outcomes

Students completing this course will:

1. Know the common characteristic shared by individuals seen by others as being most influential

2. Be able to list at least four negative uses of power and influence

3. Be able to list at least six indicators of an individual's possession of power and influence

4. Be able to define the differences between compliance and commitment from others

5. Be able to ask and answer the essential question involved in influencing someone else to act in a desired manner

6. Be able to present an idea with the best possible chance of action by others

7. Be able to explain why you cannot motivate others to do things they may not want to do

8. Help the student be able to identify opportunities to develop positive influence within their current organization

9. Be able to identify the four sources of personal power within an organization.

Intended Audience

This course is designed for students who are in a low level of management and want to learn how to maximize their influence for opportunities of professional growth through helping others become more successful.

Additionally, this course is also useful for students who, although not currently in a management position, want to be as prepared as possible for when the opportunity occurs, or simply want to be as valued within their organizations as possible.

A View of Power

Ninety individuals nominated by their peers as the most influential leaders in our society were interviewed by a leading organizational development guru a few years ago.

After comparing the information gathered from their responses, it became apparent they all shared a single characteristic of power: *they made others feel powerful!*

They were seen as powerful because they had learned how to build a strong power base in their own institutions or organizations. Their power evolved as they helped peers and subordinates accomplish exceptional tasks. If this were a Star Wars adventure, we would say they were using the "good side of the Force."

Unfortunately, news of corporate price-fixing and accounting scandals has given the word "power" many unflattering connotations in today's world. For someone to actively seek it sends out a "danger" signal reminding us of the worst in our fellow man.

Nearly everyone who has spent any time in a large organization, public or private, has stories about conniving bosses, vindictive peers and subordinates, corporate abuses of power, and dirty office politics. It is a difficult concept to embrace for most of us because it is typically associated with some form of domination over others.

The truth is that power and influence do not inherently have the values of good or bad within them: it is the morality of the user that determines their application.

" Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely."
Lord Acton, *Letter to Bishop Mandell Creighton, 1887*

Clearly, negative uses of power and influence may include:
- Being insensitive to others, abrasive, and intimidating
- Acting cold, aloof, and arrogant
- Betraying other's trust
- Intentionally manipulating others or situations

On the other hand, some positive indicators of a manager's upward and outward possession of power would include ability to:

- Intercede favorably on behalf of someone in trouble

- Get a desirable placement for a talented subordinate

- Get approval for expenditures beyond the budget

- Get items on and off the agenda at policy meetings

- Get fast access to top decision makers

- Maintain regular, frequent contact with top decision makers

- Acquire early information about decisions and policy shifts

This course will focus more on power as "the potential to influence behavior" (i.e., getting things done) as opposed to an authority-based control of behavior. Whether the skills used to influence that behavior are used for positive outcomes that benefit more than just the user is an outcome that lies solely within the control of the User.

Compliance vs. Commitment

Before we get farther into our course on power and influence, it is useful to understand the difference between compliance and commitment: - the difference between having to do something and wanting to do it. If someone is trying to influence an outcome, we expect they would want the most desirable one possible: something more than "barely adequate."

Simply having the positional power to compel someone to act ("compliance" in our terms) DOES NOT mean they will do their best; i.e., make a commitment of effort. A boss that uses his or her power to compel someone to act usually results in getting the least the worker can do to get by. Even if the Boss wants it done within the next hour, the worker still has the option of determining when they do it – and it will probably be done at the last minute.

Since influencing someone to act with commitment (they want to do their best because of an internal drive) involves an understanding of what motivates people to act, we will take a moment to look more into motivation.

Essentially, motivation is the unspoken answer people hear when they ask themselves "Why would I want to do that", or "What's in it for me?"

If their internal answer gives them a good reason to act, they will. If not, they won't.

The unspoken answers to internal questions are typically something like this:

Situation	Internal Question	Possible Internal Answer and Action (the motivation or lack of it)
Seeing new clothes for sale at the mall	*"Why would I want to spend that much for a suit?"*	• "Because it will make me look so good!" and buy it • "I need the money for something else that I want more" and not buy it.
Your Boss asks for volunteers to work late	*"Why would I want to do that?"*	• "Because I want to get off early next week to see my child's game" and volunteer • "I don't like him/her – why should I help?" and not volunteer.
You see a charity asking for donations	*"Why would I want to donate to that?"*	• "Because it makes me feel good to help others" and donate • "Nobody helped me when I needed it" and do not donate.
You see a potential problem coming up at work that no one else sees.	*"Why would I want to tell the Boss about this?"*	• "Because I like my Boss and this is a good place to work" and tell someone • "If my Boss and this company doesn't care about me, why should I care about them?" and stay quiet.
What have you seen recently?	*What would be the question?*	What are the choices of actions?

Ask Yourself

How does knowing that question, ""What's in it for me?" , apply to someone wanting to influence others?

It is because you should have an answer for the other person's internal question of "Why would I want to do that" BEFORE asking someone to do something.

Before we go much farther and explain why you should have an answer for them asking themselves *"Why would I want to do that"* you must consider something else first. There can be as many reasons why people are motivated to act (or not act) as there are people. Some of the more common reasons include:

- *I materially gain from it (money or property)*
- *I emotionally gain from it (it makes me feel good)*
- *I spiritually gain from it (it heartens my soul)*
- *I psychologically gain from it (enhances my reputation or self-image)*

What additional reasons can you add?

Now before you ask someone to do something, take a moment to consider if there were a way that doing what you want will help him or her achieve any of the gains listed above.

In other words, ask yourself this, "How can I present this need of mine to them in such a way that it will help them achieve something they want?" or "How can I make it easy for them to want to do this?"

Parents may say to a child, "The sooner you get your room cleaned up (what the parent wants), the sooner you can go out to play with your friends (what the child wants)." While it is true the parents can still order the child to clean up their room, it may not have the speed and quality that the parent desires.

Take a moment to look back to the opening statement, "Essentially, motivation is the unspoken answer people hear when they ask themselves "Why would I want to do that", or "What's in it for me?" What is the source of that "…unspoken answer people hear …?"

It is their internal voice responding to their needs based on their experiences. The things that motivate you may not be the things that motivate me. Therefore, it only makes sense ==that the more I consider the situation from your perspective, the better the chance I have that to discover what would lead you to respond in the manner I want.==

Suppose you really love ice cream and would do nearly anything for it. (Your motivator is "it makes me feel good!") Then you want someone to do something for you and you offer ice cream as an incentive because it means so much to you.

However, what if they do not like ice cream as much as you do? You may not have identified a reason for their internal motivation just because it would work for you.

The point here is that we all have our internal motivators. If you want to become adept at influencing others, you will make an effort to learn enough about them through talking, listening, and observing to provide them with the chance to achieve those motivators to do something you want them to do.

Ask Yourself

| Can you motivate someone with threats? | No. They still make the internal decision whether to act in the way |

you want them to. They may decide that protecting their income is more important than telling off the Boss if he says they HAVE TO WORK LATE.

The Boss did not motivate them to work by saying, "If you don't show up, you'll be fired," he or she just coerced them into making a decision. (What would they say if they had just won the lottery and did not need the job?)

Can you think of a time in your employment history when a boss used a threat (or an implied threat) to coerce you into doing what they wanted? How did it make you feel? Would you describe the quality of your work on that particular project your best work or just good enough to get by?

Ask
Yourself

Take a few minutes to talk with some of your peers about whom they think are the more influential people in your organization and what it is about the people they name that makes them think they are influential.

(You may have to help them realize the difference between positional and personal power. Also that influence does not mean coercion.)

The Changing Workplace

As our workplace changes, the structure of power associated with positions within it will change because of some very specific reasons.

One cause is the" flattening" of an organization. When organizations flatten themselves by eliminating their middle management layers and outsourcing more work, the typical hierarchy of power will also change. Although it may seem easy to eliminate positions because they are just boxes on an org chart, it is more difficult to change the roles and responsibilities that made up our prior culture.

For example, the person who used to coordinate the popular company picnic was lost in the reorganization. But, since the picnic is a popular tradition, morale would suffer greatly if we eliminated it, too. Therefore, who's going to handle it now?

We must decide what to do with the policies, procedures, and practices that comprised the former shape of the organization plus decide who will influence them. They all must be either modified or retained by those staying, eliminated entirely, or kept intact and distributed among the remaining positions.

Another example of change in the workplace is technology. The IT departments speed the flow of information and knowledge throughout the organization to the lowest levels outside the older models of communication from top down. Information spreads more rapidly.

The company "grapevine" continues to grow rapidly and the people who have knowledge (or the perception of having knowledge) are always sought out for the latest news – meaning they have some influence. This spreads immediately past the chains of command as emails, telephone calls, and various entries on social media sites.

There is a steady increase in the amount of smaller companies (less than 100 employees) in our current national economy resulting in less opportunity to create multiple layers of management and authority. Therefore, each position will have to have broader influential skills.

These organizational mutations with fewer positions of authority mean that management styles must evolve from director ("do it because I said so!") to coach and mentor ("how well can you do it?") to get things done.

Sources of Personal Power within the Organization

Power within an organization primarily comes from two factors: personal attributes and the person's formal position – who you are versus where you are. (Note: this course is not about organizations with strong chains-of-authority and communication such as the military which is based on rank. Although other non-military organizations have a hierarchy of authority, they are not as rigidly enforced as in the military. This course is about those described on page 5.)
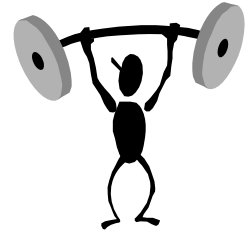
There are four specific characteristics we must discuss within the scope of who you are:

1. **Your expertise** – specialized work related knowledge is a great advantage because it erases boundaries of background, formal education, or who you know. In other words, if you are an expert in doing the work of the organization, you have some personal power based on your expert knowledge and everyone recognizes it.

2. **Your personal attraction** – desirable characteristics seen in you by those around you. These include charisma, agreeable behavior, and physical characteristics. (We will explore these a little farther in a few minutes.)

3. **The amount of effort you put into your work**. The more that you are seen as dependable, ready to "go the extra mile", or to stay late to help with unexpected work tells people that you are an above average person; i.e., the "team player" that every group needs for success.

4. **"Conformity"** is acting in alignment with the organization's norms and values. The more you act the "way we expect" here in our company, the more we will accept you into our culture. The deeper you become immersed in our culture means the more influence (power) you are likely to have with us.

Expertise

As mentioned above, this is all about work-related knowledge and the reasonable assumption that people who know the most about how to do what we do will have more influence than those who know less.

The problem associated with this characteristic is when higher-ranking people are brought in from outside, they may have to rely on lower ranking people who have more work knowledge. This can give the subordinate an influence within the organization that would seem disproportionate to their position which is typically low profile and nearly "invisible."

This is typical of a staff position where the incumbent handles all the forms, knows who to call, and must "train" the new Boss. The delicate balancing act for the subordinate is to use their knowledge to help the new Boss be successful and not to abuse the power they have by virtue of their position. The role of Radar O'Reilly in the M*A*S*H TV sitcom is an example of this situation.

Ask Yourself

What kind of expertise do you have that may be valuable in your current situation?

How can you expand your influence with this expertise?

Personal Attraction

There are three elements of personal attraction to consider:

- **Charisma** – Although the definition to the right may make it seem that this trait is more of a gift from God than something an individual can influence, research indicates there are some intentional behaviors that can lead to a "charismatic perception" by others:
    - Express a vision for the organization that is inspiring to others
    - Incur personal sacrifice and even risk while pursuing that vision
    - Recommend or support the use of non-traditional methods to achieve goals
    - Have a seemingly uncanny feel for what is possible and be very aware of timing in relation to the important issues within that vision
    - Most important of all – demonstrate sensitivity to members' needs and concerns.

> cha·ris·ma n. *pl.* cha·ris·ma·ta (-mə-tə)
> A rare personal quality attributed to leaders who arouse fervent popular devotion and enthusiasm. Personal magnetism or charm: a television news program famed for the charisma of its anchors. *Christianity* An extraordinary power, such as the ability to perform miracles, granted by the Holy Spirit.
>   The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English

- **Agreeable behavior** – the characteristics necessary to develop and sustain friendships that would include as a minimum:
    - Support an open, honest, and loyal relationship
    - Be perceived as emotionally accessible – a good listener
    - Provide unconditional and positive regard and acceptance. ("I may not approve of what you did but I am still your friend.")
    - Endure some sacrifices if the relationship requires them
    - Be genuinely sympathetic or empathetic as the situation demands

- **Physical characteristics** – Obviously, someone cannot do a lot about their innate physical characteristics but they can do something about their dress and grooming. Tabloids in the grocery store checkout line frequently run pictures of Hollywood stars with and without their makeup. Many times, the contrast is very striking.

    Remember the saying that "you only get one chance to make a good first impression" and the fact that, whether justified or not, many people make snap judgments of others based on their appearance. Make sure you give yourself every advantage that you can from a physical appearance standpoint.

Ask Yourself

What can you do to improve your personal attraction in these three areas:

- Charisma – how can you become more charismatic?

- Agreeable behavior – how can you demonstrate more agreeable behavior?

- What can you do to change your personal characteristics?

Effort

A high degree of personal effort is valued in organizations because it gives the perception the individual is reliable, persistent, and can be counted on to "go the extra mile" – (however one defines that nebulous phrase.) This trait is increasingly important in a business climate where flexibility of schedule amidst the rapidly changing environment is critical.

Unfortunately, this trait can also be a double-edged sword to the practitioner if this willingness to do "whatever it takes" is perceived by some as the departmental doormat*: the person who does all the jobs no one else wants or will do and doesn't have the strength to stand up for themselves and say no.*

In this case, we recommend demonstrating a willingness to exert the extra effort but also be strong enough to ask for some trade-offs. *"If I work late tonight to help you, can I leave early tomorrow to watch my child's Little League baseball game?"*

Ask Yourself

What opportunities exist for you to demonstrate maximum effort?

What trade-offs will you ask for to keep from becoming a doormat for the department?

Conformity

The more you attempt to conform or "fit in" with an organization means the more influence you are capable of gathering. This is much more than just following the dress code and the policies you received during the orientation process, it means that you take time to understand the culture.

Are there organizational stories of legendary efforts ("Ray stayed on the job for 72 hours during that hurricane 3 years ago") or decisions made that emphasize the company values ("Even though we could have doubled our market share, we would have had to compromise quality on that") that help define the culture?

If the company calls itself, "the company to own, the place to work, the neighbor to have", what does that mean to you as a new employee? How can understanding that phrase increase your ability to conform and gain influence as a strong supporter of the company's vision of itself?

Suppose your employer were an insurance company and the founders decided that for anyone to be promoted above a certain level anywhere within the company, they had to meet some industry requirements for professional certification.

"But I'm in Accounting and don't deal with customers! Why should I have to have that certification?" you may wonder. The answer would be that the founders wanted to make sure that every employee above a certain pay level shared the same understanding about the industry and the need for customer service. This means they would be more focused on the company overall instead of their functional department within it. In the founders' minds, it is a way to insure the corporate culture endures.

If you were to protest loudly that it doesn't make sense in today's world regardless of what the founders though fifty years ago, you could seriously threaten your credibility and subsequent influence within the organization. This is not to say that speaking up should be discouraged but rather an individual may be expected to have to "pay their dues" before they can speak with any legitimacy within the culture.

Managing "UP"

There are some ways in which a skillful subordinate can manage "up" and exert some influence over their Boss. This can be a very useful skill within an organization but, like so many other things, it can have a dangerous downside, too.

We suggest the primary motive behind using these skills should be a genuine desire to help your Boss or a peer be successful trusting that he or she will "take care of you" as time goes on. (This is the unscientific but often true concept that "what goes around, comes around.")

Otherwise, if you are perceived as a manipulator within the office environment only looking out for yourself, any good things you have done will quickly be overshadowed and your career may have hit a dead-end for the time being.

Since the work place is changing (we described this on page 9), it is critically important that the Boss be aware of what's going on below him or her. And, since their skills in gathering information and developing relationships may not be sufficiently high that they can devise processes to collect the information they need, strategically-thinking subordinates can provide it if they are prepared to do so when the door of career opportunity opens.

Before we identify what the smart subordinate can do, let's review what Bosses can do that may be useful to a subordinate. Typically, they can exert varying amounts of influence though:

- Awarding (or withholding) rewards or special opportunities to subordinates
- Helping to get (or hinder) special consideration for transfers or promotions of subordinates
- Getting items or issues outside the normal flow of work placed before executives for special consideration
- Obtaining and sharing "inside information" about current or pending organizational events or situations
- Accessing and sharing any other particular advantages unique to their position and personal relationships with their superiors.

All of those advantages are potentially available to a subordinate who is able to "manage up"; i.e., leverage influence carefully through developing a successful relationship with the Boss.

These considerations will be helpful in managing a relationship with the Boss:

1. Make sure you understand their goals, objectives, priorities, values, strengths, weaknesses, blind spots, and working style (i.e., can see the "big picture" but not good with details or the contrary as detail focused but has trouble seeing the big picture)

2. Be able to identify the pressures on him or her and their source. (Perhaps you can help to relieve some.)

3. Make sure you understand your own version of #1 above

4. Understand the limits and extent of your skills and how they may be useful to the Boss

5. Determine the extent of your need for directions and frequent approval for your accomplishments. (Do you need a lot of positive feedback on things or are you confident that you can do a good job without constantly being told that?)

6. Make sure you have clearly understood the Boss' expectations of you and that he or she understands what you need from him or her. (Such as clear directions and expectations - then leave me alone to do it.)

7. Make sure no surprises occur for them that you could have prevented or at least warned them about.

8. Be very selective about how you use their time and resources for your needs.

9. Read #1 again
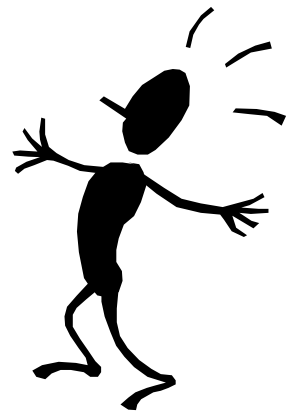
Some key behaviors to consider before developing that relationship are:

- **You must be willing to speak up if you want to influence up.** This is another example of the potential amount of risk equals the amount of gain. The Boss may not want to hear the bad news but, if you are thoughtful in your presentation of it, they may be very grateful for your information.

Ask Yourself

How willing are you to speak up to the Boss about situations in your organization?

What are some situations about would you would speak up?

Before speaking up, you should team up. If what you have to report may impact several others, it is useful to have them on your side to support what you are doing.

They can add credibility to your issue. However, be careful to make sure they aren't trying to use you to deliver bad news if the Boss is known for killing the messenger. They may be trying to manipulate you into doing their "dirty work."

Ask Yourself

How willing would you be to team up with someone else?

With whom would you want to team up? How would you get them interested in working with you to bring up the situation?

- **Speak up without arguing up**. Make sure your viewpoint argues a different viewpoint using as much objective fact as possible. Do not become argumentative by basing your presentation on emotion or broad statements that have little value such as "everybody knows" or "it's common knowledge that..."

  One way in which issues of concern can be pushed up the organization is described by Dutton and Ashford (1993) as "issue selling." If a particular issue concerns you, the employee, how can you escalate it upward so your Boss (and maybe even his or her Boss) devotes some of their limited time to address it?

Here are some considerations for packaging your concerns before sending them upward:

- **Alignment** – Make sure the issue is aligned with something valued by the organization and aligned (reasonably) with your role and responsibility within the organization. For example, if you work in engineering and bring up an accounting issue, there may be a stretch in the minds of some as to why you are bringing up an issue so far outside of your functional role.

- **Credibility** – Does the issue and your presentation of it (instead of someone else) indicate a genuine concern for the Boss and the organization or does it appear as a self-serving gesture on your part?

- **Publicity** – Present and set the issue in as public a forum as possible - meetings, face-to-face, emails, networks, conferences, or newsletters. The more who hear about it from you (or as your issue) increases the likelihood that it gets to the Boss' agenda.

- **Solvability** – Identify how it can be solved (ideally using internal resources) because issues that can't be solved are ignored and you'll be seen as wasting their time for listening and yours for addressing it in the first place.

- **WIIFT** – "What's-in-it-for-them" means you specify as clearly as possible the benefits of doing this. Topics such as redundancies (cost elimination), risk reduction, good will in the community, increased efficiencies leading to reduced costs and greater profits are all issues that would interest senior management.

- **Bundling** – Bundle your new issue with others already being considered after you clearly link yours to the others. For example, offering to share your user knowledge of a new software application the organization is implementing will enhance your reputation as you piggy-back on a change that has already been approved.

- **Teamwork** – This was identified on the previous page but is worth repeating here. The more people that you can get to support your idea means the greater the chance it will be noticed. (Also, the greater the chance someone may suggest improvements in your idea that make it look even better than you began with.)

Ask
Yourself

Which of the packaging techniques above would you use to present your information to the Boss?

How would you package it for presentation?

Position Power

The most common source of power in an organization is associated with the position (as opposed to the personal which we have discussed previously.) Typically, people holding higher positions within the organization have greater authority to act, higher spending limits, and perquisites ("perks") that lower positions don't enjoy.

However, someone does not have to have an elevated formal position within the organization to be capable of developing influence and limited power. Start small; develop experience while accumulating influence and power and eventually great things may happen to you! The four types of positional power that we will look at are centrality, flexibility, visibility, and relevance.

1. Centrality

This is not about being located in a geographically central location, i.e., the "home office", but rather in a central position within a broad network of task and interpersonal relationships. This is because, except for routine and repetitive tasks and in rare situations, NO ONE HAS ALL THE INFORMATION THEY NEED TO COMPLETE THEIR ASSIGNMENT.

The more that an individual is seen as a resource of information, as the department's "go to" person, the greater will be their information influence and power within that network. This network can extend horizontally to include departmental peers and even to those with a similar rank in other departments and vertically when providing information to the Boss who may pass it along to his or her peers.

A key aspect of this source of power is that anyone with initiative and basic social skills can develop some influence and power without being in a positional setting. As we referenced in the sitcom M*A*S*H earlier, the company clerk, Corporal Radar O'Reilly, wielded great influence and power within the camp full of much higher ranking officers because he was the "go to" person for information, equipment, or supplies out of the ordinary. (A M*A*S*H website states, "The unit's commander, Lt. Col. Henry Blake, took him under his wing. Eventually, the young man became an excellent clerk, often balancing out Lt. Col. Blake's occasional silliness with the near-magical abilities to get whatever the unit needed. Throughout much of the series, he was more or less the glue that held the 4077th together, keeping the unit running like a well-oiled machine. In one episode, when Blake received a medal for the 95% efficiency of the unit, he "jokingly" remarked that Radar is the one running the 4077th using him as a prop.)

How could you create a position of centrality within your existing network at work?

How could you strengthen your position in this network?

Ask
Yourself

2. Flexibility

Is your position one that has been around forever or has it been created recently as a response to a new company initiative, organizational requirement, or customer need? Is there much opportunity (or requirement) in your job for innovation, creativity, discretion, and "thinking out of the box"? If it is new and not well-defined and you can create it as you go, there is a strong likelihood that you can develop influence and power within your corner of the work world.

On the contrary, individuals in jobs that have existed forever and are part of a regimented work flow with well-defined routines and policies have little chance of developing much power and influence.

WARNING!!
One way to discover whether conformity or innovation is valued, look at the reward system associated with that position. If people are rewarded for "Most Dependable" or "Most Consistent", then attempts at creativity and innovation may jeopardize a career.

However, if the prize is called something like "Best New Idea", then that tells you this position could be an opportunity to develop power and influence.

Ask
Yourself

How can you demonstrate flexibility in your current position?

3. Visibility
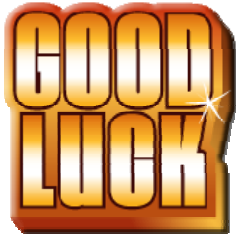
Good luck has been described as the intersection of preparation and opportunity. It is also important to add "visibility" to that formula because someone who does a great job albeit unseen in a vacuum still won't develop much power and influence.

On the contrary, "good luck' that occurs where it is visible to those in positions of power can be a tremendous boost in influence, prestige, and potential power. Also, this visibility does not have to be in front of audiences making presentations; it can simply be having access to them and making the most of the opportunity.

Or, as in the case of many executive secretaries, power and influence can mean controlling the access to the executives.

> **WARNING!!**
> Individuals who are new to the organizational world may assume that the author of a particularly good document or research project will automatically get the credit for the work. **This is not always the case!**
>
> Frequently, the person who <u>presents</u> the document in a clear and concise manner that is clearly linked to the organization's business objectives will be remembered longer by the audience than will be the author.
>
> (Think of a movie that you enjoyed a great deal. Who were the actors – the "presenters?" Who was the writer?)

There are at least two examples of increasing your visibility that can be useful:

1. **Be a part of a problem-solving task force.** If you are selected (or better yet, volunteer, and be accepted) and the task force makes a breakthrough that helps the organization, make sure you are seen as a valuable participant (see "Centrality" on page 20).

   Be sure to participate in the presentation of findings if given the chance, be a part of the group pictures (if any are taken), and anything that will help people associate you with the success of the project. (Remember; focus on how you can help the project be successful, not only on your public relations.)

2. **Make your name easily seen and recognized.** Any politician can tell you that publicity is critical if you want to have (or be thought to have) influence. Your name on a column within a departmental newsletter (even if you have to start the newsletter), on invitations to other departments for an event presented by your department or a group to whom you belong, or on a congratulatory note sent to someone within the organization who has accomplished something significant recently or just joined the company. The more your name is legitimately

(i.e., tied to organizational needs, issues, or events) visible by peers and those with higher rank can mean a gain in your influence and power.

Ask Yourself

What can you start doing today to increase your visibility within your work group?

4. Relevance

This is very simple: the more your activities are seen to align with the critical issues and objectives within your organization usually means the more influence and power you will have. Remember, it doesn't have to be formal power as a result of your position but can be based on your specialized knowledge. When something happens and people ask, "Who You Gonna' Call?" make sure it's your name that comes up.

An example of how a typical functional position has gained prestige and influence over time would be the Human Resources Department. Once called Personnel and located in the fringes of the organizational chart (if it even had a formal name and wasn't just an additional duty of some executive's competent administrative assistant), it usually dealt with collecting timesheets and getting new employees into the payroll system and exiting ones out of it.

But, as the rights of employees became more codified into Federal Law (Affirmative Action, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, the Civil Rights Act of 1964), it became financially risky for organizations that did not have policies and procedures in place on how they treated their employees.

The writers and keepers of those policies and procedures were the Personnel Department who, as their value and influence within the organization grew, became known as Human Resources (HR). Then as mergers, takeovers, downsizing, and outsourcing became more common, the roles and responsibility of HR increased even more until they are now seen as the first line of defense against employment-related litigation.

Nearly anything that occurs within an organization that touches the employees (company picnic, menu of benefits, blood drives, relocation policies, recruiting, promotion, discipline, or termination) usually requires HR's blessing as a minimum. They are very relevant and can be very influential when suggesting actions to higher executives – they can be essential counselors within an organization.

Ask Yourself

How can you enhance your relevance to the organization?

Strategies of Influence

In·flu·ence   [in-floo-uh ns]–noun

1. The capacity or power of persons or things to be a compelling force on or produce effects on the actions, behavior, opinions, etc., of others: *He used family influence to get the contract.*

2. The action or process of producing effects on the actions, behavior, opinions, etc., of another or others: *Her mother's influence made her stay*.

There are at least three broad categories of behavior associated with influencing others:

- Retribution
- Reciprocity
- Reason

It is beyond the scope of this course to make value judgments on the techniques presented: we leave that up to the reader. The intent of this course is to help the reader become more aware of them so they can deal react accordingly when confronted with them.

Retribution

This is the most primitive and straightforward method of influencing someone – simply threaten them. Although the "civilized" world of large institutions, both public and private, would not condone overt threats being made, we have devised more subtle methods of getting what we want.

We may not threaten others directly but we imply similar meanings when we use these techniques:

- **Social Pressure** – "Everyone else in your group wants to do it. What about you?"

- **Positional Pressure** – "I'm sure you and I can resolve this without having to get the Boss involved" or "Because I'm the Boss, that's why!"

- **Exhaustion** – "I'll stop (the action) if you'll give in."

- **Scarcity & Time Pressure** – "If you don't act now, they'll be gone!"

- **Martyr** – "If you don't give in, the others will suffer."
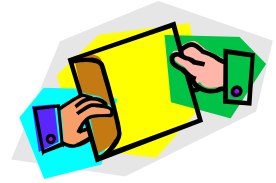
Ask Yourself

When in your work experience have you had the retribution tactic used on you or seen it used on someone else?

Was it effective?   Why or why not?

Reciprocity

This is an exchange of items of value or a sense of obligation assumed by one side in hopes the other will be shamed into the desired action:

- **Promise** – "If you'll do what I want, I'll reward you."

- **Vanity** – "People you value will think more (or less) of you if you'll do (or not do) this."

- **Exchanging** – "If I do this for you, will you do that for me?" (This differs slightly from 'Promise' in that I am offering to make the first move, not waiting for you to do it.) Please note that we suggest that you never ask someone to concede something as part of exchanging. For many people, "concede" means giving up something to the other side; i.e. a win-lose result. We suggest that you say, "*Let's trade this for that*" because trading implies an exchange of value that retains the social level of those involved; i.e., a win-win outcome.

- **Debt** – "You owe me this because of things I have done for you in the past."

- **Reciprocal compromise** – "Since I changed my initial price/offer, I expect that you'll act favorably." (It does not matter whether the initial price/offer was reasonable or not.)

When in your work experience have you had the reciprocity tactic used on you or seen it used on someone else?

Ask Yourself

Was it effective?   Why or why not?

Reason

We share similar personal values or viewpoints (or I want you to think we do).

- **Outside Proof** – "These expert opinions that you respect should convince you that I'm right."

- **Basic Needs** – "This is what I need. Will you help me?"

- **Your Goal** – "Doing this will help you achieve your goal of X."

- **Consistent Values** – "Doing this fits right in with your belief about X."

- **Vanity** – "You are the only one we know with this skill. Will you help us?" (Note that this is a slightly different variation of the 'Vanity' shown above.)

- **Loyalty** – "As a friend (fraternity, sorority, specialized group member), will you do this for me?"

- **Altruism** – "Will you do it for the good of the group?"

When in your work experience have you had the reason tactic used on you or seen it used on someone else?

Ask Yourself

Was it effective?   Why or why not?

This is a review of Influencing Strategies in the workplace

Influence Strategy	When to Use It	Possible Advantages	Possible Disadvantages	Possible Complaints
Retribution	Unequal power in influencer's favor. Commitment and quality not important. Tight time constraints. Issues not important to the target. Resistance is likely. When else?	Quick response & fast action What else?	Resentment from the target builds quickly. Trust and morale quickly erode. Must escalate pressure each time to remain effective. What else?	Ethical issues Legal issues What else?
Reciprocity	Each side has something of value to exchange If there is enough time for negotiating Joint needs are specific Mutual commitment to broad goals are not needed When else?	Low possibility of resistance since there is an exchange of value What else?	May lead to thinking that all work-related directions or requests are negotiable What else?	Those without something to "trade" have no leverage What else?
Reason	Both sides share a common view of the goals There is common respect between the parties When else?	Strengthening of the relationship What else?	It takes a long time to build the trust required for this approach What else?	May take too long to reach an agreement if both sides feel strongly What else?

Summary

We designed this course to help the student make the most of their current status within any organization regarding the development of political influence. Being born into wealth and position is not necessary for someone to become a source of influence within their world.

It does take, however, careful analysis of one's abilities, the skill set of one's Boss, the needs of the organization, and a desire to be a source of vital information or unique skills that will make peers and superiors dependent on them.

Accumulating power and influence typically takes time, patience, and perseverance. As we said earlier, sometimes you have to "pay your dues" before anyone begins to take you seriously.

But, if you are just starting your career and realistically plan to spend another twenty to thirty years working anyway, why not try to gain some political influence and power along the way? Eventually, it could make that climb up the career ladder a little easier!