CHAPTER 5

GAINING POWER AND INFLUENCE

SKILL ASSESSMENT

DIAGNOSTIC SURVEYS FOR GAINING POWER AND INFLUENCE

GAINING POWER AND INFLUENCE

Step 1: Before you read this chapter, respond to the following statements by writing a number from the rating scale that follows in the left-hand column (Pre-assessment). Your answers should reflect your attitudes and behavior as they are now, not as you would like them to be. Be honest. This instrument is designed to help you discover your level of competency in gaining power and influence so you can tailor your learning to your specific needs. When you have completed the survey, use the scoring key in Appendix 1 to identify the skill areas discussed in this chapter that are most important for you to master.

Step 2: After you have completed the reading and the exercises in this chapter and, ideally, as many of the Skill Application assignments at the end of this chapter as you can, cover up your first set of answers. Then respond to the same statements again, this time in the right-hand column (Post-assessment). When you have completed the survey, use the scoring key in the Appendix to measure your progress. If your score remains low in specific skill areas, use the behavioral guidelines at the end of the Skill Learning section to guide your further practice.

Rating Scale

1  Strongly disagree
2  Disagree
3  Slightly disagree
4  Slightly agree
5  Agree
6  Strongly agree

Assessment

Pre- Post-

In a situation in which it is important to obtain more power:

_____  1. I strive to become highly proficient in my line of work.

_____  2. I express friendliness, honesty, and sincerity toward those with whom I work.

_____  3. I put forth more effort and take more initiative than expected in my work.

_____  4. I support organizational ceremonial events and activities.

_____  5. I form a broad network of relationships with people throughout the organization at all levels.

_____  6. I send personal notes to others when they accomplish something significant or when I pass along important information to them.

_____  7. In my work I strive to generate new ideas, initiate new activities, and minimize routine tasks.

_____  8. I try to find ways to be an external representative for my unit or organization.
9. I am continually upgrading my skills and knowledge.

10. I strive to enhance my personal appearance.

11. I work harder than most co-workers.

12. I encourage new members to support important organizational values by both their words and their actions.

13. I gain access to important information by becoming central in communication networks.

14. I strive to find opportunities to make reports about my work, especially to senior people.

15. I maintain variety in the tasks that I do.

16. I keep my work connected to the central mission of the organization.

When trying to influence someone for a specific purpose:

17. I emphasize reason and factual information.

18. I feel comfortable using a variety of different influence techniques, matching them to specific circumstances.

19. I reward others for agreeing with me, thereby establishing a condition of reciprocity.

20. I use a direct, straightforward approach rather than an indirect or manipulative one.

21. I avoid using threats or demands to impose my will on others.

When resisting an inappropriate influence attempt directed at me:

22. I use resources and information I control to equalize demands and threats.

23. I refuse to bargain with individuals who use high-pressure negotiation tactics.

24. I explain why I can’t comply with reasonable-sounding requests by pointing out how the consequences would affect my responsibilities and obligations.

When trying to influence those above me in the organization:

25. I help determine the issues to which they pay attention by effectively selling the importance of those issues.

26. I convince them that the issues on which I want to focus are compatible with the goals and future success of the organization.

27. I help them solve problems that they didn’t expect me to help them solve.

28. I work as hard to make them look good and be successful as I do for my own success.

**Using Influence Strategies**

Indicate, by writing the appropriate number in the blank, how often you use each of the following strategies for getting others to comply with your wishes. Choose from a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being “rarely,” 3 being “sometimes,” and 5 being “always.” After you have completed the survey, use the scoring key in Appendix 1 to tabulate your results.

1. “If you don’t comply, I’ll make you regret it.”

2. “If you comply, I will reward you.”

3. “These facts demonstrate the merit of my position.”

4. “Others in the group have agreed; what is your decision?”
5. “People you value will think better (worse) of you if you do (do not) comply.”

6. “The group needs your help, so do it for the good of us all.”

7. “I will stop nagging you if you comply.”

8. “You owe me compliance because of past favors.”

9. “This is what I need; will you help out?”

10. “If you don’t act now, you’ll lose this opportunity.”

11. “I have moderated my initial position; now I expect you to be equally reasonable.”

12. “This request is consistent with other decisions you’ve made.”

13. “If you don’t agree to help out, the consequences will be harmful to others.”

14. “I’m only requesting a small commitment [now].”

15. “Compliance will enable you to reach a personally important objective.”
Building a Strong Power Base and Using Influence Wisely

In his significant treatise on leadership, former U.S. President Richard Nixon observed that “It is not enough for a leader to know the right thing. He must be able to do the right thing. The . . . leader without judgment or perception to make the right decisions fails for lack of vision. The one who knows the right thing but cannot achieve it falls because he is ineffectual. The great leader needs . . . the capacity to achieve” (Nixon, 1982).

The distinction between knowing the right thing and being able to do the right thing is particularly relevant for today’s workforce, which, according to a recent *Fortune* magazine report, includes large numbers of “fearless and ambitious unseasoned twenty-somethings flooding the managerial job market.” These new managers are taking positions traditionally reserved for battle-tested pros who understand from experience the ins and outs of gaining power and influence. Nearly 12 percent of employed 20- to 34-year-olds held management positions in 1998. 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 (Leger, 2000).

Professor John Kotter of Harvard University, who teaches a course on power, agrees with this assessment. “It makes me sick to hear economists tell students that their job is to maximize shareholder profits,” he says. “Their job is going to be managing a whole host of constituencies: bosses, underlings, customers, suppliers, unions, you name it. Trying to get cooperation from different constituencies is an infinitely more difficult task than milking your business for money” (Gelman, 1985).

Bogdan J. Dawidowicz, a young senior systems analyst at General Motors, is grateful he took Professor Kotter’s course during his Harvard MBA program. He credits it for his ability to handle extremely delicate assignments. For example, when he was told to evaluate product scheduling at a GM plant, he knew that plant management would not take kindly to an outsider’s disrupting their routine, demanding information, and critiquing their performance. So he called the plant superintendent and enlisted his support. Following an extended discussion, the superintendent took the lead in scheduling appointments with his staff and compiling all the necessary information prior to the visit (Buell & Cowan, 1985).

A Balanced View of Power

It should come as no surprise that many authorities argue that the effective use of power is the most critical element of management. One such authority, Warren Bennis, seeking the quintessential ingredients of effective leaders, interviewed 90 individuals who had been nominated by peers as the most influential leaders in all walks of our society. Bennis found that these individuals shared one significant characteristic: They made others feel powerful. These leaders were powerful because they had learned how to build a strong power base in their organizations or institutions. They were influential because they used their power to help peers and subordinates accomplish exceptional tasks. It requires no particular power, skill, or genius to accomplish the ordinary. But it is difficult to do the truly unusual without political clout (Bennis & Nanus, 1997).

Lack of Power

John Gardner has observed, “In this country—and in most democracies—power has such a bad name that many people persuade themselves they want nothing to do with it” (1990). For these people, power is a “four-letter word,” conjuring up images of vindictive, domineering bosses and manipulative, cunning subordinates. It is associated with dirty office politics engaged in by ruthless individuals who use as their handbooks for corporate guerrilla warfare books such as *Winning Through Intimidation*, and who subscribe to the philosophy of Heinrich von Treitschke: “Your neighbor, even though he may look upon you as a natural ally against another power which is feared by you both, is always ready, at the first opportunity, as soon as it can be done with safety, to better himself at your expense. . . . Whoever fails to increase his power, must decrease it, if others increase theirs” (Korda, 1975: 4).
Those with a distaste for power argue that teaching managers and prospective managers how to increase their power is tantamount to sanctioning the use of primitive forms of domination. They support this argument by noting the nasty political fight between Lewis Glucksman and Peter Peterson for control of Lehman Brothers that cost Lehman its independence; the conflict between co-founders Steven Jobs and John Sculley that turned Apple Computer into a battleground; and the firing of Frank Biondi, the president of Viacom, by its power-hungry chairperson Sumner Redstone.

This negative view of “personal power” is especially common in cultures that place a high value on ascription, rather than achievement, and on collectivism, rather than individualism (Triandis, 1994; Trompenaars, 1996). People who view interpersonal relations through the lens of ascription believe that power resides in stable, personal characteristics, such as age, gender, level of education, ethnic background, or social class. Hence, focusing the attention of organizational members on “getting ahead,” “taking charge,” and “making things happen” seems contrary to the natural social order. Those who place a high value on collectivism are also likely to feel uncomfortable with our approach, but for a different reason. Their concern would be that placing too much emphasis on increasing a single individual’s power might not be in the best interests of the larger group.

We acknowledge that this chapter has a very “American” orientation. Consequently, it might not be an appropriate skill development framework for all readers. For those who feel uncomfortable modeling their own behavior after the principles and guidelines in this chapter, we suggest you think of this as a useful “translation guide” for helping you understand how American business managers view power and how American corporations treat power. In addition, we hope that readers who might be tempted to assume that our approach is the only reasonable approach will understand that they are likely to interact with individuals from different cultures who will probably believe that some of these strategies are ineffective and/or inappropriate.

There are many American business leaders and scholars who make a persuasive case for operating from a position of power in an organization. Robert Dilenschneider, president and chief executive officer (CEO) of a leading public relations firm, states: “The use of influence is itself not negative. It can often lead to a great good. Like any powerful force—from potent medicine to nuclear power—it is the morality with which influence is used that makes all the difference” (Dilenschneider, 1990: xviii). Power need not be associated with aggression, brute force, craftiness, or deceit. Power can also be viewed as a sign of personal efficacy. It is the ability to mobilize resources to accomplish productive work. People with power shape their environment, whereas the powerless are molded by theirs. Rollo May, in Power and Innocence (1972), suggests that those who are unwilling to exercise power and influence are condemned to experience unhappiness throughout their lives.

There is nothing more demoralizing than feeling you have a creative new idea or a unique insight into a significant organizational problem and then coming face-to-face with your organizational impotence. This face of power is seen by many young college graduates, who annually flood the corporate job market. They are energetic, optimistic, and supremely confident that their “awesome” ability, state-of-the-art training, and indefatigable energy will rocket them up the corporate ladder. However, many soon become discouraged and embittered. They blame “the old guard” for protecting their turf and not being open to new ideas. Their feelings of frustration prompt many to look for greener pastures of opportunity in other companies—only to be confronted anew with rejection and failure. One such “victim” stated dejectedly, “Hell is knowing you have a better solution than someone else but not being able to get the votes.”

These individuals learn quickly that only the naive believe that the best recommendation always gets selected, the most capable individual always gets the promotion, and the deserving unit gets its fair share of the budget. These are political decisions heavily influenced by the interests of the powerful.

Astute managers understand that in the long run no one benefits from lopsided distributions of power. One seasoned veteran of organizational power games summarized his experience: “Powerless members of an organization either get angry and try to tear down the system, or they become apathetic and withdraw. Either way, everyone loses.”

Rosabeth Kanter (1979) has pointed out that powerful managers not only can accomplish more personally, but can also pass on more information and make more resources available to subordinates. For this reason, people tend to prefer bosses with “clout.” Subordinates tend to feel that they have higher status in an organization and their morale is higher when they perceive that their boss has considerable upward influence. In contrast, Kanter argues, powerlessness tends to foster bossiness, rather than true leadership. “In large organizations, at least,” she notes, “it is pow-
erlessness that often creates ineffective, desultory management and petty, dictatorial, rules-minded managerial styles” (p. 65).

Kanter (1979) has identified several indicators of a manager’s upward and outward power in an organization. These are shown in Table 1. In some respects, these serve as a set of behavioral objectives for our discussion of power and influence.

**Table 1** Indicators of a Manager’s Upward and Outward Power

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Powerful managers can</th>
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<tr>
<td>❑ Intervene favorably on behalf of someone in trouble.</td>
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<td>❑ Get a desirable placement for a talented subordinate.</td>
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<td>❑ Get approval for expenditures beyond the budget.</td>
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<td>❑ Get items on and off the agenda at policy meetings.</td>
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<td>❑ Get fast access to top decision makers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>❑ Maintain regular, frequent contact with top decision makers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>❑ Acquire early information about decisions and policy shifts.</td>
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**ABUSE OF POWER**

But what about Lord Acton’s well-known dictum, “Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely”? Hardly a week goes by that new evidence of this seemingly ageless observation isn’t reflected in news headlines. Doesn’t that suggest that effective managers should avoid power because “abuse of office,” with a likely fall from power, will inevitably follow?

This certainly appears to be an ageless lesson of history. In the Greek plays of Sophocles, for instance, the viewer is confronted with the image of great and powerful rulers transformed by their prior success so that they are filled with a sense of their own worth and importance—with hubris—which causes them to be impatient of the advice of others and unwilling to listen to opinions different from their own. Yet in the end they are destroyed by events that they discover, to their anguish, they cannot control. Oedipus is destroyed soon after the crowds say (and he believes) that “he is almost like a God”; King Creon, at the zenith of his political and military power, is brought down as a result of his unjust and unfeeling belief in the infallibility of his judgments.

Headlines of business trade periodicals regularly trumpet claims of modern day hubris among business elites (Bunker, Kram, & Ting, 2002). One of the most frequently mentioned examples is the “slash and burn” management style of Al Dunlap at Scott Paper and Sunbeam Electric. He takes pride in being responsible for thousands of employees losing their jobs while he takes home multimillion-dollar bonuses (DeGeorge, 1999).

Sophocles warns us never to be envious of the powerful until we see the nature of their endings. Support for the modern-day relevance of this timeless warning that arrogance tends to be self-checking is reflected in the results of studies of both successful and failed corporate executives (McCall & Lombardo, 1983; Shipper & Dillard, 2000). In the first study of its kind, scholars at the Center for Creative Leadership identified approximately 20 executives who had risen to the top of their firms and matched them with a similar group of 20 executives who had failed to reach their career aspirations. Earlier, both groups had entered their respective organizations with equal promise. There were no noticeable differences in their preparation, expertise, education, and so forth. However, over time, the second group’s careers had become “derailed” by the personal inadequacies shown in Table 2.

It is sobering to note how many of these problems relate to the ineffective use of power in interpersonal relationships. In general, this group tends to support Lord Acton’s dictum as well as the warnings of Sophocles. They were given a little authority, and they failed the test of worthy stewardship.

This observation is consistent with the research findings of David McClelland, who has spent many years studying what he considers to be one of the fundamental human needs, the “need for power” (McClelland & Burnham, 2003). According to

<table>
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<th>Characteristics That Derail Managers’ Careers</th>
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<tr>
<td>❑ Insensitive to others; abrasive and intimidating</td>
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<tr>
<td>❑ Cold, aloof, and arrogant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❑ Betraying others’ trust</td>
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<tr>
<td>❑ Overly ambitious; playing politics and always trying to move up</td>
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<tr>
<td>❑ Unable to delegate to others or to build a team</td>
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<tr>
<td>❑ Overdependent on others (e.g., a mentor)</td>
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McClelland, managers with an institutional power orientation use their power to advance the goals of the organization, whereas those with a personal power view of power tend to use their power for personal gain. For example, he found that although leaders with both orientations are likely to exhort their subordinates to engage in heroic endeavors, the “institutional power” leaders tend to link those efforts to organizational objectives, whereas the “personal power” leaders are more likely to use their subordinates’ accomplishments to further enhance their own power base.

The relationship between power and personal effectiveness that we have described is depicted in Figure 1. Both a lack of power and the abuse of power are equally debilitating and counterproductive. In contrast, empowerment uses sufficient amounts of personal power to achieve high levels of effectiveness. The purpose of this chapter is to help managers “stay on top of the power curve,” as represented by the indicators of organizational power reported by Kanter in Table 1. This is accomplished with the aid of two specific management skills:

1. Gaining power (overcoming feelings of powerlessness)
2. Converting power effectively into interpersonal influence in ways that avoid the abuse of power

We will define power as the potential to influence behavior. This is an important departure from a more traditional definition that focuses on authority-based control of behavior, as in “powerful” bosses having authority over their subordinates or “powerful” parents having control over their children. We believe there are several trends in organizations that warrant this shift in the definition of power from “having authority over others” to “being able to get things done.”

THE NECESSITY OF POWER AND EMPOWERMENT

Our discussion to this point should be viewed as a cautionary warning, reminiscent of similar concerns expressed about the potential harm resulting from the unintentional, improper use of medicine or the deliberate, harmful misapplication of powerful information technologies. Despite these legitimate concerns, people generally believe in and benefit from medicine and information technologies. The implication for our current discussion is not that we need to avoid the use of power, but that we need to learn how to use it wisely.
1. Organizations are becoming less hierarchical, or flatter, as they downsize layers of management (especially middle managers) and as they outsource work that can be done more cheaply by someone else. Rather than adding to their full-time employment ranks, many organizations are choosing to grow through the use of temporary and part-time workers who can more easily be let go during tough economic times. These leaner organizations are staffed by fewer managers who must learn to yield influence to lower-level employees in order to get the work of the organization done (Stewart, 1992).

2. Information technology, such as computers, is helping to decentralize the flow of information to lower levels of the organizational hierarchy. This not only gives lower-level employees more influence, but also increases their flexibility. Today, more and more workers are telecommuting, or working out of their homes but staying linked to the organization through the use of computers, faxes, and phones. When employees are off-site, managers must cede more decision-making control and discretion to them.

3. Traditional boundaries within and between organizations are becoming blurred. The “boundaryless” organization is becoming in vogue as we see evidence of the virtual organization composed of a network of different entities (Tully, 1993). Such an organization will exist only for the life of a project (say, a motion picture) and then disband upon its completion. These structural changes shift the nature of authority relationships as well.

4. The percentage of the workforce working in companies with fewer than 100 employees is increasing. In a small business where the organization’s survival depends on good customer relations, imaginative ideas for new products, and favorable financial agreements with banks, personal characteristics are often the predominant source of power. The work of each employee is highly visible and the unique contribution of the aggressive salesperson or the problem-solving engineer will likely be recognized and rewarded. This may be why we see more and more MBAs choosing to forgo employment with blue-chip firms for smaller, entrepreneurial ventures (Labich, 1995).

Each of these changes is contributing to the evolution of the role of the typical manager from director to coach and mentor. Under these conditions, power is likely to come less from someone’s formal position in the organization than from one’s ability to perform. The conditions make the notion of empowerment particularly important for your effectiveness in today’s organizations.

Two basic factors determine a person’s power in an organization: personal attributes and position characteristics. Naturally, the importance of each factor varies depending on the organizational context. For example, position title is extremely important in a strong hierarchical system, such as the military or civil service. The saying “Rank has its privileges” illustrates the fact that in these organizations many rewards are allocated more on the basis of position title than personal performance. However, given the trends noted above, you will notice that our discussion of position power is very nonhierarchical. By this we mean that rather than focusing on the level of authority attached to a position, we focus on the opportunities embedded in a position or a job.

Although the trend in American firms is toward person-based views of power, there are cultural reasons why individuals might prefer a position-based orientation regarding power. Research has shown that people who have been raised in different cultures are likely to hold different views regarding the determinants of success (Chiu, 2001; Choi, Nisbett, & Norenzayan, 1999). Specifically, it has been shown that Eastern cultures encourage contextual, or situational, logic (“He was promoted because he got to know lots of people while working in headquarters”), whereas Western cultures foster personal, or dispositional, explanations (“He was promoted because he is the smartest engineer in the company”). This comparison was summarized by Chiu (1972: 236) as follows: “Chinese are situation-centered. They are obliged to be sensitive to their environment. Americans are individual-centered. They expect their environment to be sensitive to them.”

The strength of this “dispositional bias” in Western thought is reflected in research showing that Americans are willing to make very confident predictions about future behavior on the basis of a very small sample of past behavior and that they consistently overestimate the predictive power of personality traits (Choi, Nisbett, & Norenzayan, 1999: 55). Psychologists have also observed that Japanese and American college students describe themselves in very different ways. For example, phrases like “I am curious” and “I am sincere” appeared three times more often in the Americans’ descriptions. In contrast, Japanese students were far more likely to describe themselves in terms of
their social identities (e.g., “I am a Keiyo student”) or in terms of a specific context (e.g., “One who plays mah-jongg on Friday nights”) (Choi, Nisbett, & Norenzayan, 1999: 49).

It is worth noting that there are differences of opinion among organizational scholars regarding the relative importance of these two sources of power: who you are versus where you are (Bolman & Deal, 1997; Kanter, 1979; Kotter, 1977; Pfeffer, 1981, 1992). We have found the distinction between human capital and social capital useful in sorting out these competing claims (Adler & Kwon, 2002; Burt, 1997). Human capital refers to an individual’s abilities and competencies, whereas social capital refers to a person’s social connections within and outside an organization. In a sense, this is the difference between saying “I know the answer to that question” versus “I know someone who does.” Burt’s underlying argument is that managers with high social capital (what we are calling high position power) are in a better position to capitalize on their human capital (personal power) because their social connections allow them to leverage their personal knowledge and abilities. Hence, it makes sense for managers seeking to increase their influence in an organization to increase both sources of power.

**SOURCES OF PERSONAL POWER**

Four personal characteristics are important sources of power. As Table 3 shows, these are expertise, personal attraction, effort, and legitimacy. Expertise reflects knowledge and capabilities; personal attraction involves affective appeal; effort suggests personal commitment and motivation; and legitimacy conveys credibility.

**Expertise**

It is self-evident that in an era of technological sophistication expertise is an important source of power. In an e-commerce business environment, where the most highly sought-after skills are more likely possessed by teenagers who have never had a real job than by their parents who have been working for 20 years, and where the median age of millionaires will soon be closer to 30 than to 60, it is hard to dispute the claim that expertise is the ascending “coin of the realm” in business. Increasingly, what you know is more important than who you know in getting a job and what you can do technically is the key to what you can become organizationally. Expertise, or work-related knowledge, is the great organizational equalizer because it can come from formal education, self-directed learning, or on-the-job experience. In addition, the universally understood and accessible standard of competence is the basis for evaluation and the antecedent of accomplishment.

Because the preponderance of management positions are not in small “dot-com” companies, but in larger, more diversified businesses, our focus will be on expertise as a source of personal power in that organizational setting. Expertise is especially salient in established business organizations because of their preference for a highly rationalized decision-making process (Bunderson, 2002; Pfeffer, 1977). In an environment in which choices are supposed to be made by objectively considering information supporting each alternative, a person possessing knowledge readily accrues power. This can become problematic when subordinates have more expertise than their bosses. The skillful subordinate makes knowledge available to the superior in a manner that does not threaten the boss’s right to make the final decision but at the same time reinforces the subordinate’s position as an expert. In essence, expert knowledge is deemed to be reliable information—something decision makers can bank on because it comes from someone whose expertise inspires trust.

That staff specialists gain power by virtue of their expertise points out the importance of examining both position and personal sources of power. If you examined only the position-power of staff specialists, you might conclude that they have very little power. Their role in the organization is not very visible, compared to line management; their jobs are often routine; and

<table>
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<th>Table 3</th>
<th>Determinants of Personal Power</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>CHARACTERISTIC</strong></td>
<td><strong>DESCRIPTION</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Expertise</td>
<td>Task-relevant knowledge or experience</td>
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<tr>
<td>Personal attraction</td>
<td>Desirable characteristics associated with friendship</td>
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<tr>
<td>Effort</td>
<td>Higher-than-expected commitment of time</td>
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<tr>
<td>Legitimacy</td>
<td>Behavior consistent with key organizational values</td>
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agreeable behavior. These behaviors are the kinds one would normally associate with friendship. Indeed, much of this research has been motivated by a desire to understand the essential ingredients of friendships. Studies of this type have identified several major factors that foster interpersonal attraction. Some of these are shown in Table 4 (Anderson et al., 2001; Canfield & LaGaipa, 1970; Furman, 2001).

How can we relate this information on friendship to the supposedly hard-nosed world of management? Does this imply that you must become good friends with your co-workers, subordinates, or boss? Not necessarily. Very often, people choose to work with others because of their demonstrated expertise, even when they know they will have difficulty getting along with them. Furthermore, it is often inappropriate to establish a close friendship with someone in your office. Thus, one need not become friends with everyone at work, but people who possess personality characteristics that are attractive to their co-workers (the kind that, if circumstances permitted, would likely lead to a strong friendship) will likely feel empowered (Hogg, 2001; Mechanic, 1962).

This proposition has been corroborated by an impressive amount of evidence. For example, individuals...
making persuasive arguments are more likely to be effective if they are liked by their audience. This stems from the fact that likable individuals are viewed as more trustworthy and impartial than disliked individuals. Subordinates who are liked by their supervisor also tend to be given the benefit of the doubt in performance appraisals. This benevolent orientation is also manifest in the fact that bosses use rewards rather than coercion to influence subordinates they like (Allinson, Armstrong, & Hayes, 2001; Tedeschi, 1974).

We don’t want to overemphasize this point, nor do we mean to suggest that “good guys” always win, but there is an impressive amount of evidence that individuals with agreeable personalities become more influential than those with disagreeable personalities. Their arguments are given more credence, their influence attempts are less likely to evoke resistance, and co-workers seem less threatened if they are promoted.

In general, given a strong cultural distrust of individuals with power, leaders with likable personalities tend to put others at ease and, in so doing, gain greater trust and influence. This pattern is consistent with the explanations for promising management candidates ending up as “derailed executives” (Table 2) because they were perceived to be insensitive to others, abrasive and intimidating, as well as cold, aloof, and arrogant.

The third basis for interpersonal attraction, physical appearance, operates independently of personality or even behavior (Hosoda, Stone-Romero, & Coats, 2003; Langlois et al., 2000). Studies have shown that people judged to have an attractive appearance are also judged to have socially desirable personality characteristics and to lead highly successful lives. It is further assumed that they hold prestigious jobs and are highly successful marriage partners and parents. In addition, attractive individuals are judged to be masters of their own fate—pursuing their own goals, imbued with a sense of mission—rather than being buffeted by environmental forces. In general, it appears that people assume attractive individuals are also virtuous and efficacious.

There is considerable evidence that these are not merely fanciful attributions. In some respects, attractive people are more successful. Research has found that, on the average, physically attractive people are paid more than their counterparts in organizations. Attractive students are assumed by teachers to be intelligent and disinclined to get into mischief. In a work setting, the written work of attractive people is more likely to be judged of high quality, and attractive people are more likely to receive high performance appraisals from their supervisors than are other people (Hosoda, Stone-Romero, & Coats, 2003; Langlois et al., 2000).

Findings on personal attraction are obviously the most difficult to transform into concrete suggestions for personal development. There is not much one can do as an adult to radically transform one’s basic appearance. However, this information is still highly relevant for managers for two reasons. First, in many of these studies, attractiveness was achieved through dress and grooming (Thompson, 2001, p. 141). Hence, it appears unnecessary for most people to resort to plastic surgery and other artificial forms of physical enhancement to boost their self-confidence. Second, one can become more sensitive to the way others form impressions and make evaluations. If you suspect you do not measure up very well in this category, despite your best efforts at “accentuating the positive,” it is a good idea to compensate by emphasizing other sources of power. If, indeed, self-confidence is the primary mechanism for transforming personal attractiveness into organizational power, then other personal and positional characteristics can contribute in a similar manner to one’s self-confidence.

### Effort

A high level of personal effort is one of the most highly prized characteristics of employees because it means they are dependable, reliable human resources. If individuals can be counted on to stay late to get out a delivery following a technological breakdown, to catch an early morning flight to visit a promising new customer, or to take a night class to learn a new software program, they earn the trust of their co-workers and their supervisors. Being known as a person who will do “whatever it takes” to get the job done is a

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**Table 4 Characteristics of Likable People**

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<th>We like people when we have reason to believe they will:</th>
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<td>❑ Support an open, honest, and loyal relationship.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❑ Foster intimacy by being emotionally accessible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❑ Provide unconditional, positive regard and acceptance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❑ Endure some sacrifices if the relationship should demand them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❑ Provide social reinforcement in the form of sympathy or empathy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❑ Engage in the social exchanges necessary to sustain a relationship.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are a variety of other ways by which effort fosters personal power. In a seminal article entitled “Sources of Power of Lower Participants,” David Mechanic (1962) described a particular process whereby members of organizations often obtain more power than is warranted by their position in the hierarchy. His observation is based on the premise that because senior members of an organization are unable to attend to all their important business, they are forced to rely on junior members to perform many tasks critical to the goals of the organization. The senior officers thus become highly dependent on their subordinates. If subordinates do not perform well, it reflects poorly on their bosses’ judgment and ability to supervise. As a result, subordinates are in a position to increase their power by working hard on these vital assignments, thereby gaining favor with their supervisors.

In addition to creating a sense of indebtedness, or obligation, a high level of effort can enhance other personal characteristics. For example, individuals who work hard at a task tend to increase their knowledge of the subject. Therefore, they are more likely to be sought out for their advice on that topic. They are also more apt to gather information that is relevant to other members of the organization. This information often can be the key to reducing another person’s uncertainty.

The efficacy of personal effort is borne out in the career of Gordon McGovern, CEO of Campbell Soup and erstwhile president of Pepperidge Farms. During the 1960s, when he was a young executive rising through the ranks at Pepperidge Farms, McGovern liked to get up before dawn and hop aboard one of the company’s bread delivery trucks. “I’d talk to the distributors and to the store managers to see what people were buying,” he recalls. In addition, as a trainee, he learned how to mix bread in 10-quart bowls and knead it by hand. This extra effort gave McGovern personal knowledge of the production process, the distribution system, and customers’ preferences (Miller, 1985). Similarly, Herb Kelleher, CEO of Southwest Airlines, is known for his “management by walking around.” He frequently serves customers on flights and visits baggage handlers and gate agents to listen to their concerns.

An extraordinary level of personal effort can also result in increased responsibility and opportunity through a process known as cognitive dissonance reduction. A fundamental principle of psychology is that individuals strive to reduce inconsistencies between their own personal beliefs and personal behavior and between their expectations of others and the behavior of others. Applied to our discussion of effort, this principle has an important implication. When individuals exert more effort to perform their jobs than is expected, according to organizational policy or office norms, an inconsistency exists. Because the person’s rewards are based on completion of the amount of work normally expected, the inconsistency can be eliminated only by reduced effort or increased responsibility. While it is quite common for “rate-busters” in blue-collar jobs to be informed by their co-workers that their extra effort is unacceptable because it makes the rest of the group look bad, this approach to dissonance reduction is less common in managerial ranks. At that level, extraordinary effort is viewed as a sign of commitment and dedication that should be encouraged and rewarded.

Before leaving this topic, we want to make a distinction between extraordinary effort and extraordinary image. The former focuses on enhanced performance, the latter on enhanced regard (without performance). The objective of the first is enhancing the boss; the objective of the second is impressing the boss. Based on their intensive examination of effective boss–subordinate relationships in major corporations, Jack Gabarro and John Kotter (1980) suggest several highly relevant guidelines for directing your efforts to the benefit of your boss. As shown in Table 5, these include understanding your boss’s pressures and priorities as well as assessing your own needs and strengths. This knowledge helps you improve your performance by targeting your efforts to maximize their impact.

This perspective is initially articulated as the vision of a dominant leader (often the founder) and institutionalized as the organization’s culture (Deal & Kennedy, 1982; Peters, 1978; Schein, 1999). It typically focuses on the “hows” and “whys” of doing business the “right” way. Values are proclaimed via the insistent message of a strong leader. For example, Harold Geneen at ITT stressed, “Search for the unshakable facts”; Tom Jones at Northrop emphasized, “Everybody at Northrop is in marketing”; John DeButts at AT&T drummed into employees, “The system is the solution”; and Ed Rust at State Farm frequently asked colleagues, “How would a good neighbor handle this?”

New members of an organization are taught what is acceptable behavior through stories (the engineer who worked for 72 hours straight to save a project), rites (graduation or promotion ceremonies), and symbols (uniforms, no private offices for managers). The savvy newcomer looks beyond formal position statements, probing for answers to questions such as: “What are the organization’s ‘sacred cows’?” “What’s the quickest way to get into trouble?” “What is the
This does not mean that a nonconformist can’t get ahead in the corporate world. It simply suggests that he or she will be held to a higher standard in terms of other sources of personal power, such as expertise and effort. A conversation during a promotion review meeting in a major corporation reflects this attitude: “I don’t trust the SOB, but he is so blasted smart and he works so darn hard, we have no choice but to promote him.”

**Legitimacy**

Actions that are congruent with the prevailing value system are deemed credible, or legitimate, by other organizational members. They are taken for granted, rather than challenged or scrutinized. Therefore, *legitimacy* increases acceptance, and acceptance is a key to personal influence. Organizational leaders are vigilant in defending core organizational values and in socializing newcomers to proper modes of thinking and acting. Often, new members or outsiders fail to understand the critical role an organization’s culture plays in articulating, and defending, its raison d’être. Conventional thinking may appear peculiar or arbitrary until it is examined from both a historical and a strategic perspective.

Managers understand that a precondition for their organization’s becoming a market leader is to be perceived as a unique player in the market (e.g., not just another computer company). They strive to create a distinctiveness that merits attention from the financial community, potential employees, and customers. This may involve placing a premium on quality, economy, value, service, loyalty to employees, or civic involvement. This uniqueness is the basis for internal organizational pride and external projections of excellence.

Such an outcome appears less sinister and more rational when one considers that organizations abhor uncertainty, both in their environment and internally. Espoused values and beliefs help reduce uncertainty. They provide a framework for interpreting the behavior of others, communicate a consistent set of priorities, and increase the efficiency of the interpersonal transactions. Individuals who fail to conform to these organizational expectations create “noise” in the system. Their inconsistency makes communication and interaction problematic, because, in common parlance, colleagues “don’t know where they’re coming from.” Consequently, these individuals tend to become bypassed and isolated. In fact, Jack Welch, recent CEO of General Electric, proclaimed that managers at GE who “make their numbers” but who do not espouse the value system of GE will not be promoted as they have been in the past.
Before leaving the subject of organizational culture and personal legitimacy, it is important to note that the discussion so far has been descriptive rather than normative. That is, we have described what it takes to become empowered in an organization, especially one with strong cultural values. That doesn’t mean that strict conformity is morally right or that it is necessarily in the best long-term interests of the firm. In fact, evidence suggests that successful organizations have members who are capable of both gaining power by fitting in and using that power to challenge the prevailing belief system that, in some sense, has been responsible for their gaining power (Pascale, 1985). Unchallenged organizational beliefs often interfere with a company’s necessary adaptation to changing competitive and regulatory conditions. However, challenges are most successful when mounted by members whose commitment to the organization has been the most loyal. “Paying your dues” creates legitimacy, and legitimacy is a prerequisite for effective criticism.

In summary, we have highlighted four sources of personal power, in the sense that they are organizational valued assets attributed to individuals, not to the positions they occupy or the titles they carry. These personal characteristics have one thing in common—they are the antecedents of trust (Dirks & Ferrin, 2001; Hosmer, 1995). The relationship between trust and power is central to the overall view of power and influence espoused in this chapter. One meaning of the term trustworthy is “being above suspicion.” Hence, individuals who are deemed trustworthy by their peers are likely candidates for positions of power and influence in organizations because organizational authority in their hands is less threatening. As shown in Table 6, there is a direct relationship between the four bases of personal power we’ve discussed and the requirements for personal trust. Basically, the trustworthiness of an individual’s claims, promises, or commitments is a function of two factors: (1) How likely is it that the person can do what he or she says? and (2) How likely is it that the person will do what he or she says? In other words, questions of trust devolve into assessments of probable performance informed by judgments regarding ability and motivation. This is why organizations place a great deal of emphasis on placing proven performers in positions of high trust (read power).

### SOURCES OF POSITION-POWER

Not all power stems from personal characteristics. In addition, the nature of one’s position and task assignments play an important role. This is illustrated by the standard practice in most organizations of placing limits on how much position holders at different hierarchical levels can spend or on the size of the exception they can authorize. Five important characteristics of a position account for its power potential in an organization: centrality, flexibility, visibility, and relevance (Fiol, O’Connor, & Aguinis, 2001; Kanter, 1979; Pfeffer, 1992). These are shown in Table 7.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Centrality</td>
<td>Access to information in a communication network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility</td>
<td>Amount of discretion vested in a position</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visibility</td>
<td>Degree to which task performance is seen by influential people in the organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relevance</td>
<td>Alignment of assigned tasks and organizational priorities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 5

GAINING POWER AND INFLUENCE

Centrality

One of the most important ways of gaining power in an organization is by occupying a position of centrality in a broad network of task and interpersonal relationships. Networks are critical to effective performance for one compelling reason: Except for routine jobs, no one has all the necessary information and resources to accomplish what’s expected of him or her. Indeed, one investigation of the determinants of effective management performance concluded that a key factor distinguishing high and low performers was the ability to establish informal relationships via networks. Isolates in informal networks were unable to gather the necessary information, resource commitments, and personal support necessary to accomplish unusual, important tasks (Kaplan & Mazique, 1983; Sparrowe, Liden, & Kraimer, 2001). On the other hand, those who have extensive diverse social networks in their work earn higher salaries and are more successful than those with extensive but narrow contact with others (Pfeffer & Konrad, 1991; Sparrowe, Liden, & Kraimer, 2001).

Power is accrued via horizontal and vertical network relationships by virtue of one’s location and function in the network. Horizontal networks link positions with similar levels of authority, whereas vertical networks include positions with different levels of authority. The more central a position is to the flow of information throughout a network, and the more critical the function is to the performance of others in a network, the more power will be accrued. This view of organizational power is referred to as strategic contingencies (Pfeffer, 1992). It argues that the reason for the uneven distribution of power in organizations is that units and positions differ in their ability to control strategic contingencies (e.g., the securing of information, expertise, financing) critical to the effective performance of others. Few important activities occur in isolation; what happens in one unit affects another. It follows that the more pervasive the effect of a position’s activities throughout the organization, the greater is its power base.

Increasing the power of a position by increasing its centrality in a communication or work flow network represents a very different approach from conventional strategies. Typically, young aspiring members of an organization think only in terms of increasing their power by moving up the organizational career ladder. They mistakenly assume that power is the exclusive right of hierarchical position. If they are not promoted as quickly as they would like, they assume their ability to accomplish the unusual is thereby curtailed. Inexperienced, ineffective organizational members grumble about not having enough formal power to get work done, and they covet the influence wielded on higher levels. In contrast, savvy organizational members realize that informal network power is available to individuals at all levels. Furthermore, they understand that informal personal power generally precedes, rather than follows from, formal organizational power. A promotion is simply a formal recognition by senior management that an individual has demonstrated the ability to get work done using informal networks.

The merits of building a horizontal power base became clear to Alan Brewer, a business manager in the medical supplies division of Hewlett-Packard (HP), when his initiatives were blocked by senior managers. He suggested to a manager in the medical instruments division that the reusable electrodes on HP electrocardiograph machines be replaced with disposable electrodes, which were becoming much more popular. The reply was, “It’s too expensive to make the switch.” Alan had done enough research to know this wasn’t true. Further investigation revealed the real problem. The man who had helped develop the disposable electrodes was abrasive, and he had alienated members of the instruments division. Now, members were unwilling to take any action that would make this person look good.

Alan overcame this problem by asking people in his division to develop a new electrode—one that would not be burdened by association with an unpopular executive. During the development stage, he actively served as a mediator, keeping colleagues in other divisions abreast of his progress. Several suggestions for enhancements were incorporated during this phase. After building a broad base of support for the new product throughout the organization, he had no difficulty getting the second request approved (Gelman, 1985).

This example illustrates the merits of establishing broad networks of organizational contacts. One of the biggest mistakes individuals make at the outset of their management careers is to become isolated. Such people assume that getting ahead in their department is sufficient for getting ahead in the organization. As a result, they concentrate all their attention on building strong relations with their immediate co-workers. If you reconsider organizations in terms of horizontal structures, you will see how isolated a communication network in a single department is. It is important to become a central actor in the organization’s communication network, not just the department’s. This can be done by going to lunch with people in other departments, reading the annual reports of all the divisions,
volunteering for interdepartmental task forces, and seeking out boundary-spanning positions that require you to work with other departments.

It is important that managers seeking to form wide-reaching social networks understand that social relations look very different in different cultural settings. Specifically, research has shown that members of different cultures differ in terms of how many friendships they are likely to form at work, the extent to which they are likely to mix socioemotional and instrumental social ties, the strength and longevity of their social relations, and the likelihood of their forming social networks that are upward, lateral, or downward directed (Morris et al., 1999). For example, American business relationships are characterized by the norms of the marketplace (they must be profitable). In contrast, Chinese business relationships are characterized by a familial orientation (doing whatever is good for the organization), German relationships are characterized by a legal-bureaucratic orientation (play by the rules), and Spanish relationships are characterized by an affiliative orientation (sociability and friendship) (Morris et al., 1999).

**Flexibility**

A critical requirement for building a power base is flexibility, or discretion—that is, freedom to exercise one’s judgment. A person who has little latitude to improvise, to innovate, or to demonstrate initiative will find it extremely difficult to become powerful (except in unusual situations in which meticulous obedience to rules disrupts the system, as in the case of air traffic controllers’ slowdowns). Power can be lost because circumstances often change more readily than people or their jobs can change to keep up with the new times (Pfeffer, 1992). A flexible position has few rules or established routines governing how work should be done. In addition, when a manager needs to make a nonroutine decision, it is not necessary to seek a senior manager’s approval. Flexibility tends to be associated with certain types of work assignments, particularly tasks that are high in variety and novelty (Hinings et al., 1974). People in such positions are assigned several types of activities, each of which requires the use of considerable judgment. The more routine the work and the fewer the tasks assigned a person, the easier it is to preprogram the job to eliminate the need for discretion.

Flexibility is also correlated with the life cycle of a position. New tasks are much more difficult to routinize than old ones. Similarly, the number of rules governing a position tends to be positively correlated with the number of individuals who have previously occupied it. Because the intention of rules is to expose exceptions, the longer a position has been in existence, the more likely it is that exceptions have been discovered.

The same logic applies to the life cycle of a decision-making process. The longer a group has been meeting to discuss an issue, the more difficult it is to have any significant amount of influence over its deliberations, unless the decision-making process becomes hopelessly stalemated. The critical decisions about how discussions will be conducted, what evidence should be examined, and which alternatives are germane are all made early in a group’s history. To make a difference, therefore, it is important to be a participant from the beginning.

One indication of the amount of flexibility inherent in a position is the reward system governing it. If people occupying a position are rewarded for being reliable and predictable, that suggests the organization will penalize people who use discretion. On the other hand, if people are rewarded for unusual performance and innovation, discretion is encouraged. A “reliable performance” reward system uses as its performance criterion conformity to a set of prescribed means for performing a task, such as a detailed procedure for assembling an electronic circuit. In contrast, an “unusual performance” reward system eschews consistency in favor of initiative. For example, a company may teach salespeople how to close a deal but at the same time encourage them to figure out better ways to do the task. Individuals with a high need for power should avoid a job that is governed by the reliable performance criterion, no matter how attractive it might appear in other aspects, because it will strip them of a necessary prerequisite of power.

**Visibility**

A sage corporate executive once counseled a young, aspiring MBA, “The key formula for promotion is excellent performance multiplied by visibility.” Obviously, a highly visible, poor performance will not lead to promotion, but the real message of this advice is that an excellent, but obscure, performance won’t either. This advice is supported by a Chicago consultant, Karolus Smejda, who is frequently brought into organizations to coach “competent but invisible” young managers. “The boss will say to me, ‘Karolus, this guy is a wonderful worker, but he’s just not visible enough.’ My job is to make that person aware of the
need to become well connected,” he says (Gelman, 1985).

One measure of visibility is the number of influential people with whom you normally interact in your organization. This helps explain why people-oriented positions are often more powerful than task-oriented positions. Of course, contacts with some members of an organization are more important than with others. It is critical that a position foster frequent contact with senior officials, decision makers, and informal leaders. This can be accomplished through participation in company or outside programs, meetings, and conferences. Many a young career has been secured by a strong presentation at a trade association convention or board meeting.

Recognizing this point, an enterprising junior executive in a large Chicago conglomerate seized on a chance occurrence to impress the chairman of the board. By a strange set of circumstances, the young executive was asked to fill in for the secretary of the board of directors and take notes at a stockholders’ meeting. Making sure that he arrived early, he greeted every person who entered the boardroom and then introduced that person to every other member in the room. The fact that this young man was able to put everyone at ease (not to mention remember the names of a large number of strangers) so impressed the chairman that he subsequently provided several opportunities for him to advance rapidly in the organization.

This example points out an important distinction between centrality and visibility. The purpose of becoming central in a broad communication network is to tap into a rich flow of information so you can satisfy the information needs of others. In contrast, from the point of view of visibility, being in a position that allows you to interact with a large number of influential people increases your power by making your accomplishments more evident to the people who allocate resources, such as desirable assignments and promotions.

The value of visibility is clearly demonstrated in the position of an executive secretary. For example, Jean C. Jones, while serving as executive secretary to the chairman of Intel Corporation, decided each day how many of the 125 telephone calls would gain Gordon Moore’s ear and how much of the 30-inch stack of mail he would see. The power inherent in this gatekeeping role is also reflected in the fact that Kathleen Kallmer parlayed her job as executive secretary to Beatrice Company’s chairman James L. Dutt into an assistant vice presidency in four years (Baum & Byre, 1986).

By far, the best way to gain visibility is by means of direct contact, and face-to-face communication is the most influential means to accomplish this. Inexperienced managers often assume that credit for writing an excellent report automatically goes to the author. Unfortunately for good writers, this is not always the case. If one member of a group composes a very good report and another member gives a very good presentation of the report to an executive committee, the presenter will likely receive a disproportionately large share of the credit for the work. Busy executives tend to be more impressed by what they see in a meeting than by what they read in their offices. They have fewer distractions in meetings (no stacks of other reading material or interruptions by phone calls), and a slightly positive personal evaluation of a presentation can be transformed into a very strong positive evaluation by the approving nods and smiles of other executives in the meeting.

Another important opportunity for gaining visibility is participation in problem-solving task forces. Being asked to serve in this capacity conveys to others that you have valuable expertise. More importantly, if the task force’s report is received well by senior officials, your name will be associated with the group responsible for the “breakthrough.” Using the language of the strategic contingencies model, problem solvers gain power by helping others cope with uncertainty. For example, those heads of government whose accomplishments stand out dramatically in a historical perspective are those who proposed remedies during major crises. Consider that Winston Churchill is credited with helping Britain survive World War II. On the smaller scale of a business firm, this truism is equally reliable. The visibility of a person’s performance is directly proportional to the significance of the tasks performed and the popularity of the causes championed.

Another additional source of visibility is name recognition. Elected officials recognize the value of keeping their names before the electorate, so they place signs at state and city boundaries and entrances to public transportation terminals welcoming travelers. In organizations there are analogous opportunities for enhancing your visibility. For example, if your office regularly sends information to the public or other departments, try enclosing a signed cover note. If you are new to an organization, introduce yourself to other members. If you have a good idea, formally communicate it to the appropriate parties in person, as well as in a follow-up memo. If someone has recently accom-
plished something significant, send a note expressing congratulations and appreciation.

**Relevance**

This leads us to the fourth critical characteristic of powerful positions, **relevance**, which means being associated with activities that are directly related to the central objectives and issues in an organization. As one manager put it, “My peers are responsive to me because the functions that I manage are the lifeblood of the organization. I manage the people who provide readings on their vital signs; consequently, my presence in their office implies that there’s a vital concern of one sort or another that needs to be dealt with” (Kaplan & Mazique, 1983, p. 10).

A noted organizational sociologist, Charles Perrow (1970), argues that, in an advanced consumer products–oriented economy, sales and marketing represent the central concerns of most businesses. Because other activities in the organization are dependent on revenues from sales, the work performed by sales personnel is most relevant to the central concern of organizational survival.

Refining this general proposition, Paul Lawrence and Jay Lorsch (1969) identified the “dominant competitive issue” for companies using different types of technology. The dominant competitive issue is the organizational activity that most accounts for the firm’s ability to compete effectively with other members of its industry. Companies using a flow-process form of technology, such as oil refineries and chemical plants, were found to be most dependent on effective marketing because of their sizable capital investment and small range of product alternatives. In contrast, companies using a standard mass-production (assembly-line) form of technology, with a stable line of products and established customers, were most dependent on the efficiency of their production process. Finally, high-tech firms, or companies producing custom-designed products, were most successful when they had strong research and development departments.

This general principle accounts for a significant recent shift in the power of the human resources department in large corporations. In the past, human resource executives occupied the outer circle in the corporate power structure. They ran a staff of personnel specialists, occupying the lower floors of the headquarters building. Today, a great many report directly to the CEO and play a key role in strategic decisions. The reason for this dramatic change is that with the increase in acquisitions, mergers, and divestments, corporations must base strategic decisions on human resource considerations. These include matching high-priced skills with critical jobs, keeping key personnel after a merger, solving human resource problems that arise from introducing new technology or closing a plant, and formulating agreements with the unions of an acquired firm (Conner & Ulrich, 1996).

According to business authorities, “The rise of the human resources function is the most dramatic change in managerial function since financial executives rose to power in the 1960s during the ‘conglomerate era,’ when asset management was the pressing problem in corporations” (Hoerr, 1985).

These results have significant implications for task relevance. An individual who seeks influential positions must be sensitive to the relevance of his or her department’s activities for the company. For example, a design engineer who works for an oil company is less likely to become influential than one who works for an electronics firm, and operations researchers will have more influence in companies with established product lines and an assembly-line production process. Computer scientists are more likely to feel empowered in a software development firm than if they are working for an insurance company or a public utility. In the latter organization, computer programming is viewed as a support function, with only an indirect effect on profitability.

There are other indications of the relevance of assigned activities besides their relationship to the firm’s dominant competitive issue. For example, the role of representative or advocate is powerful because it enables a person to become identified with important causes. Another key role is that of evaluator. Positions designated by the organization as checkpoints become powerful by virtue of the fact that they create dependence. The approval controlled by people in these positions is highly relevant to those individuals who must receive it to obtain organizational rewards.

The role of trainer or mentor to new members of a work unit is another powerful position. It places you in a critical position to reduce uncertainty for newcomers and substantially enhance their performance. Newcomers are generally apprehensive, and they will appreciate your showing them the ropes. Also, successful performance in this developmental role earns you the respect and admiration of those colleagues who stand to benefit from your effective training.

To summarize, we have discussed four aspects of organizational positions that are critical to the
CHAPTER 5

GAINING POWER AND INFLUENCE

Table 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Influence Strategies</th>
<th>Direct Approach</th>
<th>Indirect Approach</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Retribution: Force others to do what you say</td>
<td>1. Coercion (threaten)</td>
<td>2. Intimidation (pressure)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reciprocity: Help others want to do what you say</td>
<td>3. Bargaining (exchange)</td>
<td>4. Ingratiation (obligate)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reason: Show others that it makes sense to do what you say</td>
<td>5. Present facts (or needs)</td>
<td>6. Appeal to personal values (or goals)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

achievement of power. As Table 7 shows, centrality and relevance encourage the gaining of power through horizontal relationships. That is, a position’s potential for power is based on its relationship to other lateral positions and activities in the organization. However, visibility and flexibility are linked to hierarchical power. Flexibility reflects the amount of discretion vested in a position by superiors. Positions that are closely supervised provide a poor vantage point for establishing a power base. A highly visible position has close ties with higher levels of authority, so a noteworthy performance in a visible position receives more recognition, which is an important prerequisite for an individual’s upward mobility in an organization.

Transforming Power into Influence

Having discussed the skill of gaining power, we now turn our attention to converting power into influence. This concept requires an understanding of the difference between power and influence. As indicated at the beginning of this chapter, many popular books on this subject suggest that power is an end in itself. They bring to mind the old commercials about “98-pound weaklings” who take up body building to punish bullies for stealing their girlfriends.

Our goal here is not to help people gain power for its own sake. When the weak seek power simply because they are tired of being pushed around, tyranny generally follows their ascension. Our interest, instead, is in helping people accomplish the exceptional in organizations, recognizing that this generally requires political clout. The well-meaning but politically naive seldom make major contributions to organizations. Consequently, our focus is on how you can become influential as well as powerful.

However, we cannot talk about influence without first understanding power, because power is a necessary precondition for influence. Influential people have power, but not all powerful people have influence. Influence entails actually securing the consent of others to work with you in accomplishing an objective. Many powerful people cannot do that, as evidenced by the chronic inability of American presidents to convince Congress to pass what the president considers to be essential legislation. The skill of transforming power into influence hinges on securing the consent of others in ways that engender support and commitment, instead of resistance and resentment.

INFLUENCE STRATEGIES: THE THREE Rs

Power is converted into influence when the target individual consents to behave according to the desires of the power holder. The influence strategies used by managers to obtain compliance fall into three broad categories: retribution, reciprocity, and reason (Allen et al., 1979; Kipnis, 1987; Kipnis, Schmidt, & Wilkinson). Table 8 lists these strategies and the corresponding direct and indirect approaches. Specific examples of these strategies are shown in Table 9 (Cialdini, 1988; Marwell & Schmitt, 1967).

You may have mixed reactions to these lists. Some strategies will probably strike you as particularly effective; others may seem inappropriate or even manipulative or dishonest. Our purpose in listing these is not to imply that all strategies within a category ought to be used. Rather, the full arsenal of influence strategies is presented so that you can informatively choose those with which you feel most comfortable and so that you can be aware when others are attempting to influence you.

These three influence strategies rely on different mechanisms for obtaining compliance. Fear of retribution is based on personal threat, which typically stems from formal authority. The direct form of this approach, coercion, involves an explicit threat to impose sanctions if the manager’s will is not obeyed. Recognizing their vulnerability to sanctions controlled by the boss, subordinates generally comply, reluctantly. The threat usually involves either the denial of expected rewards or the imposition of punishment.

Intimidation is an indirect form of retribution because the threat is only implied. Behind the manager’s forceful request is the possibility of organizationally
Table 9  Examples of Influence Strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Retribution (Coercion and Intimidation)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>General form:</strong> “If you don’t do X, you will regret it!”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Threat:</strong> “If you do not comply, I will punish you.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social pressure:</strong> “Others in your group have agreed; what’s your decision?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Had enough?:</strong> “I will stop nagging you if you comply.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Perceived scarcity and time pressure:</strong> “If you don’t act now, you’ll lose this opportunity/cause problems for others.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Avoid causing pain to others:</strong> “If you don’t agree, others will be hurt/disadvantaged.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reciprocity (Exchange and Ingratiation)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>General form:</strong> “If you do X, you’ll receive Y.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Promise:</strong> “If you comply, I will reward you.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Esteem:</strong> “People you value will think better (worse) of you if you do (do not) comply.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pregiving:</strong> “I will do something you like for you; then will you do this for me?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Obligation:</strong> “You owe me compliance because of past favors.” (“Even though I implied there would be no future obligation.”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reciprocal compromise:</strong> “I have lowered my initial offer/price, and now I expect you to reciprocate” (no matter how unreasonable my initial position was).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Escalation of commitment:</strong> “I’m only interested in a small commitment.” (“But I’ll be back later for more.”)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason (Persuasion Based on Facts, Needs, or Personal Values)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>General form:</strong> “I want you to do X, because it’s consistent with/good for/necessary to . . .”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Evidence:</strong> “These facts/experts’ opinions demonstrate the merits of my position/request.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Need:</strong> “This is what I need; will you help me out?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Goal attainment:</strong> “Compliance will enable you to reach a personally important objective.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Value congruence:</strong> “This action is consistent with your commitment to X.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ability:</strong> “This endeavor would be enhanced if we could count on your ability/experience.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Loyalty:</strong> “Because we are friends/minorities, will you do this?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Altruism:</strong> “The group needs your support, so do it for the good of us all.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

based sanctions for noncompliance, but the dominant feature of the demand is an intimidating interpersonal style. Intimidation can take many forms: A manager publicly criticizes a subordinate’s report, a member of a management committee is systematically ignored during meetings, or junior executives are given impossible tasks by insecure senior executives.

Acts of intimidation are generally accompanied by special emphasis on the authority of the power holder. Assignments are typically given in the boss’s office, in a highly formal manner, with reference to the vulnerability of the target (e.g., mentioning his junior grade or short tenure with the organization). This sets the stage for an implicit threat (e.g., “If people aren’t willing to work overtime on this project, corporate headquarters is going to pull the plug on our budget and a number of younger employees will get hurt”).

Intimidation can also occur through peer pressure. Managers who know that a majority of their subordinates support a controversial action can use group dynamics to secure the compliance of the minority. This is done by telling the majority that a decision must be unanimous and it’s their responsibility to demonstrate leadership by securing the commitment of all members. Or, the manager can apply pressure directly to the holdout members of the group by stressing the need for harmony, mutual support, and working for the common good.
The second strategy extracts compliance from others by invoking the norm of **reciprocity**. Reciprocity operates on the principle of satisfying the self-interest of both parties. The direct form of this approach involves straightforward **bargaining** in which each party gains something from the exchange. In bargaining, both parties are aware of the costs and benefits associated with striking a deal, and their negotiations focus on reaching an agreement that is satisfactory to both. **Ingratiation**, however, is more subtle. It involves using friendliness and favors to incur social obligations. When compliance is required or support is needed, previous benefactors are then reminded of their debts.

Reciprocity is used in many ways in organizations. These include striking deals with influential opinion leaders to support a new program, asking subordinates to work overtime in exchange for an extended weekend, doing small favors for the boss so one can take longer lunch hours occasionally, and formally negotiating with staff members to get them to accept undesirable assignments (Cohen & Bradford, 1994).

Although the retribution and reciprocity strategies are both grounded in the manager's control of outcomes valued by others, the dynamics of these strategies are different. Retribution strategies exploit a subordinate's natural desire to avoid pain or unpleasantness, while strategies of reciprocity are used to make the outcomes desired by the manager seem desirable and attractive to the subordinate. Retribution strategy ignores the rights of others and the norm of fairness, whereas reciprocity strategy honors both. An emphasis on retribution leads to ignoring the quality of the ongoing relationship between the parties, while reciprocity implies a recognition of the value of strengthening their interdependence.

The third approach is based on the manager's persuasive ability. Instead of seeking compliance by making the instrumental nature of their relationship salient to the target person, this approach appeals to **reason**. The manager argues that compliance is warranted because of the inherent merits of the request. Here, the focus is on helping others to see why your ideas make sense. This is most likely to occur if the manager is perceived as knowledgeable on the subject and if his or her personal characteristics are attractive to the target person. The direct approach to persuasion relies on the compelling nature of the **facts or needs** supporting the case. A convincing statement is made, coupled with a specific request. For example, “If your shift doesn't work overtime tonight, we will lose $5,000 worth of product. Will you pitch in and help us solve this problem?” In the indirect form, the manager appeals to the other person's **personal values or goals**. These might include being altruistic, a loyal team member, respected as an expert; and helping to keep the plant nonunion or keeping customers satisfied.

Because persuasion is sometimes confused with manipulation, it is important here to distinguish between the two. A persuasive appeal is explicit and direct, while a manipulative act is implicit and deceptive. The persuader respects the autonomy of decision makers and trusts their ability to judge evidence effectively. In contrast, a manipulator has low regard for the abilities of decision makers and doesn’t trust them to make good decisions. Manipulators have the same objectives as authoritarian leaders—they simply use more subtle tactics. Manipulative managers, therefore, often appear to the casual observer to be using a democratic leadership style. In fact, they are actually “illusive democrats” because, while their actions may appear democratic, they have no inclination to share power. They use a democratic style only because it makes others less defensive and therefore more vulnerable to their power initiatives (Dyer, 1972).

### The Pros and Cons of Each Strategy

As Table 10 notes, each approach has advantages and limitations (Cuming, 1984; Mulder et al., 1986). The retribution strategy produces immediate action, and work is performed exactly according to the manager's specifications. But the retribution strategy comes with high costs. Of the three strategies, it is the most likely to engender resistance. Most people do not like to be forced to do something. Effective managers use this approach sparingly, generally reserving it for crises or as a last resort when the other strategies have failed. It is best suited to situations in which the goals of the parties are competing or independent. This approach is effective only when the target person perceives that the manager has both the power and the will to follow through on his or her threat. Otherwise, the person being influenced may be tempted to call the manager's bluff. Also, the threatened sanctions must be sufficiently severe that disobedience is unthinkable.

When used repeatedly, the retribution approach produces resentment and alienation that frequently generate overt or covert opposition. Consequently, it should be used extensively only when the ongoing commitment of the target person is not critical, when opposition is acceptable (the target person can be replaced if necessary), and when extensive surveillance is possible. Because these conditions tend to stifle initiative and innovative behavior—even when individual
compliance is obtained—organizational performance is likely to suffer because affected individuals have little incentive to bring emerging problems resulting from changing conditions to their supervisor’s attention.

The reciprocity strategy allows the manager to obtain compliance without causing resentment, since both parties benefit from the agreement. Also, because of the instrumental nature of the exchange, it is not necessary to take time to justify the manager’s actions. It is most appropriate when each party controls some outcomes valued by the other party and established rules govern the transaction, including provisions for adjudication of grievances. Even under these conditions, such exchanges—especially agreements that are not formally documented—require some degree of trust. If individuals have reneged on past agreements, their credibility as negotiating partners becomes suspect. Reciprocity is also best suited to situations in which the power holder needs the target person to perform specific unambiguous assignments. Consequently, neither a long-term commitment to general goals and values nor the extensive use of personal judgment is required. An agreement to perform certain tasks according to specified terms is sufficient.

The chief disadvantage of this approach, when used frequently, is that it engenders a highly instrumental view of work. The other person begins to expect that every request is open for negotiation and

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**Table 10 Comparisons Among Influence Strategies**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Influence Strategy</th>
<th>When to use it</th>
<th>Possible Advantages</th>
<th>Possible Disadvantages</th>
<th>Possible Complaints</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Retribution</td>
<td>Unequal power, in influencer’s favor</td>
<td>Quick, direct action</td>
<td>Stiffles commitment, creativity</td>
<td>Violation of rights, ethical violations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Commitment and quality not important</td>
<td></td>
<td>Insecurity of boss, Engenders resentment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tight time constraints</td>
<td></td>
<td>Must increase seriousness of threats to maintain pressure</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Serious violation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Issue not important to target</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If issue is important, retribution not likely</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Specific, unambiguous request</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Resistance to request is likely</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reciprocity</td>
<td>Parties mutually dependent</td>
<td>Low incidence of resentment, Justification for request not required</td>
<td>Engenders instrumental view of work (expectation of specific rewards for specific actions)</td>
<td>Unfairness, dashed expectations, manipulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Each party has resources valued by other</td>
<td></td>
<td>Encourages people to feel that the terms of assignments are open for negotiation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adequate time for negotiating</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Established exchange norms exist</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parties viewed as trustworthy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Commitment to broad goals and values not critical</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Needs are specific and short-term</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reason</td>
<td>Adequate time for extensive discussion</td>
<td>Need for surveillance enhanced</td>
<td>Considerable time required to build trust (time increases as number of people increases)</td>
<td>Difference of opinions, conflicting perceptions of priorities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Common goals/values</td>
<td></td>
<td>Requires common goals and values</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parties share mutual respect/credibility</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parties share ongoing relationship</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
that every completed assignment will generate a reward of equal value. As a result, the reciprocal approach tends to undercut internalized commitment as members take on a highly calculative orientation and downplay the value of working hard to achieve organizational goals, regardless of personal gain.

The assets and liabilities of the third approach—reason—are more complicated. The objective of the rational strategy is a higher form of compliance, that is, internalized commitment. While the focus of compliance is acceptable behavior, commitment requires shared understanding. Commitment relies on teaching correct principles and explaining legitimate needs and then trusting the good intent and sound judgment of subordinates to act appropriately. In its ideal form, commitment decreases the need for surveillance based on accountability and enhances the subordinate’s initiative, commitment, and creativity. This approach works best when the worst thing the other person can do is turn down the request, since he or she has little incentive to hurt the manager. Also, the target person should feel there is little potential for the manager to cause harm, as is typically the case when the target person is the manager’s co-worker or superior. However, when the target person is a subordinate, the manager must demonstrate his or her unwillingness to rely on coercion and intimidation in seeking compliance.

The principal disadvantage of the rational, or reason, approach is the amount of time required to build the trust and mutual understanding required to make it operate effectively. This time increases as the number of involved individuals expands. Also, because the success of this strategy requires congruence of goals and values (rather than the rewards or sanctions a person controls), this approach is difficult to implement when the parties have dissimilar backgrounds, subscribe to competing philosophies, or are assigned conflicting responsibilities, such as maintaining quality versus meeting deadlines.

In their classic studies on influence strategies, Schmidt and Kipnis (1987; Kipnis & Schmidt, 1988), provided compelling evidence supporting the superior benefits of the approach based on reason. Individuals who rely primarily on reason and logic to influence others are rated as highly effective by their bosses, and they report low levels of job-related stress and high levels of job satisfaction. In contrast, individuals who persistently use any other approach to get their way tend to receive lower performance ratings and experience higher levels of personal stress and job dissatisfaction.

Although the evidence is not clear-cut, it does appear that a more general rule can be proposed. Higher-numbered strategies in Table 8 are more effective than lower-numbered strategies. This ordering reflects the overall value system portrayed here: Direct is better than indirect; open is better than closed; exchange is better than intimidation; and sincere requests are better than guile.

One justification for this conclusion is that the higher-numbered strategies are more likely to be perceived as fair and just, because they are more likely to be accompanied by an explanation. Research on organizational change has consistently shown that people are more willing to change when they understand why. For example, in a study of 187 employees in seven business firms that had just been relocated, they rated the process as fair, even though they felt the move was unfavorable, when they understood the reasons behind the action (Daly, 1995).

It is important to point out how cultural preferences need to be factored into your choice of influence strategy. First, your influence strategy needs to be congruent with your personal cultural values. Second, it needs to be congruent with the cultural values of the influence “target.” Third, it needs to be congruent with the general context in which your relationship is embedded. As an extreme case of these three situational factors, one can imagine a Japanese manager trying to influence an African employee in an auto plant in Germany. To illustrate the importance of cultural congruence, our claims regarding the merits and liabilities of these influence attempts are clearly bounded by traditional American cultural norms, including egalitarian relations, direct communication, and individualism. In contrast, members of cultures that place a high value on social obligation would be more prone to favor the reciprocity influence strategies. In addition, cultures that emphasize indirect communication methods, such as storytelling and inference making, would likely prefer the indirect over the direct strategies. Similarly, individuals who place particular importance on hierarchical relationships may feel more comfortable with the forcing strategies (Thompson, 2001).

“Selling Issues” Upward as a Special Case of the Reason Strategy

There is a particular form of influence that warrants special attention. Our discussion of the “Three Rs” has largely assumed that the influence attempt involved a peer or a subordinate. The role that is obviously missing from this set of influence targets is “the boss.” Given Kanter’s (1979) notion discussed earlier in this chapter that organizational power can be measured in terms of
one’s control over making “exceptions to the rule,” it is important that we examine strategies for getting exceptional requests granted by exerting upward influence. As you recall, Table 1 listed a number of exceptions that subordinates believed were the result of having a “boss with clout,” including actions like interceding favorably on behalf of someone in trouble, getting a desirable placement for a talented subordinate, and getting approval for expenditures beyond the budget. Given the stress we’ve placed on using our power to have a positive, constructive influence in an organization, it is important to underscore the merits of managers using their power to benefit their subordinates by exerting upward and outward influence. If subordinates perceive that their unit leader’s clout will shield them from outside, disruptive pressures and help them break down artificial organizational barriers to getting the job done right, then they are naturally inclined to strengthen their boss’s power base.

The synergy in this “win–win” process should be obvious. Unfortunately, the means whereby bosses can effectively influence their superiors is far from obvious. One approach that has received a great deal of attention is called issue selling (Dutton & Ashford, 1993). Effective issue selling draws attention to those issues or problems that concern you, notwithstanding the numerous other issues that compete for your superior’s time and attention. The issues that busy leaders believe warrant their attention are those that they perceive are most consequential. Effectively influencing upward, therefore, means that you need to convince your boss that a particular issue you espouse is so important that it requires his or her attention. Table 11 contains a summary of the key strategies that can be used to exercise

### Table 11 Ways to Sell Issues Upward

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principle</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Congruence</td>
<td>The issue must be congruent with your position and role. A person in the marketing department trying to sell an issue relating to computers would be less effective than would an information specialist.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credibility</td>
<td>Maintain credibility by being honest, open, non-self-serving, and straightforward. Demonstrate that your interest in the issue is not mere personal gain. Issues that seem self-serving are more difficult to sell.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Gain or maintain access to a broad communication network. Use multiple communication channels, including face-to-face conversations, written memos, e-mail, conferences, news clippings, and so on.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compatibility</td>
<td>Select issues that are compatible and in harmony with the organization. Avoid issues that contradict the company culture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solvability</td>
<td>The issue must be solvable. Make it clear that the issue can be solved. Show that solution alternatives are available. Unresolvable issues don’t capture attention.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Payoff</td>
<td>Clearly point out the long-term payoff, for the organization or the manager, of addressing the issue. The higher the potential payoff appears to be, the more likely the issue will receive attention.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expertise</td>
<td>Identify the expertise needed to solve the problem. Issues are more likely to capture attention if it is clear that the expertise necessary to resolve them resides in the organization, or better still, under the purview of the top manager or boss.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>Point out the responsibility that top managers have to address the issue. Emphasize the negative consequences associated with ignoring the issue or leaving it unresolved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>Ensure that the issue is presented succinctly, in emotionally positive terms, with supporting data and novel information. Complex and convoluted information does not capture attention, so the issue must be explained in precise, simple terms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bundling</td>
<td>Bundle similar issues together with other important issues that interest top managers. Point out the relationship between your issue and other issues already being addressed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coalitions</td>
<td>The issue must be sponsored by other people who will help see the issue. Building coalitions of supporters makes the issue hard to ignore.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visibility</td>
<td>Present and sell the issue in a public forum rather than in a private meeting. The more individuals who hear about the issue, the more likely it is to reach the boss’s agenda.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 12** Characteristics of Abusive Bosses

- Micromanager—obsessed with details and perfection.
- Inexplicit direction with decisive delivery—treats everything as a priority, requiring immediate, careful attention.
- Mercurial mood swings—responses are very unpredictable.
- Obsession with loyalty and obedience—believes, “You are either for me or against me.”
- Status derogation—criticizes subordinates in public, to the point of ridicule.
- Capricious actions—known for arbitrariness and hypocrisy.
- Exercises raw power for personal gain—feels entitled to the “spoils of victory.”


ACTING ASSERTIVELY: NEUTRALIZING INFLUENCE ATTEMPTS

In general, managers are more effective when they assume others are reasonable, well meaning, and motivated. Unfortunately, in some cases, these assumptions are proven false. When this happens, it is important to be prepared to protect ourselves from unwanted, inappropriate efforts by others to influence our actions. Therefore, it is not only important to learn how to influence others effectively, but we must also understand how to protect ourselves against the undesirable attempts of others to influence us. As we discussed earlier, one-sided dependence is the antithesis of empowerment. Recalling Figure 1, feelings of lack of power are just as harmful to personal performance as flagrant, excessive use of power. Therefore, it is just as important to be skillful at resisting unwanted influence attempts as it is to influence the behavior of others effectively and appropriately. This skill is particularly relevant in work situations where maintaining personal initiative is difficult in the face of strong countervailing pressures.

Tables 8 and 9 contain an impressive arsenal of influence strategies. Is it possible to neutralize the impact of such a highly developed, well-conceived set of tools? Many people succumb to these influence attempts, either because they are unaware of the social dynamics affecting their decisions or because they feel compelled to give in without offering any resistance. To avoid this plight, it is important to develop the skill of resisting inappropriate efforts to control your behavior. Assertiveness increases self-determination by thwarting exploitation at the hands of overpowering bosses, manipulative sales personnel, and high-pressured negotiators (Cialdini, 1988). This is consistent with the time-honored sociological theory that power is the opposite of dependence, and hence the pathway to empowerment involves throwing off the choice-limiting constraints imposed by dependence (Emerson, 1962).

The importance of avoiding relationships in which individuals in power positions attempt to foster dependency in others has been the subject of recent research on the “toxic effects of tyranny in organizations” (Bies & Tripp, 1998). A summary of the characteristics of abusive bosses, from this study, is shown in Table 12. Given the tendency for most leaders to occasionally take advantage of their position of power, we include this as a tool for identifying situations in which excess has become the norm. As you examine the following strategies for neutralizing inappropriate influence attempts, you might find it useful to use these characteristics of abusive relationships as a frame of reference.

**Neutralizing Retribution Strategies Used by Others**

Coercive and intimidating actions are intended to create a power imbalance by substituting dependence for interdependence. This is the most detrimental form of influence, and therefore it should be resisted most vigorously and directly. You can use several approaches. These tend to form a hierarchy of responses, as follows (begin with the first and progress to the others if the initial response fails):

1. **Use countervailing power to shift dependence to interdependence.** The primary reason individuals (particularly bosses) rely heavily on the threat of retribution as an influence strategy is because they perceive an inequality in power. Obviously, the boss in an organization has the final say, but the larger the perceived discrepancy in power, the greater the temptation to exploit the powerless. The first half of this chapter outlined several techniques for increasing your power base. However, when exploitation occurs, the time
for planning how to increase your power base has passed. Ideally, you are in a position to focus your boss’s attention on your mutual dependence, that is, your interdependence. Point out the negative consequences of failing to respect your rights and acting cooperatively. As part of this discussion, it may be appropriate to discuss more acceptable means of satisfying the boss’s demands.

2. **Confront the exploiting individual directly.** All individuals, no matter what their job or organizational status, must protect their personal rights. One of those rights is to be treated as an intelligent, mature, responsible adult. To initiate a complaint effectively, key elements include describing the problem in terms of behaviors, consequences, and feelings, persisting until understood, and making specific suggestions. These techniques can be used in this situation to stress the seriousness of your concerns. If necessary, you should specify actions you are willing to take to stop coercive behavior. For example, whistle-blowing involves registering a complaint with an external governing body.

3. **Actively resist.** As a last resort, you should consider “fighting fire with fire.” This is obviously a sensitive matter, but there are some individuals who will keep pushing others until they meet resistance. A work slowdown, deliberate disobedience to orders, or reporting the problem to a senior manager might be necessary. Again, this step should be pursued only after all other efforts to counter unwanted threats and demands have failed.

**Neutralizing Reciprocity Strategies by Others**

Many of the persuasion strategies used in sales and advertising fall into this category. In the marketplace, your concern is to avoid being duped. In the workplace, your concern is to avoid being manipulated. The following hierarchically arranged actions should be helpful in either situation. Once again, begin with the first response and follow with others if necessary.

1. **Examine the intent of any gift or favor-giving activity.** When a favor or gift is offered, you should consider the motives of the person, the appropriateness of the behavior, and the probable consequences. You should ask yourself questions such as “Is the giver likely to profit from this?” “Is this transaction inappropriate, unethical, or illegal?” “Is there a stated or implied expectation of reciprocation, and would I feel good about complying if the gift or favor were not offered?” In brief, when in doubt about a benefactor’s motives, ask questions or decline the gift.

2. **Confront individuals who are using manipulative bargaining tactics.** Common ploys used in these situations are escalating commitments (“I’m only interested in a small commitment [now]”) and reciprocal compromises (“I’ve lowered my [extreme] initial position; now I expect you [in the spirit of fair play] to also offer a compromise”). Simply drawing attention to these attempts at manipulation will enhance your power in the relationship. State that you do not approve of the manipulative strategy; then propose an alternative exchange, with emphasis on the merits of the case or the true value of the product rather than on the craftiness of the negotiators. You will thus be able to reshape the exchange process and avoid being manipulated.

3. **Refuse to bargain with individuals who use high-pressure tactics.** If steps 1 and 2 have failed, refuse to continue the discussion unless high-pressure tactics, such as imposing unrealistic time constraints or emphasizing the limited supply of the commodity or service, are dropped. If you suspect that the dynamics of the negotiation process may be clouding your judgment about the value of the object or the importance of the issue, ask yourself, “Would I be interested in this item if there were an unlimited supply and no decision-making deadline?” If the answer is negative, either disengage from the negotiation process or focus your attention on its inequality. By shifting attention from content to process, you neutralize the advantage of a more experienced or powerful bargainer. By refusing to continue unless artificial constraints of time and supply are removed, you can establish fairer terms of trade.

**Neutralizing Reason Strategies by Others**

Although strategies based on reason are the most egalitarian of influence attempts, they can still create or exacerbate conditions of inequity. The following ordered guidelines should help you avoid these situations:
1. **Explain the adverse effects of compliance on performance.** Often, others’ pressing priorities are your incements. The fact that someone can present a legitimate, convincing case does not mean you should comply with the request. For example, a request may be reasonable, but its timing bad; compliance would mean your having to miss important personal deadlines or neglect your customers. You should discuss these concerns with the influencer. By acknowledging the other person’s need, explaining your concerns about personal compliance, and then helping to find alternatives, you avoid becoming overcommitted without giving offense.

2. **Defend your personal rights.** If you have used step 1 and your petitioner persists, focus the discussion on your personal rights. If individuals frequently come to you for help because they mismanage their time or resources, appeal to their sense of fairness. Ask if it is right to ask you to get behind in your own work in order to bail them out of their predicaments. Co-workers have the right to request your help in a pinch, but you also have the right to say no when even reasonable requests place you at a serious disadvantage or when they stem from the negligence or overdependence of others.

3. **Firmly refuse to comply with the request.** If your efforts to explain why you are unable to comply have not worked, you should firmly restate your refusal and terminate the discussion. Some people believe that their case is so compelling, they have difficulty believing others won’t comply. If your co-worker still “won’t take no for an answer,” it’s probably because your no was not firm enough. As a last resort, you may have to seek the support of a higher authority.

**SUMMARY**

In Figure 2, the two skills discussed in this chapter—gaining power and translating power into influence—are highlighted. We began by discussing sources of power, such as personal attributes and position characteristics. Both of these must be developed if one is to maximize one’s potential as a power holder. A strong
person in a weak position and a weak person in a strong position are both at a disadvantage. Ideally, one should become a strong person in a strong position.

A manager must establish a power base in order to get work accomplished and obtain commitments to important objectives. But power without influence is not sufficient. Consequently, we discussed how to translate power into influence by selecting an appropriate influence strategy and implementing it in such a way that resistance is minimized. In general, this is most likely to occur when managers use the higher-numbered strategies in Table 8. Persuasion tends to build trust and encourage internalized commitment, while coercion and intimidation erode trust, produce only superficial compliance, and encourage servility.

The unbridled use of power tends to increase resistance among subordinates, which in turn erodes the manager's power base. It also transforms the nature of the manager's stewardship over subordinates. The more a manager dominates subordinates, the more dependent they become on management's initiatives. As a result, managers tend to overvalue their contribution to their workers' job-performance activities (“Without me, they would be lost”). This inflated sense of self-importance encourages abuse of power that weakens the manager's influence and may even lead others to demand the manager's resignation. Thus, the abuse of power is both organizationally and personally destructive.

Power need not be abused, however. Managers, by definition, are located somewhere above the midpoint in the range of organizational levels (from the CEO at the top to hourly employees at the bottom). Managers who shun initiative and refuse to take responsibility for their actions see themselves as the “janitors” for the management pyramid above them. Their job, as they see it, is to clean up messes and carry out orders. Their attitude and demeanor reflect that of their bosses. In contrast, managers characterized by high initiative, personal responsibility, and influence see themselves as presidents of the organizational pyramid below them. They work within acknowledged constraints, but they figure out ways to do things right. They take full responsibility for their subordinates’ performance, as well as for their commitment to their work and their membership in the organization.

Translating power into influence should not only be directed downward (i.e., toward organizational subordinates) but also upward (i.e., toward organizational superiors). Incompetent attempts to influence upward can quickly derail a manager’s career, while competent upward influence can markedly enhance it. By helping to set the agenda of senior managers (issue selling) and by working for senior management’s success (benefiting the boss), a manager's influence can increase significantly. When applying these two principles, however, managers should be motivated, not by a thirst for mere self-aggrandizement, but by an honest desire to benefit their companies and strengthen their bosses’ position.

The counsel of the late A. Bartlett Giamatti, former president of Yale University and commissioner of Major League Baseball, serves as a particularly fitting conclusion to this discussion: “Far better to conceive of power as consisting in part of the knowledge of when not to use all the power you have . . . Whoever knows how to restrain and effectively release power finds . . . that power flows back to him” (1981: 169).

**BEHAVIORAL GUIDELINES**

Effective management within an organization includes both gaining power and exercising influence wisely. Key guidelines for gaining power include:

1. Enhance your personal power in the organization by:
   - Developing your knowledge and skills to the point of becoming an acknowledged expert.
   - Enhancing your attractiveness to others, for example, by fostering the attributes of friendship (genuineness, intimacy, acceptance, validation of self-worth, tolerance, and social exchange).
   - Being extremely dependable and, when appropriate, putting forth more effort than expected.
   - Aligning your behaviors and decisions with core organizational values.

2. Increase the centrality of your position by:
   - Expanding your network of communication contacts.
   - Having information routed through you.
   - Serving as the source of information for others.

3. Increase the latitude and flexibility of your job by:
   - Reducing the percentage of routine activities.
   - Expanding task variety and novelty.
   - Initiating new ideas.
   - Getting involved in new projects.
   - Participating in the early stages of decision-making processes.
   - Seeking unusual and design-oriented jobs, rather than those that are repetitive and maintenance oriented.
4. Increase the visibility of your job performance by:
- Expanding the number of contacts you have with senior people.
- Making oral presentations of written work.
- Participating in problem-solving task forces.
- Inviting senior managers to help you recognize important accomplishments within your work group.
- Sending personal notes of congratulations or cover notes accompanying reports or useful information.

5. Increase the relevance of your tasks to the organization by:
- Becoming an internal coordinator or external representative.
- Providing services and information to other units.
- Monitoring and evaluating activities within your own unit.
- Expanding the domain of your work activities.
- Becoming involved in activities central to the organization’s top priorities.
- Becoming a trainer or mentor for new members.

The general guidelines for influencing others effectively involve matching your influence strategy to specific situations, acting assertively when others attempt to influence you inappropriately, and empowering others. In general, use reason strategies more often than reciprocity strategies, and reciprocity more than threats of retribution. Use open, direct approaches in preference to indirect, manipulative approaches.

6. Use reason strategies when:
- There are few time constraints.
- Initiative and innovation are vital.
- Interpersonal trust is high.
- The relationship is long term.
- Interpersonal conflict is not high.
- Personal goals are congruent and/or respected by both parties.
- It is important for the other person to understand why the request is being made.

7. Use reciprocity strategies when:
- The parties are mutually dependent.
- There are clearly specified rules governing interpersonal transactions.
- Long-term commitment to common goals and values is not important.
- There is sufficient time to reach satisfactory agreements.

8. Use retribution strategies when:
- There is a substantial imbalance of power between the parties.
- The ongoing commitment of the other person is not critical.
- Quality and innovation are not important.
- Opposition is acceptable (e.g., when personnel replacement is possible, if necessary).
- Extensive surveillance is possible.
- No other alternatives exist.

9. To neutralize reason influence strategies of others:
- Explain the negative consequences of compliance.
- Defend your rights.
- Firmly refuse to comply with request.

10. To neutralize reciprocal influence strategies of others:
- Examine the context of any gift- or favor-giving activity.
- Confront individuals using escalating or compromising tactics.
- Refuse to bargain with individuals using high-pressure tactics.

11. To neutralize retribution influence strategies of others:
- Use countervailing power to shift dependence to interdependence.
- Confront the exploitative individual directly.
- Actively resist.

12. To sell issues to your superiors:
- Select issues that are congruent with your position or role.
- Present the issue honestly and without being self-serving.
- Communicate the issue broadly.
- Select an issue that is compatible with the culture.
- Select a solvable issue.
- Clarify the payoff to be achieved.
- Identify the needed expertise.
- Point out senior managers’ responsibility for the issue.
- Be succinct, use emotional imagery, and provide supporting data and novel information.
- Bundle the issue with other similar important issues.
- Find like-minded supporters.
- Use public forums.
CASE INVOLVING POWER AND INFLUENCE

Dr. Brilliant vs. the Devil of Ambition

If baby boomers had their own Faust, he’d be Larry Brilliant, a man who’s found himself at the center of almost every defining moment of his generation. His biggest battle: Taming the devil of ambition.

What happens when you’re the quintessential baby boomer? What happens when you’re raised according to the precepts of Dr. Spock? What happens when, every time you cry, you’re fed?

Here’s what happens: The devil of ambition starts raising you. You grow up impossibly demanding—and hating how demanding all of your fellow boomers are. You become ruthlessly competitive—and even more competitive about appearing noncompetitive. You aspire to be a superachiever—but you can’t appear to be an egomaniac. You become ambitious. And you become even more ambitious about not being ambitious.

This is the story of an entire generation. It is the story of baby boomers raised on ambition and of a generation that is never happy with what it has. When everything comes too easily, all you want is more. Ambition is the longest unrequited love affair of boomers’ lives. It scrambles their brains and leaves them empty and unfulfilled. No wonder boomers are reaching their forties and fifties and feeling as fried as the Colonel’s best.

This is the story of a man named “Brilliant.” Talk about a blessing and a curse. How would you like to live with a name like that? For starters, you would have to become nothing less than Dr. Brilliant, your generation’s answer to Dr. Faust. Then you would have to play a starring role in every generation-defining event in every decade from the 1960s forward.

You wouldn’t just go to Woodstock, you would star in the movie sequel. You wouldn’t just make a pilgrimage to India at the same time that Mia Farrow is being chased by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, or at the same time that the Beatles are just an ashram away, learning to meditate and siphoning sitar music into Rubber Soul; you would find your own yogi, a formidable guru who would send you on a mission to banish smallpox from India.

After spending a decade in India, you would find your way home, where you would invent the first—indeed the prototypical—online community, the WELL. You would try to get Zenny Baba Ram Dass to baby-sit your rambunctious kids. You would become the personal physician to Jerry Garcia, the quintessential 1960s icon. And still ambition would be an itch that you hadn’t scratched.

So, when you are 56, when all of your baby-boomer friends would be writing workplace exit strategies, you would take your first real job: dot-com CEO, of course. After 30 years of struggling to find God and your soul and the meaning of work, you would walk into the heart of the new economy, smack into the belly of the beast. Why? Because you know deep down that you won’t really kill off that itch of ambition. You won’t really be free of its nagging demands for more and more and more until you’ve gone one long round in the ring with Mephistopheles. You have to prove to
yourself once and for all that even in the soulless world of Silicon Valley, a complete human being, an authentic leader, can survive.

This is the stuff of legend, the kind of confrontation that would be worthy of a work by Goethe or of an opera by Gounod: "The Soul vs. the Devil of Ambition." In the title role would be Dr. Larry Brilliant, his soul on the line in a contest for the soul of a generation.

To know your own soul—and maybe even to save it—it helps to understand Larry Brilliant's.

Did Somebody Say “Soul”?

Larry Brilliant steps out of the fancy dusk of Soho's Mercer hotel, shouldering past media mogul Rupert Murdoch and his new Lolita wife, and the first thing that Brilliant says is, “Every day, I struggle with ambition. Every day, I try to understand the meaning of this line: 'Live your life without ambition. But live as those who are ambitious.'

“On the surface, this ideal is preposterous,” Brilliant continues. “It means, ‘Don't aspire to power or success. But live as those who are ambitious.' It means that you can never tell when you are being sincere. Do I stay at the Four Seasons? Can I take a hot tub? Do I not try too hard at anything?”

Two years ago, Brilliant became CEO of SoftNet Systems Inc., a broadband company based in San Francisco that brings high-speed Internet access to small cities, airports, and rural towns. The SoftNet CEO looks like a great success. The company has 400 employees and a market value of $280 million. In February, the company partnered with CMGI and Compaq to invest more than $100 million combined to bring broadband mobile Internet services to global business travelers. During the coming year, the company expects to see the mushrooming of SoftNet Zones, local-area networks and computing-business service centers, complete with cyber-concierges in airports, convention halls, and hotels. Cisco Systems and Nokia have joined to provide the technical equipment and support.

And now Brilliant asks himself the question that measures his own ambition: “Where better could I test my soul than in the land of temptation, power, and money?”

Brilliant has found a new way to be ambitious, a healthy way, a way to act ambitiously without letting it sink into his sense of identity. Ambition, after all, is a basically healthy state. The word **ambition** shares a root with the word **ambient**—*ambire*, meaning “to move around freely.” That word originated in the 14th century, when politicians would travel broadly to get votes and support. Taken literally, and used correctly, to have ambition is to create your life's journey. Ambition is not a single-minded focus, a career obsession, or rampant self-promotion at the expense of others. The true arc of ambition, as Brilliant has lived it, is a healthy one.

It shows. There are people in Silicon Valley who are more successful than Larry Brilliant. And there are people in Silicon Valley who are richer than he is. But there are few who have had more impact on the world at large than he has.

In truth, Brilliant has been ambitious for one thing only: his soul. How many of us would consider the soul a sufficient driver for success? The soul, after all, can be an annoyance when you're trying to get ahead. But things are changing. The soul may be the next drilling platform to plumb the heart of the leader. As the new economy continues, each of us is going to be drilled down to our depths. And the only mark of difference between us will be in our deep identity, our soul. Everything else will be commodified.

That is why Brilliant has devoted his life to understanding that one simple, puzzling mantra: “Live your life without ambition. But live as those who are ambitious.”
Do that, and you discover the discipline of living an authentic life—and of living hard, as if each day counts. That said, there is no mistaking that Brilliant is, well, weird. He is maybe three statistical variations from the norm, which he also fully accepts.

Where Did Goethe Find Faust?

I have, alas, studied philosophy/Jurisprudence and medicine, too,/And, worst of all, theology/With keen endeavor, through and through—/And here I am, for all my lore,/The wretched fool I was before./Called Master of Arts, and Doctor to boot... 

So where does this tale of abnormal, sane, hyperactive ambition begin? With a kid growing up Jewish in Detroit, being raised on Dr. Spock—and switching to medical school when he learns that his father is dying of cancer. He has been studying philosophy and has been thinking, like almost everyone in his generation, that his mission is to change the world. His father’s death convinces him not to change the world but to save it.

Then, as the 26-year-old Larry Brilliant is finishing his surgical internship at Presbyterian Hospital in San Francisco in 1970, he learns that the first person he must save is himself: He is diagnosed with cancer of the parathyroid gland. The surgery he is headed for is his own. The salvation he must seek begins with his recovery.

“I took time off to heal,” Brilliant recalls. “That summer, a group of Indians took over Alcatraz. A woman named Tina Trudell, whose husband was John Trudell, the rap poet, wanted to have her baby on Alcatraz—the first Indian baby to be born on Indian-freed land in 200 years. She couldn’t get a doctor to come out and deliver the baby. I agreed to go out there. I wound up living on Alcatraz for a couple of weeks, the only white person there.”

The press started calling, and, without trying, he found himself being a spokesman for Native American rights. One time, the phone rang and it was Warner Brothers. The studio was making *Medicine Ball Caravan*, a sequel to the hit *Woodstock Nation*. How would he like to play a doctor in a film about a tribe of hippies who follow the Grateful Dead, Jefferson Airplane, Jethro Tull, and Joni Mitchell?

“Warner Brothers had agreed to give massive infusions of photos of dead presidents to free clinics in America, so Larry and his wife, Girija, signed on,” says Wavy Gravy, 64, another mythical figure of the 1960s who had just come back from serving as the “chief of please” at Woodstock. In *Caravan*, he was asked to serve a similar role, handling life support and security. “When we did anything cool,” Wavy recalls, “we had to do it once more ‘for François,’ the film’s French director.”

The final scenes were shot in Canterbury, England, with Pink Floyd performing. The night before the shoot, Wavy ran through the quiet village banging on doors and shouting, “The Americans are coming! The Americans are coming!”

By the time that production wrapped, Warner Brothers had accumulated a fortune in rupees: The cast got paid in Indian Airlines tickets. When you’re a charter member of Woodstock Nation, what do you do with airline tickets? Several members of the group cashed them in and bought a bus.

“The idea was to drive around Western Europe spreading good vibes,” says Wavy. But in 1970, a cyclone hit Bangladesh. One of the century’s worst disasters, the storm claimed hundreds of thousands of lives. “Relief efforts were so slow to respond that we decided to go there to help the people and to embarrass the relief agencies. We put together medical and food supplies, and we pooled our money. In Germany, we got another bus—42 people from 17 countries. We thought it would take a couple of weeks. It turned into one and a half years.”

The film—which had started the whole journey—turned out to be the worst ever made until *Ishtar* came along. But Brilliant was hooked on learning the secrets of life...
that went beyond mere comfort and success. “We had never met so many people who were so poor, yet so alive,” Brilliant says. “Life didn’t just happen to them. They experienced life at a deeper level than I had ever experienced it. I had been a radical, a left-wing politico, and meeting the Indian people made me realize that the politics of the left and the right were so much less important than the politics of the heart and the spirit.” A year later, he wound up at the ashram of Neem Karoli Baba.

To Brilliant, this destination didn’t look like ambition—it smelled like Nirvana. It turned into a trip to the big time.

Apply Apples to Your Testicles and Call Me in the Morning

Brilliant was sitting under a bodhi tree at his guru’s ashram in northern India, content with doing nothing more than his daily meditations. There was just one problem: “Every time I sat and meditated, my guru would throw apples at my testicles,” Brilliant says. “I had to get up and get moving. I had no choice.”

The point of the apple throwing was to get Brilliant out of the lotus position and into work where he could do the greatest good. His guru, Neem Karoli Baba, was telling him, “There are people who get exactly what they want. You think they’re the lucky ones, but they’re not. The lucky ones are those who do what they are meant to do.” For Baba, that meant vaccinating people against smallpox. In the early 1970s, the disease was devastating India. Trying to eradicate it seemed like a fool’s errand.

That errand became Brilliant’s. At his guru’s insistence, he found himself on his longest journey yet: a bus ride from the monastery in northern India to the offices of the United Nations.

It is a measure of Brilliant’s unusual outlook on ambition that he never questioned his guru’s advice. “I had never seen a case of smallpox,” says Brilliant. “I don’t know how my guru knew that I could do this work. I had hair down the middle of my back, and I was wearing a white robe. Everybody in the United Nations was over 50 and wearing a business suit. I showed up at the United Nations office dressed as you would expect someone to be dressed in a monastery. I walked in and said, ‘My mystic sent me to cure smallpox.’ I was told to go home. I took the 17-hour bus ride back to the ashram and told Baba that I had failed. He said, ‘Go back.’ I did this two dozen times, making this trip back and forth. Slowly, the robe gave way to pants, then to a shirt, then to a tie, then to a haircut, and then to a résumé. I learned to look like a diplomat.”

What was the lesson that his guru was teaching him? “The great thing about gurus is not that they make you feel everybody’s love,” says Brilliant. “It’s that they make you feel that you can love everybody.”

The nightmare wasn’t confined to the disease. “Mrs. Gandhi wasn’t allowing the UN to work in India on smallpox. Later, she changed her mind, and I became one of the first four people hired for the program—largely because I could speak Hindi and because I could type. It wasn’t until several years later that anyone remembered that I was a doctor. I ended up staying with the program for six years, and I was in India for ten years.”

Day and night, smallpox, like a war, ravaged the villages of India. Rivers stopped flowing, dammed by the dead bodies that filled them. Crows were seen flying overhead carrying tiny arms and legs that were spotted with the disease. Entire cities were decimated. Smallpox is a virus that forms lesions carried through the bloodstream. The lesions can attach themselves anywhere: to the stomach, to the eyes, to the lungs. Then they consume the whole body. Quickly, they consume whole villages. A win had to be total: If one person were left untreated, smallpox could reemerge even more virulently. Even if the UN could inoculate each of India’s 600 million people, an impossible task, how could it cope with each year’s new wave of 25 million
unvaccinated babies? The solution was to quarantine whole villages in order to contain the outbreaks.

One night, Brilliant and his team set up camp in one of the most devastated villages—and got no volunteers for the inoculations that they were offering. Desperate, they ambushed the village leader. They broke into his house as he slept and then vaccinated him. Believing that faith in God meant surrendering to all suffering, the tribal leader considered it his responsibility to resist the doctors. He tried to suck out the vaccine, and he attacked members of the UN team when they vaccinated his wife.

When the battle was over, the leader, exhausted, went into his garden, plucked the single ripe cucumber from its vine, and presented it to a young Indian doctor whom his wife had bitten as she had struggled. The tribal leader had been firm in his faith, he said, but now it was time for truce. As a crowd of villagers gathered to witness the struggle, Brilliant’s Indian colleague refused to accept anything less than total victory. It was Brilliant’s dharma—his destiny—to fight the disease, the doctor explained. Brilliant had come 10,000 miles to this village to save lives because it was his guru’s wish that smallpox should be eradicated. The village leader gave the project his blessing, and the entire village lined up for inoculations.

But even that moment came at a price for Brilliant, who had been on the Michigan board of the American Civil Liberties Union and had worked for civil rights. How do you justify breaking down a person’s door to vaccinate him, even if that inoculation saves his life?

“I used to spend weekdays in New Delhi, working at the World Health Organization, and weekends in the monastery," Brilliant recalls. "I would travel 17 hours by public bus to get to the monastery. I was having a very rough time, and I asked Baba how I could deal with this amount of corruption and contradiction.

"It was like the answer to the question ‘How do I deal with such ignorant officials as the tribal chief?’ I had externalized the problem by asking, ‘How do I deal with these corrupt authority figures?’ My guru said, ‘It’s not them, it’s you. If you live in a world of sense objects, you’re not at peace. You are not thinking clearly. When you are not thinking clearly, the mind is behaving like a drunken, crazed monkey in a cage.’"

Two-Thirds Dalai Lama, One-Third Chauncy Gardiner

Here’s the problem: You begin to develop attachments to meaningless things, to sense objects. From those attachments, you make choices. From those choices, you find preferences. From those preferences, you identify with the best or the worst attributes of some of them. That identification takes you directly to the land of illusion, because those attributes are meaningless. From that identification comes cognitive dissonance. As a result, your desire for one thing versus another is based on illusions in your own mind—illusions that cloud your ability to see what is really worth doing, what would truly make you happy.

Here’s how it plays out: “Say you decide that you like Chevrolets and not Fords," says Brilliant. "Or you decide that you like Yahoo! and not Lycos. It’s all the same. In my case, I felt that it was more important to stay in the monastery and to become noble than it was to do common work. But in the long run, preferences don’t matter to your success or to your happiness. They distract you from seeing what is most important to you. The point of life is to transcend the smallness of the finite self by identifying with things that last. Preferences, or attachments, lead to forgetfulness: How can I really remember why I like Chevys and not Fords, why Yahoo! is better than Lycos? Why, in my case, is study better than action? From my preference for a certain path comes confusion, and from that confusion comes inability to reason, and from that inability to reason comes pranashiti—total destruction of the cognitive process.
“Comparisons are odious,” Brilliant continues. “The more you think about that, the more it helps you to achieve your goal. The goal is to be equanimous.” Equanimity, balance, peace—so that you are yourself no matter what goes on around you, no matter what the world hurls at you. “If you are constantly making judgments based on superficial affiliations, your world gets to be pretty small.”

The exemplar of that attitude? That, in Brilliant’s estimation, was U Thant, secretary general of the United Nations from 1961 to 1971. “He was a great and spiritual man. Dag Hammarskjöld had just been killed. There was a possibility of nuclear conflagration over a surrogate war being fought in the Congo, in which the West and the East were actually at war. U Thant was locked in a last-ditch meeting to avert disaster when he was handed a piece of paper, which he read, and he stayed in that meeting until the parties had reached a truce. Someone then asked him what was on that slip of paper. He said, ‘My son was just killed in a car accident.’

“The newspapers wrote about a cold-hearted Buddhist. But in that act was someone whose love of humanity allowed him to transcend his own narrow definition of family and to expand it into a greater definition. U Thant’s act was an act of a great, loving human being. That is equanimity, and it will probably see you through tougher times than passion or balance will.

“If you live a rich life of the spirit, you are not distracted,” says Brilliant. “You carry out your duty, your dharma, no matter what.”

**This Just In: Your Soul Is Not Dead**

We advise you not to try stepping over it on your way to someplace else.

There is a little book of Hindu scripture that is called the *Bhagavad-Gita*. The book says, in effect, that work is a form of ecstasy—if you twist your mind into the right position. Think of the *Gita* as the *Kama Sutra* of work.

The *Gita* tells the story of a brilliant warrior named Arjuna who mysteriously loses his will to fight at the worst possible moment: the morning of battle. At dawn, he walks the battlefield and sees arrayed on the other side brothers, fathers, uncles. He has no appetite for killing them. But he is a trained fighter. It’s his dharma; he must fight. His guru, Krishna, reminds him that ambition must be focused on one thing only: duty. The satisfaction is in doing what you are supposed to do, not in doing what you want to do.

“I experienced Arjuna’s dejection,” Brilliant says. “It happens at the time that we confront why we exist, why you, particularly, exist. Not why we but why I exist. I exist to do this work? I felt that dark night of the soul so many times when I was working in the smallpox program. I would say to myself, ‘God, you have chosen poorly. You’ve chosen me, and I’m [worthless]. Any god who would choose me for such an important position can’t be God.’"

The *Gita* teaches you to think differently about ambition and about its unnecessary limitations. “Early on,” says Brilliant, “I had this problem with a government secretary. I placed an order for 200 four-wheel-drive Mahendra jeeps which would be used to deliver the vaccine into the most remote villages. It was the monsoon season, and many of those places were tough to reach. I went to see the secretary, who said, ‘You have to change your order. You have to have the two-wheel-drive jeeps.’ I knew the four-wheel-drive jeeps were the only ones that could reach the villages. He said, ‘But if you buy the two-wheel-drive jeeps, you’ll have my support. The two-wheel-drive jeeps are made in a factory that is owned by my brother.’

“I thought, now I’m carrying this burden of ‘Do I [tick] off this secretary? Or do I buy jeeps that can’t do the job?’ I’m 28 years old, I’ve never even bought a jeep for myself, and here I have to make such a big decision. I agonized over that, and then I
read the *Bhagavad-Gita*, which says, ‘Don’t take yourself too seriously; don’t get attached.’ But I was carrying such a heavy burden. I wondered how I could detach myself from this burden in order to see clearly. I told my guru about my problem. On one hand, if I bought the wrong jeeps, hundreds of thousands of kids would die because we wouldn’t be able to get medicine to them. On the other hand, if I screwed up my relationship with this secretary, I didn’t know if we would ever get help from him. And if I bribed him, my hands would be dirtied.

“My guru sent me to Lama Govinda, who said, ‘Think things through very clearly. Ask yourself, number one, are you exaggerating? Are you exaggerating the importance of this decision and of your role in it? Are you milking the melodrama?’ Whoops! I thought to myself, ‘How does this guy know?’

“Then Govinda said, ‘Once you’ve satisfied yourself that you’re not milking the melodrama, then choose the decision that’s best for the kids—and don’t worry about your hands.’ And that’s what the *Gita* says: Use the tools of spiritualism to clarify the mirror of your mind so that it’s not fogged over, so that you see things as they really are. Don’t let the melodrama of how seductive your importance is, or of how great the power of your decision is, beguile you into losing your ability to think things through. Then do the right thing—and to hell with everything else.

“That’s all at a very rational level. But here’s the magic: I sat down alone and cleared my mind. I concluded that yes, I had psyched myself up, sipping my own whiskey and getting into it, as I’m wont to do. But I also decided that it really mattered that I get the government of India on my side. I could always raise more money for more jeeps, but if I antagonized that powerful secretary, he could kick the smallpox program out of India. I was prepared to give the secretary a bribe, which was something I had never done in my life. I drove to the secretary’s office, only to find when I arrived that he had been transferred two hours earlier. The new guy said, ‘Oh, four-wheel-drive jeeps? No problem.’

“That’s the magic part of it. That’s the inexplicable part of clearing your mind and of knowing just what to do. So now you can begin to sip your own whiskey again. Now you say, ‘God created this lucky incident just for me.’

“When you sober up again, you remember that you’re entitled to the joy of work, you’re just not entitled to the results. “As long as you devote the outcome to God, and you don’t get confused about who the actor is, you’re going to be fine. This message is brutal.

“Lao Tzu says that the Tao—your life’s way, or path—is easy for one who has no preferences,” Brilliant says. “Your preferences get you into trouble. If you believe that there is no difference between going to the left and going to the right, you won’t have any trouble. You’ll find the right way. That’s fate, which is a good thing to accept.”

**Fast Track to Enlightenment**

After two years and more than 2 billion house calls, the Army declared a victory over smallpox. Brilliant had started off as the mascot of the UN team. All of the people who knew what they were doing had moved on or had died off, so Brilliant wound up running a program in northern India with an army of 100,000 workers. It was one of the largest peacetime armies ever assembled. So much for planning. No one could have planned a mission like that.

“Greater things have happened to me by accident than by planning—getting to India, meeting my wife, finding myself at the head of the India smallpox program. I could not have planned any of those things. And now, when I meet someone who can help me, I will have done all of my planning beforehand, but still I have to leave myself open to the unexpected.”
To explain the difference between responding to fate and driving yourself through ambition, Brilliant sings the words to a little song that he had once heard sung by a Sufi choir: “I love the sadhus [holy men]. I love the way they pray. When the wind blows their hair in their face, they go the other way.” Then he asks a rhetorical question: “Have I been passive, in the sense that life happens to you? Being passive is almost as bad as being indifferent. But accepting what happens, going with the flow—that’s a good thing.”

Where Do You Want to Put Your Dead Presidents?
Brilliant was deep into his love/hate affair with ambition. Every time that the conflict stirred, he directed his energy into something obvious and philanthropic. “How you get through this battle for your soul depends on where you’re going to stick your photos of dead presidents,” says Wavy Gravy. “You try and put your good where it will do the most.”

That was the guiding philosophy of Larry and Girija Brilliant. When the war against smallpox in India was over, they came back to the United States, enrolled in graduate public-health programs at the University of Michigan, and started their family of three children. They also created the Seva Foundation and its mission to eradicate blindness—a disease that they had seen firsthand while working in the smallpox program. Since Seva’s beginning, doctors have performed 1 million free sight-restoring operations in Asia. “Seva started primarily as a spiritual organization,” Brilliant says. “The work we did to alleviate blindness was a consequence of our spirituality. It was motivated by a desire to serve God by doing good.”

By chance, Bob Weir, 53, legendary guitarist of the Grateful Dead, read about Brilliant’s work in India. Wavy Gravy introduced Weir to Brilliant, and it wasn’t long before Weir and fellow band member Danny Rifkin joined the board of Seva. Board members often would underestimate the number of beds needed for those impromptu overnight meetings, and Weir often bunked on the floor. “At least they remembered to keep the heat on,” Weir says.

In the meantime, almost by accident, Brilliant continued to ricochet from generational icon to generational icon. He had crossed paths with Steve Jobs in India, and now he tried to recruit the young entrepreneur to head Seva. “Steve had just started Apple. I tried to tell him that Apple was a terrible idea. Why didn’t he become the executive director of Seva and do some good? He kept saying, ‘Computers are going to change the world. We’re going to take away the power of the priestly class that runs these mainframes.’ He wouldn’t lead Seva, but he did give us money and computers. We were trying to do Steve a good turn, so we bought shares in Apple.”

Another unplanned opportunity: With money earned from Apple stock, Brilliant built one of the first Internet companies, Network Technologies. “We put together one of the first online communities and eventually sold the company,” Brilliant says. He had underestimated what it would take to build on the Internet, but the experience prompted his next brush with destiny: He conjured up the idea of the WELL. It became one of the first expressions of online community, a gathering place for many of the brightest minds, the fiercest pioneers, and the keenest explorers of the just-gathering new economy. “It was the first electronic community,” he says.

But, having had the initial idea for the WELL, Brilliant didn’t see himself as its keeper. “I went to see Stuart Brand, whom I knew in the 1960s to be one of Ken Kesey’s Merry Pranksters. I wanted Stuart to run the WELL, which he agreed to do.” Brand ran the WELL for 10 years before he and Brilliant agreed to sell it in parts in 1993 and in 1995. The idea was to avoid entanglements with the world of business. But Brilliant’s younger brother, Barry, challenged him over a personal unpaid debt: Their father had died when Barry was only 17. Rather than acting as a surrogate
father, Larry had gone off to India. Now Barry wanted his big brother’s help in starting a smart-card business. He got it. They dubbed the venture “Brilliant Color Cards,” ran it for eight years, and sold it in 1998.

Which brings us to Larry Brilliant’s current adventure. “I met the kid who wanted to turn SoftNet into an Internet company,” he says. “The company’s stock was at $4, and it had a market cap of $30 million. I was recruited for the board. Now our stock is at $10, and our market cap is at $280 million. I agreed to be the interim CEO and to stay only six months. That was two years ago. I recently told the board, ‘You’ll have to pry me out with the jaws of life.’ It’s fun. Bringing in people of color, building a company, building a team, making good products, bridging the digital divide—all of it is fun.”

In the meantime, Brilliant was still doctoring the Dead when one of its members had a sprained ankle or a cold. Perhaps the only clinical failure of his career was Jerry Garcia. “The advice that Larry gave him, which we all gave him, was to take it easy,” says Garcia’s bandmate Bob Weir. “And that finally killed him.”

In the Belly of the Beast

Consider the parts of the body a person pays attention to. An inferior person, according to Confucius, pays attention to inferior parts of the body, while a superior person pays attention to superior parts of the body. In your choice of parts of the body is your destiny.

Brilliant chooses the stomach. He is not just in the belly of the beast: He is the belly of the beast. “I’m no different from most indulged CEOs,” he says. He wants to win. He wants everything.

So who’s going to win the battle for the soul: Brilliant or Silicon Valley? Will the Valley corrupt him? Change him?

Every life takes the shape of this parable: an arrow coming home to the bow. True ambition is this: After you do something amazing, you do something ordinary—and you discover the importance in it. Compared with taking the slowest bus ride in the history of the world in order to save a country of victims, compared with curing smallpox in India, with inventing the WELL, with paying a family debt to your brother, compared with all of that, working as the CEO of an Internet company is nothing. But a man who is driven by ambition and by appetite sees it as more than that. If Brilliant can keep his soul alive here, his soul can survive anywhere. Silicon Valley is like a bad case of new-economy smallpox.

His mantra of ambition—to live ambitiously but without ambition—is the centerpiece of Nish Kan Karma yoga. “Yoga means ‘being yoked,’” says Brilliant. “In yoga, the individual self is linked to the larger soul, Brahma, which, in Hindu, means ‘the mind of God.’ You have one job: to find out who you are. Like the asymptote, the mathematical function, you are always approaching your goal, but you never achieve it. You are always reaching for the flame, but you’ll never be the flame. You always fail. You always aspire.

“Capitalism has wonderful lessons to teach us. I’m happy to be called a capitalist. To make a change in the world, you must creatively employ capital. You have to understand how the engines of commerce work. To lament that those engines concentrate wealth is not going to help you or anyone else.

“But as long as I have ambition, I will not have good judgment, because my ambition is based on trying to get something. That means I am attached to the results, to the fruits. That means I am violating a rule that I know is intuitively true. And that is the crucible. I need to be tested this way. I need to fail in the way that I fail. Every time that I get confused and see a person who works for me or with me as a customer, a competitor, a colleague, I fail. And every time that I am unable to see that person as
a human being—and instead only see what’s useful to me—I fail. In those moments, I fall victim to my ambition. But in those moments when I see people as human beings, as real people, I inspire them.

“When I get confused and exploit someone for who they are, I’ll get something narrow or I’ll get a gift that’s not worth receiving. But my deepest and strongest relationships are in those moments when I see someone for who they really are. That’s when I join them in a moment to try to create something far more interesting.

“Handling ambition this way, I can moderate the amount of craziness that I feel. Things by which we measure success or victory or achievement are by and large banal. The thing that gives true and lasting satisfaction is giving things to people.”

“Larry takes his bedside manner where there is no bed,” says Wavy Gravy. “We’re all in this big hospital, all of us people on the planet. The infusion of wealth, rightly directed, can cause great healing to occur. If he can activate more people to do that, he can create tremendous good.”

Brilliant is doing good by working with Seva, which runs eye hospitals throughout Asia. He is on the board of a summer camp for inner-city children run by Wavy. He is delivering broadband to all corners of the earth, including India. Weir calls him a “budding saint,” and says, “If Larry gets wealthy out of this, he will make it a manifest blessing for mankind.” But most of all, Brilliant is keeping his soul alive in the inferno. He’s still the poster child for a new way in which to be ambitious: deeply, spiritually. From Detroit to Silicon Valley, Larry Brilliant is still trying to save the world.


Discussion Questions

1. Analyze the power and influence aspects of this case using the material discussed in this chapter. Which specific bases of power did Dr. Brilliant rely on? Which influence strategies did he find particularly useful? Which conventional power and influence strategies did he eschew?

2. Carefully examine Dr. Brilliant’s philosophy of life. How would you expect that his views of spirituality, fate, duty, balance, ambition, etc., would be reflected in his day-to-day actions as the current CEO of a high-tech company? Do you think Larry Brilliant’s holistic philosophy is a harbinger of powerful emerging trends in management, or merely a faint echo of the 1960s?

3. The author characterizes Dr. Brilliant as a prototype of his “boomer generation.” To what extent do you believe that a generation’s values shape people’s views? For example, do you see a difference in baby boomers’ versus generation Xers’ use of power and influence?
EXERCISE FOR GAINING POWER

Repairing Power Failures in Management Circuits

Rosabeth Kanter (1979) argues that much of what is labeled “poor management” in organizations is simply individuals protecting their diminished power bases. Instead of criticizing these managers as incompetent, she proposes that we bolster their feelings of personal power. If we solve the real problem of perceived lack of power, the undesirable symptoms of poor leadership often evaporate. This point of view is consistent with the principles discussed in this chapter.

Assignment

In this exercise, you are asked to give advice to individuals who feel powerless. For each of the situations below, form groups to explore opportunities for enhancing the power base of these three individuals. Prepare to report your recommendations.

Situation 1: First-Line Supervisor

Kate Shalene has been a first-line supervisor for six months. She was proud of her new promotion but surprised to discover she felt increasingly powerless. Instead of being a stepping stone, this position was feeling more and more like a dead end. Managers above her were about her age and the hoped-for company expansion never materialized. She was not a central part of the organization, and she felt that no one ever noticed her unless she messed up. She was expected to be supportive of her subordinates, but they never returned the favor. She was expected to absorb their flack without support from above. In general, she felt as though she was constantly “getting it from both ends.” Her job was extremely rule bound, so she had little discretion in what she did or how she did it. She had only modest control over the pay or benefits of her subordinates, because their union agreement left very little flexibility. So she felt powerless to reward them or punish them in ways that really mattered.

As a result, she found she was more and more apt to impose rules to get subordinates to do what she wanted. She became increasingly jealous of any successes and recognition achieved by her subordinates, so she tended to isolate them from people higher up in the organization and from complete information. She lost her penchant for informality and became increasingly rigid in following standard operating procedures. Predictably, her subordinates were becoming more resentful and less productive.

Situation 2: Staff Professional

Shawn Quinn came to the organization a year ago as a staff professional. He believed it might be a way for him to achieve considerable visibility with the top brass, but instead he felt isolated and forgotten. As a staff officer, he had almost no decision-making authority except in his narrow area of expertise. Most of what went on in the organization occurred without his involvement. Innovation and entrepreneurial activity were completely out of his realm. While some of the line officers were given opportunities for professional development, no one seemed to care about his becoming more experienced and capable. They saw him only as a specialist. Because his job didn’t require that he work with others, he had little opportunity to cultivate relationships that might lead to contacts with someone near the top.
What hurt was that a consultant had been hired a few times to work on projects that were part of his area. If consultants could be brought in to do his work, he thought, he must not be very important to the organization.

Shawn found himself being more and more turf conscious. He didn’t want others encroaching on his area of expertise. He tried to demonstrate his competence to others, but the more he did so, the more he became defined as a specialist, outside the mainstream of the organization. Overall, he felt that he was losing ground in his career.

**Situation 3: Top Executive**

May Phelps has been a top executive for three years now. When she obtained the position, she felt that her ultimate career goal had been achieved. Now she was not so sure. Surprisingly, she discovered myriad constraints limiting her discretion and initiative. For example, the job had so many demands and details associated with it that she never had time to engage in any long-term planning. There always seemed to be one more crisis that demanded her attention. Unfortunately, most of the constraints were from sources she couldn’t control, such as government regulations, demands for greater accountability made by the board of directors and by stockholders, union relationships, equal opportunity statutes, and so on. She had built her reputation as a successful manager on being entrepreneurial, creative, and innovative, but none of those qualities seemed appropriate for the demands of her current work. Furthermore, because she was so mired in operations, she had become more and more out of touch with the information flow in the organization. Some things had to remain confidential with her, but her secrecy made others unwilling to share information with her. She had assistants who were supposed to be monitoring the organization and providing her with information, but she often felt they only told her what she wanted to hear.

May had begun to hear rumors that certain special-interest groups were demanding her removal from the top job. She responded by becoming more dictatorial and defensive, with the result that the organization was becoming more control-oriented and conservative. She felt that she was on a downward spiral, but she couldn’t find a way to reverse the trend. “I always thought the saying ‘It’s lonely at the top’ was just a metaphor,” she mused.

**EXERCISE FOR USING INFLUENCE EFFECTIVELY**

Managers are given formal power in an organization by virtue of their position of authority. However, they often find that this authority does not readily translate into actual influence. Particularly when they are working with peers, they find it necessary to develop informal relationships through making deals, persuasive arguments, and so forth. These relationships form the basis of real influence in an organization.

**Assignment**

After reading the following case, assume the roles of Ann’s staff members. Divide into small groups and conduct an informal staff discussion in which you design a plan for influencing Ann’s colleagues and superiors to support her proposal. First, decide which general influence strategy (or combination of strategies) is most appropriate for this situation. Second, using Table 7, recommend specific actions for implementing your general strategy. Prepare to present your suggestions, including justifications.
Ann Lyman's Proposal

Ann Lyman was recently hired by the Challenge Products Corporation (CPC) as a senior marketing executive for the electronic housewares division. Her previous experience at Pearces, a major competitor, had earned her a reputation for being a creative and hardworking manager. Her department at Pearces had increased in sales at least 15 percent per year over the past five years, and she had been featured in a lead article in *Contemporary Management*. This combination of competence and visibility was what attracted the attention of John Dilworth, the CEO of Challenge. John was troubled about the two-quarter decline in electronic sales. This was the core of CPC’s business, and he could not risk losing market share.

In the past, CPC’s products had dominated such a large share of their markets that, ironically, marketing wasn’t considered very important. Production touted its high quality and low costs, purchasing emphasized its contribution to keeping costs low, and engineering stressed the durability of its designs. CPC products, it was argued by many, “sold themselves.”

But that was before the cheaper, “look-alike” products from Asia flooded the discount stores. No longer could CPC expect high customer loyalty simply because it was the oldest, best-known, most reliable name brand on the shelf. Ann was convinced that in order for CPC to stay competitive, the company needed to expand its product line, offering more options at different price levels. She felt it also needed to branch out into “trend designs” that appealed to the contemporary lifestyle of young adults. These options would require the company to find new channels of distribution, such as specialty mail-order catalogs, as well as manufacture generic products for department stores’ private labels.

These changes had far-reaching ramifications for other departments at CPC. For one thing, they meant that engineering would have to shorten its design cycle, provide support for a broader range of products, and emphasize customer-oriented, rather than functional, features. These changes would obviously not sit well with the production department, which jealously protected its long production runs based on standard orders and relatively few model changes. It also stressed ease of fabrication and assembly. In addition, purchasing would be required to find new sourcing alternatives for nonstandard parts, which would make it more difficult to get volume discounts and ensure quality.

After three months on the job, Ann felt she was ready to make her proposal to John. She pushed her staff hard to add the finishing touches before John left on his two-week vacation to Lake Tahoe. She wasn’t disappointed—he thought it was a winner. He was excited and ready to “sign on.” But he was also realistic about the difficulty they faced convincing others that these changes were necessary. Ann’s counterparts in production, purchasing, and engineering would certainly object. “It’ll be a hard sell, but I think you have some good ideas,” he concluded. “While I’m away, I’d like you to design a plan for getting the cooperation of the other departments. You can count on me for general support, but the culture in this organization isn’t consistent with sending out an edict. You’ll have to figure out how to get their support some other way.”

**EXERCISES FOR NEUTRALIZING UNWANTED INFLUENCE ATTEMPTS**

An important aspect of becoming empowered and influential is reducing inappropriate dependence. Obviously, social and work interdependence are integral parts of organizational life. Most forms of interdependence are natural and healthy. However, sometimes
individuals attempt to turn interdependence into dependence by exercising inappropriate influence. Their objective is to increase their power over us by creating a significant imbalance of power.

Assignment
Following are two role-play exercises. In each case, assume the role of the person who needs to resist unwanted influence (Betty or Pat). Prior to the beginning of the role play, review the relevant behavioral guidelines (see the Observer's Feedback Form in Appendix 1), determine which combination is most appropriate, and plan your strategy for dealing with this problem. Do not read the other role descriptions (Bill or Lynn). Following the role play, an assigned observer will give you feedback using the Observer's Feedback Form as a guide.

Cindy's Fast Foods

Betty, Assistant Manager
You are the assistant manager of Cindy's, a fast-food franchise in a college town. You are one of the few student employees who has stayed on after graduation. You weren’t ready to move on, and there weren’t that many good jobs in elementary education, anyway. The spring before graduation, the owner offered you the job of assistant manager. The timing was perfect because the offer would relieve the pressure on you to pursue teaching jobs in which you really weren’t interested. Your work at Cindy’s had sparked your interest in business, and your student-teaching experience had not been very successful. Even though your parents weren’t too pleased about paying four years’ tuition at an expensive private liberal arts college to have you end up “cooking hamburgers” for a career, their feelings mellowed when you explained the opportunities you would have to advance and possibly purchase a franchise. “Besides,” you told them, “I’ll only be in this position for three years, and then I can decide whether I want to apply for a manager’s position or try again for a teaching job.”

It’s hard to believe it’s been two years since graduation. Your manager, Bill, has done a conscientious job helping you learn the ropes as a manager. He has worked you hard, but trained you well. You feel indebted to him for his help. You have become quite close friends, although his occasional dirty jokes and sexist comments with the guys on break in the back room make you feel uncomfortable.

One night you are finishing your book work for the day, after the rest of the crew has gone home. These late nights are the one really bad feature of your job. Just as you are about to turn out the lights, Bill comes in. It is not unusual for him to stop by at closing. He is single, likes to bowl after work, and sometimes drops by later on his way home. You are just putting on your coat when he asks you to come into his office. He shuts the door, and pulls up a chair next to you. “Betty, I’ve been watching your performance very closely. You’re a hard worker. The employees enjoy your management style. And I’ve taken a liking to you as well. I think I have a good shot at transferring to a much larger store in Cincinnati. I’ll be glad to get out of this one-horse town and gain more visibility closer to corporate headquarters.”

You start getting a little nervous as he moves his chair closer to yours. “I think you would be a really good replacement for me, but you haven’t completed your full term as assistant. So I’ll need to ask for a special exception to the corporate policy. And I’ll have to put in a good word for you with the owner. However, there’s some risk involved for me, because the regional manager is a real stickler on rules, and I’ve asked him to recommend me for the Cincinnati job. But I’d be willing to take that risk under certain conditions.” As he waits for a response, you know very well where this conversation is headed.
Bill, Manager
You have been attracted to Betty for some time. You find her very attractive, and you enjoy her company. You have several times manufactured excuses to have personal chats with her or to be alone with her. You think Betty finds you attractive, also. It seems that she has been extra friendly lately. You figure she’s either bucking for your job or sending you signals that she’d like to expand your relationship beyond strictly business—or both.
Besides, you feel she owes you something. You have worked extra hard to train her, and you’ve been dropping hints to the owner that you think Betty might be ready to move up.

9:00 to 7:30
Pat Simpson, Loan Officer
You are a member of a small consumer-loan company. The staff consists of you, another loan officer, and a secretary. Last month, a larger financial institution acquired your firm and made some personnel changes. The other loan officer, with whom you had worked for four years, was replaced by Lynn Johnson. Having entered the company at about the same time, you and Lynn have known each other for years. In fact, you worked in the Ann Arbor office together for a year. During that time, you were both single, and together you enjoyed the night life of Detroit. You learn that Lynn is still single and “living the life of Riley.” In contrast, you have been married for about three years. You looked forward to working with Lynn again but wondered if your lack of interest in the local night scene would affect your relationship. Lynn has the reputation of being capable but lazy. She’s known for taking in lots of loan applications and then striking bargains with or cajoling co-workers into helping out with the dreaded credit-checking process. You wonder if this practice has anything to do with the fact that her uncle was a founding partner in the bank.
After Lynn arrives, you are shocked at the difference in your work attitudes and lifestyles. “Boy, what a difference three years makes!” you think to yourself. You and your previous office mate, Jim, were both married, and both of you favored a vigorous working tempo from 9:00 to 5:15, taking lunch when convenient. You and Jim had a great working relationship, and the loan volume in your office increased steadily. There was even some discussion of expanding the size of the staff. In contrast, Lynn prefers leisurely mornings that begin in earnest around 10:30, luncheons as long as Mexican siestas, and a flurry of activity between 4:00 and 7:30 P.M.
You and your spouse are experiencing some marital turbulence, and you feel it is very important to be home in the evenings. Your spouse has begun attending night classes and leaves for school at 8:00 P.M. The educational program is an extremely intense three-year ordeal. Unfortunately, the stress level already seems unbearable. When you stay at the office late, you not only miss dinner together but you don’t even see each other until after class, when you are both so tired there is no opportunity for quality time. It seems as though most weekends are devoted to homework.
Because the office staff is so small, the difference in workday rhythms is creating a serious hardship on you. Lynn doesn’t function very well in the morning and has begun expressing irritation when you rush out the door at closing time. Lately, your relationship has become strained. You handle most of the walk-in business early in the morning, eat lunch at your desk, and have your paperwork done by 5:30 at the latest. In contrast, Lynn is just getting into high gear about 4:00. Because company rules require checking each other’s loan approvals, Lynn becomes testy when you say you can’t stay after 5:30 to check her work. Some evenings you have relented and stayed until 7:00 or 8:00, but your spouse got very upset. When you don’t stay late, you are greeted by a stack of paperwork on your desk in the morning, which makes it difficult for you to meet with...
new customers. Several times Lynn has tried to get you to do the credit checks on her loan applications, saying that the press of new business was too great. Something has got to change! You decide to go to lunch with Lynn today and tell her how you feel.

Lynn Johnson, Loan Officer

You have worked for this firm for 10 years, and you are very good at your work. During that time, you have passed up offers from larger financial institutions because you like the flexibility of working in a small office. Besides, your family is well-to-do, so you aren’t concerned about making a lot of money.

In every other office, your co-workers have been willing to accommodate your work style. They recognize that you are one of the top loan officers in the company—and having the right last name doesn’t hurt any—so they make allowances for your idiosyncrasies.

But your new office mate (and, you thought, old friend) is an exception. Since you arrived, the relationship has been testy because of your different schedules. You don’t understand why there can’t be more tolerance for your work style. After all, you get the job done, and that’s what counts. Besides, your requests for assistance are not that unreasonable; other co-workers have always been willing to comply.

Thinking about the impending discussion, you realize how important it is for you to get Pat to change her work habits to conform with yours. You certainly hope you can convince Pat to pitch in and help you when you get behind. “I mean, that’s what co-workers (and old friends) are for, right?” you muse on the way to work. During the discussion, you plan to stress the reasonableness of your requests. Others have never objected strenuously; why should Pat? If that doesn’t work, you plan to try and work out a bargain. Maybe you could put in a good word for Pat with your uncle, a founder of the company. Pat’s career hasn’t exactly skyrocketed, and she is probably itching to move to a larger office in a metropolitan city. Possibly, her title could be upgraded to Senior Loan Officer.
SKILL APPLICATION

ACTIVITIES FOR GAINING POWER AND INFLUENCE

Suggested Assignments

1. Select a friend or associate who has complained to you about feeling powerless in an organizational position. This might be a person who holds a relatively insignificant leadership position in a campus organization or a low-level position in a work organization. Perhaps the individual feels his or her personal abilities do not command respect in that position. Sit down with this person and teach him or her the guidelines for gaining power in an organization. (You might use the Assessment Survey at the beginning of this chapter as a diagnostic instrument.) As part of this conversation, design a specific plan of action for increasing both the position and personal bases of power. Discuss the outcomes of this plan with your friend and report on his or her success.

2. Using the guidelines for gaining power, develop a plan for increasing your power in an organizational setting. Describe the setting, including the factors you feel account for your feelings of powerlessness. Use your score on the Assessment Survey as a diagnostic aid. Formulate a detailed strategy for increasing your positional and personal power. Report on your results and describe the benefits of becoming more empowered.

3. Over time, analyze your efforts to influence other people. Use the “Three Rs” model to catalog your strategies. Consider why you used each strategy. Did you repeatedly rely on one of two strategies, or did you vary your approach according to circumstances? Keep track of the outcome of each attempt. Did you seem to have more success with one of the strategies? Next, select a person you have attempted to influence, one with whom you have a close, ongoing relationship. Discuss the alternative influence strategies with that person and ask him or her what effect the frequent use of each approach might have on your relationship.

4. Watch at least two realistic dramas (movies, plays, TV). Observe the influence strategies used by various characters. Which form of influence did they use most frequently, and why? Did certain people demonstrate a preference for a particular strategy? If so, was this based on personality traits, gender roles, authority relationships, or other situational factors? How successful were these influence attempts, and what impact did they have on ongoing relationships?

5. Identify a specific relationship in which you are regularly asked to do things that you feel are inappropriate. Using the relevant guidelines for resisting unwanted influence, formulate a strategy for assertively responding to the next attempt. Role-play this approach with a friend or co-worker and incorporate his or her suggestions. After you implement your plan, report on the outcome. What was the reaction? Were you successful in communicating your position? Was an understanding
reached regarding future interactions that is more fair? Based on this experience, examine other relationships for which this approach might be appropriate.

**Application Plan and Evaluation**

The intent of this exercise is to help you apply this cluster of skills in a real-life, out-of-class setting. Now that you have become familiar with the behavioral guidelines that form the basis of effective skill performance, you will improve most by trying out those guidelines in an everyday context. Unlike a classroom activity, in which feedback is immediate and others can assist you with their evaluations, this skill application activity is one you must accomplish and evaluate on your own. There are two parts to this activity. Part 1 helps prepare you to apply the skill. Part 2 helps you evaluate and improve on your experience. Be sure to write down answers to each item. Don’t short-circuit the process by skipping steps.

**Part 1. Planning**

1. Write down the two or three aspects of this skill that are most important to you. These may be areas of weakness, areas you most want to improve, or areas that are most salient to a problem you face right now. Identify the specific aspects of this skill that you want to apply.
2. Now identify the setting or the situation in which you will apply this skill. Establish a plan for performance by actually writing down a description of the situation. Who else will be involved? When will you do it? Where will it be done? Circumstances:
   - Who else?
   - When?
   - Where?
3. Identify the specific behaviors you will engage in to apply this skill. Operationalize your skill performance.
4. What are the indicators of successful performance? How will you know you have been effective? What will indicate you have performed competently?

**Part 2. Evaluation**

5. After you have completed your implementation, record the results. What happened? How successful were you? What was the effect on others?
6. How can you improve? What modifications can you make next time? What will you do differently in a similar situation in the future?
7. Looking back on your whole skill practice and application experience, what have you learned? What has been surprising? In what ways might this experience help you in the long term?