

Power and Politics

15.301 Managerial Psychology
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An honest man can feel no pleasure in the exercise of power over his fellow citizens -- T. Jefferson

The attempt to combine wisdom and power has only rarely been successful and then only for a short while -- A. Einstein

It is not the misuse of power that is evil; the very existence of power is evil -- Charles Reich

Only in America do we use the word 'politics' to describe the process so well; 'poli' in Latin meaning 'many' and 'tics' meaning 'blood-sucking creatures'! -- Anonymous

Power is America's last dirty word. It is easier to talk about money --and much easier to talk about sex -- than it is to talk about power. -- Rosabeth Kanter

Power corrupts. Knowledge is power. Study hard. Be evil. -- Anonymous

Power

The potential ability to influence behavior, to change the course of events, to overcome resistance and to get people to do things that they would not otherwise do. Politics and influence are the processes, the actions, the behaviors through which this potential power is utilized and realized.

Pfeffer (1990, 30)

...also power is not the property of one person: it is relational, having power over someone

Power vs. Leadership

- Intertwined
- Leaders use power as a means

But,

- Power does not require goal compatibility merely dependence
- Leadership is usually thought of downward, but power is also sideways, and upwards.

Sources of Power: Personal

- Personal Characteristics: energy and physical stamina, focus, sensitivity to others, flexibility, ability to tolerate conflict.
- Skills, knowledge (expert power)
- Admiration, being liked (referent power)
- Personality, interpersonal style (charismatic power)
- Who you know and what you can get done (network power)
- Reputation

Sources of Power: Structural

- Control over resources, provision, allocation, use.
- Control over punishment (coercive power)
- Control over rewards (reward power)
- Control over information
- Belief that person has the right to issue directives (legitimate power)

Strategies and Tactics

- Framing: setting the context.
- Timing: first mover, delay, deadlines.
- Strategic presentation of information.
- Change the structure: divide and conquer, expand, build coalitions.
- Language, symbols, ceremonies.
- Flattery, friendliness.
- Assertiveness.
- Bargaining.
- Influence --Cialdini.

Video

- Two Clips
 - Dead Poets Society: this is the first day of class and we see the different teachers.
 - Shawshank Redemption: takes place inside a prison, the narrator is Red, Morgan Freeman's character.
- Look for sources of power and tactics
 - Who has power? Where does the power come from?
How are they using it, tactics?

Analysis

- Who has power?
- What is the source of power?
- Are they using a specific tactic?
- Are they building power?

How do you Spot Power?

- Reputation: ask people
- Which units are over-represented in important roles?
- Who benefits the most from decisions?
From resource allocations?
- Who has the big office? Good parking spaces?
- Outward deference? Who interrupts whom?

How Power is Lost

- Times change and people do not, what gave you power before might not continue to give you power
- Power not earned is easily lost, not building a network or understanding what is needed
- Pride, thinking you are always right

Manage your Power

- Create resources, find new domains
- Build alliances by using reciprocity (think the Godfather).
- Build your network: be a bridge, be central.
- Build your reputation: be careful of first impressions
- Be in the right unit.
- Gather information, learn, know what is going on.