**The ‘P word’**

“Power is [our] last dirty word. It is easier to talk about money—and much easier to talk about sex—than it is to talk about power. People who have it deny it; people who want it do not want to appear to hunger for it; and people who engage in its machinations do it secretly.”

- Rosabeth Kanter

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**Organizational Politics**

- **Organizational politics**: process of using power to achieve outcomes that are beneficial to the self and/or organization

- Uncertainty and disagreement serve as two major catalysts of politicking

- What leads to increases in politics?
  - Structural change
  - Management succession
  - Resource allocation (including money and people)
  - Coordination needed among departments

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**Today’s Game Plan**

- **Introduction to Power**
  - What is Power?
  - What Leads to Politics?

- Analyzing Your Own Power
  - Positional, Personal and Relational

- The Downsides of Power

- Some Tools for You Moving Forward
  - Dealing with upward conflict
  - Building your relational power

- Takeaways and Wrap-Up
If you wanted to find out which department holds the most power in an organization, but you could only ask one question in your job interview, what question would you ask?

Context
- Formal Structure (distribution of resources, information flows)
- Culture
- Constituents' needs
- Time urgency/turbulence

Effective Use of Power

Positional Power
- Derived from your formal roles (relates to legitimate power):
  - Structural/hierarchical position
  - Strategic resources
  - Legitimate authority

Personal Power
- Derived from your own personal attributes and skills (relates to expert power):
  - Fostering cooperation: sensitivity, ego, flexibility
  - Succeeding in competitive contexts: focus, tolerance for conflict
  - Gaining support: charisma, linguistic ability, track record

Building Personal Power
- Develop influence and persuasion abilities
- Don’t underestimate your influence over others
- Adaptability, rather than only authenticity

Principles of Persuasion
1. Liking
2. Reciprocity
3. Social proof/consensus
4. Consistency/commitment
5. Scarcity
6. Authority/expertise
If one of your colleagues came to you with a request for help on a project that requires taking time, energy, even staffing away from your own project, under what circumstances would you feel most obligated to say yes?"

1. Liking
- People prefer to comply with the requests of people they know and like
  - Similarity in terms of age, religion, politics, hobbies
  - Praise enables liking via flattery and compliments
- Why the principle works:
  - Want to make those we like happy
- Tactic:
  - Frame flattery as advice seeking (e.g., How were you able to close that deal so successfully?)
  - Complimenting a person in their network

2. Reciprocity
- People feel obligated to repay others
- Why the principle works:
  - Human tendency: treat others the way they treat us
  - Creates sense of obligation – recipient feels guilty if he/she does not reciprocate
- Tactic:
  - (Proactively) give what you want to receive

3. Social Proof
- People follow the lead of similar others (e.g., “everyone else is doing it”)
- Why the principle works:
  - We rely heavily on social cues
  - Grants legitimacy to our actions
- Tactic:
  - Use peer power whenever available

4. Consistency/Commitment
- People align with their clear commitments
- Why the principle works:
  - Personal consistency is highly valued by society
  - People prefer to stick to the stances they take
- Tactic:
  - Make commitments active, public and voluntary
    - Must be public, effortful, and freely chosen
    - Writing provides physical proof of commitment, cannot be disbelieved, and can be shown to others

5. Scarcity
- People value items and opportunities more as they become less available
- Why the principle works:
  - Things that are difficult to attain are generally more valuable
- Tactic:
  - Highlight unique benefits and useful information
6. Expertise

- People defer to experts

**Why the principle works:**
- We are socialized to respect and obey authority figures
- Genuine authority figures usually possess high levels of knowledge, wisdom, and power (so it is usually good to comply)

**Tactic:**
- Expose your expertise (or even better, have others promote it)

Building Personal Power

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Don’t Underestimate Your Influence

- If you want something, ask for it: people tend to overestimate the number of people they would have to ask to get help from others
  - One study featured participants asking individuals for a series of favors (e.g., cell phones, donations, fill out questionnaires, etc.)
  - Participants incorrectly guessed that they would need to ask twice the number of people than they actually did to get help

- Why do people help?
  - People feel that they have a social obligation to others (i.e., reciprocity)

Building Personal Power

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Takeaways: Mix Authenticity & Adaptability

- Play with Your Possible Selves
  - Sign up for a new project, taskforce, association or extracurricular professional activity

- Learn from Your Mount Rushmore
  - Choose 3-4 people (more than 1-2) whom you admire and emulate them

- Don’t Stick to “Your Story”
  - Recraft your story every six months to incorporate the new and refined aspects of your identity

Relational Power
Relational Power

• Your direct, indirect and dormant ties to others
  - Source of emotional support, advice, information, tangible resources
  - Relationships can foster coalitions that enable you to reward or place pressure on others

• Includes informal affiliations and the groups and organizations to which we belong

• Network structure:
  - Centrality
  - Strength of Ties
  - Structural Holes

Building Relational Power

• Become central to your network

• Build your weak ties

• Bridge holes in your network

Whose network offers more power?

Strong or Weak Ties?

Weak ties = more diverse information = more power

Building Relational Power

• Become central to your network

• Build your weak ties

• Bridge holes in your network

Structural Holes Offer Opportunities

You

General Managers

Engineers

Technology Start-up

Investors

Bridging holes = bring unique ideas/resources together = more power
Exercise: Understanding Your Relational Power

- List top 10 most valuable contacts in your network
- For each of the contacts, assign a score 0-10, reflecting the extent to which you depend on that contact (i.e., how much value the contact gives you)
- For each relationship, assign a score 0-10, reflecting the extent to which a given contact depends on you (i.e., how much value you offer to that contact)
- Analyze patterns of mutual and asymmetrical dependence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contact Name</th>
<th>My Dependence on the Contact (1=low; 10=high)</th>
<th>Contact's Dependence on Me (1=low; 10=high)</th>
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Takeaways: Developing Relational Power

- **View networking as an opportunity:** each encounter you can add knowledge and resources to your network
- **Think long-term:** build ties before you need them (it’s less shady and more effective)
- **Be pragmatic and reciprocate:** analyze what your ties want—know what they value—and figure out how you can (proactively) give back
- **Be purposeful:** set aside time and prepare for your encounters and follow up with gratitude

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Power Impacts...

1. Perspective Taking
2. Complexity of Arguments
3. Information Sharing with Others

What is the power paradox?

The skills most important to obtaining power and leading effectively are the very skills that deteriorate once we have power.
Professor Samir Nurmohamed

Complexity of Arguments
• Content analysis of the language that officials used to describe Hurricane Katrina, 9/11, and its aftermath (Magee, Milliken, & Lurie, 2010; Milliken, Magee, Lam, & Menezes, working paper)
• People in power were more likely to describe the situation as:
  ▫ More abstract (vs. concrete)
  ▫ More positive (vs. negative)
  ▫ Sometime more certain (vs. uncertain)
• Legitimate and reward power (i.e., positional power) was associated with these effects, but not expert power
  ▫ Could be as a result of us expecting our leaders to speak more confidently and convey a sense of calmness

Crowding Out Discussion
• When leaders holding formal authority are focused on their own sense of power, they hurt the communication and performance of their teams (Tost, Gilio, & Larrick, 2014)
• Heightened sense of power elicits verbal dominance
  ▫ More likely to talk a lot and more likely for subordinates to believe that their ideas aren’t valued
  ▫ More likely to also discount advice from experts and experienced advisors

Resolving the Power Paradox
• Constantly question...ask “Is this right?” or “What could/should be done?”
  ▫ We are biased to anchoring on our own viewpoints
• Think of how decisions will affect others (both inside AND outside organizations), not just yourself (i.e., perspective taking)
• Talk through key decisions with individuals outside the hierarchy/immediate task
• Communicating how every team member is individually instrumental to the task at hand
  ▫ Helps empower them to take action

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Dealing with Upward Conflict
• Competition: destroy the target’s competence and character
• Avoidance: use a strategy of disassociation
• Accommodation: avoid rocking the boat and simply do what the target tells you to do
• Collaboration: sort through issues and work towards an integrative solution
• Compromise: adapt to fit the target, but retain your priorities in areas that you care more about
Exercise: Revisiting Your Power Audit

Revisit the 10 contacts you listed at the beginning of today, focusing on the ones who you depend on the most versus the least

• Using what we learned today, list 2-3 strategies for each individual you depend on the most so that you can balance these relationships
• Similarly, for the contacts who depend on you, what can you do to make these individuals believe and feel like these relationships are more balanced and mutual? Also, ensure that you are not suffering from the power paradox in these relationships

Exercise: Revisiting Your Power Audit

Add 4-5 contacts that you should meet with in the next two months to build and develop your power

• Consider weak ties, structural holes, density, and centrality when making your choices
• How can they contribute to you reaching your long-term goals?
• What can you do proactively to help them in their endeavors?

Exercise: Revisiting Your Power Audit

Consider 2-3 people who are preventing you from thriving right now

• What can you do to repair your relationships with them? Can you draw on another source of power to help you reach your goals?
• If the relationships are beyond repair:
  ▫ What can you do to scale back your relationships with them?
  ▫ If their absence creates a structural hole in your network, what can you do to either fill the hole or build relationships beyond those individuals?
  ▫ Incivility is a whole other issue!

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Today’s Takeaways

• Power goes beyond formal authority—it’s subjective and people can build power via expertise (i.e., personal) and informal relationships (i.e., relational)
• Understand the perils of power: reduced perspective taking, abstract and less nuanced thinking, social distance and lower willingness to help, illusory control
• Start thinking about ways in which you can guard yourself against the dangers of power (without hindering its benefits)

Ways to Keep in Touch

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Thank you for joining us today!