

Organizational Behavior

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Lecture 9:

Power and Politics in Organizations

Power and Politics

1. Power

- ❑ **Power** refers to a capacity that **A** has to influence the behavior of **B** so **B** acts in accordance with **A's** wishes.
- ❑ A capacity to influence the behavior of others

Sources of power

1. Formal power

- is based on an **individual's position** in an organization.
- It can come from the ability to **coerce**, the ability to **reward**, or formal authority (also termed **legitimate power**).

Formal power

- **Reward power:** people comply with the wishes of another because it produces positive benefits
- **Coercive power:** a power that is dependent on fear
- **Legitimate power:** the power a person possesses as result of their position in the organization.

2. Personal power

- Comes from an individual's unique characteristics.
- There are two bases of personal power: **expertise**, and the respect and admiration of others, which is also termed **referent power**

Personal power

- **Expert Power**
- Power possessed because of a **specific knowledge, skill, expertise or experience** an individual has.
- As the world has become more technical, this power source has grown

Personal power

- **Referent Power**
- Power resulting to a person because of **desirable** characteristics of resources.
- It develops out of administration for the power holder

7 ways to increase your power:

- ❑ **Be reasonable:** use facts and data to build a position then reason from it.
- ❑ **Be friendly:** create good will and good relations
- ❑ **Build coalitions:** get the support of others who possess a similar view point.
- ❑ **Bargain:** negotiate for exchange of benefits(to minimize the dependency)

7 ways to increase your power:

- ❑ **Be assertive:** a little more directly forceful
seek higher authority support - provide leverage
- ❑ **Leverage sanctions:** use organizationally derived rewards or punishments and the threat of them to cause action

Empowerment

- Is the ability and freedom of employees to make decisions and commitments.
- To some degree, boundaries are set around where employees can make decisions, and empowerment seeks to expand them

Empowered employees exhibit 4 characteristics:

- **Self-determination:** free to choose their work
- **Sense of meaning:** feel their work is important
- **Sense of competence:** confident in their ability to do the work
- **Sense of impact:** believe they can influence their work unit, team or organization

Empowerment benefits management because:

- It reduces management work load
- Places decision making power in the hands of those often better equipped to make decisions
- Provides significant motivation and learning opportunities for employees

Levels of Empowerment

- **No discretion** (usually for routine, low skilled jobs)
- **Task setting:** employee can determine how the job gets done
- **Participatory:** some decision making power over job context/content
- **Mission defining:** groups set broad for a project
- **Self-management:** Total decision making power

Abuse of power

- **Harassment:** the abuse of power position
- **Sexual harassment:** unwelcome behaviour of a sexual nature in the workplace that negatively affect the work environment or leads to adverse job related consequences for employees.

2. Politics: POWER IN ACTION!

- Politics is present when employees **convert** the power into action
- Political behaviour is that activity that attempt the distribution of advantages and disadvantages within an organization
- It becomes most notable when it is outside direct job responsibility.

Why do politics exist?

- Organizations are made up of people with differing **values, goals** and **interests**
- Resources are **limited** which causes action to resolve the shortage resulting in conflict
- Facts used to allocate resources are open to interpretation
- The less trust there is in an organization, the more politics unclear performance evaluations promote politics

Rules of Politics

- Fast Company Magazine's Rules for Politics:
 - ✓ Nobody wins unless everybody wins
 - ✓ Don't just ask for opinions, change them
 - ✓ Everybody expects to be paid back
 - ✓ Success can create opposition (what goes around comes around)

Reference

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Thank you!

Next lecture: Creativity and Innovation in
Organizations

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