

9. Power and Organizational Politics

Understanding Key Concept

- Power is the ability to get someone else to do something you want done or the ability to make things happen or get things done the way you want.
- Influence is a behavioral response to the exercise of power.
- Reward power is the extent to which a manager can use extrinsic and intrinsic rewards to control other people.
- Coercive power is the extent to which a manager can deny desired rewards or administer punishment to control other people.
- Legitimate power or formal authority is the extent to which a manager can use the “right of command” to control other people.
- Expert power is the ability to control another’s behavior because of the possession of knowledge, experience, or judgment that the other person does not have but needs.
- Rational persuasion is the ability to control another’s behavior because through the individual’s efforts, the person accepts the desirability of an offered goal and a reasonable way of achieving it.
- Referent power is the ability to control another’s behavior because of the individual’s desire to identify with the power source.
- A zone of indifference is the range of authoritative requests to which a subordinate is willing to respond without subjecting the directives to critical evaluation or judgment.
- Empowerment is the process by which managers help others to acquire and use the power needed to make decisions affecting themselves and their work.
- Organizational politics is the management of influence to obtain ends not sanctioned by the organization or to obtain sanctioned ends through nonsanctioned means and the art of creative compromise among competing interests.
- Organizational governance is the pattern of authority, influence, and acceptable managerial behavior established at the top of the organization.

Power

In OB, power is defined as the ability to get someone to do something you want done or the ability to make things happen in the way you want them to. We examined leadership as a key power mechanism to make things happen. Now it is time to discuss other ways. The essence of power is control over the behavior of others. Power is the force you use to make things happen in an intended way, whereas influence is what you have when you exercise power, and it is expressed by others' behavioral response to your exercise of power. Managers derive power from both organizational and individual sources. These sources are called position power and personal power, respectively.

POSITION POWER

Three bases of power are available to a manager solely as a result of his or her position in the organization: reward, coercive, and legitimate power.

Reward power is the extent to which a manager can use extrinsic and intrinsic rewards to control other people. Examples of such rewards include money, promotions, compliments, or enriched jobs. Although all managers have some access to rewards, success in accessing and utilizing rewards to achieve influence varies according to the skills of the manager.

Power can also be founded on punishment instead of reward. For example, a manager may threaten to withhold a pay raise, or to transfer, demote, or even recommend the firing of a subordinate who does not act as desired. Such coercive power is the extent to which a manager can deny desired rewards or administer punishments to control other people. The availability of coercive power also varies from one organization and manager to another. The presence of unions and organizational policies on employee treatment can weaken this power base considerably.

The third base of "position" power is legitimate power, or formal authority. It stems from the extent to which a manager can use subordinates' internalized values or beliefs that the "boss" has a "right of command" to control their behavior. For example, the boss may have the formal authority to approve or deny such employee requests as job transfers, equipment purchases, personal time off, or overtime work. Legitimate power represents a special kind of power a manager has because subordinates believe it is legitimate for a person occupying the managerial position to have the right to command. If this legitimacy is lost, authority will not be accepted by subordinates. Since legitimate power is multifaceted and much of it may be "latent," some additional discussion is required.

One of the most important aspects of legitimacy is the access to and control of information. Indeed, some observers believe that information power should be listed as a separate source of power. In most organizations, the “right” to know and use information is restricted and confined by a series of rules and regulations. For instance, in most firms an individual’s pay is not broadly known, nor are engineering drawings typically allowed outside engineering. Marketing plans may be “top secret,” as is the latest evaluation of the boss. The nominal reason for controlling information is to protect the firm. The real reason is often to allow information holders to increase their power.

Underpinning legitimacy in most organizations is an implicit moral and technical order. As we will note later in this section, from the crib to the school to the corporation to retirement, individuals in our society are taught to obey “higher authority.” In U.S. firms, “higher authority” means those close to the top of the corporate pyramid. In other societies, “higher authority” does not have a bureaucratic or organizational reference but consists of those with moral authority such as tribal chiefs, religious leaders, and the like. In firms, the legitimacy of those at the top increasingly derives from their positions as representatives for various constituencies. This is a technical or instrumental role, but many senior executives evoke social causes in their role as authority figures.

PERSONAL POWER

Personal power resides in the individual and is independent of that individual’s position. Personal power is important in many well-managed firms. Three bases of personal power are expertise, rational persuasion, and reference.

Expert power is the ability to control another person’s behavior through the possession of knowledge, experience, or judgment that the other person does not have but needs. A subordinate obeys a supervisor possessing expert power because the boss ordinarily knows more about what is to be done or how it is to be done than does the subordinate. Expert power is relative, not absolute.

Rational persuasion is the ability to control another’s behavior because through the individual’s efforts, the person accepts the desirability of an offered goal and a reasonable way of achieving it. Much of what a supervisor does day to day involves rational persuasion up, down, and across the organization. Rational persuasion involves both explaining the desirability of expected outcomes and showing how specific actions will achieve these outcomes.

Referent power is the ability to control another’s behavior because the person wants to identify

with the power source. In this case, a subordinate obeys the boss because he or she wants to behave, perceive, or believe as the boss does. This obedience may occur, for example, because the subordinate likes the boss personally and therefore tries to do things the way the boss wants them done. In a sense, the subordinate attempts to avoid doing anything that would interfere with the pleasing boss-subordinate relationship. A person's referent power can be enhanced when the individual taps into the moral order or shows a clearer long-term path to a morally desirable end. In common language, individuals with the ability to tap into these more esoteric aspects of corporate life have "charisma" and "the vision thing." Followership is not based on what the subordinate will get for specific actions or specific levels of performance, but on what the individual represents—a path toward a loftier future.

ACQUIRING AND USING POWER AND INFLUENCE

A considerable portion of any manager's time is directed toward what is called power-oriented behavior. Power-oriented behavior is action directed primarily at developing or using relationships in which other people are to some degree willing to defer to one's wishes.³ Figure 4.1 shows three basic dimensions of power and influence with which a manager will become involved in this regard: downward, upward, and lateral. Also shown in the figure are some preliminary ideas for achieving success along each of these dimensions.

The effective manager is one who succeeds in building and maintaining high levels of both position and personal power over time. Only then is sufficient power of the right types available when the manager needs to exercise influence on downward, lateral, and upward dimensions.

Building Position Power Position power can be enhanced when managers are able to demonstrate to others that their work units are highly relevant to organizational goals and are able to respond to urgent organizational needs. To increase centrality and criticality in the organization, managers may seek to acquire a more central role in the work flow by having information filtered through them, making at least part of their job responsibilities unique, expanding their network of communication contacts, and occupying an office convenient to main traffic flows.

Managers may also attempt to increase the relevance of their tasks and those of their unit to the organization. There are many ways to do this. Executives may attempt to become an internal coordinator within the firm or external representative. They may suggest their subordinates take on these roles, particularly when the firm is downsizing. When the firm is in a dynamic setting of changing technology, the executive may also move to provide unique services and information to other units. This is particularly effective if the executive moves his unit into becoming involved with decisions central to the organization's top-priority goals. To expand their position,

managers may also delegate routine activities, expand the task variety and novelty for subordinates, initiate new ideas, and get involved in new projects. We will have more to say about this matter when discussing empowerment.

There are also ways managers attempt to build influence that may or may not have a positive effect on the organization. Managers may attempt to define tasks so that they are difficult to evaluate, such as by creating an ambiguous job description or developing a unique language for their work.

Building Personal Power Personal power arises from the personal characteristics of the manager rather than from the location and other characteristics of his or her position in the organization's hierarchy of authority.

Three personal characteristics, expertise, political savvy, and likability, have special potential for enhancing personal power in an organization. The most obvious is building expertise. Additional expertise may be gained by advanced training and education, participation in professional associations, and involvement in the early stages of projects.

A somewhat less obvious way to increase personal power is to learn political savvy—better ways to negotiate, persuade individuals, and understand the goals and means they are most willing to accept. The novice believes that most individuals are very much the same, see the same goals, and will accept much the same paths toward these goals. The more astute individual recognizes important individual differences.

A manager's reference power is increased by characteristics that enhance his or her "likability" and create personal attraction in relationships with other people. These include pleasant personality characteristics, agreeable behavior patterns, and attractive personal appearance. The demonstration of sincere hard work on behalf of task performance can also increase personal power by enhancing both expertise and reference. A person who is perceived to try hard may be expected to know more about the job and thus be sought out for advice. A person who tries hard is also likely to be respected for the attempt and may even be depended on by others to maintain that effort.

Combined Building of Position and Personal Power From a purely analytical standpoint, most sources of power can be traced to position power or personal power. However, many of the influential actions and behaviors are combinations of position and personal power.

Most managers attempt to increase the visibility of their job performance by (1) expanding the number of contacts they have with senior people, (2) making oral presentations of written work, (3) participating in problem-solving task forces, (4) sending out notices of accomplishment, and (5) generally seeking additional opportunities to increase personal name recognition. Most managers also recognize that, between superiors and subordinates, access to or control over information is an important element. A boss may appear to expand his or her expert power over a subordinate by not allowing the individual access to critical information. Although the denial may appear to enhance the boss's expert power, it may reduce the subordinate's effectiveness. In a similar manner a supervisor may also control access to key organizational decision makers. An individual's ability to contact key persons informally can offset some of this disadvantage. Furthermore, astute senior executives routinely develop "back channels" to lower-level individuals deep within the firm to offset the tendency of bosses to control information and access.

Expert power is often relational and embedded within the organizational context. Many important decisions are made outside formal channels and are substantially influenced by key individuals with the requisite knowledge. By developing and using coalitions and networks, an individual may build on their expert power. Though coalitions and networks, an individual may alter the flow of information and the context for analysis. By developing coalitions and networks, executives also expand their access to information and their opportunities for participation.

Executives also attempt to control, or at least influence, decision premises. A decision premise is a basis for defining the problem and for selecting among alternatives. By defining a problem in a manner that fits the executive's expertise, it is natural for that executive to be in charge of solving it. Thus, the executive subtly shifts his or her position power.

Executives who want to increase their power often make their goals and needs clear and bargain effectively to show that their preferred goals and needs are best. They do not show their power base directly but instead provide clear "rational persuasion" for their preferences. So the astute executive does not threaten or attempt to evoke sanctions to build power. Instead, he or she combines personal power with the position of the unit to enhance total power. As the organizational context changes, different personal sources of power may become more important alone and in combination with the individual's position power. So there is an art to building power.

TURNING POWER INTO RELATIONAL INFLUENCE

Using position and personal power well to achieve the desired influence over other people is a challenge for most managers. Practically speaking, there are many useful ways of exercising

relational influence. The most common strategies involve the following:

Strategies for exercising influence

Reason Using facts and data to support a logical argument.

Friendliness Using flattery, goodwill, and favorable impressions.

Coalition Using relationships with other people for support.

Bargaining Using the exchange of benefits as a basis for negotiation.

Assertiveness Using a direct and forceful personal approach.

Higher authority Gaining higher level support for one's requests.

Sanctions Using organizationally derived rewards and punishments.

Research on these strategies suggests that reason is the most popular strategy overall. In addition, friendliness, assertiveness, bargaining, and higher authority are used more frequently to influence subordinates than to influence supervisors. This pattern of influence attempts is consistent with our earlier contention that downward influence generally includes mobilization of both position and personal power sources, whereas upward influence is more likely to draw on personal power.

Little research is available on the subject of upward influence in organizations. This is unfortunate, since truly effective managers are able to influence their bosses as well as their subordinates. One study reports that both supervisors and subordinates view reason, or the logical presentation of ideas, as the most frequently used strategy of upward influence. When queried on reasons for success and failure, however, the viewpoints of the two groups show both similarities and differences. The perceived causes of success in upward influence are similar for both supervisors and subordinates and involve the favorable content of the influence attempt, a favorable manner of its presentation, and the competence of the subordinate. The two groups disagree on the causes of failure, however. Subordinates attribute failure in upward influence to the close mindedness of the supervisor, unfavorable content of the influence attempt, and unfavorable interpersonal relationships with the supervisor. In contrast, supervisors attribute failure to the unfavorable content of the attempt, the unfavorable manner in which it was presented, and the subordinate's lack of competence.

POWER, FORMAL AUTHORITY, AND OBEDIENCE

As we have shown, power is the potential to control the behavior of others, and formal authority is the potential to exert such control through the legitimacy of a managerial position. Yet, we also know that people who seem to have power don't always get their way. Why do some people obey directives and others do not? More specifically, why should subordinates respond to a manager's authority, or "right to command," in the first place? Furthermore, given that subordinates are willing to obey, what determines the limits of obedience?

The Milgram Experiments The mythology of American independence and unbridled individualism is so strong we need to spend some time explaining how most of us are really quite obedient. So we turn to the seminal studies of Stanley Milgram on obedience. Milgram designed experiments to determine the extent to which people obey the commands of an authority figure, even if they believe they are endangering the life of another person. Subjects, ranging in age from 20 to 50 and representing a diverse set of occupations (engineers, salespeople, schoolteachers, laborers, and others), were paid a nominal fee for participation in the project.

The subjects were falsely told that the purpose of the study was to determine the effects of punishment on learning. The subjects were to be the “teachers.” The “learner” was a confederate of Milgram’s, who was strapped to a chair in an adjoining room with an electrode attached to his wrist. The “experimenter,” another confederate of Milgram’s, was dressed in a gray laboratory coat. Appearing impassive and somewhat stern, the experimenter instructed the “teacher” to read a series of word pairs to the “learner” and then to reread the first word along with four other terms. The learner was supposed to indicate which of the four terms was in the original pair by pressing a switch that caused a light to flash on a response panel in front of the teacher.

The teacher was instructed to administer a shock to the learner each time a wrong answer was given. This shock was to be increased one level of intensity each time the learner made a mistake. The teacher controlled switches that ostensibly administered shocks ranging from 15 to 450 volts. In reality, there was no electric current in the apparatus, but the learners purposely “erred” often and responded to each level of “shock” in progressively distressing ways. If a “teacher” (subject) proved unwilling to administer a shock, the experimenter used the following sequential prods to get him or her to perform as requested:

(1) “Please continue” or “Please go on”; (2) “The experiment requires that you continue”; (3) “It is absolutely essential that you continue”; and (4) “You have no choice, you must go on.” Only when the “teacher” refused to go on after the fourth prod would the experiment be stopped. When would you expect the “teachers” to refuse to go on?

Milgram asked some of his students and colleagues the same question. Most felt that few, if any, of the subjects would go beyond the “very strong shock” level. Actually, 26 subjects (65 percent) continued to the end of the experiment and shocked the “learners” to the maximum. None stopped before 300 volts, the point at which the learner pounded on the wall. The remaining 14 subjects refused to obey the experimenter at various intermediate points.

Most people are surprised by these results, as was Milgram. The question is why other people

would have a tendency to accept or comply with authoritative commands under such extreme conditions. Milgram conducted further experiments to try to answer this question. The subjects' tendencies toward compliance were somewhat reduced (1) when experimentation took place in a rundown office (rather than a university lab), (2) when the victim was closer, (3) when the experimenter was farther away, and (4) when the subject could observe other subjects. However, the level of compliance was still much higher than most of us would expect.

What does this mean for empowerment? Note the tendency for individuals to comply and be obedient—to switch off and merely do exactly what they are told to do. In many firms, employees are hired to be obedient; they are rewarded for being so, and they feel alienated when others seek to “empower them.”

Obedience and the Acceptance of Authority Direct defiance within organizational settings is quite rare, as is the individual who institutes new and different ways to get the job done. If the tendency to follow instructions is great and defiance is rare, then why do so many organizations appear to drift into apparent chaos?

The answer to this question can be found in work by the famous management writer Chester Barnard. Barnard's argument focused on the “consent of the governed” rather than on the rights derived from ownership. He argued that subordinates accepted or followed a directive from the boss only under special circumstances.

All four of these circumstances must be met: (1) the subordinate can and must understand the directive; (2) the subordinate must feel mentally and physically capable of carrying out the directive; (3) the subordinate must believe that the directive is not inconsistent with the purpose of the organization; and (4) the subordinate must believe that the directive is not inconsistent with his or her personal interests.

These four conditions are very carefully stated. For instance, to accept and follow an order, the subordinate does not need to understand how the proposed action will help the organization. He or she only needs to believe that the requested action is not inconsistent with the purpose of the firm. The astute manager will not take these guidelines for granted. In giving directives, the astute manager recognizes that the acceptance of the request is not assured. When seeking empowerment, two of the biggest problems are embodied in Barnard's work. First, few employees understand what they are to do when a boss says they are empowered. They just do not understand what is to be done or what is to be accomplished. Second, many employees are deeply suspicious of management and need to know why empowerment is better for them or at

least not inconsistent with their own interests. Continual lauding of the importance of empowerment for the firm does not satisfy this important factor.

Obedience and the Zone of Indifference Most people seek a balance between what they put into an organization (contributions) and what they get from an organization in return (inducements). Within the boundaries of the psychological contract, therefore, employees will agree to do many things in and for the organization because they think they should. In exchange for certain inducements, subordinates recognize the authority of the organization and its managers to direct their behavior in certain ways. Based on his acceptance view of authority, Chester Barnard calls this area in which directions are obeyed the “zone of indifference.”

A zone of indifference is the range of authoritative requests to which a subordinate is willing to respond without subjecting the directives to critical evaluation or judgment. Directives falling within the zone are obeyed. Requests or orders falling outside the zone of indifference are not considered legitimate under terms of the psychological contract. Such “extraordinary” directives may or may not be obeyed. This link between the zone of indifference and the psychological contract is shown in Figure 4.2.

The zone of indifference is not fixed. There may be times when a boss would like a subordinate to do things falling outside the zone. In this case, the manager must enlarge the zone to accommodate additional behaviors. In these attempts, a manager most likely will have to use more incentives than pure position power. In some instances, no power base may be capable of accomplishing the desired result. Consider your own zone of indifference and tendency to obey. When will you say “No” to your boss? When should you be willing to say “No”? At times, the situation may involve ethical dilemmas, where you may be asked to do things that are illegal, unethical, or both.

Research on ethical managerial behavior shows that supervisors can become sources of pressure for subordinates to do such things as support incorrect viewpoints, sign false documents, overlook the supervisor’s wrongdoing, and do business with the supervisor’s friends. Most of us will occasionally face such ethical dilemmas during our careers. For now, we must simply remember that saying “No” or “refusing to keep quiet” can be difficult and potentially costly.

Organizational Politics

Any study of power and influence inevitably leads to the subject of “politics.” For many, this word may conjure up thoughts of illicit deals, favors, and special personal relationships. Perhaps this image of shrewd, often dishonest, practices of obtaining one’s way is reinforced by

Machiavelli's classic fifteenth-century work *The Prince*, which outlines how to obtain and hold power via political action. It is important, however, to adopt a perspective that allows politics in organizations to function in a much broader capacity.

THE TWO TRADITIONS OF ORGANIZATIONAL POLITICS

There are two quite different traditions in the analysis of organizational politics. One tradition builds on Machiavelli's philosophy and defines politics in terms of self-interest and the use of nonsanctioned means. In this tradition, organizational politics may be formally defined as the management of influence to obtain ends not sanctioned by the organization or to obtain sanctioned ends through nonsanctioned influence means. Managers are often considered political when they seek their own goals or use means that are not currently authorized by the organization or that push legal limits. Where there is uncertainty or ambiguity, it is often extremely difficult to tell whether a manager is being political in this self-serving sense.¹⁴ For instance, was John Meriwether a great innovator when he established Long Term Capital Management (LTCM) as a hedge fund to bet on interest rate spreads? At one time, the firm included 2 Nobel laureates and some 25 Ph.D.s. Or was he the consummate insider when he got the U.S. Federal Reserve to orchestrate a bailout when it looked like he would either go broke or lose control to a rich investor? Or as often happens in the world of corporate politics, could both of these statements be partially true?

The second tradition treats politics as a necessary function resulting from differences in the self-interests of individuals. Here, organizational politics is viewed as the art of creative compromise among competing interests. In the case of John Meriwether and LTCM, when it went bankrupt the country's financial leaders were concerned that it could cause a panic in the markets and so hurt everyone. So the Federal Reserve stepped in. That Meriwether did not lose everything was merely a byproduct of saving the whole financial system. In a heterogeneous society, individuals will disagree as to whose self-interests are most valuable and whose concerns should therefore be bounded by collective interests. Politics arise because individuals need to develop compromises, avoid confrontation, and live together. The same holds true in organizations, where individuals join, work, and stay together because their self-interests are served. Furthermore, it is important to remember that the goals of the organization and the acceptable means are established by organizationally powerful individuals in negotiation with others. Thus, organizational politics is also the use of power to develop socially acceptable ends and means that balance individual and collective interests.

THE DOUBLE-EDGED SWORD OF ORGANIZATIONAL POLITICS

The two different traditions of organizational politics are reflected in the ways executives

describe their effects on managers and their organizations. In one survey, some 53 percent of those interviewed indicated that organizational politics enhanced the achievement of organizational goals and survival. Yet, some 44 percent suggested that it distracted individuals from organizational goals. In this same survey, 60 percent of respondents suggested that organizational politics was good for career advancement; 39 percent reported that it led to a loss of power, position, and credibility.

Organizational politics is not automatically good or bad. It can serve a number of important functions, including overcoming personnel inadequacies, coping with change, and substituting for formal authority.

Even in the best managed firms, mismatches arise among managers who are learning, burned out, lacking in needed training and skills, overqualified, or lacking the resources needed to accomplish their assigned duties. Organizational politics provides a mechanism for circumventing these inadequacies and getting the job done. Organizational politics can facilitate adaptation to changes in the environment and technology of an organization.

Organizational politics can help identify such problems and move ambitious, problem-solving managers into the breach. It is quicker than restructuring. It allows the firm to meet unanticipated problems with people and resources quickly, before small headaches become major problems. Finally, when a person's formal authority breaks down or fails to apply to a particular situation, political actions can be used to prevent a loss of influence. Managers may use political behavior to maintain operations and to achieve task continuity in circumstances where the failure of formal authority may otherwise cause problems.

ORGANIZATIONAL POLITICS AND SELF-PROTECTION

Whereas organizational politics may be helpful to the organization as a whole, it is probably more commonly known and better understood in terms of self-protection. Whether or not management likes it, all employees recognize that in any organization they must watch out for themselves first. In too many organizations, if the employee doesn't protect himself or herself, no one else will. Individuals can employ three common strategies to protect themselves. They can (1) avoid action and risk taking, (2) redirect accountability and responsibility, or (3) defend their turf.

Avoidance

Avoidance is quite common in controversial areas where the employee must risk being wrong or where actions may yield a sanction. Perhaps the most common reaction is to "work to the

rules.” That is, employees are protected when they adhere strictly to all the rules, policies, and procedures or do not allow deviations or exceptions. Perhaps one of the most frustrating but effective techniques is to “play dumb.” We all do this at some time or another. When was the last time you said, “Officer, I didn’t know the speed limit was. I couldn’t have been going.”

Although working to the rules and playing dumb are common techniques, experienced employees often practice somewhat more subtle techniques of self-protection. These include depersonalization and stalling. Depersonalization involves treating individuals, such as customers, clients, or subordinates, as numbers, things, or objects. Senior managers don’t fire long-term employees; the organization is merely “downsized” or “delayed.” Routine stalling involves slowing down the pace of work to expand the task so that the individuals look as if they are working hard. With creative stalling, the employees may spend the time supporting the organization’s ideology, position, or program and delaying implementation.

Redirecting

Responsibility Politically sensitive individuals will always protect themselves from accepting blame for the negative consequences of their actions. Again, a variety of well-worn techniques may be used for redirecting responsibility. “Passing the buck” is a common method employees and managers use. The trick here is to define the task in such a way that it becomes someone else’s formal responsibility. The ingenious ways individuals can redefine an issue to avoid action and transfer responsibility are often amazing.

Both employees and managers may avoid responsibility by buffering, or rigorous documentation. Here, individuals take action only when all the paperwork is in place and it is clear that they are merely following procedure. Closely related to rigorous documentation is the “blind memo,” which explains an objection to an action implemented by the individual. Here, the required action is taken, but the blind memo is prepared should the action come into question. Politicians are particularly good at this technique. They will meet with a lobbyist and then send a memo to the files confirming the meeting. Any relationship between what was discussed in the meeting and the memo is accidental.

As the last example suggests, a convenient method some managers use to avoid responsibility is merely to rewrite history. If a program is successful, the manager claims to have been an early supporter. If a program fails, the manager was the one who expressed serious reservations in the first place. Whereas a memo in the files is often nice to have to show one’s early support or objections, some executives don’t bother with such niceties. They merely start a meeting by recapping what has happened in such a way that makes them look good.

For the really devious, there are three other techniques for redirecting responsibility. One technique is to blame the problem on someone or some group that has difficulty defending themselves. Fired employees, outsiders, and opponents are often targets of such scapegoating. Closely related to scapegoating is blaming the problem on uncontrollable events. The really astute manager goes far beyond the old “the-dog-ate-my-homework” routine. A perennial favorite is, “Given the unexpected severe decline in the overall economy, firm profitability was only somewhat below reasonable expectations.” Meaning, the firm lost a bundle.

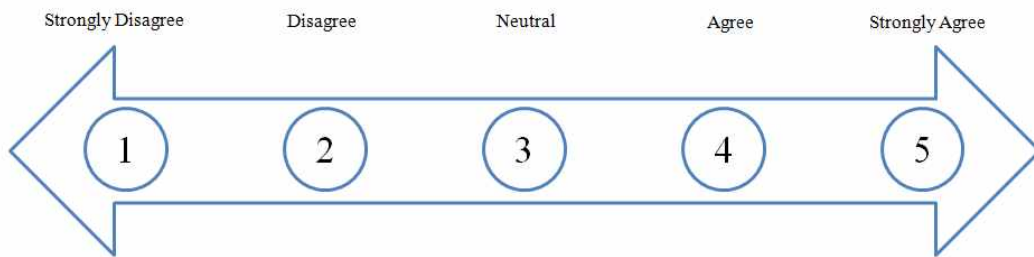
Should these techniques fail, there is always another possibility: Facing apparent defeat, the manager can escalate commitment to a losing cause of action. That is, when all appears lost, assert your confidence in the original action, blame the problems on not spending enough money to implement the planfully, and embark on actions that call for increased effort. The hope is that you will be promoted or retired by the time the negative consequences are recognized.

Defending Turf Defending turf is a time-honored tradition in most large organizations. As noted earlier, managers seeking to improve their power attempt to expand the jobs their groups perform. Defending turf also results from the coalitional nature of organizations. That is, the organization may be seen as a collection of competing interests held by various departments and groups. As each group attempts to expand its influence, it starts to encroach on the activities of other groups. Turf protection can be seen more easily in the following analysis of political action and the manager.

Self Assessment on 'Personal Power Profile'¹⁾

Instructions

Below is a list of statements that may be used in describing behaviors that supervisors (leaders) in work organizations can direct toward their subordinates (followers). First, carefully read each descriptive statement, thinking in terms of how you prefer to influence others. Mark the number that most closely represents how you feel. Use the following numbers for your answers.



To influence others, I would prefer to:	Score
1. Increase their pay level	[]
2. Make them feel valued	[]
3. Give undesirable job assignments	[]
4. Make them feel like I approve of them	[]
5. Make them feel that they have commitments to meet	[]
6. Make them feel personally accepted	[]
7. Make them feel important	[]
8. Give them good technical suggestions	[]
9. Make the work difficult for them	[]
10. Share my experience and/or training	[]
11. Make things unpleasant here	[]
12. Make being at work distasteful	[]
13. Influence their getting a pay increase	[]
14. Make them feel like they should satisfy their job requirements	[]
15. Provide them with sound job-related advice	[]
16. Provide them with special benefits	[]
17. Influence their getting a promotion	[]
18. Give them the feeling that they have responsibilities to fulfill	[]
19. Provide them with needed technical knowledge	[]

1) Source: Modified version of T. R. Hinkin and C. A. Schriesheim, "development and Application of New Scales to Measure the French and Raven (1959) Bases of Social Power." *Journal of Applied Psychology*, Vol. 74, 1989, 561-67.

20. Make them recognize that they have tasks to accomplish []

Scoring

Using the structure below, insert your scores from the 20 questions and proceed as follows:

Reward power—sum your response to items 1, 13, 16, and 17 and divide by 4. Coercive power—sum your response to items 3, 9, 11, and 12 and divide by 4. Legitimate power—sum your response to questions 5, 14, 18, and 20 and divide by 4. Referent power—sum your response to questions 2, 4, 6, and 7 and divide by 4. Expert power—sum your response to questions 8, 10, 15, and 19 and divide by 4.

	Reward	Coercive	Legitimate	Referent	Expert
1	___	3	5	2	8
13	___	9	14	4	10
16	___	11	18	6	15
17	___	12	20	7	19
Total	___	___	___	___	___
Divide by 4	___	___	___	___	___

Interpretation

A high score (4 and greater) on any of the five dimensions of power implies that you prefer to influence others by employing that particular form of power. A low score (2 or less) implies that you prefer not to employ this particular form of power to influence others. This represents your power profile. Your overall power position is not reflected by the simple sum of the power derived from each of the five sources. Instead, some combinations of power are synergistic in nature—they are greater than the simple sum of their parts. For example, referent power tends to magnify the impact of other power sources because these other influence attempts are coming from a “respected” person. Reward power often increases the impact of referent power, because people generally tend to like those who give them things that they desire. Some power combinations tend to produce the opposite of synergistic effects, such that the total is less than the sum of the parts. Power dilution frequently accompanies the use of (or threatened use of) coercive power.