

Power and politics in organizations

Module 9



MGMT 2384
Macro
Organizational
Behaviour

What is power?

- The capacity to influence others who are in a state of dependence
 - ability to influence others' behaviours to get what you want
- Applies to both individuals and groups
- Not always associated with higher rank
- Think about it:
 - Do I have power to influence your behaviour?
 - Do you have power to influence my behaviour?

Bases of individual power

It's all about organizational positions and resources.

- Legitimate – power derived from a person's position or job in an organization
 - “I'm your boss.”
- Reward – power derived from the ability to provide positive outcomes and prevent negative outcomes
 - “I can promote you.”
- Coercive – power derived from the use of punishment and threat
 - “I can fire you.”
- Expert – power derived from having special information or expertise that is valued by an organization
 - “I'm the best at what I do.”
- Referent – power derived from being well liked by others
 - “You like me.”

Bases of individual power

Let's match the power base with the most appropriate person

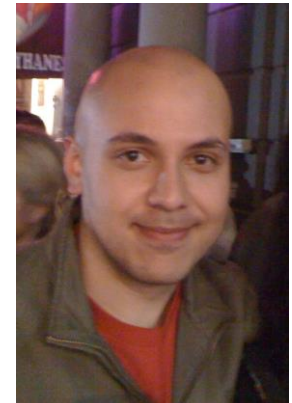
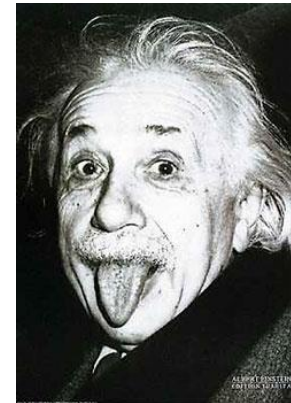
Legitimate

Reward

Coercive

Expert

Referent



Bases of individual power

Legitimate



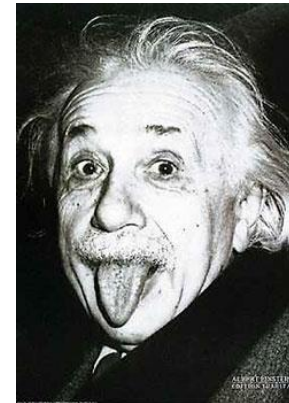
Coercive



Referent



Expert



Reward



Bases of individual power

Employee cooperation

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- Which base is the most likely to produce resistance?
- Which base is the most likely to produce commitment?

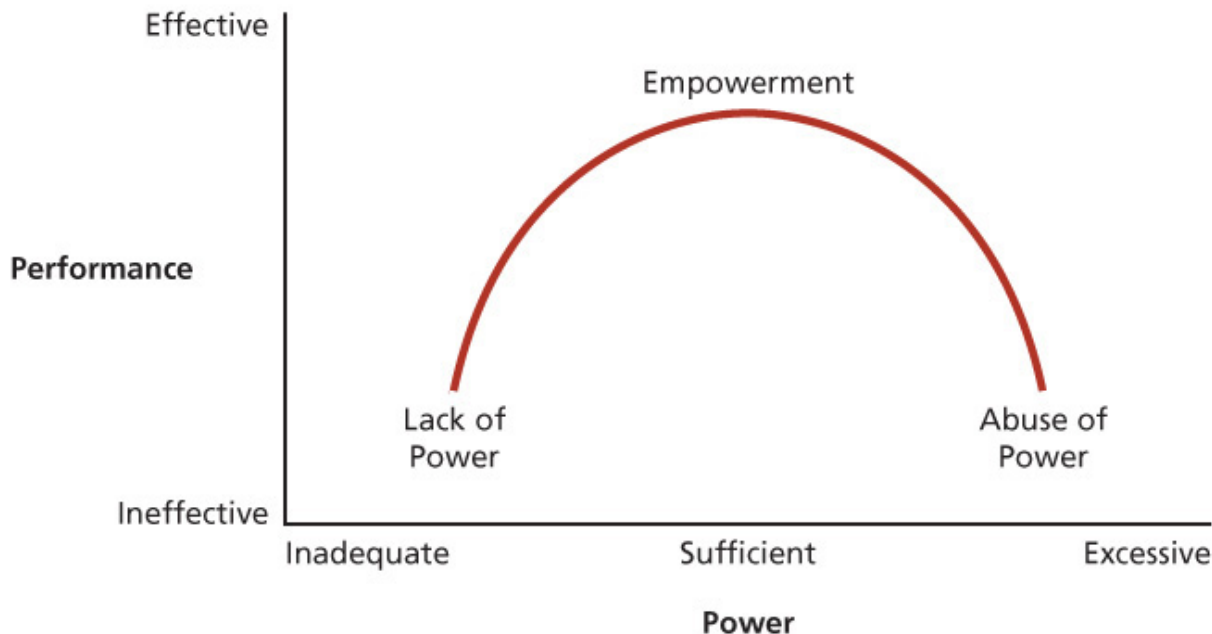


How do people obtain power?

- Doing the 'right' things
 - Extraordinary
 - Visible
 - Relevant
- Cultivating the 'right' people – “It's not what you know, it's whom you know.”
 - Outsiders
 - Subordinates
 - Peers
 - Superiors

Empowerment

- Giving people the authority (legitimate power), opportunity, and motivation to solve organizational problems
- Enablers of empowerment
 - Self-efficacy – “I can make things happen”
 - Internal locus of control – “I’m in control of my performance”



Influence tactics

Tactics used to convert power into actual influence over others

- Managing others' impressions of themselves
- Depends on bases of power and target of influence
- Assertiveness – confronting others, nagging, ordering
- Ingratiation – acting friendly, complimenting
- Rationality – using logic and reason
- Exchange – trading favours
- Upward appeal to higher authorities
- Coalition formation

Power and managers

- Need for power – *n Pow*
 - Reliable personality characteristic
 - Effective managers have a medium to high *n Pow*
- Three types of managers
 - Affiliative managers – power used for being liked
 - Personal power managers – power used for personal gain
 - Institutional managers – power used for the organization

Percentile Ranking of Average (National Norms)

0 10 20 30 40 50

Sense of Responsibility



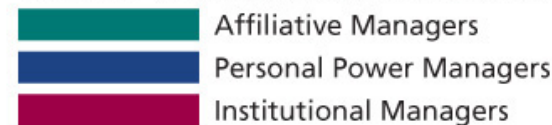
Organizational Clarity



Team Spirit



Scores for at Least Three Subordinates of:



Subunit power: controlling strategic contingencies

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- Subunits – organizational departments or particular jobs
- Strategic contingency – critical factors affecting organizational effectiveness that are controlled by a key subunit
- Subunits acquire power by controlling strategic contingencies, which are based on four factors:
 - Scarcity – holding and accessing resources that are unique and difficult to obtain
 - Uncertainty – capability of coping with uncertainty
 - Centrality – being central to the mission or workflow of the organization (i.e., how important is this department/job?)
 - Substitutability – “Can we find somebody else who can do this job in or outside our organization?”

Organizational politics

Pursuit of self-interest in an organization

- Regardless of whether this self-interest corresponds to organizational goals
- Self-conscious and intentional
- Political activity contingency
 - Organizational level → middle and higher
 - Subunits → departments with vague goals
 - Type of organizational issue → important issues

Influence Means	Influence Ends	
	Organizationally Sanctioned	Not Sanctioned by Organization
Organizationally Sanctioned	Nonpolitical job behaviour I	II Organizationally dysfunctional political behaviour
Not Sanctioned by Organization	III Political behaviour potentially functional to the organization	IV Organizationally dysfunctional political behaviour

Political skill

Ability to understand others at work and to use that knowledge to influence others to act in ways that enhance one's personal or organizational objectives

- Facets:
 - Social astuteness – 'reading' people and acting accordingly
 - Interpersonal influence – being persuasive and putting others at ease
 - Apparent sincerity – influence with no sincerity is manipulation
 - Networking ability – ability to establish good relationships with key people

Reactive politics

- Using political skills to defend against others and reduce threats to your power
 - Stalling – saying no without saying no
 - Overconforming – sticking strictly to your job description
 - Buck passing – having someone else take action
 - Buffing – carefully documenting information
 - Scapegoating

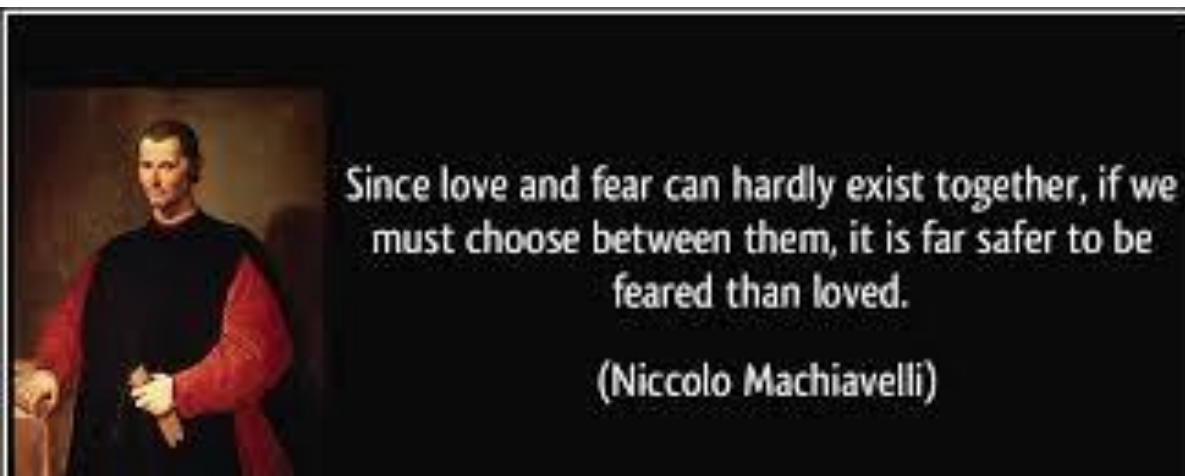


SCAPEGOAT

A Good Scapegoat Is Nearly As Welcome As A Solution To The Problem

Machiavellianism (a.k.a. Mach)

- Mach - stable personality trait involving a set of cynical beliefs about human nature, morality, and the permissibility of using various tactics to achieve one's ends
- “End justifies the means”
- Unlikely to be high performers
- Likely to demonstrate counterproductive behaviours
- Love politics!



Have a great day!