Influence, Power & Politics In The Organization

A Report by
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POWER & INFLUENCE

Power
- The ability to get someone to do something you want done or the ability to make things the way you want them to.

DEPENDENCE THEORY OF POWER

“If B is dependent on A, then A has power over B”

Influence
- A behavioral response to the exercise of power.

Sources of Power:

Five Sources of Power (French and Raven, 1960):

1. Referent or Personal Power – The ability of leaders to develop followers from the strength of their own personalities.
2. Expert Power – 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.
3. Legitimate or Position Power – stems from an authority's legitimate right to require and demand compliance.
4. Reward Power – the extent to which a manager can use extrinsic and intrinsic rewards to control other people.
5. Coercive Power – The extents to which a manager can deny desired rewards or administer punishment to control other people.
Three Bases of Power (Etzioni, 1968):

1. Coercive Power – involves forcing someone to comply with one's wishes.
2. Utilitarian Power – is power based on a system of rewards or punishments.
3. Normative Power – is power which rests on the beliefs of the members that the organization has a right to govern their behavior.

Possible Responses to the Use of Power:

1. Resistance – resisting the request without apparent cause or in an arrogant manner. This is most likely response to Coercive Power.
2. Compliance – complying with the request by meeting minimal expectations while withholding extra effort. Legitimate and Reward Powers usually results in Compliance.
3. Commitment – enthusiastic release of energy and talent to satisfy the leader’s request. Referent and Expert Powers are most likely to produce commitment.

Figure 1. Common Employee Reactions to Bases of Power

Some Techniques for Exercising Influence

Reason, Friendliness, Coalition, Bargaining, Assertiveness, Higher Authority, Sanctions
Organizational Politics

- Intentional behaviors that are designed to enhance or protect a person’s influence and self-interest.
- In terms of self-interest, the management of influence to obtain ends not sanctioned by the organization.
- As a necessary function, the art of creative compromise among competing interests.
- Not automatically good or bad as it also serves a number of important functions like overcoming personnel inadequacies, coping with change, and substituting for formal authority.

Impression Management

- The ability to protect a person's self-image while intentionally affecting another's assessment of them.
- The tool used to increase influence by self-monitoring capacity and political skills in order to rise to the top of modern organization.
Some Tactics in Gaining Political Power:

1. Social Exchange – relies on the powerful norm of reciprocity in society, where two people in a continuing relationship feel a strong obligation to repay their social “debts” to each other.
2. Alliances – two or more persons join in a longer-term power group to get benefits that they usually desire.
3. Identification with Higher Authority – gaining special privileges by becoming identified with a powerful figure in the organization.
4. Selective Service – giving service selectively to gain support, often by bending the rules.
5. Power and Status Symbols – acquiring power and status symbols that imply that you are an important person in the firm.
7. Networks – joining or forming interest groups that have a common objective. The group operates on the basis of friendships and personal contacts.

Common Strategies in Self-Protection

1. Avoidance – adhering strictly to the rules and “playing dumb.”
2. Redirecting Responsibility – defining the task in such a way that it becomes someone else’s formal responsibility.
3. Defending Turf – defending the group from encroachment of other groups.
Suggested Readings:

INTERNET RESOURCES

- ROYBELEN.COM - DWCL-MBA Unofficial Portal
  http://mba.roybelen.com
- OBNotes by WILF H. RATZBURG
  http://www.geocities.com/Athens/forum/1650/htmlobtoc02.html
- The Ethics of Power, Influence, and Persuasion: Points to Honor
- Power and Political Behavior
  http://users.dickinson.edu/~jin/Power.html

REFERENCE BOOKS