With New Chapters on Gender and Distance

ALLAN R. COHEN | DAVID L. BRADFORD

FOREWORD BY AARON LEVIE, CEO, AND DAN LEVIN, COO, BOX, INC.

INFLUENCE *WITHOUT* AUTHORITY

THIRD EDITION OF THE **MANAGEMENT CLASSIC**

GET WORK DONE IN TODAY'S ORGANIZATIONS

INFLUENCE YOUR BOSS, PEERS, CLIENTS, AND STAKEHOLDERS EVERYWHERE

BUILD RELATIONSHIPS AND **CREATE** ALLIES

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Cover design: Wiley

Published by John Wiley & Sons, Inc., Hoboken, New Jersey.
Published simultaneously in Canada.

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data:

Names: Cohen, Allan R., author. | Bradford, David L., author.
Title: Influence without authority / Allan R. Cohen and David L. Bradford.
Description: Third edition. | Hoboken, New Jersey : John Wiley & Sons, Inc., [2017] | Includes bibliographical references and index. |
Identifiers: LCCN 2017020942 (print) | LCCN 2017033175 (ebook) | ISBN 9781119347507 (pdf) | ISBN 9781119347514 (epub) | ISBN 9781119347712 (cloth)
Subjects: LCSH: Organizational effectiveness. | Executive ability. | Interpersonal relations.
Classification: LCC HD58.9 (ebook) | LCC HD58.9 .C64 2017 (print) | DDC 658.4/09–dc23
LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2017020942

Printed in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

To our wives, Joyce and Eva,
who, as our toughest and most supportive colleagues,
have taught us the essence of mutual influence
in strategic alliances.

Contents

Foreword

The concepts seem so obvious, so basic.

Be clear on your own goals and objectives before you start—no Ready, Fire, Aim!
Assume that everyone is a potential ally, that each of your colleagues can help you achieve your goals in some way.
Understand their reality, their situation, in some detail. Know how they are paid, how they are "goaled," and how their interests align with yours.
Keep the deeply held human value of reciprocity—of quid pro quo—firmly in mind, and while doing so, think about what you have that they might want, and vice versa. And it never hurts to build up a bit of credit with someone. You never know when you might need to collect.
Be willing to trade, to give something, in order to get what you need.

Would anyone argue with these simple ideas? Of course not.

And yet, in the workplace with our colleagues, when it matters most for our professional success, so many of us fail to keep these ideas in mind or to use them as the foundation of our actions. We complain that "Kira doesn't work for me, so how can I get her to deliver what I need?" Or that "Malhar won't attend the meetings of my cross-functional task force. Please tell him that he has to come."

We have grown from fewer than fifty to over fifteen hundred Boxers in the past seven years. Many of the largest companies in the world, including GE, P&G, and Coca Cola rely on Box, as do tens of thousands of smaller businesses. We have seen the problems that we face grow exponentially in complexity, and watched our colleagues struggle when we demand crisp and effective cross-functional execution in the face of, and despite, that complexity.

In order to grow rapidly, we have always known that we must invest heavily in "skilling up" our leaders to thrive in an increasingly complex world of more partners, more customers, more departments, and more products. And at the center of everything that we teach is one simple concept—we expect you to get stuff done at breakneck speed whether the people that you depend on report to you or not.

The ideas in this book around the concept of influence without explicit authority lie at the heart of our success as a business, and at the heart of the design of our service—which enables coworkers to easily collaborate around documents and other forms of content so that they can work together without hierarchy or information bottlenecks.

Influence is the foundation of success in the modern world of business and this book is a straightforward guide. We rely on it, we teach it, and you should, too.

—Aaron Levie, CEO, Box Inc.
Dan Levin, COO, Box Inc.

Acknowledgments

Acknowledgments to the First Edition

Many people have influenced us in positive ways, and we are deeply indebted to them. A number of colleagues read portions of the manuscript in draft form and made helpful suggestions, including J.B. Kassarjian, Lynne Rosansky, Les Livingstone, Jan Jaferian, Farshad Rafii, and Roy Lewicki. Rosabeth Moss Kanter, Barry Stein, Richard Pascale, Jerry Porras, and Jean Kirsch provided useful stimulation over many years. NTL gave us the opportunity to develop and test our ideas in a series of workshops for managers. Many wonderful friends and clients provided the rich examples we have used, but regrettably, most must remain anonymous to preserve confidentiality. We thank former students Tom Greenfield, Marianne McLaughlin, Spencer Lovette, and James Wiegel and good friend Leslie Charm for their contributions. Our students and clients have been a continuous source of learning. Editor John Mahaney went far beyond the call of duty in helping to shape this book, and we're almost sorry for all the grief we gave him. We very much appreciate the perspective he brought. Sydney Craft Rozen and Louann Werksma buffed our prose, and Nancy Marcus Land's cheerful wisdom made the production process more than bearable. Tom Hart gave us valuable advice on contract issues. Thanks to Sydney Cohen for preparing the index.

We are grateful to Babson's Vice-President for Academic Affairs, Gordon Prichett, the faculty nominating committee, and Ex-President Bill Dill for choosing Allan to be the first occupant of the Walter H. Carpenter Chair. Although the miracles of word processors let us do most of the typing ourselves, several people at Babson were incredibly helpful in producing draft after draft of the manuscript; for their support we thank Margie Kurtzman, Jim Murphy, Sheila Faherty, as well as George Recck and his angels of computer mercy, Ara Heghinian, Scott Andersen, and especially John Walker, who promptly and patiently rescued lost files and answered countless questions. The Graduate School of Business at Stanford also provided valuable support.

Our extended families have also played an important part in helping us, not only by their encouragement but also by the lessons on influence they teach as we interact with them. For their contributions to our ongoing education, we are forever grateful to our wives, children, parents, brothers, in-laws, aunts, uncles, and cousins—a veritable army of informal instructors.

ADDITIONAL ACKNOWLEDGMENTS FOR THE SECOND EDITION

We are grateful to an additional group of colleagues and managers who have provided us with feedback and examples. Andrea Corney, Anne Donnellon, PJ Guinan, David Hennessey, James Hunt, Martha Lanning, Carole Robin, Phyllis Schlesinger, Mike Smith, Neal Thornberry, and Yelena Shayenzon have built our ideas and helped with the manuscript. Eric Arcese, Timlynn Babitsky, Suzanne Currey, Brian Duerk, David Garabedian, Mary Garrett, Doug Giuliana, Mike Glass, Tony Greco, Fran Grigsby, Jan Jefarian, Sandi Medeiros, Akihiro Nakamura, Efren Olivares, Dan Perlman, Ethan Platt, Carole Robin, Jim Salmons, Nettie Seabrooks, Scott Timmins, and Paul Westbrook all contributed examples in one form or another. We are also deeply appreciative to the hundreds of managers with whom we have worked, who provide criticism, hard-nosed assessment of the utility of our ideas, and wonderful examples of how they struggle with or use influence at work.

The vagaries of publishing have brought us several Wiley editors since the first edition, all of whom we enjoyed, but we worked most closely with Paula Sinnott, Richard Narramore, and Emily Conway. We thank them for forcing us to make the manuscript ever more accessible and useful.

Alas, despite our profound gratitude to a lengthy list of helpful influencers, we cannot escape final accountability for the results of their splendid efforts. Only we had the authority to complete this book, and we are responsible for its contents.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS FOR THE THIRD EDITION

We are deeply grateful to Nan Langowitz, who suggested the idea for a chapter on gender and influence and added so much to our understanding and perspective that we asked her to coauthor it. Aaron Levie and Dan Levin graciously agreed to write a foreword to this edition, no small feat while running a company that is exploding in size. Additionally, we add only names of those who made new or increased contributions to our examples or learning. To all of them, heartfelt thanks! Matt Abrahams, Shelly Anderson, Kavita Bhat, Alan Briskin, Nancy Brown-Jamison, Crystal Bryant, Jocelyn

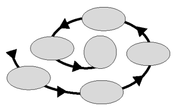
Cascio, Susan Harris, Vishwas Hegde, James Hunt, Gloria Lee, Zhengwei Luo, Shirley Marom, Kate McKone-Sweet, Larkin Mehta, Barbara Merz, Grant Miller, Gopi Parampalli, Carole Robin, Beth Schirick, Lisa Stefanac, Bobbi Thomason, Eiko Tsukamoto, Bonnie Wentworth, Paul Westbrook, Roz Winegrad, and Judi Wise. In addition, our students and clients constantly enrich our understanding. As always, we accept responsibility for the final product.

PART I

Introduction

CHAPTER 1

Why Influence: What You Will Get from This Book



> Influence is one of the hottest topics with all of my clients—how can I have more, how can I develop more in my team, how can I be more effective with influence efforts? So much work today is cross team, cross function, project oriented where the leader and the person accountable rarely has formal authority. If you do, and you use your formal authority, it doesn't tend to go well.
>
> —*Wanda Wallace, President and CEO, Leadership Forum; VoiceAmerica Talk Radio, Host of "Out of the Comfort Zone"*

This book is about influence—the power to get your work done. You need to influence those in other departments and divisions: people you can't order and control. You need to influence your manager and others above you, and you certainly can't order and control them!

But you are not alone: nobody has the formal authority to achieve what is necessary, not even with those who report to them. It is an illusion that once upon a time managers could make their direct reports do whatever was needed. Nobody has ever had enough authority—they never have and never will. Organizational life is too complicated for that.

Yet, you can have enough influence to make things happen—and this book will tell you how.

You will learn how to move others to accomplish important objectives, in a way that benefits them as well as you and the organization. We build on a way of working that you already know, though it is easy to lose sight of how to create win-win trades in difficult situations or when dealing with difficult individuals, groups, or organizations. The book teaches you how to stop doing the things that get in the way of influencing those problematic situations and can dramatically increase your ability to get things done.

When we first wrote about influence in the 1980s, we had to justify its importance to people at all levels of the organization. At that time, the leadership and managerial focus was on how to command better, how to give clear directions and how to ensure compliance. But the world was changing, with a greater need for managing laterally and upward—along with less ability to just give orders downward. Today, almost everyone knows that influence is how the world works. We have lost count of the people who hear the title of this book, *Influence without Authority*, and instantly say, "That's my life" (Table 1.1).

Few people can do anything significant alone. This requires influence in three directions.

Along with death and taxes, bosses are faced with this inevitable certainty of organizational life. In a flat organization, the boss may be a distant, benevolent resource, while in a more hierarchical one the boss may be breathing down your neck, but no one escapes having someone officially responsible for him or her. Even CEOs have a board and sources of financing they must influence, not to mention the financial markets, the press, and other organizations needed to create or sell company products.

Similarly, virtually everyone in organizations must deal with peers. Very few jobs let a person work completely solo. Most are dependent upon, and important to, a variety of colleagues.

Table 1.1 Forces Increasing the Need for Influence Skills

Increasingly rapid technological change and shortened product cycles; more competition (including internationally)
Complex problems requiring smarter employees, more input from specialists, and more integration, making it difficult to command excellence
Increased workforce diversity creating more differences about what is important and less automatic agreement
Greater geographic dispersal, including language and distance impediments
More information needed from a greater number of people
Less organizational slack from downsizing and cost-cutting, so more use of all employees needed
Greater emphasis on quality and service, so "getting by" doesn't get by
Fewer traditional hierarchies, more lateral organizations, including product-based, geographical, customer-focused, matrix, virtual, and networked organizations

Finally, some people also have responsibility as supervisors of others— the bosses to all those subordinates just mentioned. These managers are expected to utilize fully their subordinates' talents to see that the assigned work gets done.

Therefore, those keeping their heads down and working only within their immediate areas will slowly become extinct. Whatever your job, you are expected to join your colleagues in important work, which will lead you to influence and be influenced. You will need to know how to sell important projects, persuade colleagues to provide needed resources, create satisfactory working relationships with them and their managers, insist that your boss respond to issues that may not appear important to him or her, and (in turn) give thoughtful responses to requests associates make of you. The person asking something of you today may be the very one you'll need next week.

Here is an actual example (only some names disguised) of life in today's organizations.

Manucom, Inc., a successful manufacturing firm, recognized important market shifts in their industry. In 2014, the company expanded to a slightly different market space and invested heavily in building a software product. The company wanted to rapidly transition into a technology company structured into separate technology and product teams. Most of the product team, which was responsible for sales and marketing, had backgrounds with little technological understanding. (They cared about and were rewarded for creating a successful new product and generating demand so that it could be sold at profitable prices and volumes. The technology team was most interested in creating a new and interesting technology with the latest bells and whistles, regardless of whether customers wanted them or would pay for them. Their rewards came from technical complexity and novelty, solving difficult problems independent of demand.) The technical and product teams were supposed to be linked by the platform management team, whose members had technology backgrounds and MBAs. This team owned the entire software platform (and were rewarded for seeing that individual products worked as part of an integrated platform, which would reduce overall costs and reduce complexity).

The new product was supposed to go live in December 2015. The marketing campaign had started, the sales team was ready to sell (and cared about the new products to help meet sales targets and achieve their bonus goals), but the tech team was way behind schedule. Despite this, the product team decided to showcase the incomplete solution to the entire sales force, thinking the demo would buy some time. However, the product crashed during the national sales demo!

Millions of dollars had been spent, and emotions were running high. The product team blamed marketing, sales, and technology. The technology team blamed product and marketing. Even though everyone was from the same company, people treated each other as contractors, often blaming each other for breach of contract and trust.

Sachin Bhat Is Asked to Step In

A few months later, Sachin Bhat, an engineer in another division and a new MBA who had recently joined the platform team, was asked to lead the project, which included getting the finger-pointing product and technology teams to work together.

What would you do?

Before reading further, consider how you would go about tackling this messy, highly charged situation. How would you identify the core problems, gain the trust needed to get people back to work, and salvage the new product if possible or kill it if necessary?

Here is Bhat's account of how he used influence to address the many challenges of gaining collaboration:

> Until then our platform team was not involved with the execution of this project due to other obligations. My first two weeks into the project was to understand the reason for failure from different perspectives—I interviewed product folks, engineers, project managers, marketing managers, program managers, and engineering managers. Because I wanted to understand the product and people, I was carefully observing the dynamics between people and quickly wanted to understand the "currencies" that I could trade with all of them.
>
> I spent two weeks talking to every single person, lowest to highest. All were good at pinpointing everyone else's issue. I wanted to understand power, who could influence the power holder, and be sure not to step on landmines. They had spent $140M; they all thought I would identify one person to blame it all on. I said "No, we all missed it."
>
> I caught the problem. At the end I presented to my SVP [senior vice president] and said it was not tech capability, but that the process had been badly managed. The product team only knew products, didn't know how to run software development, and it was the same with the tech team. (Unlike with manufactured products, a product team has to "thin slice" a software project, not give the tech team the whole thing all at once, or they won't know how to tackle it and the problems until the last minute. By receiving the project in orderly, small, thin slices, the tech team can make steady progress and not be overwhelmed.)

It was all blame games; every team blamed the other teams. They did not know how to prioritize. If I took a side, it would be a problem, because it would be stepping on toes.

Both technology and product senior management had worked together elsewhere, so in the big meeting I couldn't publicly say who was right or wrong, because it was highly political. But I told my manager and he told the SVP offline.

In the big meeting people were saying I would clean up the mess; I didn't like that; [I] knew I had to get everyone on my side. I had to be subtle, saying *we* would fix the problems.

The VP [vice president] was happy because I was not stepping on his shoes. I gave him my observations and asked him to give the reports in all big meetings, and let him run the show. It wouldn't fly for me to say, "*I* would do it."

The product team in Los Angeles blames the tech team in Seattle all the time—I went back and forth. I kept saying, "Blame is not a help; we all win if this works or lose if it doesn't. Think of it as delivering a product together; not one side wins, and the other one loses if it fails."

Every time I visited the tech team I talked to every engineer; I asked about their families, took them to dinners. I wanted not to sound artificial, so they wouldn't feel threatened, or that I was out to get their jobs. After two [to] three months it worked. Now when I go they reach out to bring us issues, and there's no more talk about superior or inferior groups. They would tell me their concerns, which helped me understand worries within engineering. Since I have an engineering background, I often knew when they were approaching problems incorrectly.

I wanted to understand the root issues. Then I would talk to the engineering manager and help him solve the problems. If you talk only to the managers, they just say that all is fine.

I knew November–December would be a big milestone. The first three or four releases should be on time, even if we just do one thing, without bells and whistles. Weekly I gave quick updates to my VP and SVP; all four product releases I promised were on time. They were happy because that had never been done before. I wanted the perception that the process was working. We had a biweekly meeting just to tell what we were doing and going to do. Previously, the process was not transparent, which did not work.

The previous day before the demo, we met sales district managers and they were totally skeptical about this product. We accepted their skepticism as understandable because of the history. After we conducted a successful hands-on demonstration meeting with 500 sales folks, they said, "You have transformed the product; we will sell it." And they even gave me a huge shout-out.

Also when the SVP was in town, I asked for a short meeting about how I was doing and watched the reactive body language. I am ambitious, so that

> way in the reporting process I could show my unique contributions without going behind my manager's back to brag. It was a byproduct of "just reporting on progress."
>
> At the beginning, the marketing officer was completely negative because of the previous fiasco, but it worked in my favor: when I kept quiet, people asked me in front of my director why I didn't respond. I said, "I do not want to fight; my goal is to just deliver, that's my answer. Wait for two months then see what progress we have made." After the two months, every time I see her, she says, "Oh, Sachin Bhat has done a great job."

This example, without all the detail of how Sachin did it, foreshadows many of the book's themes. Several individuals and groups are pursuing their own agendas. No one person or group has the correct answer and cannot be ordered to help. Collaboration is needed. Groups working at a distance can easily stereotype one another. Mistrust blocks open and honest communication, causing poor and costly decisions. Instead, careful listening and responsiveness are needed to regain sufficient openness to really understand the issues. The various parties must feel that they are gaining something they care about to get them to cooperate. Early successes lead to greater cooperation. Individual recognition has to come from accomplishment, not obvious self-promotion.

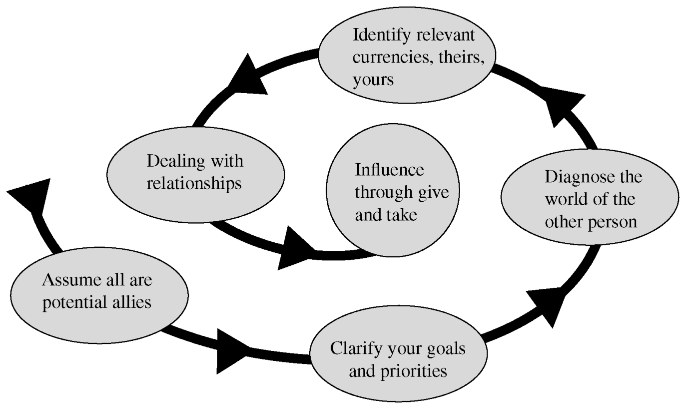
With so much interdependence required, wielding influence becomes a test of skill. Going hat in hand to throw yourself at a colleague's mercy may work once or twice, but is seldom a powerful or effective option. At the other extreme, trying to bull your way through by sheer nerve and aggressiveness can be costly as well. Antagonizing crucial peers or superiors is a dangerous strategy that can easily come back to haunt you. So, what is the alternative?

When you want to influence those you don't control, you will have to get to know them, figure out what they want, build reasonable trust so they will consider making exchanges, satisfy them, and slowly build cooperation. If you already have close relationships, mutual influence is a free-flowing byproduct that seems to happen naturally.

Why an Influence Model?

Aren't these points self-evident? And don't you use them already? "Yes" to both of those; when you already know how to influence individuals or groups to get needed cooperation, just do it. But if you are stuck or frustrated, can't figure out what is really wanted or don't care to give it, are having trouble connecting, don't seem to have anything to offer, or want

Figure 1.1
Summary of the Cohen-Bradford Model of Influence without Authority



to be certain how best to approach someone, then a systematic model can be incredibly helpful in making sure you have covered all the steps or make things worse before you get going.[1]

The model we developed is based on a universal principle of interaction social scientists call the Law of Reciprocity. It states that people expect to get "paid back for what they do for others." When someone helps you, you are expected sooner or later to somehow reciprocate, in some reasonably equivalent way. This give and take—formally called exchange—is a core part of all human interaction and the lubricant that makes organizations functional.

Although the concept of give and take is in many ways simple and straightforward, the process of exchange is more complicated. We have found that there are six essential components (Figure 1.1).

Brief Summary of the Steps of the Model

Assume everyone is a potential ally. With this mindset, no matter how difficult the interaction might be, it is possible that the other may eventually help. With enough exploration, it is likely that almost everyone cares about something that you could offer in return for what you seek.

Clarify your goals and priorities. Be sure you know what you want, what is most important, and what you would settle for. Be specific; "good working relationship" is too general to be useful.

Diagnose the world of the other person. In organizational life, people care about many things including how they are measured and rewarded, what their boss expects, their unit's culture, the actual tasks they are assigned, and so on. Knowing what they care about helps in (tentatively) figuring out what you might offer.

Identify relevant currencies, theirs, yours. Since exchange is involved, currencies provide a useful metaphor for what someone values. Most people value many different currencies, and fortunately, most people wanting influence often have more currencies than they might think.

Dealing with relationships. This has two aspects: (a) how good (or strained) is the present relationship and (b) how does the other person want to be related to?

Influence through give and take. In this process you give something the other party values (a currency) in exchange for what you want. This can be done implicitly or explicitly, casually or formally, depending on the relationship, the organization's culture, and both parties' personal preferences.

Chapter 2 (and the rest of the book) explores all these steps in more detail. But much of the time influence happens when people use elements of this model instinctively and automatically. When you already have a good relationship and have been mutually influencing one another for some time, you don't need conscious diagnosis, reflection on your key goals, or an assessment of the relationship. It comes naturally. Like the person in Moliere's play who discovered that after all these years he was unknowingly speaking "prose," you probably already are doing much of what we describe here without thinking about it, especially when things are going well.

But other conditions make influence more difficult. These are listed in Table 1.2.

Table 1.2 Conditions Requiring Conscious Use of an Influence Model

Use an influence model when faced with one or more of the following conditions:
The other person is known to be resistant.
You don't know the other person or group and are asking for something that might be costly.
You have a poor relationship (or your group has a poor relationship with the other person's group).
You might not get another chance.
You have tried everything you can think of but the other person still refuses.

Table 1.3 Barriers to Influence

External	*Internal*
Power differential too big	Lack of knowledge about how to influence
Different goals, objectives, priorities	Blinding attitudes
Incompatible measures and rewards	Fear of reactions
Rivalry, competitiveness, jealousy	Fear of failing

Conscious attention to this model isn't necessary at all times, but when useful, consider the model analogous to a pilot's checklist, which is followed routinely before a flight. Pilots know what to do, but the checklist ensures they cover all the bases. Such an influence checklist is especially helpful when you face an anxiety-provoking situation that may narrow your focus and constrain the alternatives considered.

Under those conditions where one meets resistance and little cooperation, the reverse of this model can play out. Rather than seeing the others as potential allies, it is hard not to slip into seeing them as recalcitrant fools—or worse. Rather than fully understanding their world, the common tendency is to simplify and stereotype it. The stress of the situation can lead you to forget your primary goals and just want to do the other in. Most people don't intend to do that, but that is why a model helps. It allows you to step back and make sure that conditions let you achieve influential win-win outcomes. But what are the barriers to doing that?

BARRIERS TO INFLUENCE

We need to start by acknowledging that in some conditions influence is not possible (Table 1.3). There truly are impossible people (though far fewer than most people think). And some external conditions may block a working relationship. However, we have found that in most cases influence fails because of internal barriers within the influencer. Those are ones you have the most control over.

External Barriers

Too great a power differential between you and the person or group you want to influence. There may be such a hierarchical distance that it is impossible to make contact or the difference is so great that you have little to offer. But we often overestimate the inaccessibility of those even a couple of levels above us.

The people you want to influence have such different personal and organizational goals and objectives that you can't find common ground. This can be true *or* it can just reflect not searching deep enough.

The people you want to influence have incompatible performance measures. These may not let them respond to what you want. The measurement system may give them little latitude.

The people you want to influence are rivals, or feel competitive and don't want you to succeed. Or there might be too great a negative history between you (or your units) that cooperation is impossible. But organizations that fiercely compete with each other (like IBM and Microsoft) can find common ground in a specific product (like developing the chip for the Xbox).

These can be objective reasons why the other cannot be influenced, but be sure before you jump to that conclusion. You will see many examples of people who reached across several boundaries, who discovered things the other would want, who uncovered a common goal underneath the differences and who, with great effort, could build working relationships with previous adversaries

Internal Barriers

Occasionally, you can't overcome these external barriers, no matter how skilled an influencer you are. However, we have discovered that far more often, the barriers are *inside* the influencer.

These internal barriers include:

Lack of knowledge of how to go about influencing when there are objective difficulties. As instinctive as some kinds of influence are, many people do not have a very conscious idea of how to go about it when the other person or group is not responsive. They don't think of influence as a kind of exchange, and don't understand how important it is to deliver something the other person values, rather than what they themselves value. They emphasize how wonderful what they want is, and forget that it must appeal to something the other person or group cares about.

Attitudes that blind you to important objective information that would help you. Do you think that you shouldn't have to try to influence others; they should just recognize truth (or a better mousetrap) and give in? Another dysfunctional attitude is rapidly writing off anyone who doesn't quickly go along with a request, assuming that they are deficient in some important way. We will say a lot about this all-too-common barrier and how to overcome it. And another handicap is knowing what would move the other person but you can't stand people who want that, so you back off or become hostile.

Fear of the other person or group and how they might react. Frequently, people recognize that to gain influence they need to say something that might get the other person or group angry or wanting to retaliate. Out of fear, usually untested (and often unfounded), they decide they can't go ahead. Even the idea that pushing might make the other person not like you can paralyze some people.

Fear of failing. Most significant initiatives involve risk of failure/rejection, but some may be so concerned about embarrassment or shame that no attempt at influence is better than a refusal—or being accepted and then having the project or activity fail.

Overcome the Barriers: Use an Influence Model to Guide You

Can you get past these barriers (and others we will introduce in later chapters)? We will help you step back and use some new guidelines. The challenge will be to overcome your own feelings and reactions, so that you can better diagnose just what is required and learn to get past the fears and misconceptions that block you. The next chapter develops the Cohen-Bradford Influence without Authority model and builds your learning from there.

Plan, But Do Not Come Across as Self-Seeking

This may sound calculating—and it is. But it is deliberate planning about how to get work done, not calculation for your personal benefit. If people perceive you as interested only in your own advancement or success, they will be wary, resistant, or go underground to retaliate later. In this way, influence in organizations over time goes to the sincere, those genuinely interested in the welfare of others, those who make lots of connections and often engage in mutually profitable exchanges. Machiavellian, self-seeking behavior may work for a while but eventually creates enemies or lack of interest in being helpful, which renders you ineffective. Someone who wants to get you can trade negative actions for your behavior, and this payback can be unpleasant. If your organization has a negative culture where only self-seeking gets rewarded, it eventually suffers and declines. People who care about the organization's objectives get disenchanted and leave as soon as they can, and those who stay spread bitterness.

GET "TWO FOR THE PRICE OF ONE"

The discussion so far has focused on achieving your task objectives by setting up a win-win outcome. That is primary, but it often produces an important secondary benefit: a more positive work relationship. The influence process of working to understand the world of the other, of speaking to their needs, of paying attention how to work together, and in having the other satisfied with the outcome usually has a positive effect on the relationship.

Research suggests that "having good work relationships" is a key factor valued at work. (Have you ever been in a negative work climate? It can be poisonous.) Often people are hesitant to push for new ideas for fear of alienating others—and sometimes that is the unfortunate outcome. But we are suggesting that using the Cohen-Bradford Influence model offers the possibility of simultaneously achieving task success and incrementally building the positive work relationships most people prefer.

THE BOOK'S ORGANIZATION

Here's how we do it. This chapter has introduced the need for influence and the benefits of learning a more systematic way of thinking about how to get it. Chapter 2 spells out the core influence model, and Chapters 3 through 7 provide more detail about each stage of the model. Then in a series of Practical Application chapters, we use the influence model in familiar situations to demonstrate how to get what you need to do good work. We include two new chapters on gender and influence and distance and influence. You may want to read selectively among these application chapters to fit your current situation, and then return later as you move into other, more complex settings.

In addition, we offer on our website several cases and numerous extended examples of people who had to go through many obstacles to acquire influence (http://www.influencewithoutauthority.com). (For more detail about these examples and the lessons we draw from them, see Appendix A on pages 279–284.)

This book can help you get ahead by showing you how to make good things happen for the organization and for those you deal with. More power to you.

Core Premises

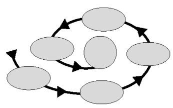
- Influence is about trades, exchanging something the other values in return for what you want.
- Relationships matter; the more good ones you have, the greater your odds of finding the right people to trade with and having some goodwill to help the trades along. And for many, relationships are important in their own right.
- Influence at work requires that you know what you are doing, have reasonable plans, are competent at the task at hand—but that often isn't enough. It is just the price of admission.
- You have to want influence for the ultimate good of the organization. In the short term, that may not be necessary, but genuine care for the organization's goals makes you more credible and trustworthy, keeps you from being seen as only in it for yourself, and prevents those whom you have influenced from ruining your reputation or seeking retaliation.
- Your difficulty with influence often rests, unfortunately, with you. Sometimes you just don't know what to do, which is relatively easy to fix. But at certain critical moments, we all do things that keep us from being as effective as we could be. While occasionally the other party is truly impossible, far more often, your influence deficit comes from something you are doing—or failing to do.
- Just about everyone is potentially much more influential than they think they are.

PART II

The Influence Model

CHAPTER 2

The Influence Model: Trading What They Want for What You've Got (Using Reciprocity and Exchange)



I have done enough for you, Apollo; now it's your turn to do something for me.

—*Rough translation of inscription on a Greek statue of the God Apollo, 700–675 B.C., demonstrating ancient understanding of the concept of reciprocity.*[1]

Come that's very well—very well indeed!
Thank you, good sir—I owe you one.

—*George Colman,* The Poor Gentleman*, Act IV, Scene 1, (1762), demonstrating an artistic understanding of reciprocity in the 18th century*

To address the kinds of challenges we have described in Chapter 1, how can you influence those over whom you have no authority? The short answer is that to have influence, you need resources that other people want to trade for what you want. This key to influence is based on a principle that underlies all human interaction, the Law of Reciprocity.

Ignore the Law of Reciprocity at Your Peril

Reciprocity is the almost universal belief that people should be paid back for what they do—that one good (or bad) turn deserves another.[2] This belief about behavior, evident in primitive and not-so-primitive societies all around the world, carries over into organizational life. One form in work settings is "an honest day's work for an honest day's pay."

People generally expect that, over time, those people they have done things for "owe them," and will roughly balance the ledger, repaying costly acts with equally valuable ones. This underlying belief in how things are supposed to work allows people in difficult organizational situations to gain cooperation. A classic study of prison guards found that threats and punishments alone did not let the guards control prisoners, who greatly outnumbered them.[3] The guards did favors for the prisoners, such as overlooking small rule infractions or providing cigarettes, for cooperation from prisoners in keeping order. All the formal authority in the world can't keep rebellious prisoners in line; they exchange their cooperation for favors making their confinement more tolerable, not out of respect for "the rules."

Even at much higher levels of organizations, little gets done without similar give and take. One manager alerts her colleague that their CEO is on a rampage and should be avoided today. Eventually, the grateful colleague repays the favor, telling the manager what he learned about a competitor's IT strategy. Soon after, the manager hears about a potential new customer whom she refers to the colleague; when the colleague has the chance, he initiates a joint project that can cut several steps from the billing process and save considerable money. The give and take of their relationship makes organizational life better for both.

Give and take can also be negative. The trade can be a loss of a benefit for lack of cooperation, or a cost that results from an undesirable response. Negative trades can be expressed as threats about what will happen in the future, or can result in both parties losing.

It is important to note, as Adam Grant clarifies, that almost everyone balances their exchanges by varying net giving and taking.[4] At work most people balance them, and evidence indicates that those who don't create value for others end up losing, as we will discuss.

EXCHANGE: THE ART OF GIVE AND TAKE THAT PERMEATES ALL INFLUENCE TACTICS

There are numerous ways of categorizing influence behavior. You can influence people by methods such as rational persuasion, inspirational appeal, consultation, ingratiation, personal appeal, forming a coalition, or relentless pressure.[5]

Although it is tempting to think of these methods as separate tactics, we believe that exchange—trading something valued for what you want—is actually the basis for all. In *every* form of influence reciprocity is at work and

Table 2.1 Examples of Reciprocity at Work

You Give	*You Get*
Work that job description calls for	Standard pay and benefits
Willingness to work on weekend to complete project	Boss praises you, mentions extra effort to higher-ups, suggests you extend vacation
Support for a colleague's project at a key meeting	Colleague gives you first shot at project results
A difficult analysis requested by colleague not in your area	Colleague tells your boss how terrific you are and/or goes out of her way when you need something

something is exchanged.[6] For example, rational persuasion works because the person sees the benefits of accepting the argument; inspirational appeal works because the person feels part of a cause or thinks that something good will result; ingratiation works because the person receives liking and closeness for willingness to be influenced, and so on. No tactic succeeds, however, if the receiver does not perceive some benefit, a payment in a valued "currency." Having a wide repertoire of ways to influence others is valuable. You should use tactics that will work in a given situation; the underlying principle is giving something the other values for what you want or need (or withholding something the other values—or giving them something they don't want—if you don't get what you need).

This kind of reciprocity is constantly taking place in organizational life. People do things and get something in return (Table 2.1).

Reciprocity Naturally Takes Place in Organizational Life

Dr. Stanley Snyder, scientist, inventor, and entrepreneur, is an untenured senior scientist at a leading Midwestern university. As a maverick and self-described organizational outsider, Dr. Snyder learned to gain necessary influence through difficult experience. Dr. Snyder had long been an adjunct member of the biology department, a natural home for a PhD in molecular biology. There he had developed several patented technologies for the university and paid his own way through royalties and grants. However, he had been a thorn in the side of the assistant provost for research, who Dr. Snyder believed wanted any excuse to get rid of him.

The anthrax scare following 9/11/01 precipitated a confrontation. Dr. Snyder's work had principally involved biology, but the U.S. government needed a quick test for the

(*Continued*)

presence of anthrax; a company approached Dr. Snyder to help develop it, and he "came to the rescue." He worked with a colleague who had an anthrax strain in her research collection and could culture these bacteria. They rather quickly developed an inexpensive, practical way to detect anthrax. Dr. Snyder then went to the university provost to announce the good news and to help arrange a corporate license agreement, with royalties for the university. Instead of welcoming the news, the university administration, according to Dr. Snyder, "went ballistic," prompted by the high anxiety over anthrax. He and his colleague were investigated by the university and then the local police and the FBI as if they were reckless scientists and criminals. They were placed on administrative leave (a very negative exchange!).

Dr. Snyder had liked working at the university with his colleagues and research collaborators. He did not wish to leave, and at first could only think of fighting the university. During this stressful period, a leading member of the physics department, Dr. Zelikoff, whom Dr. Snyder had previously helped with a patent application, met with him. As they discussed Snyder's employment problem, Dr. Zelikoff offered to explore having him join the physics department. A bit of an individualist himself, but skilled at working within the university organization, Dr. Zelikoff wanted to help both Dr. Snyder and the university resolve a difficult situation. He studied the policies and procedures and realized that he could invite Dr. Snyder (who would be self-funding anyway) to the department. Dr. Zelikoff would get a useful colleague and the department would receive a share of Dr. Snyder's royalties. Dr. Snyder would gain some protection and oversight as well as laboratory and office space. Resisting the efforts of the assistant provost for research to terminate Dr. Snyder, they worked out a deal with the provost (manager of the Assistant Provost) that benefitted Dr. Snyder, the department, and the university. Dr. Snyder is currently hard at work on applied research and new inventions, one of which is now a valuable commercial product producing large royalties for the university.

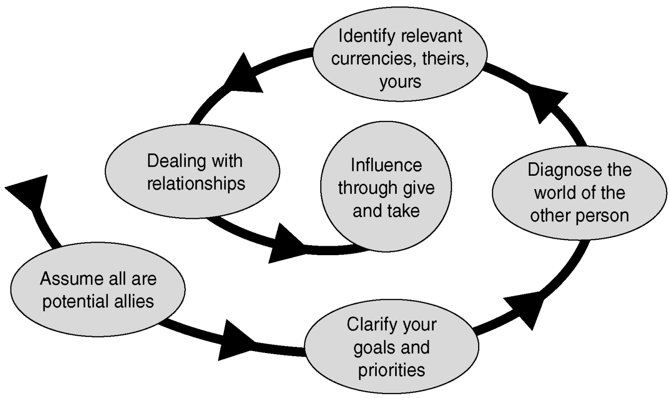
THE COHEN-BRADFORD INFLUENCE WITHOUT AUTHORITY MODEL

For those times that need more systematic attempts to be influential and preliminary planning to help you determine what to offer that's attractive enough to gain cooperation, here are the parts of the model (Figure 2.1).

Assume All—the Other Person or Group—Are Potential Allies

One major challenge to influencing the uncooperative is to keep the view that they eventually might cooperate. We tend to prematurely write such people off, concluding they are impossible.

Figure 2.1
Summary of the Cohen-Bradford Model of Influence without Authority



Instead you must think that everyone you want to influence could, with work, be a potential ally. That frees you up to become curious about their world and to assess a potential alliance by discovering where there might be overlapping interests. The view that the other will always be an adversary prevents accurate understanding, creating misperceptions, stereotypes, and miscommunication, perhaps even a self-fulfilling prophecy. Furthermore, treating the other person as an enemy produces adversarial responses. This same mind-set of assuming the other person is a potential ally also applies to your manager; if you assume that managers are partners in the organization with subordinates, then it is also part of your responsibility, along with the manager, to figure out how to make the relationship mutually beneficial. (Chapter 9 explores in detail how to do that.)

Clarify Your Goals and Priorities

Knowing what you want from the potential ally isn't always easy. These dimensions affect your choice of how to proceed:

- What are your primary versus your secondary goals?
- Are they short-term or long-term objectives?
- Are they "must-haves" or "nice-to-haves" that can be negotiated?
- Is your priority to accomplish the task or to preserve (or improve) the relationship?

You need to think hard about your core objectives, so you won't get side tracked into pursuing secondary goals. Just what do you require, what are your priorities among several possibilities, what you are willing to trade to get the minimum you need? Do you want cooperation on a specific item, or would you settle for a better future relationship? Would a short-term victory be worth creating hard feelings, or is it more important to be able to come back to the person later?

Too often, the person desiring influence does not sort personal desires from what the job truly needs, thus creating confusion or resistance.

For example, if you are overly concerned about being right at all costs, humiliating the other person, or always having the last word, your personal concerns can become central and interfere with other more important organizational goals. Would you rather be right or effective?

Diagnose the Ally's World: Organizational Forces Likely to Shape Goals, Concerns, and Needs

The challenge here is to determine the organizational situation of potential allies that drives much of what they care about. These forces usually play an even greater role in shaping what is important to them than their personality. If for any reason you can't ask that person directly, examine the organizational forces that might shape goals, concerns, or needs. For example, how a person is measured and rewarded, the manager's and peer's expectations, where the person is in his or her career, and so on, have a powerful effect on what the person might want in exchange for cooperation, and what the costs would be for getting what you want.

This diagnostic activity helps overcome the tendency to blame bad personality, character, or motives for behavior that you do not like or understand, and can help you to see the person behind the role. Understanding the pressures that person is under can help you avoid "demonizing," and start seeing a potential ally.

Identify Relevant Currencies (What Is Valued): The Ally's and Yours

We have named the things that people care about "currencies," because that equates something of value you have that you can exchange for something valuable they have. Most people care about more than one thing (e.g., information, resources, prestige, money, being liked). If you can identify

Table 2.2 Sources of Currencies

Sources	*Examples*
Organizationally determined	Performance, how to behave, reward system
Job determined	Meeting measures, doing required work well
Personally determined	Preferred style, reputation

several applicable currencies, your range of possibilities to offer in exchange is wider (Table 2.2).

Assess Your Resources Relative to the Ally's Wants. It is not unlikely that your ally wants some things that you can't offer. Therefore, it is important to know what resources you command or have access to, so that you can use a currency that fits. Because many people underestimate their resources, they conclude that they are powerless. But a careful look at the many things you can do without a budget or formal permission—your alternative currencies—can reveal potential bargaining chips. Employees lose influence, for example, by failing to see the wide range of currencies they can offer their manager, such as getting work done on time, passing on important outside information, defending their manager, or alerting the manager to potential disasters.

Laying this process out explicitly can sound a bit cold and impersonal, like pure horse-trading, but in organizational life, influence is mostly for the superordinate goal of meeting organizational objectives, whether they are mentioned or just understood. As we have mentioned, if the exchange methods become (or are seen as) only about self-interest, and not mutual benefit for organizational good, suspicion and mistrust are aroused, rendering the efforts ineffective or negative. Furthermore, the relationship with the person you are trying to influence matters going in, during, and usually after the discussions.

Dealing with Relationships

This has two aspects: (1) What is your current relationship with that person—positive, neutral, or negative? (2) How does that person want to be related to?

If you have a prior relationship that is good, then it will be easier to ask for what you want without proving your good intentions. If, however, the relationship has a history of mistrust—whether for personal reasons or departmental conflicts—or if there has been no prior contact, proceed with caution. You will need to pay attention to building the requisite trust and credibility.

Each person has preferred ways of being related to. Some like a thorough analysis before you launch into discussion with them, while others would rather hear preliminary ideas and brainstorm. Some want to see alternatives, whereas others want only your final conclusion. Be careful to avoid relating in your preferred style instead of the other person's. You will have more influence if you use an approach the other person finds comfortable.

Make Exchanges: Determine Your Approach

Once you have determined what goods or services can be exchanged, you are ready to offer what you have for what you want. Your approach will be shaped by:

- The attractiveness of your resources
- The ally's needs for what you have
- Your desire for what the ally has
- Your organization's unwritten rules about how people can express their wants and needs
- Your prior relationship with the potential ally and the preferred style of interaction
- Your willingness to take chances for what you want

This helps you plan an approach that has the best chance of being judged on its merits. There are four general options:

Can I show that what I want is also in your best interest?

For example, can you show that your boss's long-term interests are best served if you take a short-term assignment on a time-consuming task force so your area will have a voice on a critical issue and build relationships with two other departments that have not been fully cooperative?

Can I compensate by paying in another currency?

For example, you want a colleague's help on a critical market research study to validate your product idea that does not yet have a budget, so you offer an introduction to a senior executive he wants to work with in another division, with whom you happen to have a close relationship.

[These first two options are preferred when available, because they are more tangible and easier.]

Can I promise future payment?

For example, consider something like, "If you help me on this, I will owe you big time. Would you like to be on the team making the final presentation if we are successful?"

Can I draw upon past payments that I have made?

For example, when a respected colleague is reluctant to back a project proposal that needs support, gently remind him that you worked through two weekends last year to help him finish a client project by an "impossible" deadline.

We will discuss all of these issues in more detail later in this book, but for now it is important to understand that expectations of reciprocity are vital in gaining influence.

Outcomes of Exchange: Task and Relationship Are Both Important

In organizations, all influence attempts simultaneously contain both a task and a relationship component. There is the work at hand and the nature of the relationship; in addition, people seldom interact without past experiences or knowledge somehow shaping the discussion. (In fact, you don't need to have actually interacted with someone for your reputation from other interactions to be a factor in how the person will treat you.)

Furthermore, ideas about the future results for the relationship are likely also to affect the discussion. Ignoring the future risks winning the battle but losing the war. You can choose to ignore the history or the consequences of your exchange attempts on the relationship, but that could be a problem when dealing with the same party again, as you usually will in organizations.

Trust plays an important part in achieving influence. If other people consider you too calculating or interested in influence for personal benefit rather than organizational work, they will be wary, resist, or go underground to retaliate later. Thus influence in organizations over time goes to those genuinely interested in the welfare of others, those who make connections and often engage in mutually profitable exchanges. Machiavellian self-seeking behavior may work for a while, but eventually it creates enemies or lack of interest in helping, making the person who will do anything to win ineffective.

Because good relationships make it easier to gain cooperation, it pays to be generous and engage in win-win exchanges. You improve relationships by doing good work together, living up to promises, or just providing what the other party values. Making successful trades tends to make people feel better about one another.

Make Connections Early and Often. At times a poor relationship makes it almost impossible to get others to make task exchanges, even ones in their best interest. Then you must spend time rebuilding the relationship before doing any task work. To prevent this, find a way to make relationships before they are needed. Suppose you want a special analysis from a colleague to proceed with new product planning. If the relationship is strained, you may first need to relieve the strain and reestablish the relationship. This will ease the conversation about the information you need and aid in finding a basis for getting the help you want.

Finally, a discussion of what you want and the quality of the relationship is always concurrent. Pay attention to the process of discussion about exchange. Focusing only on the task outcome—getting your way—may not only harm future dealings but make you lose the deal.

When you make many relationships and create a positive reputation, your credit will be good, and you will have longer to pay back the help received. A good reputation is a form of saving for a rainy day, like making a goodwill deposit in a bank, so you can draw on it later. Try not to mortgage the future; you never know when you will need to call in your chips.

Exchanges Can Be Positive or Negative

As mentioned earlier, exchanges can be positive or negative. Positive ones take the form, "I do something beneficial for you and in turn you do something valuable for me." But you can also exchange negatives for negatives: "I have little inclination to go out of my way for your requests since you won't do that for mine." Negatives can be about impact on the organization, consequences for the other party, or something unfair.

Note two forms of negative exchange: (1) implicit or explicit threats of what you might do or what might happen because of the other person's responses, and (2) negative retaliation, in which both sides lose. Negative payback can feel unpleasant for both the sender and the receiver but can sometimes be necessary (as we will explore below) for positive exchanges to eventually occur. Lose-lose retaliatory exchanges are the least desirable, to be used only as a last resort.

You May Occasionally Need to Use Negative Exchanges. Even offers of positive exchange, however, implicitly contain a message about negative consequences if they are not accepted. If compliance will result in mutual benefit, there is always the underlying possibility that not complying will lead to negative results for both parties. You can make the consequences clear or leave them unsaid. "If you can loan me that chemical engineer, I can complete this essential project," implies that failure to comply will stop the project and something valuable will be lost. Finally, you can use negative exchanges to gradually up the ante, making it increasingly undesirable not to cooperate.

Being overt about possible negative exchanges can be useful in moving things along, putting teeth into the request. It shows seriousness and can be a powerful way to impact others—if the threat is a real one the other person cares about.

While the threat of negative consequences is a less friendly way to make exchanges, it may be necessary in difficult situations. The mule may need a whack with a two-by-four to get its attention when no amount of coaxing will move it. When mentioning negative consequences, it is usually helpful to also hold out a carrot: "I don't want to have to resort to this; I would much prefer X, but if that can't occur, I will be forced to . . ." We say more about this in Chapter 7 on making exchanges.

A problem arises, however, when frustration with lack of cooperation—now or in the past—causes you to open with threats of negative exchanges from aggravation instead of careful diagnosis. People who feel stymied can move rapidly to negative ways of operating, relying on threats as a first resort rather than a distant last one. That may cause a negative reaction in itself, hindering any possible deal.

Have a Bias toward Positive Exchanges. Although negative exchanges can be powerful influencers, we encourage beginning with positive ones. Some people find it more difficult to get tough when necessary later, but we believe that a positive emphasis will expand the influence repertoires of most people.

As we have suggested, a negative approach may create its own form of reciprocity, with the other person feeling compelled to oppose you. You create a self-fulfilling prophecy. Threatened people often automatically start to fight fire with fire, increasing their resistance. The person becomes more difficult, reinforcing your negative opinion, which induces you to be tougher. The negativism escalates until each of you is irritated and unbending. Even worse, if you gain a reputation for the negative, some potential allies will be negative toward you before you do anything to them. The potential threat of your setting fires causes them to burn you first.

Another reason for accentuating the positive is that peers and superiors may be stronger, with at least as many resources for retaliation as you have, which heightens the potential dangers of a spitting contest. They may salivate at the chance to show who is tougher. Positive expectations, on the other hand, create an atmosphere making win-win outcomes more likely. Much of what transpires after you make a request depends on not only how well you speak to the person's needs but also how much the person trusts you—a product of your past actions and the extent to which the person views you as a good corporate citizen.

And don't forget the future. Since people often come back in other roles, assume the possibility of finding mutual objectives. Should the assumption later prove to be untrue, you can fall back on other strategies and assumptions.

SELF-CREATED BARRIERS TO INFLUENCING

We have described a straightforward model for diagnosing what to do and executing it to achieve influence. Over the years, we have taught many people to use this model successfully. But we have also observed many failed efforts at each stage of the model, whether or not the person was aware of using it. Either the person desiring influence manages to make things worse, gives up prematurely, or doesn't even try out of frustration from anticipated failure. Before subsequent chapters explain how to use the important parts of the model, here are the most common ways that people block their own effectiveness at each stage. Table 2.3 can serve as warnings to monitor yourself when trying to make things happen.

Barrier: Not Assuming the Other Person Is at Least a Potential Ally

Failure to think positively about people who are difficult to influence is perhaps the deadliest self-created trap. It usually starts when a request is

Table 2.3 Common Self-Created Barriers to Influencing

Not assuming other person is at least a potential ally. Not clarifying your goals and priorities.
Not diagnosing ally's world: organizational forces likely to shape goals, concerns, needs.
Not determining the ally's currencies.
Knowing but not accepting the ally's currencies.
Not assessing your resources relative to the ally's wants.
Not diagnosing (and fixing if necessary) your relationship with the potential ally. Not figuring out how the other person wants to be related to.
Not knowing how you want to make trades—or knowing, but not making them.

turned down. You want something clearly important to you that the other person can deliver. Sometimes you follow this with a second request and, if you are really determined, a third. Few people can be turned down two to three times without becoming convinced that something is fundamentally wrong with the other person. (Psychologists call this attribution.)[7] The person has a defect of character, motives, or intelligence, or is a "perfect representative of that miserable group of incompetents from (the offending group)." Even when the negative attribution isn't spoken out loud ("Just another empty suit from marketing." "Another engineering nerd." "A numbers-obsessed shark from finance." "A soft-headed bleeding heart from HR." "A green eyeshade accountant who doesn't have the personality to be an actuary."), it gets communicated.

Once you even think such a thing, whether or not you verbalize it, the targets sense that you consider them defective and close off. Who wants to be influenced by someone with the equivalent of a red neon sign on the forehead that says, "I think you are a jerk!" The difficulty is that once you think the person is a jerk (or worse), it is hard to find a big enough cover for the neon sign.

Classic Joke on the Hazards of Assuming the Worst of Someone You Want to Influence: The Story of the Jack

A man was driving an unfamiliar country road late at night, when his tire blew. He wanted to change the tire but found no jack in the trunk. After fuming a while, he decided that his only choice was to walk until he found a farmhouse and borrow a

(*Continued*)

jack. As he walked, he began to worry that it was late and dark; he would be a stranger waking up the occupant in the middle of the night. But lacking any alternative and feeling cold, he kept walking. Finally, he saw a farmhouse, but as he got closer, he grew more and more concerned about how the person would react. "He's going to be really upset and angry, and might have a gun," and so on. Finally, he got there, knocked, and yet again imagined how upset the farmer would be. After a lot of knocking and a long wait, the light went on and door opened. The traveler punched the farmer, shouted, "You can keep your damn jack!" and stomped off.

Separate your frustration at the moment (which is real) from the conclusion that this person could never be an ally. Even though he or she may think opposition is rational, search for some common ground. Try not to write off anyone, no matter how difficult they appear. Only after all efforts fail should you be dismissive.

Barrier: Not Clarifying Your Goals and Priorities

You may be tempted to build up a long list of desires, especially from someone you haven't had success with or anticipate resistance from, but that only causes overload and makes people back away. Another frequent mistake is mixing together personal and organizational objectives. Not only is some resource or support requested, but also personal recognition, or extra attention, or (for someone in an organizational minority) the admission that the minority person (such as a marketing expert in a technical organization, a woman in a male-dominated organization, an African American in a mostly white organization) is truly a worthy equal. Doing good work, over time, usually brings you the personal acclaim desired; mixing it into the work-related request can make people react to mixed messages and reduce your chances of getting what's most needed.

Another important barrier arises when your intense personal needs—to win, not to lose face, to do the other in, to show how smart you are, to get ahead, and so on—keep you from assuring the other that you really want the cooperation to get the work done more than a victory. Is personal triumph so important that you would jeopardize the task or relationship? If the answer is "yes," that's your right, but your choice should be conscious, not just a reflex.

Example of Failing to Take into Account Organizational Forces Driving Resistant Behavior at an International Software Company

A product manager is frustrated because the country manager in France won't push his salesforce to try an important new product. But the country manager is measured by total country sales, and it is much harder for his salesforce to explain and sell a new inexpensive product than to make a few big sales of existing ones. The new-product manager pushes but gives up in frustration. Lack of cooperation isn't inevitable. One mistake is failing to diagnose this difference in objectives in advance and blindly bumping up against it. The second is understanding it but ignoring other things that might be attractive to the recipient. Perhaps the country manager cares about the prestige of being the first to develop a good market for the new product or wants to be involved at an earlier stage of market planning, which the product manager could offer.

Barrier: Not Determining the Ally's Currencies

Even more fundamental is the common failure to pay attention to what's important to the person or group to be influenced. Those desiring influence are often so excited about what they are trying to accomplish, so in love with what they wish to bring to life, so sure that its value is self-evident, that they ignore what the other person values. We call this "missing by a mile," and every reader has seen, if not personally committed, this self-inflicted limit. Think of the soccer enthusiast trying to sell the game to a basketball or American football fan: "It's such a subtle game of skill and tactics that there is very little scoring, and if you watch long enough, you will see how beautiful it is!" That argument hasn't worked yet, though some keep using it.

Another common major barrier is not recognizing the possible range of currencies that people can value, assuming that everyone likes only what you like. It isn't only Henry Higgins of *My Fair Lady* who can't understand why a woman he wants to influence can't be more like a man—that is, more like him.

A variation of this problem is assuming that the other person only likes one thing, one important currency, and without it you are stuck (see the boxed example of the product manager and the French country manager). Almost everyone has a portfolio of valued currencies, and even though some are more valued than others, trade-offs are often possible.

Barrier: Not Accepting the Ally's Currencies

Sometimes the influencer does understand what the other person cares about, but doesn't accept those as desirable currencies. It is one thing if what the other person wants violates deeply held values or ethical principles, but often it is just differences. A go-getter with entrepreneurial skills can have difficulty accepting the colleague who focuses on structure and procedures, leading him to want to change the colleague instead of accommodating to what is important to him. Influence by exchange is about giving what the other person wants in return for what you need, not about changing what the person wants.

Barrier: Not Assessing Your Resources Relative to the Ally's Wants

The biggest barrier here is not recognizing that many of the currencies others desire are ones that you have in abundance. You don't need anyone's permission to give recognition, show appreciation, confer status, give respect, be understanding, help the other person, and so on. If the other party will only accept a transfer of budget dollars and you do not yet have a budget for your project, you might be at a dead end, though sometimes creative horse-trading can overcome even that limitation. But most people have more at their disposal than they recognize.

Barrier: Not Diagnosing Your Relationship with the Potential Ally (and Fixing It If Necessary)

We have already mentioned that ignoring the benefits of positive relationships can block making exchanges. If you are not trusted, it can be very difficult to get a potential partner to take any risks in working together. Those desiring influence sometimes mistakenly focus only on the task benefits of transactions or try to be nice at the last minute, which comes across as phony.

Alternatively, some people desiring influence fake interest in the other person, going through the motions of making relationships. Some are so instrumental as they attempt to influence others that they appear manipulative, creating distrust in the process. No technique works well when a person is perceived as only self-interested. Our influence model doesn't work when it appears to be only about the influencer's benefit, not the organization's true needs. This problem is compounded by Machiavellian game players who cloak all requests in the "it's-good-for-the-organization" mantle, as if no one notices their self-orientation.

Barrier: Not Figuring Out How You Want to Make Trades—And Making Them

Again, failure to create trust is a major barrier to influence. If you seem to be a person who makes everything a tit-for-tat exchange—a wheeler-dealer or a compulsive exchanger who never relies on mutual goodwill and liking—even attractive deals can get turned down. Occasionally, influencers go too far the other way, presuming that past positive exchanges and a decent relationship should always cause the person to cooperate, even against self-interest; and then become angry if the ally says the request is too much. That anger then interferes with the relationship, so both future and present influence is lost.

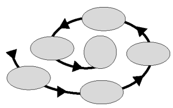
Another common barrier is failing to adapt your style of interacting to your potential ally's preferences. This can be caused by interpersonal blindness; for example, you don't notice that the other person likes concise solutions and blather on about the problem's complexities. Sometimes you might recognize the other person's preferences for interactions but stubbornly stick to your own preferences as a misguided way of "being true to yourself." By considering interaction style a matter of personal integrity, people wipe out the rights of others to have their own preferences and annoy them, if not worse.

For a detailed example of an otherwise competent manager who failed to get what he wanted because he lacked an appropriate model to help guide his actions, with lessons about how he could have avoided the problem, go to our website www.influencewithoutauthority.com and see "Why Won't He Listen?"

The next five chapters help flesh out the Influence without Authority model. We start with a deeper discussion of currencies and their meanings.

CHAPTER 3

Goods and Services: The Currencies of Exchange



Mugger: *Your money or your life.*
Comedian Jack Benny [notorious cheapskate]: *(Silence)*
Mugger: *Well?*
Jack Benny: *I'm thinking!*

Coin of the Realm: The Concept of Currencies

The Cohen–Bradford Influence model is based on exchange and reciprocity—trading what the other person desires for what you want. Influence is possible when you have what others want. That can be just about anything. A recent report on US prisons revealed that ramen is now replacing tobacco as the most desirable currency because budgetary cutbacks restricted the availability and quality of food.[1] The metaphor of currencies—something that is valued—can help you determine what you might offer a potential ally for cooperation. Because currencies represent resources that can be exchanged, they are the basis for acquiring influence. Without currencies in your treasury that the other person values, you have nothing to exchange and, therefore, are likely to have little influence. This chapter looks more closely at how currencies work, which ones are common to organizational life, and how to understand their use.

Frequently Valued Currencies

To make trades, you need to understand the many things people care about and all the valuables you have to offer. At least five types of currencies at work in a variety of settings are shown with our starter list of examples in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Currencies Frequently Valued in Organizations

Inspiration-Related Currencies	
Vision	Working on a task with larger significance for unit, organization, customers, or society
Excellence	Having a chance to do important things really well
Mentoring, teaching	Help others grow and learn; passing along wisdom
Moral/ethical correctness	Doing what is "right" by a higher standard than efficiency
Task-Related Currencies	
New resources	Obtaining money, budget increases, personnel, space, and so forth
Challenge/learning	Doing tasks that increase skills and abilities
Assistance	Receiving help with existing projects or unwanted tasks
Organizational support	Receiving overt or subtle backing or direct assistance with implementation
Rapid response	Getting something more quickly
Information	Obtaining access to organizational or technical knowledge
Position-Related Currencies	
Recognition	Acknowledgment of effort, accomplishments, or abilities
Visibility	The chance to be known by higher-ups or significant people in the organization
Reputation	Being seen as competent, committed
Insiderness/importance	A sense of centrality, of belonging
Contacts	Opportunities for linking with others
Relationship-Related Currencies	
Understanding	Having concerns and issues listened to
Inclusion/personal connection	Feeling closeness and friendship
Personal support	Receiving personal and emotional backing
Personal-Related Currencies	
Gratitude	Appreciation or expression of indebtedness
Ownership/involvement	Ownership of and influence over important tasks
Self-concept	Affirmation of values, self-esteem, and identity
Comfort	Avoidance of hassles

Although the list is by no means comprehensive and is somewhat arbitrarily grouped for convenience, it does provide a broader view of possible currencies than many organizational members conventionally think about. This framework can alert you to currencies available to you that others might value.

Inspiration-Related Currencies

Inspiration-related currencies reflect inspirational goals, ones providing meaning to a person's work. They are increasingly valued by people at all levels of organizational life.

Vision. Vision is perhaps the grandest currency. It can be highly motivating to portray an exciting vision of the company's or department's future and show how the ally's cooperation will help reach it. You can help overcome personal objections and inconvenience by inspiring the potential ally to see the larger significance of your request.

Excellence. The opportunity to do something really well and to have pride in accomplishing important, genuinely excellent work can be highly motivating. In this sense, craftsmanship is not dead; it is only in hiding, waiting to be tapped. Many people want to do high-quality, polished work, and knowing how to offer them that chance can be a valuable currency.

Mentoring/Teaching. For some, it is deeply satisfying to coach others, to help them learn to be more effective, to use the wisdom acquired through experience. They see it as a chance to give back, to take satisfaction from the growth of others.

Moral/Ethical Correctness. Probably most members of organizations would like to do what they consider the ethical, moral, altruistic, or correct thing. But they often feel that isn't possible in their job. Because they value a higher standard than efficiency or personal convenience, these people respond to requests that let them do what they consider "right." Their self-image leads them to prefer personal inconvenience to doing anything inappropriate. This lets them feel good about themselves, so virtue becomes its own reward.

Task-Related Currencies

Task-related currencies are directly connected to doing the job. They relate to a person's ability to perform his or her assigned tasks or to the satisfactions that arise from accomplishment.

New Resources. For some managers, especially in organizations where resources are scarce or difficult to obtain, one very important currency is the chance to obtain new resources to accomplish their goals. These resources may or may not be directly budgetary; they could include the loan of people, space, or equipment.

Challenge/Learning. One widely valued currency in modern organizations is the chance to work at challenging tasks that provide a chance to stretch and to learn. Employees consistently list challenge among the top items when surveyed about what's important in their jobs. At the extreme, some professionals will do almost anything for a chance to work on tough tasks. In many technical organizations, the running joke is that the reward for killing yourself working 80 hours a week on a tough project is succeeding and getting to do it again on a tougher, more important project. For those people, the challenge and chance to learn is its own reward.

It is usually not difficult to figure out ways of offering challenge. Asking your potential allies to join the problem-solving group or passing them a tough piece of your project are ways to pay in the currency of challenge. (If the person is competent, you probably get back more than expected.)

If your boss values challenge, share information about tough issues you are facing, go to him or her to talk over tough decisions, or suggest major issues to tackle with colleagues or higher-ups. (The boss who hates challenge, however, will value being protected from complex issues.) At times almost everyone is overwhelmed with new information and may temporarily want to rely on what they know and can already do, but the urge to learn is usually an important currency.

Assistance. Although many people desire increased responsibilities and challenge, most need help on tasks or would be glad to shed some. Perhaps they personally dislike those tasks, are swamped by current difficulties, are in unreasonably demanding jobs, or for some reason have decided to disinvest in the organization. Whatever the reason, they will respond particularly favorably to anyone providing relief.

Another important type of assistance involves products or services that one department provides to another. These can be customized to fit the recipients' needs rather than designed for the convenience of the provider. Staff groups can create the currency of assistance if they first make sincere attempts to understand and adjust to departmental needs before demanding compliance with a new program.

Organizational Support. Organizational support is the currency most valued by someone working on a project who needs public backing or behind-the-scenes help in selling the project to others. It can also be valuable to someone who is struggling with an ongoing set of activities and who will benefit from a good word with higher-ups or other colleagues. Since most significant work is likely to generate some opposition, the person seeking approval for a project or plan can be greatly aided by a "friend in court." A positive word to the right person at the right time can be very helpful in furthering someone's career or objectives. This kind of support is most valuable when the recipient is under fire and a colleague publicly supports the person or the project.

Rapid Response. A quick response to urgent requests can be worth a great deal to a colleague or boss. Helping someone avoid the waiting line builds valuable credit for later use, especially with managers in charge of resources that are always needed "yesterday." Sometimes people get carried away and try to make it seem that they're always doing the other person a big favor, even when they have spare capacity. This tactic works only when those with urgent requests don't know the true backlog: a secret that is likely not to be secret for long. Be careful; overstating your burdens not only depreciates a valuable currency but builds mistrust.

Information. Recognizing that knowledge is power, some people value any information that may help them shape their unit's performance. Answers to specific questions can be valuable currency, but broader information can be equally rewarding. Knowledge of industry trends, customer concerns, top management's strategic views, or other departments' agendas is valued for its contribution to planning and managing key tasks. And insider information may be even more valued. Who is getting ahead and who is in trouble? What are top management's latest concerns? What are the hottest industry trends or the newest customer developments? Information junkies will go out of their way to help anyone who can give them insider information, even if it does not help them with immediate tasks.

This hunger for information can create opportunities for anyone who has access to valuable knowledge and is willing to share it. If your boss values such information, you have an extra incentive to develop wide-ranging relationships throughout the organization. In addition, keeping your ear to the ground will provide a wealth of extra-valuable currency to offer to the information-hungry boss. Paradoxically, the higher a person's position, the less likely he or she is to know what is really going on in the organization and the greater the gratitude for being informed.

Position-Related Currencies

These currencies enhance a person's position in the organization, thereby indirectly helping the person to accomplish tasks or advance a career.

Recognition. Many people gladly will extend themselves for a project when they believe their contributions will be recognized. Yet, it is remarkable how many fail to spread recognition around or withhold it for only very special occasions. It is probably not a coincidence that virtually all the managers a major research study identified as successfully accomplishing innovation from the middle of their organizations were very careful to share the credit and spread the glory.[2] They all recognized the importance of giving people this valuable currency.

Visibility to Higher-Ups. Ambitious employees realize that, in a large organization, opportunities to perform for or to be recognized by powerful people can be a deciding factor in achieving future opportunities, information, or promotions. That is why, for example, task force members may fight over who will present the group's recommendations to top decision makers.

Reputation. Yet another variation on recognition is the more generalized currency of reputation. A good reputation can create lots of opportunities while a bad one can quickly shut the person out and make it difficult to perform.

A person with good press gets invited to important meetings, is consulted about new projects, and is considered an important ally when trying to sell ideas. A talented person with bad press, even in a nominally important position, may be ignored or not asked for opinions until it is too late to make a real difference. Note that actual ability is only partially related to reputation, at least in larger organizations, because few have direct knowledge of anyone's actual capacities. Accurate or not, however, reputation carries potent consequences. Having no reputation—being essentially invisible—means even those who could be very helpful are not asked to participate.

Often, people at lower levels, who think they have very little clout, don't realize how much they can influence the reputation of a manager who has more formal power. Speaking well or ill of the manager can make an enormous difference in reputation and, therefore, effectiveness. Smart sales people go out of their way to be nice to secretaries or support staff. They realize that a secretary's nasty comment about them to the boss can create a bad impression that is difficult to overcome.

Insiderness. For some, being in the inner circle can be a most valued currency. Inside information is one sign of this currency, and another is being connected to important people. The chance to work on important events, tasks, or plans can be valuable in itself. Some people gain a sense of significance from being close to the action and extend themselves to obtain such access.

Importance. A variation on inside knowledge and contacts as currency is the chance to feel important. Inclusion and information are symbols of that, but just being acknowledged as an important player counts a lot for many people who feel underrecognized.

Contacts. The opportunity for making contacts is related to many previous currencies, for it creates a network of people to approach for mutually helpful transactions. Some people are confident they can build satisfactory relationships once they have access. The organization member skilled at bringing people together benefits from facilitating introductions.

A Contact-Creation Master

Our friend Alice Sargent, an organizational consultant, was the world's greatest contact facilitator. Alice's address book—built through expertise; a friendly, open style; willingness to extend herself; and a profession that put her in the position of meeting many new people—was at the service of hundreds of people, including us, and she always knew someone we "should talk to" no matter what our task. She was selfless in her desire to be helpful; and we were always grateful for her knowledge of who was doing what, her energy in increasing her range of acquaintances, and her willingness to share

(*Continued*)

them. Even on her unfairly premature deathbed, she was still searching for just the right contact to help a friend's daughter decide whether to go to Pomona or Bryn Mawr, an author find an audience for his message, and a company to help package the author's training program. Many consultants and organizational members benefited from her generosity and still miss her. Among the many things we learned from her is the power of helping people connect to one another.

Relationship-Related Currencies

Relationship-related currencies are more connected to strengthening the relationship with someone than directly accomplishing the organization's tasks. That in no way diminishes the importance of the tasks.

Inclusion/Personal Connection. Some people most value the feeling of closeness to others, whether an individual or a group/department. They are receptive to those who offer warmth and liking as currencies, or enjoy building relationships in their own right. They may value closeness more than task-related currencies, or at the very least they won't sustain satisfactory transactions with anyone who does not include warmth and acceptance in serious task discussions.

Understanding/Listening/Sympathy. Colleagues who feel beleaguered by organizational demands or isolated and unsupported by their bosses especially value a sympathetic ear. Almost everyone is glad at times for a chance to talk about what bugs him or her, especially when the listeners seem to have no axe to grind or are not too caught up in their own problems to pay attention. Indeed, sympathetic listening without advice is a form of action that many managers do not recognize because the nature of their jobs and personalities orient them to "doing something." They don't recognize that listening, in and of itself, can be a valuable currency.

Personal Support. For some people, at particular times, having the support of others is the currency they value most. A colleague feeling stressed, upset, vulnerable, or needy will doubly appreciate—and remember—a thoughtful gesture such as asking how he is doing, offering a kind word, or placing a hand on the shoulder. Some people are intuitively brilliant at finding just the right touch for a colleague in personal stress, sensing who would appreciate flowers, who would like to go out for a drink, and who would respond best to a meaningful article or book. The item itself is far less important than the gesture, no matter how awkwardly expressed.

Unfortunately, such personal gestures could miss the mark or be misconstrued as signs of more intimate interest or personal friendship than you might intend. An invitation to dinner at your home, for example, could come across as an intrusion to a very private person. Although caution is in order, genuinely kind gestures usually transcend misinterpretation.

Personal Currencies

These currencies could form an infinite list of idiosyncratic needs. Individuals value them because they enhance their sense of self. They may be derived from task or interpersonal activity. We mention only a few common ones.

Gratitude. Gratitude may be another form of recognition or support. Though not necessarily job-related, gratitude can be valued highly by people who make a point of helping others. For their efforts, some people want the receiver to appreciate them in terms of thanks or deference. This is a tricky currency; when it's overused, even those who desire it may devalue it. That is, an expression of gratitude for the first favor may be more valued than a similar expression of gratitude for the tenth.

Ownership/Involvement. Another currency often valued by organizational members is the chance to feel that they at least partly control something important or can make a major contribution. While this is akin to other currencies, for some people the chance to get their hands into something interesting is its own reward. They do not need other forms of payment.

Self-Concept. We referred earlier to moral and ethical correctness as a currency. Another way of thinking about self-referencing currencies is to include those that are consistent with a person's image of himself or herself. "Payments" do not always have to come from someone else. They can be self-generated if you take action consistent with your idea of who you are; you reward comes from your personal beliefs about being virtuous, benevolent, or committed to the organization's welfare. You might respond to another's request because it reinforces your cherished values, sense of identity, or feelings of self-worth. Payment is still interpersonally stimulated;

for example this kind of self-payment is generated when you ask for cooperation to accomplish organizational goals. But the person who responds because "it is the right thing to do" and feels good about being the "kind of person who does not act out of narrow self-interest" is printing currency (virtue) that is self-satisfying.

Rosabeth Kanter, a leading researcher on change, discovered that many innovative middle managers had worked long and hard to make significant changes that they knew would not be rewarded.[3] Several had been punished by the organization for fighting to make valuable changes that upset cherished beliefs or key executives. Furthermore, they knew that their efforts would get them in trouble but proceeded anyway because they saw themselves as people who would do what in their view was needed whether or not anyone else agreed.

Comfort. Finally, some individuals highly value personal comfort. Lovers of routine and haters of risk, they will do almost anything to avoid being hassled or embarrassed. The thought of making a public fuss and being the target of notoriety or the recipient of anger is enough to drive them to the ends of the earth. They care far less about advancement than the chance to do their job with minimal disturbance; you do them a valuable favor by protecting them from being bothered or approached by outsiders.

Negative Currencies

Currencies are what people value. But there are also negative currencies, things that people do not value and wish to avoid (see Table 3.2). Using these is less desirable, because they can have repercussions you don't want, but they are sometimes potent or necessary. Negative currencies come in two forms:

1. Withholding payment of a known valuable currency
2. Using directly undesirable currencies

Whenever an ally values a currency, its absence or threatened removal can also be motivating. Because too many people think only of the possible negative effects when seeking influence, we have stressed the positive use of currency, but you limit yourself needlessly by overlooking the power of withholding a valuable currency. Refusal to give resources, recognition, challenge, or support can make an ally cooperate. In the right situation, the

Table 3.2 Common Negative Currencies

Withholding Payments
Not giving recognition
Not offering support
Not providing challenge
Threatening to quit the situation
Directly Undesirable
Raising voice, yelling
Refusing to cooperate when asked
Escalating issue to common boss
Going public with issue, making lack of cooperation visible
Attacking person's reputation, integrity
Rather than "attacking," "negative impact" on person's reputation
Making the relationship much worse

threat of quitting—removing the benefits of staying in the situation—can be potent.

SOME CAUTIONS

The directly undesirable currencies are fraught with danger because the recipient can find them quite unpleasant forms of payment. Although different people value different currencies, few want to be yelled at, to have their behavior on display to the boss or others, to be exposed for their behavior and attitudes, or to have colleagues attack their reputation. These negative currencies, or the threat of their use, can be exactly what you need to move the other person into action.

The danger is that the action will provoke retaliation—at once or in the future. You don't want to enrage someone with more ammunition than you have or who will gladly go down in flames while dragging you along. Using negative currencies risks setting off a war; winning influence in the short term may create an enemy who looks to retaliate when you least expect it.

Therefore, the better part of valor, even when you must use a negative currency exchange, is to look for a positive way to frame the currency. "I know you wouldn't want to be left out" probably will get a more positive response than “If you don’t cooperate, I’ll see that you’re left out.” In both cases, however, you indicate you will withhold the currency without an exchange. If you must directly use a negative currency, try to tie it to a desirable future state that you both want in which the negatives won’t be necessary.

USING CURRENCIES: COMPLEXITIES AND RESTRICTIONS

Even if you do not underestimate your number of available currencies, there are still complex issues around implementation. The following section provides an overview, but we go into more detail in Chapter 7, “Strategies for Making Mutually Profitable Trades.” There we discuss how to think through the ramifications of your relative power and how to take that into account when positioning for and making complex exchanges.

Establishing Currency Exchange Rates: How to Equate Apples and Oranges

If it is true that everyone expects to be paid back in one form or another, then it is important to address the question of “one form or another.” What will it require to make an offer in a currency that the other person considers equivalent?

In the economic marketplace, everything is translated into monetary equivalents, which makes it easier to say what a fair payment is. Does a ton of steel equal a set of golf clubs? By translating both commodities into dollars (or euros, yen, or rubles), strangers can make a fair deal. In the organizational marketplace, however, calculating the payback is more complicated. How do I repay your willingness to help me finish my report? Is a simple “thank you” enough? Will it be sufficient for me to say something nice about you to your boss? And what if we have very different ideas about fair repayment? We may value the same thing very differently. Absent an established standard value, exchanging for influence can be complicated.

A useful way of understanding what potential allies consider important is to examine the goods and services they trade. What do they seem to care about? What does their language signal? What do they talk about first when explaining why they won’t cooperate? Does your analysis of their world and how they are measured and rewarded help? Can you ask directly—in a collaborative way, aimed at finding ways to help them so they can help you?

Be careful not to measure their currencies with your own weights. It isn't how you value the goods and services, it is how they do.

Occasionally, people know exactly what they want in return for favors or help at work, but more often they will settle for very rough equivalents—provided there is reasonable goodwill. It may, therefore, be more important to identify the currency the potential ally likes to trade in and offer to pay with goods that you have translated into that currency than it is to determine the exact right amount. In other words, think about the nature (quality) of the currency in each transaction before you worry about the quantity.

Different Strokes: Few Universal Currencies

A few currencies are very widely valued, such as the desire to have some influence on others, to be appreciated, to be treated fairly, and to have a good reputation and positive work relationships. Nevertheless, even these nearly universal currencies vary in importance from person to person and thus are valued differently. A currency's value is solely in the eye of the beholder. Does just about everyone value having influence? Probably. But do some people just want to be left alone to do their job? Yes. Similarly, while many rank positive work relationships highly, others do not want to have personal connections with coworkers and think it is a bad idea. While one manager might consider a thank-you note a sign of appreciation, another might see it as an attempt to flatter, and a third might dismiss it as a cheap way to try to repay extensive favors and service. (And we can say from experience—don't try even friendly East Coast irony with the straightforward, nice folks from Minnesota!)

Furthermore, if you use the same currency successfully several times with the same person or group, they can eventually come to devalue it, so that it no longer works. After many repetitions, for example, your praise can sound hollow when given for constant favors that take a lot of time.[4]

One Act: Multiple Currencies, Multiple Forms of Payment

Currencies of the kind discussed here are not exact and fixed; they are also a function of perception and language:

- A particular "good," for example an offer to create a special analytical report, may be translatable into several different currencies. To the receiver, it may be a performance currency ("With this report, I'll be able to determine which products to push."); a political currency ("This report will help me look good to my division president."); or a personal currency ("Although getting the report certainly won't hurt my decision making, it's more significant that it shows you recognize my importance."). The same good may be valued for different reasons by different people— or by the same person.

- One currency can be paid in many different forms. For example, you can pay in appreciation by verbal thanks, praise, public statements of support, informal comments to peers, or a note to the person's boss.
- Because the value of currency is changeable, it becomes even more necessary to understand what is important to each potential ally—not only what he or she values but also the language that reflects that valued currency. Sometimes a different way of talking about your offer—based on the ally's style and priorities—will make it more attractive. Don't needlessly exaggerate; if you don't have the right goods, hype will only offend. Nevertheless, think carefully about how to talk about goods that are available.

Currencies Can Be Organizational, Not Just Personal

For convenience, we have discussed currencies completely in terms of what is important to the individual you want to influence. But another, less direct, kind of currency is departmental or organizational benefit. When employees identify strongly with the welfare of their group, department, or organization, it can be very important to focus on exchanges benefitting the unit rather the individual.

At the same time, the person gets the psychological satisfaction of "being good," or of "doing what is right," which are by no means trivial currencies. For many people, seeing themselves as good citizens and benevolent, loyal people is indeed a powerful currency. This gives them a potent payoff, even if at first it seems that what they must give is not in their self-interest.

In fact, in some organizations, a reputation for being willing to do something not of immediate personal benefit is precisely what develops an influential, positive reputation. In these kinds of organizations, altruism reigns supreme. We have watched a large number of upper-middle managers at BlueCross BlueShield of Massachusetts, for example, focus on what the organization can do for members and the uninsured, resisting talk of narrowly construed self- or departmental interests. Managers who can think creatively about helping customers are listened to and valued. FedEx celebrates the story of the employee who hired a helicopter to deliver a package over an avalanche in order to "ensure overnight delivery."

In such situations, encouraging the potential ally to cooperate for personal gain is a serious breach of etiquette. Enhancing the person's reputation is considered a by-product, not something to be overtly touted.

Reframing: Fit the Language to the Culture

How explicitly you position self-interest is different from organization to organization. For example, many high-tech companies expect members to be direct about what they want from others. Employees talk freely about wheeling and dealing for resources. But the tradition at IBM is to use language is that is far less direct, with requests couched in terms of organizational benefits, not personal gains. No one at IBM is likely to say, "If you help me on this project, your career will be advanced." Instead, they will say something like, "Your area's help will increase the value of the product, and that will aid your group's getting the recognition it deserves for its outstanding efforts." The result might be the same, but the language used to get results is different.

Although a few situations may expect blunt, "I'll do this if you will do that" trades (for example, a tough New Jersey construction firm we know), in most organizations it is more about describing what you want in a way that appeals to your audience. Paying attention to the culture's ways is important in addition to looking at the individual. If, however, you are dealing with a maverick, a countercultural approach may be just the thing.

Sometimes a good idea can be stymied when it's described with loaded language—words whose connotations turn off the people whose support is most needed. Inappropriate language can convert something valuable to a potential ally into undesirable currency. One of the authors remembers vividly getting completely tuned out when talking to human resources people at the old, polite Hewlett-Packard about "ways to get clout." They did want to shape managerial practice, but "clout" sounded far too crude. (And they were too nice to tell him until after easing him out of the program, and then only indirectly.)

EXPANDING YOUR "CURRENCY POOL"

As we have stressed (and expand on below), most people have more currencies to use than they currently think. In addition to utilizing what you have available, seeing how you can increase that pool is also useful.

You can easily forget about the future when focused on your current job and all the ways you need more influence. But try to think longer term, anticipating future currencies of relevant colleagues (or possible future colleagues). For example, perhaps your job interfaces with operations, and cost pressures are making your organization consider outsourcing some activities to India or China. You might want to learn about the difficulties of outsourcing without being asked. If you build knowledge in advance, you might have something valuable to the operations person who suddenly gets dumped with the problem, and you can create credit that will serve you later. (For an inspiring example, see Nettie Seabrooks at www.influencewithoutauthority.com.)

The example below shows how Shirley Marom, a project marketing manager at Google, saw a need and took steps to develop herself.

Shirley Marom, Project Marketing Manager at Google, Anticipates Future Skill Needs

I've been through my fair share of re-orgs throughout the years—from leadership changes to entire projects getting cancelled. One thing that has worked well for me was finding what knowledge or skill would be valuable for the team following a change—and then being the person to learn that skill and share it with the group.

For example: I work in marketing and collaborate closely with cross-functional teams. When a project I worked on got cancelled, we went back to the sketching board in terms of product development. I hadn't had a lot of product management experience but was incredibly interested in learning. So I did some research and found a great one-week product management course at Berkeley's executive learning program, and pitched to my manager and director that I should take that course, then share learning with the group.

It has helped position me as a thought leader, which has been beneficial for me, and I'm recognized for that.

SELF-TRAPS IN USING CURRENCIES

While the notion of exchange seems simple, there are many ways for people to go wrong and miss by a mile (see the Checklist for Avoiding Currency Traps).

Checklist for Avoiding Currency Traps

Don't underestimate what you have to offer. What do your training and experience give you?

Your Resources	**Who Would Value the Resource?**
☐ Technical	________________
☐ Organization information	________________
☐ Customer knowledge	________________
☐ Political information	________________
What do you control that requires no permission to spend?	
☐ Reputation	________________
☐ Appreciation	________________
☐ Visibility	________________
☐ Gratitude	________________
☐ Recognition	________________
☐ Respect	________________
☐ Your personal help on tasks	________________

Pay in what the other person values, not what you value.
- ☐ Fit with what you know about the person.
- ☐ Fit with the way the person likes to be approached.
- ☐ Give what the other person wants, even if you don't like it.

Are you willing to do more than is required?
- ☐ Go beyond job description.

Don't exaggerate or lie.
- ☐ Can you deliver what you promise?

Underestimating What You Have to Offer

Start with what you know. Has your training and experience given you access to something others might value?

- Rare technical knowledge.
- Organizational information. Where expertise does reside, what departments are interested in your department's activities, who might be working on something interesting or has useful information, or who holds resources that aren't being used?
- Customer knowledge. Who is a key customer playing golf with, what problems are they having using your company's products, how have

they improvised new uses for your products that might interest other customers? Are potential clients not being attended to now?

- Political information. Who is unhappy, planning to leave, on the rise, or close to key higher-ups?

What do you control that you can "spend" without formal permission? As suggested earlier, sometimes people who feel impotent think too narrowly about their resources. They think only budget dollars or promotions are relevant resources and, lacking these, assume they have nothing of value to trade. You can give gratitude, recognition, appreciation, respect, and help—many things that others value. No supervisor or higher-up has to empower anyone to write a thank-you note, publicly praise another, or rush responses to a request. Often you have valuable goods or services to use if you cast your net wide enough.

Remember that being someone who others enjoy talking with, know is interested in them, and trust can be valuable—or just pleasurable even without any payoff.

PAY IN THE CURRENCY OTHERS VALUE, NOT JUST WHAT YOU WOULD VALUE

This trap is completely understandable, because it is both easier to know what you like and to assume that everyone else must want what you value. As we have mentioned, there are certainly some universals that almost everyone wants—self-worth, recognition for good work, connection—but even those are tricky and can use expansion. Many people like positive attention and gratitude, but some do not like the spotlight or being thanked for favors that they consider a routine part of their job. Others just want to be left alone. But even worse, people often are so preoccupied with their wants that they don't pay close attention to or totally ignore the signals from others about what matters to them. They hear these signals as excuses or barriers and just tune them out.

We have seen many people, even at high levels, who are so certain that influencing their manager is impossible that they completely miss something obvious, such as the manager's preference for written proposals with the conclusions first. For example, the subordinate wants early feedback but is sure that the boss won't like her idea, so she doesn't even write a concise memo and send it before the meeting. Creating a memo is within the subordinate's control, but she never sees how crucial that is to her reflective and busy boss, so she fails to take a simple but effective step to gain influence. (For more on how to tune in to signals sent, see Chapter 4.)

Worst of all, when frustrated influencers hear that the other wants something they don't like themselves, they don't want to give it to the other. The colleague who craves status, for example, can set their teeth on edge, so they do everything possible to make that person seem small. Or they resent ambition and try to thwart it rather than work with it and help the ambitious colleague. Remember, reciprocity is about paying with something the other person values.

RESENTING HAVING TO GO OUT OF THE WAY

Some people limit their influence when they refuse to do something necessary to move others in desirable ways because it isn't their job. They stand on principle: "That shouldn't have to be my job, and my colleagues should just be persuaded by my arguments and what (I see) is right!" Certainly principles should not be violated, but "It's not my job" probably isn't one of them. Think of it as building a line of credit that you might draw on someday, or think of it just as being effective. If the organization's interest requires you to figure out what others need to cooperate, then eventually it will also be in your interest.

A WORD OF WARNING: BEWARE FALSE ADVERTISING

As discussed, the language that you use to describe your offers can increase the chances that those goods or services will meet the other party's needs, that is, address their desired currency. Careful, thoughtful communication adds needed precision to the imprecise process of equating your offer with another's needs.

Nevertheless, the process has dangers. A way with words is useful in any selling activity, but avoid gilding the lily or exaggerating claims. Within your own organization, you can lose your credibility with an impossible promise, a false claim, or even too much wishful thinking, damaging future transactions. As we have tried to make abundantly clear, your reputation is a precious commodity in organizational terms. Protect that valuable asset even as you press the boundaries to complete important exchanges.

Nonconvertible Currencies

The PhD founder-chairman of a high-tech company and the president he had hired five years earlier were growing more and more displeased with each other. The president, a Harvard MBA, was committed to creating maximum shareholder value—the currency most precious to him. He predicted that the company's line of exotic components would soon saturate the market, and risky major research investments would be needed for a strategic move to end-user products. Thus he concluded that the company was perfectly positioned to cash in by squeezing expenses to maximize profits and then going public.

The chairman was unmoved, however, because he valued a different currency—the fun of technological challenges. An independently wealthy man, he wasn't at all interested in getting $10 million or more from maximized profits by cutting research and selling out. He wanted a place to test his intuitive, creative hunches, not an inert cache of capital.

Their disagreements led first to bickering and then to hostility. But they were able to move beyond this, and further exploration told them they would never be able to reach accord. Their currencies just weren't convertible at an acceptable exchange rate. That understanding freed them to agree that the president should leave—on good terms—after a more compatible replacement was found. And he did leave, moving to another company where he successfully used his skills.

LAST WORD: SOME CURRENCIES REALLY ARE NOT CONVERTIBLE

Another warning is in order: not everything can be converted into equivalent currencies. If two people value fundamentally different things, they may not be able to find common ground. Open, honest exploration guarantees only that if there is any possibility of mutuality, it will be discovered and the relationship probably won't be damaged by the failure to find a deal. But sometimes, currencies do not convert. Know when to fold 'em—and do it graciously.

Currencies are important but not always obvious. Chapter 4 shows you how to determine what a person's currencies might be when you do not automatically know them or do not have direct access to the person or group you want to influence.

CHAPTER 4

How to Know What They Want: Understanding Their Worlds (and the Forces Acting on Them)

> Do not do unto others as you would that they should do unto you. Their tastes may not be the same.
>
> —*George Bernard Shaw, 1903*

> If you will work on any man, you must either know his nature and fashions, and so lead him; or his ends, and so persuade him; or his weaknesses and disadvantages, and so awe him; or those that have interest in him, and so govern him.
>
> —*Francis Bacon, 1561–1626*

You have influence in getting work done and building relationships when you can give people what they need. But how do you know what they need? Knowing the concerns, objectives, and styles of the people you want to influence—all your important stakeholders—is fundamental for determining what to offer to gain cooperation. The more you know, the better you can determine valued currencies, the language they speak, and their preferred style for interactions.

For those you work with frequently, it is likely that you know their preferences and can proceed effectively. But if you're unclear about what matters to an important person or group, puzzled by resistance, stymied when "reasonable" approaches aren't working, or angry and assuming the worst about their motives, you may need to analyze their world(s) carefully.

The more stakeholders you must influence for a given objective or the greater your anticipated difficulty in finding the right approach, the more you should do in advance. This chapter focuses on how to analyze the world of those whose driving forces are not immediately apparent, so you can figure out how to build present and future win-win relationships.

Continuing to look at a situation only from your own viewpoint makes it easy to stumble into self-defeating actions that haven't worked or slip into tortured silence. When hopeful influencers intensely desire to do something significant or make important changes, they can easily become blind to a potential ally's critical concerns. The resistant ally seems difficult, impossible, or even irrational when the determined influencer doesn't understand his or her behavior. Don't fall into that trap.

Two Forces That Can Explain All Behavior

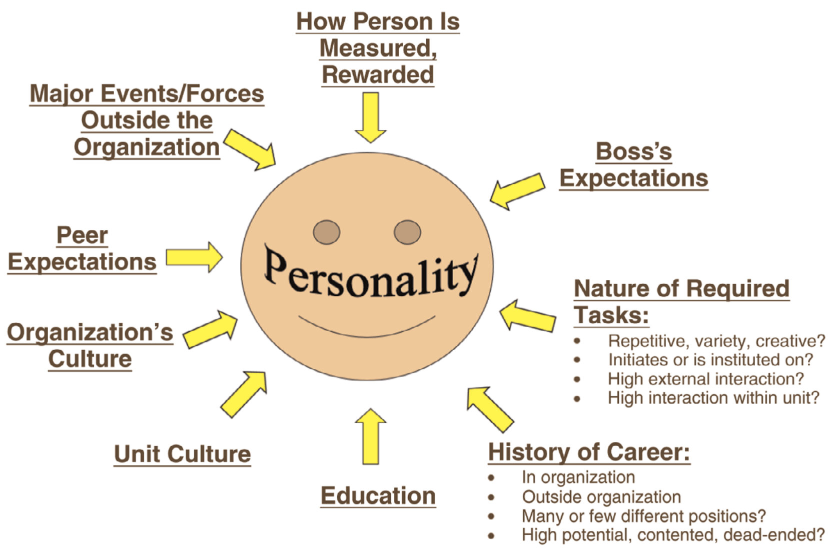
If you want to figure out an approach for influence, it helps to understand what might be driving the other's behavior. Few social scientists would tell you that all behavior can be explained by only two things, but we do: *personality* and *everything else*. Personality is surely important in understanding what matters to anyone, and if you are confident that you understand the other person's psyche and what makes that individual tick, you can devise your influence approach accordingly. But be careful. Research shows that we usually oversimplify our assessment of others.

Personality is hard to assess if you don't know the party extremely well, and even with extensive contact, personality can still be difficult to fathom. Furthermore, it is not easily changed. For both those reasons, we suggest you spend little energy on that territory.

The other forces, however, that drive what people care about arise from the situation they operate in as well as residue from events in past situations. In fact, situational forces are usually more powerful than an individual's personality. At work, for example, numerous factors might influence behavior. We explore these later, but consider one of the most obvious: the way people are measured and rewarded shapes a lot of behavior. Steve Kerr's classic article, "On the Folly of Hoping for A When Rewarding B," makes it clear that the organization's actual rewards are more important than management's exhortations.[1]

This chapter's premise is that identifying someone's work context (mostly from a distance and even without knowing the individual or group) gives you a good tentative reading on significant factors driving the behavior of

Figure 4.1
Contextual Forces That Shape Behavior along with Personality



those you want to influence. Then you can develop a good working sense of the currencies they might value. Occasionally, an important party's personality will override all situational forces, but this happens less often than many believe. (One definition of mental health is the ability to alter behavior to fit the situation, which suggests that the person who treats everyone exactly the same—his or her boss, mother, lover, child, colleague, and subordinate—is not so healthy.)

With this background, we turn to the most universal factors at work that affect a person's or group's world and usually offer strong clues about their concerns and the trades they might make (Figure 4.1 gives a graphic summary of the common forces).

How to Know What Might Be Important to the Other Person

Numerous factors can help determine what might be valued by the person or group you wish to influence.

The Potential Ally's Job Tasks

Understanding a potential ally's duties and responsibilities can be a key to influencing him or her. Think about the impact of the job on these seven simple, but basic, organizational factors:

1. Does the person deal with numbers all day or with people?
2. Is the work repetitive or highly varied?
3. Does the person's job demand careful accuracy and replicability or originality and improvisation?
4. Is the person subject to constant demands from others or constantly making demands on others?
5. Is the person in a high-risk, high-visibility position or a secure protected role?
6. Does that person control all information and resources needed to do the job, or does he or she depend on others?
7. How much uncertainty is in the role?

Such information can provide a beginning guide to the currencies that potential allies value, how they see the world, or the style for approaching them. For example, the brand manager's tasks, which encompass every aspect of a product's positioning, presentation, price, and so on, differ from those of a market researcher, who works with statistics, validity, scientific method, focus groups, and the like. The brand manager must pull many elements together at once across many parts of the organization; the market researcher usually works alone or with a similar colleague and at a slower pace to discover significant results.

THE POTENTIAL ALLY'S ENVIRONMENT

Other factors that shape task demands include degree of contact with:

- The environment outside the organization (clients, suppliers, regulators, financial institutions and the like)
- Top management
- Headquarters
- The salesforce
- The factory floor
- Exotic or temperamental equipment
- The media

Each of such contacts, or lack of them, is likely to create pressures that affect how the person looks at problems and requests. The manager who must deal with customer complaints regularly may be far more receptive to appeals that involve quality improvement than the manager who never sees customers but works closely with the controller's office.

Task Uncertainties

Another indicator of what might be important could be those aspects of the potential ally's job that have the most uncertainties associated with them.

Mismatches Due to Reward System Differences

The bank's mortgage manager, who is furious because her colleague in investments does not recommend that a good customer use the bank for a jumbo mortgage, may not realize that the investment representative gets paid for customer retention. If the bank's mortgage rates are not competitive, customers might not consider the investment advisor impartial and go elsewhere for investments. The investment advisor's response doesn't necessarily arise from a disregard for the mortgage manager or overall bank sales goals, but from what he is measured on.

Similarly, the management information system (MIS) manager who resists the plant manager's pet scheme for automating production costing may be responding to the project backlog measure by which she is judged. Less complex projects that don't require design from scratch simplify planning and controlling backlog, so she may be avoiding a desirable but necessarily lengthy project. And, in turn, the chief financial officer who balks at the MIS manager's requests for the latest technology may be judged by certain financial ratios that will be harmed by adding expensive equipment that takes many months before it begins to provide proportionate returns.

In organizational life, control is valued. The bigger the uncertainty, the harder it is to keep control, so the areas of greatest uncertainty receive the most attention. You often can gain an ally if you can help the person control a part of the job that is currently uncertain.

But the demands of tasks alone do not account for all the pressures and concerns of individuals who are influence targets. Thus, it is useful to think about many other aspects of what might be important to the one you want to influence.

Who's Counting? Measurement and Reward Systems

As suggested earlier, how people behave is often strongly dictated by how their performance is measured and rewarded. Those who act "difficult" or negative may only be doing what they have been told will be regarded as good performance in that function.

Understanding the other people's performance criteria lets you determine how you might be able to add value or alter your request to fit their requirements. In some instances, it might be possible to question the reasonableness of the measure; departmental measures designed from the top or left over from the past may have unanticipated negative consequences. The organization might eventually alter the measures if their negative impact to the company becomes clear. In the short run, however, how the other person is judged is often a given you must work with or around.

Two Differing Cultures: Investment Bank and Insurance Company

People in investment banking (doing high-risk, high-gain deals) and insurance companies (aiming for low-risk, predictable returns) usually have different views of how intense to be, how openly to talk about money and ambition, how to dress, how to treat colleagues, what kinds of expertise are respected, and so on. But some firms in each industry are unlike the majority, and each large organization might have quite different (and sometimes conflicting) subcultures. Back-office people in both kinds of companies are not as high status, not as money obsessed, possibly more detail oriented, more harassed, and perhaps more direct. They are forced into thinking about very short-term goals—they close books at the end of each day—and may behave accordingly. In organizations of any kind, colleagues tend to reinforce the cultures of their units because those who do not follow the assumptions of proper behavior are considered threats to the maintenance of that culture. Thus, someone who is brusque, direct, sarcastic, and driving may be a product of the culture of the organization and function he or she works in, not a type A personality. Similarly, niceness, personal interest, and patience may be by-products of a work unit that prides itself on friendliness or has a strong culture of customer responsiveness.

Unit and Organizational Culture

Most people are affected by the culture of the organization where they work and sometimes by their immediate workgroup's particular subculture. Culture is the set of automatic assumptions that groups of people have about how the world should work including what should be valued and how people should interact.

Different areas may have their own set of "values in use" (values actually driving behavior) that are often stronger than the organization's espoused values. Even in the same organization, people might be operating under different sets of values.

For example, is the culture one of high blame, or are (prudent) mistakes seen as learning experiences? Is it an "up-or-out" system, or can one be successful staying at the same level? Are members expected to help one another, or is it every person for him- or herself? Is upper management respected or whispered about as self-centered and short-sighted? And is it different in different areas?

Major Forces Outside the Organization

Outside forces that can drive behavior include:

- The state of the economy
- How threatened or entitled people feel about jobs and mobility
- Major competition
- Legal rulings affecting the industry or company

These forces can affect everyone in the organization or differentially among departments. The threat of an SEC action, an injunction about discrimination in hiring and promotion policies, or a falling stock price can induce strong reactions. For example, if a software company is being sued for the acquisition of a competitor, legal department members may aggressively challenge practices previously ignored. Conversely, organizations that are geographically isolated or have dominant market positions may behave quite differently from most other organizations at the time.

WHERE ARE THEY HEADED? CAREER ASPIRATIONS AND PERSONAL BACKGROUND

Besides the organizational factors that are part of the potential ally's world, many personal concerns will arise from the person's previous work experience and current goals. You might not know the person well enough to know his or her entire history, but you might gain valuable insight if you know or can easily ask about the person's former jobs. Although you don't want to pry for embarrassing revelations, often the comments people drop about past experience can provide clues about what is important.

Friendly or antagonistic, familiar or unknown, the potential ally's world will be more transparent if you can answer some critical questions:

- Is your ally on the fast track or stuck indefinitely in his or her current position?
- Is that person under pressure to shake up the department and produce internal change, or do they want to preserve a calm atmosphere in the department?
- How long will that person live with the consequences of cooperating (or refusing to). Is he or she likely to move on soon and, therefore, unlikely to care about the consequences?

While being careful to avoid stereotyping, you might also examine what you know about the ally's personal history. Was he or she raised in another part of the world? A first-generation citizen? Educational background can be helpful, including what the person studied and where. Managers lacking a college degree or, in some organizations, an MBA or other advanced degree, could be sensitive about their perceived deficiency or about possible slights to their intelligence.

Ivy League liberal arts graduates might care more about high culture and polished manners than engineers from a big state university. In turn, engineers or accounting majors might prefer more careful discussions of data and detail than the marketing majors. Basing your approach entirely on such preconceptions would be risky, but might provide clues for more careful diagnosis:

- How successful was the person in previous jobs?
- Does the person see himself or herself as highly competent or still learning?
- Is the person a fast-track performer brought in to fix things, or moved slowly into each position and remaining there a long time?
- Was the person burned (or made successful) by a previous project that was similar to what you are pushing or for other reasons?
- Was the person a victim of arbitrary firing and a bad manager?
- Was the person let down by a subordinate in a crucial situation or back-stabbed after promised support?

Managers who have worked for Google or Facebook will look at problems differently from those who only worked for the same medium-size, family-owned company. And managers who have spent some time at European and Japanese subsidiaries probably will have different perspectives from those who never left Detroit.

Career Backgrounds That Make a Difference

Stan was vice president of human resources for a Fortune 500 company. In executive meetings, he spoke very little and never said anything controversial even when issues directly affected his area. A new team member was puzzled. Stan had come from a line position, so his background might have suggested a more assertive, risk-taking stance. The member got some insight when a colleague told him, "The previous CEO one day got mad at what he said and fired him on the spot. Later that day, the CEO revoked that decision, but Stan has been this way ever since, even though Bill, the new CEO, is much more accepting of different ideas."

All of these situations will likely affect how the person will react to new ideas, major changes, or large projects versus more modest ones.

The Potential Ally's Worries

In addition to looking at the environmental forces that affect your potential ally, consider what the person's anxieties might be. Ask yourself what work issues make your potential ally toss in bed at 2 a.m. At the least, you ought to be able to answer that for your boss. If you don't know, think about it. You never will get what you want from your boss if you can't quite pinpoint his or her biggest worries:

- Long-term competition from China? Or issues of outsourcing jobs?
- Meeting next week's payroll as demand shifts?
- Merger rumor mill?
- Fear of boss's wrath for missing a budgeted expense number?
- Impact of exotic new technologies? AI? Robotics?
- How to confront dug-in resisters on their nasty political games?

The answers to these and similar questions help determine your approach.

How the Potential Ally Defines the World

Although you cannot always easily detect them from a distance, knowing the potential ally's assumptions about key issues (leadership, motivation, competition, or change) helps you determine what that individual values. Often, people have made overt statements about such basic matters, making their views known. The manager, for example, who believes that people are inherently lazy and need to be closely watched is likely to value control and predictability, while one who believes that most people want to do a good job is more likely to value challenge and growth. The ally who believes that anything is negotiable operates quite differently from the one who holds fast to a few eternal truths, no matter what the situation.

To make these previous concepts come alive, think of a difficult-to-influence colleague, and fill out the Inquiry Map (Figure 4.2) about that person. After completion, how much did you know, and how confident are you that you are right? Was it enough to develop a reasonable hypothesis about that person's world and likely currencies? If not, how can you find out more? Based on your diagnosis, what currencies will that person most likely value?

Gathering Real-Time Data about the World of Others

A warning first: all these methods, including directly asking, yield helpful information, but you must be tentative in coming to conclusions before you act. Treat what you learn as working hypotheses to test further, not as final conclusions that let you leap without looking. For anything you discover, ask how certain you are that it's valid for the other's world and how to verify it. Often the direct act of influencing lets you discover important new currencies of that person, so listen carefully.

What Did You Say? Language as a Clue to Valued Currencies

As we have mentioned, any argument or request is more likely to succeed when framed in the currency the other person values, so any clues to important currencies will be useful. One of the best ways to rapidly learn about currencies is to listen closely to a person's language. When you are tuned in, you will be amazed at how often and how repetitively people broadcast their currencies—what matters to them.

People's choice of metaphors often can reveal their preoccupations. Does she use military (or sports) metaphors about battle, competition, and destroying the opposition? Does he use gardening metaphors, which show his concern for learning and development of the organization's talent? Does the person refer to everything in impersonal mechanical terms or use

Figure 4.2
Inquiry Map

Areas of Inquiry	What I Know	Certainty Scale	Best Sources to Confirm
		High Low	
Key responsibilities			
Priority tasks			
How the person is measured			
How the person measures others			
Primary departments and people the person interacts with			
Career aspirations			
Work and communications styles			
Worries, areas of uncertainty, or work pressures			
Previous work			

rich examples about people's foibles and accomplishments? Technically, the following two phrases about maintaining organizational change describe the same thing, but the people using them see the world differently:

1. "I'm seeking an interlocking gear to lock in each bit of forward movement and prevent slippage."
2. "We need to capture people's hearts, so they will passionately persist."

When a request for help is met immediately with an inquiry about who else will be involved, you know that political concerns are that person's currency. Another might ask directly, "What's in it for me?" which reveals concern for self and suggests that a blunt, direct response is probably best. Yet another manager will ask how the request fits in with the company's mission, which indicates that person values corporate over personal goals—and perhaps will welcome the opportunity to be a good citizen.

Expressed Concerns as Clues

Remarkably, the hopeful influencer will often completely miss obvious clues to the potential ally's hot buttons. Many resistant allies telegraph their core currencies when they raise concerns: "What I'd be worried about if we did that . . ." or "I don't think the finance people would buy it" or "My concern here is . . ." You can too easily read these as signs of stubbornness and intractability, but they can also be statements about what is important to that person and, therefore, an important currency. So rather than arguing them out of their concern, pay them in their concern! Could a few questions exploring what the potential ally is worried about set up the possibility of a win-win outcome? "What if we set up a meeting with the head of finance and if you are reassured, will you join the task force?"

The style of language used—metaphors, images, jargon—can be revealing, but tone and nonverbal signs also can be important cues to feelings and attitudes. Tuning in to others' emotions is a communication skill you should practice because it is especially informative when trying to figure out what is important to a potential ally. Whether you just learn to soften your tone when your boss's neck gets red or you watch for the widened eyes that indicate growing interest in the tack you are taking, careful attention to the nonverbal cues can help you determine which currencies to use and how to make your requests in language that will elicit the desired response.

Being sensitive to nonverbal cues is easier said than done. Time and again in our management training workshops, we find participants eager to demonstrate their skill in reading others' concerns, but then they promptly get sucked right into selling their own views rather than trying to determine the ally's views.

Other Sources of Data

Even when you seek help from a stranger, he or she may advertise so clearly that it is hard to miss what is important. Who hasn't encountered fellow employees who mention their (high-status) undergraduate college or MBA school within the first five minutes of conversation, no matter what the topic? It doesn't take great psychoanalytic insight to figure out that for them status is probably an important currency.

Selling Own Views and Missing Cues to Others' Currencies

Mara wants Rajesh to join a task force to solve the company's problems in recruiting top talent, and Rajesh responds by saying, "Oh sure, and spend hours going round and round about 'better working conditions' when everyone knows top management will never accept signing bonuses and stock awards." Mara, who has frequently heard Raj's claims about the power of monetary incentives, feebly attempts to say how important the task is, then throws up her hands and walks away from what she sees as a money-obsessed engineer. Thus she doesn't realize that Raj is sending important messages about how he prefers to get rapidly to decisions, his frustration about the difficulty of getting top management approval, and possibly his skepticism about the others involved—as well as his belief about the power of money to overcome other objections. Mara could discuss all of these currencies, accommodate some or show that others are not applicable, but only if she really listened and wasn't preoccupied with the challenge of getting the right members for the task force she thinks is obviously important.

With a bit of ingenuity, you can often find someone you trust to be a helpful source. However, this approach has limitations too, as we will discuss later in this chapter.

Just Ask Directly

It isn't always easy to gain access to ask about a person's values or concerns. For troubled relationships, it can feel too risky, but we do not want to slight the benefits of a direct approach. We later discuss how to overcome relationship problems that get in the way of direct inquiry, but consider the possibilities of being willing to say to the person you want to influence: "I'd like to understand better the pressures you are under so that I can try to be helpful or at least not get in your way with what I am asking. Our areas are interdependent, and we both could benefit if we helped each other more." You are paying the other in the currencies of better understanding and good working relationships. Often that works.

An Extreme Solution to Understanding the World of Important Stakeholders: Joining for a While

Christopher Panini is a marketing manager working at a rapidly growing and aggressive Fortune 500 high-tech firm. He was told several times that he had to understand salespeople better to be effective. In his words, here is what happened:

> I realized that in order to bring value to marketing, I would have to learn sales. So I interviewed for a transfer to a sales job and was suddenly in a new world. For two and a half years I was a hunter rep visiting client offices in Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Washington, DC. My job was to track new customers down and poach business from our competitors. This meant cold-calling executives during the dot-com boom, trying to deliver our value proposition to anyone who would listen. Part of the lifestyle as an account manager was winning people over, entertaining executives at dinner, playing golf with them, hosting them at special events—all to build a network of customer and partner relationships in everything that I did. (This would be a wonderful way to function inside any organization!) All of a sudden I was being perceived at the company as someone that played a strategic role in the information infrastructures of my customers. . . . I was learning as I went and winging it half the time.
>
> One day I realized that I was no longer a marketing guy but a salesman. This realization happened after several of the following changes in my life occurred: waking up in cold sweats thinking about my looming and omnipresent quota, spending my first commission check on impulse purchases, scheduling the events of my personal life around each fiscal quarter, the first half-dozen deals that I lost before I won my first, trading my Japanese economy car in for a German sports sedan, my quota getting raised by management every time I was tracking to make it, daily 7 a.m. team meetings with my district manager, two-hour territory inspections in front of a group of 20 managers who were looking for any hole they could find in my business plan, etc. Living these experiences made me truly understand the people that I was to support. These are funny and real, though a bit sad. When I returned to marketing, my opinions and perspective were suddenly validated by what I had learned in the sales organization. I was a different person.

JUST BECAUSE IT WADDLES AND QUACKS LIKE A DUCK DOESN'T MEAN IT'S A DUCK: THE DANGERS OF STEREOTYPING

Sift through everything you hear and treat things only as clues, not certainties. Be careful not to assume any one factor determines all currencies; people respond to many complex pressures. The actuary who cut his teeth on numbers may indeed prefer crisp statistical reports, but we have worked with high-level actuaries who are eloquent about the limits of numerical analysis and the need for intuition when making important decisions.

We are not suggesting that you must compile a complete dossier on each potential ally. Often you only need a few pieces of information for a good idea of where to begin discussion. As we mentioned above but can't stress enough, you are doing an initial diagnosis so that the other will continue the discussion. It is in the ensuing back-and-forth that you often fully understand what is crucial to the other. But the more difficult the situation, the wiser it is to do your homework and spend time on a careful diagnosis.

BARRIERS TO ACTING ON KNOWLEDGE OF THE WORLDS OF IMPORTANT STAKEHOLDERS

Several things can get in the way of using the knowledge you gain from understanding the world of the person or group you want to influence.

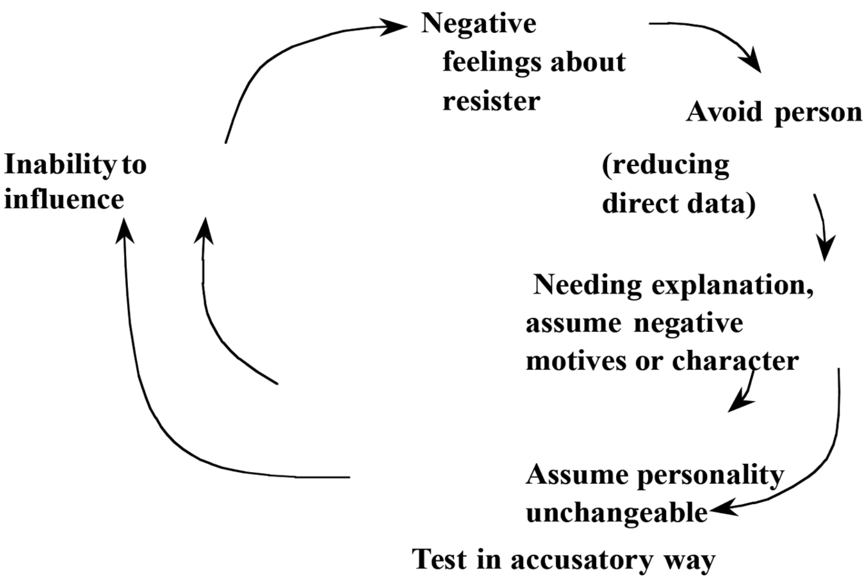
The Negative Attribution Cycle

Having a difficult time getting the influence you desire can lead to a self-defeating cycle of negative attributions about the other person's intentions, motives, and even personality.[2] Suppose you meet resistance you think is unreasonable, and all of your efforts are shrugged off. Because dealing with this person has been so unpleasant, you start to avoid any interaction. But you still need to find an explanation for the person's resistance. The tendency is to assume the worst, thinking that he wants to block you or is a selfish, inconsiderate ass. You are now at a place where influencing him will be extremely difficult. Figure 4.3, the Negative Attribution Cycle, depicts the process by which this occurs.

THE "SELECTIVE CONFIRMATION" BIAS

Once you have a preliminary hypothesis, a common trap is listening only to information confirming the first hunch and ignoring data that contradicts it.

Figure 4.3
The Negative Attribution Cycle



It is too tempting to assume the bad impression is "the real person" and anything else is just putting on a show.

Distancing Difficult People

People tend to interact more with those they like (and to like and interact most with those who are like them). In turn, people tend to avoid interaction with those who are dissimilar. While this makes life more pleasant and predictable, because it avoids the discomfort of trying to overcome unfamiliarity or belligerence, it tends to cut you off from information about someone whose help you may need.

Thus, it is most important to discover the interests of the people you are least likely to understand. Difficult potential allies might well value currencies that make exchange possible, but you will find that difficult to know without contact or discussion.

Focusing on Personality and Ignoring Situational Forces

One natural way people explain puzzling behavior of others is to attribute to them motives that make sense of the behavior. Their explanation assumes the behavior is driven by internal forces rather than the organizational factors shown previously (Figure 4.1, Contextual Forces That Shape Behavior along with Personality).

When you don't like the way someone acts, you tend to demonize that person, labelling him or her a "jerk" or worse. Although almost everyone does it, premature negative labeling makes it difficult to understand the potential ally's currencies. And it never matters who started the negative attributions; once begun, they often take on a life of their own

> Learn to understand others; don't be one of those who says, "He's so bright I don't understand why he doesn't agree with me."
>
> —*Patricia Hillman, Retired Executive VP, Fidelity*

FURTHER DECREASES IN INTERACTION

Once assumptions about personality begin to harden like concrete, any inclinations to interact diminish. Why waste time on someone who you believe has negative traits and can't change? Isn't that the last person to lunch with? Because you have concluded that you would hurt or anger such an immovable person by discussing the offending behavior, you write off that potential ally for all time.

In the unlikely event, however, that you do raise the issue, it is extremely difficult not to be negative or accusatory. Doing that relieves your frustrations but doesn't help the colleague learn something useful. By then, even if you were wrong about the potential ally's inability to change, your attack just precluded any positive response, and you walk away from the exchange feeling vindicated in your negative beliefs. Such an outburst provides a momentary release of frustration but is not exactly a formula for building a trusting relationship where influence can flow both ways. (For a sad tale of an actual downward cycle of misunderstanding, see "Mutual Misinterpretation, Leading to Decreased Interaction and Understanding: Oliver and Mark," on our website www.influencewithoutauthority.com.)

ALTERNATIVES TO CREATING DISTANCE AND LIMITING INFLUENCE

One way to avoid the kind of negative cycle that limits influence is to recognize the pattern as it develops. Whenever you assign negative personality traits to an uncooperative colleague or boss, consider it a warning that you should investigate further. That difficult person may indeed be a totally immovable object, but without thoroughly testing that notion, you can't be sure.

You can develop intelligence about another person by asking colleagues whether they see him or her as you do. Their views might be more detailed, more detached, and more insightful, and can protect you from reaching inaccurate conclusions. Be sure they know you aren't fishing for a nasty answer but are genuinely trying to understand the person so you can work things out.

Unfortunately, colleagues are not always the most useful source, although their views, when different from yours, can prevent you from prematurely hardening arbitrary conclusions. There are two potential problems with colleague opinions. First, you trust most those who see the world the way you do. It is the sharing of biases and assumptions that usually makes for trusted colleague relationships, which increases comfort but reinforces distortions. Instead, is there somebody who actually works well with your difficult person? Can you find out exactly how they do it?

Second, even when the people you ask for an opinion are not so similar that your prejudices are merely shared and reinforced, they may not be able to provide better evidence than you already have. Their responses to queries may be based on limited observations and some rumors, not firsthand knowledge. Thus, it is not always as easy to get useful evidence from colleagues as it appears.

I Thought You'd Never Ask: Using Direct Inquiry as an Alternative

As suggested earlier in this chapter, a good way to understand others is to take the direct route—to the horse's mouth. Despite the natural fears of being bitten, when in doubt, just ask. However, you must make a genuine attempt to solve a problem, not a thinly veiled accusation.

To do that (and not just fake it, which seldom fools anyone), you must set aside any of your negative judgments and assume that the potential ally does not view his or her behavior as deliberately bad. Most people view their own behavior as reasonable and justified, no matter how it may appear to others. Rarely do people get up in the morning and say, "I am really going to be a total jerk today."

The trick to unhooking yourself from your negative views is to assume that the potential ally thinks his or her behavior is reasonable, so you must understand that reasonable person's rationale to pursue a win-win resolution. In other words, can you see the world through his or her eyes? Try stepping back and (temporarily) taking a novel approach: "Let me assume this is an intelligent, reasonable person who, for some reason that I don't understand,

Table 4.1 Sample Questions That Do Not Assume Negative Motives

I'd like to understand more about the forces you are responding to. Can you help me understand your job and its demands?
What about your job keeps you awake at night? Tell me more about that.
You seem concerned about __________; what makes that a concern? How can I help make that less of an issue?

is not cooperating. I am beginning to act as if his motives were intentionally bad. What if that weren't the case? How can I understand better?" What questions can you ask to open up the discussion? Table 4.1 provides sample questions that do not assume negative motives.

Often, a direct question may be all you need. But you get into trouble when a negative view ensures that the only question you can think of would make things worse. Ask open-ended questions, not closed-ended loaded questions that only provoke the recipient rather than begin an exploratory discussion.

Once you have a negative opinion about someone, it is difficult to go back to neutral inquiry. Work on understanding an ally's world when you are still puzzled, rather than after you have tried and convicted the person in your mind.

The Benefits of Asking

Despite the natural fear of openly admitting you don't understand something (especially to someone you think might want to get you), such openness works well for several reasons. First, the potential ally is likely to be surprised by your genuine interest. Because people in organizations rarely bother to ask others exactly how they see the world, those asked are often grateful. They appreciate your willingness to show confusion and, in return, give you the information you need.

Second, most people appreciate the chance to "tell their story" and explain themselves and their situation. This works, however, only if you have genuine interest in the other person's story and aren't just going through the motions with a technique described in some book. Oddly, many organizational members believe they can fool anyone when they want to but that nobody can successfully fool them. (That leaves too many who are nobody's fools.) In general, few are taken in by insincerity, so don't fake interest or confusion if you don't feel it (or can't drop the negative assumptions you've made).

Table 4.2 Summary of Self-Inflicted Barriers to Understanding the Worlds of Others

Factors Requiring Only Your Awareness in Order to Change
Preoccupation with what you want, so you are not tuning in
Assuming all resistance comes from personality, not organizational factors, then demonizing the person's character, motives, or intelligence
Unfamiliarity with the other person's world, so you have little clue or you are filling in with assumptions
Not listening carefully to the other person's language, especially about concerns
Not asking; not wanting to give up your comfortable answer
Factors Where You and Your Attitudes Are the Problem
Asking in an accusatory way that causes defensiveness or anger
Avoiding the person whose behavior is difficult or resistant to influence
Leaping to conclusions from one piece of information
Disapproving of the other person's world rather than understanding it and how it affects behavior

Finally, sincere, direct inquiry builds openness and trust in the relationship, aiding all future transactions. It is easy to get so caught up in influencing potential allies that you fail to learn from them. Asking what is important to them helps keep you in a posture more open to mutual influence, which increases their confidence in you.

Conclusion: Barriers to Understanding the World of Others

What keeps people from reaching mutually satisfying understanding? Why is asking about something crucial so difficult? If you can explore others' concerns and situations directly, then it is far easier to find possibilities for exchange. Even when the relationship is not well developed, inquiring can be useful. Why doesn't it successfully happen more often? Table 4.2 provides a summary of self-inflicted barriers to understanding the worlds of others.

If you have the patience to work toward understanding, you can find opportunities for exchange where at first there appeared to be none. Knowing the potential ally's world, however, is only part of what you need. You must also be clear about your own needs and interests to increase the likelihood of finding currencies to offer for those valued by the ally. Chapter 5 covers understanding your world and the power you control.

CHAPTER 5

YOU HAVE MORE TO OFFER THAN YOU THINK IF YOU KNOW YOUR GOALS, PRIORITIES, AND RESOURCES

> [I'm part of a volunteer community organization,] The Columbus Partnership, a group of 16 CEOs. The group picked me as the leader. My inauguration speech was, "I have no authority; you're all here voluntarily—your interest is the community. I'm going to try to lead you, but understand I can only influence you. And I'm very sensitive to that, the fact that you're all presidents, some of you are presidents of businesses larger than ours, so [there is] a disparity of interests, but I can only lead from influence. So the notion of an influence model, an authority model, listening skills, organization skills, visioning skills . . . [etc.] it's the things that leaders want to practice, practicing their art and their science. It's a wonderful thing to try these things in communities, let alone your particular skill set. . . . It enriches your career and advances it."
>
> —*Les Wexner, CEO of The Limited, Talk at the Kennedy School, Harvard University, Fall 2003*

POWER SOURCES: YOU ARE PLUGGED IN

Our basic premise is that your ability to influence—the power that is due to your skills, as much, if not more than your position—comes from access to resources that others want. This works because you gain influence through mutually beneficial exchanges, and the more resources you can supply, the more influence you can get. How do you find valuable things to offer so you can provide needed currencies? First of all, it helps a great deal to understand the world of the person or group you want to influence and their likely currencies, as Chapter 4 describes. Such knowledge can stimulate your imagination and let you recognize your valuable resources in the particular instance, whether or not you usually think of them that way.

For example, here Larkin Mehta describes dealing with a male colleague who was treating her as of lesser value when she was a young project manager in a Fortune 500 tech company. Though much younger and less experienced, she had to figure out what was important to him and create valuable currencies to exchange for peer status.

> *I was assigned to work with one colleague who called me "Kiddo." I couldn't believe it. It was not respectful and devalued me. It was not OK. I was in my early 20s; he was a middle manager. He was using his age as a power imbalance, rather than as offering experience. Why was he doing it? I wasn't as experienced. What did I bring?*
>
> *I had to get a level playing field. I had something to learn but didn't want it to be one way, lopsided, so [I] had to demonstrate what I brought.*
>
> *How can I handle this so I do not come off as just green? I thought about why I was hired. What was I working on? The actual projects, my education, what experience could I bring to bear from my part-time work all through high school and college? I could see he wanted to be valued for his expertise, and I wanted to approach him in ways that recognized that while demonstrating I brought something too.*
>
> *I discovered I was a similar age to his children. I was new in my career, [so] I approached it as "here is what I can learn from you, here is what I can offer you." We were in the same business unit, so I went to him and asked how he would deal with certain issues; I could gain from what he said. I saw he felt in a higher position. OK, we were working on a common project with software vendors. I had certain vendors I was working with. I asked how he dealt with those he had. Then I told him things I was finding, how I was getting my vendors engaged.*
>
> *I had to continue to work at it over a year, let him tell first, and tried to have more info to share back with him as I went along, [and let him] see how I was rolling up my sleeves, taking different approaches that also worked. It usually takes more than one interaction with anyone to build a better relationship.*
>
> *I learned later he didn't want to move up but wanted to be perceived as expert, so I kept following up with what I could bring. Some of the tools from my education I was happy to share, but those were less important than actual work experience (e.g., "a team at one of my vendors is type A, here is what worked with them, how do you do it?"). I acknowledged his need to be expert, but I didn't have to diminish what I could bring to bear.*
>
> *I worked on creating more of a dialogue; I always asked questions to engage, add in what I see, make it more of a balanced dynamic.*

Reflecting back years later, Larkin observed, "I still do it: offering up my experience without pushing it, admit what I don't know but not acting as if I don't know anything. It's all about relationships, that flow to try to get things done. You won't get far without it. When you have to articulate your value, it can reduce your confidence, lead you to overfocus on what you don't know. When I had to identify it, it built my confidence, because I had to reflect, identify what I could do, and articulate it. When in a situation where someone else is more experienced or better, where you are forced, it drives more awareness. You have to be OK acknowledging what you don't know, not pretend to be expert when you are not, but show how you will learn, the others you can work with, the foundation you can learn from." (See Chapter 8 for more on gender and influence.)

This kind of exchange, especially when working uphill as Larkin was, requires that you know your own world—your interests, capabilities, accomplishments—as well as your potential ally's world. (It also requires that you must not get "hooked" by the other's devaluing behavior—not always an easy thing to do.) Until this point, we have assumed that your world is perfectly clear to you, but, unfortunately, we often see that employees at all organizational levels lack clarity about what they want and what they bring to the table—the resources they command. Although they want influence, they aren't aware that they might do certain things inadvertently that diminish their potency.

As Chapter 3 suggests, you may well have more to offer than you think. Careful diagnosis can reveal your untapped resources, which you can then use to gain influence even in difficult situations. This chapter shows you how to increase your resource pool and influence repertoire by looking carefully at the elements available when you know your own world and that of your potential ally.

WHAT DO YOU WANT ANYWAY? GAINING CLARITY ON YOUR OBJECTIVES

The first step is to figure out exactly what you want and in at least roughly what order of priority. This is often easier said than done. Since most significant influence attempts usually have multiple goals, the problem comes in deciding which goal or goals are most important and which you are willing to give up if necessary.

In general, it is important to think carefully about what you want from each person or group that you are trying to influence. Decide in advance the minimum you need from each. Because your wish list will often contain more than the potential ally may be willing (or able) to give, it's important to know the difference between what's nice to have and what's absolutely necessary.

For example, suppose you are asked to lead a task force that is likely to be controversial and run into considerable opposition, yet is important for your organization and could be an important turning point in your career. Ideally, you would get to choose all the members, based on their knowledge of the issues, their reputation and clout in the organization, their probable support for the kind of solutions the task force is likely to recommend, how well they work as team members, your connection to and relationship with each one of them, and perhaps more. Yet since this is controversial, your boss and her boss want to select the members mostly for political connections and to guarantee a safe recommendation, which could set the organization back several years and leave you looking ineffective at best.

You aren't likely to win on all the members or on all the criteria; which are most important, which next most, and which would you like to have but could probably live without? Put another way, what percentage of the task force could be resisters without killing any chance for an innovative solution?

Success may require many conversations with various stakeholders to learn who to avoid at all costs and who could really help, some careful diagnosis of your boss's currencies (and her boss's), a compelling vision of what is at stake and the possibilities, and eventually a clear internal sense of priorities.

WHAT ARE YOUR PRIMARY GOALS AND WHAT ARE SECONDARY?

Which goals can you let go of, if necessary, so you aren't distracted by the less important?

Think of Les Charm's goals (see boxed example below) when he realized he was not enjoying his job at Prudential. He wanted to meet many people who could help him later when he went into business for himself. He wanted experience in making complicated financial deals. He wanted freedom from the usual company constraints and paperwork. He also wanted to be able to act unconventionally and feel he had not sold his soul to a large company.

Although Les eventually could do all of these things, he needed to determine his main priorities. If being unconventional was his main goal, Les might have focused on that and created an adversarial relationship with Dick Gill. (Many young hotshots have irritated their bosses by failing to understand how things work in the organization.) Then, he would have lost the chance to get out and explore new deals. Instead, by focusing on freeing himself from routine paperwork and hours, he had the time to meet people who would be potential loan candidates. Furthermore, not following conventional hours let him meet prospective clients for breakfast before their plants opened, or for dinner, rather at the bank during regular banking hours. The chance to behave in an unconventional manner otherwise would come when he proved himself, which he soon did.

One of the first requirements in any job is to deliver what is expected of you. Les would have been just a loud-mouthed, over-confident new MBA if he hadn't been good at finding financing deals. By combining clarity of what he wanted with excellent performance, he could shape his other job requirements.

Being willing to hold off your personal needs, even temporarily, isn't easy. Too often, we have seen people who are consumed by their personal demands, which drives out task goals and prevents others from hearing what they want. It isn't a matter of squelching all desires, but of getting clarity on priorities.

Les Charm, a Newcomer at Prudential Insurance, Finds Valuable Currencies to Trade for the Freedom He Wants

To salvage an uncomfortable situation, our friend Leslie Charm, a young MBA graduate, quickly discovered valuable currencies to trade for the experience he wanted. Though a low-ranked outsider, he found a way to achieve influence. Although extremely different from others in his organization, he marshaled his skills, ambition, and impatience to achieve amazing opportunities.

Les, now a successful entrepreneur, franchiser, and turnaround expert, has always been full of energy and nerve, willing to take risks. He loves doing complex financial analysis and seeing unusual possibilities. After finishing his undergraduate degree at Babson College, he earned an MBA at Harvard Business School. His first position after Harvard was as an analyst in the five-person private loan placement department for Prudential, which at the time was an old-line, bureaucratic insurance company. The extreme mismatch between his personality and the company's was evident from the beginning.

Les had worked since he was a teenager for his father's leather manufacturing company and always started his workday early. On his first day at Prudential, Les arrived at 7:30 a.m., raring to go, but no one was there. He hadn't asked, and no one had thought to tell him about the gentlemanly 9 to 5 workday. Nor was he pleased with the conservative, stiff atmosphere when everyone did show up.

(*Continued*)

Dick Gill, the senior vice-president of the division and an experienced Prudential employee, called Les into his office that day and greeted him with, "Welcome to the Pru. When are you leaving?" Taken aback, Les asked what Gill meant. Gill replied, "An ambitious Jewish boy like you isn't planning to make a career at a place like this. So how long do you plan to stay?"

Taken by surprise, Les decided to meet honesty with honesty. "How long do you want?" he asked. "Two years," was Gill's frank reply, "by which time you'll have learned the business and will have done enough deals to pay me back for letting you learn." Les thought that was a fair arrangement, but within two weeks he was champing at the bit. He hated the required paperwork and the routine, bureaucratic way of life the others seemed to accept. He wanted to meet entrepreneurs all over eastern Massachusetts, create a network of contacts, and make complicated loan deals. How could he make the two years bearable or, better yet, enjoyable and educational?

As Les pondered his options, he realized that he was the new kid on the block, an alien in a conservative land. His formal position was two levels below Gill's, and he was not in charge of anyone else. The situation did not seem promising for getting the freedom to do what he wanted in a style that he preferred.

Then Les remembered his only other work experience outside his family's leather business. A week after Les got his bachelor's degree in business administration, his father died. Les took a year off to sell the company before starting his MBA. Six months later, the business was sold, and Les found himself without a job. After only one month, the embarrassment of collecting unemployment propelled him into taking a short-term job in the asset-factoring division at the First National Bank of Boston. The interviewer who hired Les sent him to a low-level credit-approval job.

During his first week at the bank, Les's boss, Richard Ajamian, invited him out for a drink. After some polite conversation, Richard suddenly said to Les, "You must be going off to graduate school in September." When Les didn't protest, Richard continued, "That's fine with me. Don't worry about it. Look, you can do your present job in two days a week. I'm 31, and I want to go places in the bank. I want you to help me, to be my tool for getting ahead. I'm going to get you into our management training program, which will allow you to see every department in the bank. You'll meet lots of people, so it won't waste your time. I'll use the training program as a cover and send you into all the asset-factoring departments. You'll look for every weakness in the system you can find and report back to me every week. That way I can strengthen the division, and you'll find it more interesting."

Les readily agreed. As an outsider with no preconceptions and a fresh viewpoint, he could spot big holes in the current system. Even better, he met many important people in the bank, who served as useful connections in his later ventures.

Best of all, Les learned that people could initiate a negotiation for something desirable by offering a win-win proposition that appealed to the other party. The opportunities Richard Ajamian had provided at the bank could serve Les as a model at Prudential.

Although Les nominally reported to Dick Gill's subordinate at the Pru, Les's boss preferred to work on his own deals rather than supervise others. Les realized that Gill, the company's expert in bringing in new business, was the person to influence. He reasoned that Gill might want some help finding new accounts, especially the unusual deals the company didn't normally get. If he could work out an arrangement with Gill, Les might free himself from the job constraints he found so irritating, meet all kinds of entrepreneurs and financiers, and, in return, provide valuable business to Gill's area.

Because the department was small and it was easy to approach anyone in it directly, Les spoke to Gill. "Dick, I see you know everybody, but I'm betting you could use help in bringing in new deals. I'll do that for you, but only if you'll meet two conditions: nobody tells me what hours to work, and you'll have someone take care of all the related paperwork except for the actual deals. I don't want to face office bullshit and spend time filling out forms. If you do that, I'll bring in deals like none you've ever seen. If they look good to you, let me fight the battles upstairs to have them approved."

Gill said he would support Les once Les's efforts proved successful. Until that time, Les was on his own. When Les said he understood the conditions, Gill agreed to the exchange.

Les spent the next five years with Prudential, working the way he liked and producing the highest volume of loans in the division. Although he worked hard, he rarely appeared at the office and conformed not at all to the customary requirements. When he did show up, he was wearing a turtleneck; then he'd casually saunter into the executive dining room for lunch. His expense account, used for wining and dining potential and not-so-potential clients, was always the highest in the office. And he delighted in tweaking Gill. One day he strolled in at 9:00 a.m. and answered Gill's question, "What are you going to do today?" with, "Oh, I'm done for the day; I've already finished two deals."

Even Les's eventual departure involved important exchanges. After five years, he told Gill he was leaving. He didn't know exactly what he would do, but he wanted to start his own business. "Have I got a deal for you," Gill replied. "Stay five more months, which will let you finish the big deal you're working on and give you time to train your replacement. In return, I'll give you an extra day off each month for your own business—one day the first month, two the second, and so on, with no loss of pay. I'll cover for you." Les agreed. Although this arrangement was not mentioned in the Prudential policy manual, both Les and Gill got what they wanted, and the company benefited.

Personal Factors That Get in the Way

At issue here is not just failure to separate personal issues from the larger goal, but the problems that arise when personal needs and desires block the ability to obtain influence. Consider how Carl Lutz defeated himself (see next boxed example).

The lesson learned is not that you should completely set aside personal needs; doing that is both impossible and counterproductive. You need personal involvement for the processes and changes this book advocates. Without a personal investment, you won't have the drive to set goals and see them through. Recognize your needs and accept them as legitimate, rather than drive them underground and beyond your conscious control. But don't be controlled by them. Decide deliberately how much to work on them directly rather than just let them be a by-product of good performance.

In most situations where people seek major influence, they have needs above and beyond their task objectives. They may also need visibility for themselves or their department, association with the project as a way to "make a name for myself," approval, or respect. These extra personal needs not only can provide the energy to stick through the rough spots but also can serve the organization. To have the time to reach the loan objectives he had committed to, Les Charm, for example, needed more freedom from the usual bureaucratic demands and more than the conventional autonomy. Achieving his objectives then justified his being granted that freedom. His personal needs dovetailed with his professional objectives and the true job requirements. He could meet potential entrepreneurial clients for breakfast, when convenient for them, not during banking hours. By contrast, Carl Lutz's personal needs ranked higher than the job-related tasks, producing unnecessary conflict.

The Dangers of Being Out of Touch with Your Own Needs and Skills

Carl was an information systems vice-president in a large financial services company. He had steadily moved up through the organization and coveted the post of senior vice-president. He was shocked and upset when he was twice passed over for that promotion. Although Carl was very bright, his coworkers found him unpolished and single-minded and doubted his ability to handle a job requiring considerable political finesse and personal sensitivity.

Carl had little patience with the delicate, indirect style used at the top echelons. He attacked those using that subtle style as "always currying favor, being concerned with style—not substance—and failing to have the courage of their convictions."

When Carl was passed over the first time, his boss tried to explain why he had not been selected. But Carl was so obsessed with status that he couldn't hear. He stubbornly insisted that he had been treated unfairly, and his angry outburst only convinced others that he was "impossible" to work with. Because of his inability to learn, Carl was eventually asked to leave.

Even worse, by not thinking through his priorities, he failed to realize that he really enjoyed complex technical tasks, not management duties. Ironically, the division would have happily given him more responsibility on major system design projects, which he would have enjoyed and excelled at.

Personal and organizational needs can also clash or support one another when there are interpersonal difficulties, either with someone you personally like and are reluctant to hurt or with someone you fear and don't want to arouse against you. Does your job require that you address the interpersonal difficulties, or can the work get done while allowing you some slack? Do you have to set aside your feelings to do what's right, or must you absolutely raise the delicate issues first? If your unhappiness makes you address the person's performance, can you do so tactfully, or is it impossible to do without creating a heated response? Carefully sorting priorities is all the more difficult when personal feelings and work are intertwined but is necessary if you are to be effective—or want to avoid making yourself sick with swallowed feelings that you are afraid to let out.

Another personal needs barrier arises when you are driven to want visibility and recognition but staying in the background better fits the situation. For example, you want to get high-powered and independent people to cooperate in establishing a new process they find uncomfortable. If you focus on getting them to take a back seat so you get credit for the idea, your overriding need could push them to demand the spotlight. Do you need credit so badly that you have to jump into the foreground? Or can you make suggestions, show benefits, and then step back to let them feel that they have ownership, too?

We are not suggesting that personal needs should always take second place. Sometimes they are so important that ignoring them has too high a cost. This was the case with Marta, a skilled but discontented professional who believed that she was long denied the full recognition she deserved.

The Straw That Broke . . .

Marta looked at the e-mail she had just typed to her boss, "Since we appear to be at an impasse, please accept my resignation as of the end of the month," and hit Send.

After a long battle, Marta had finally had enough. She worked for a consulting firm that conducted strategic planning projects for companies without fully developed in-house strategy groups. The work was exciting and she liked seeing the positive impact on client companies. She was also doing quite well, which pleased her, since unlike most of her colleagues, she didn't have an MBA.

In spite of her performance, the lack of the right degree was a hindrance. Frequently she was not included in top-level planning meetings, and at times she felt that the choice assignments went to others despite her belief that she was equally or more competent. Her pay also trailed that of her (mostly male) degreed colleagues.

She had also developed a new protocol for implementing strategy that could be applied across projects. While the organization appreciated that, it didn't get the accolades that a new approach to formulating strategy might have. It was seen as "only a tool," even though it facilitated the implementation of various projects and helped the organization's bottom line.

The firm was organized around content areas, and Marta had been working in the marketing group. In addition to other tasks, she started to focus on strategic e-commerce issues. This was a rapidly growing area, with over $350 billion in overall e-commerce retail trade. The firm was interested in this area and encouraged Marta to develop it. (And she agreed that it had provided generous financial support for her work.)

Over the past eighteen months, Marta had grown the e-commerce strategy area so it was close in size and revenue to several other units. This assignment had been somewhat temporary, so she was faced with two issues. First, should she take it over as a permanent assignment, and second, should it be part of marketing or an independent unit?

Even though being part of marketing hadn't caused any problems, Marta was concerned whether there would be continued support; would she be the "poor step-child"? She thought that as an independent unit she could argue better for budget and personnel. Also, she very much wanted to be recognized for her achievement and was proud that she would be the only non-MBA to head a unit.

She went to Peter, her boss, to discuss the idea. "You certainly have done a great job and deserve to head the unit," he said. "I don't think there would be any opposition to your taking that as your permanent assignment." But then he hesitated. "I am not sure that this is the most opportune time to form a new unit. Our new CEO has been on the job only seven months, and coming from the outside, he is still trying to get his hands around the organization. He is also not sure the firm is organized the right way. Let's first talk about what it would look like for you to take this on within marketing."

Marta pushed back. "Look, this isn't something radically new; we have added units before. I must say, Peter, that I am feeling a bit used. I perform well but don't get the rewards that others do. I worked hard to develop this e-commerce area and that was on top of my other work." Peter acknowledged her work and said that he would do the best he could, but he thought that the organization was in a holding pattern. "But let's try and work out the details of what it would be like if this area was your permanent assignment."

In the ensuing discussion, they agreed on salary level and the degree of autonomy. Marta asked about the title. "Anything that you and HR agree on as long as it isn't unit director. Go check with HR and I will check with the executive committee about whether it can be seen as an independent unit and the issue of title."

HR told Marta, "any title that you and the exec committee agree to, we can make happen." She happily e-mailed that news to Peter expecting a positive response. Three days later, he buzzed and asked her to come to his office.

> I am afraid that I don't have great news. The executive committee is firmly against starting any new areas or any differentiation at this time. They are in support of your taking over the e-commerce area, but with no new title, and we are not going to make any big announcement of this.

Marta was upset and expressed her disappointment and frustration. "But look, Marta, you have what's important—you have this area, you have a higher salary, and you have autonomy. What's so important about a title for you or your area?" She replied, "You just don't understand," and stood up to leave. By the time she got back to her office, she knew what she was going to do.

From an external point of view, it is possible to conclude that Marta had her priorities "wrong" and stumbled on issues of status. After all, as Peter said, she would have received a plum job with autonomy and more pay. How important is a title? But that is seeing Marta and her currencies from the outside (and a male point of view), not from what she valued most.

Marta valued what the title and separate unit stood for—especially because of the way she had been treated while at the firm. Her priorities, though not fully understood by Peter and the firm, were more about being valued and recognized than money. The pay discrepancy mattered to her, but not quite as much as the feeling that the firm did not fully appreciate and publicly acknowledge her accomplishments.

In turn, Marta was so intent on what she cared about—a common issue for those wanting influence—that she discounted what was important to Peter and the firm. There was new leadership, and she ignored the signals that time was needed to reconsider the entire organizational structure. When Marta insisted that because units had been created before meant that it shouldn't be a problem now, she was ignoring what it might mean for a CEO who is thinking of shaking up the structure (and in turn reporting relationships, therefore formal power, possibly pay, etc.). In addition, "right" or not, in the firm, degrees apparently were an important factor in determining status, not just performance. A new CEO could well want to move slowly before taking on such a powerful symbolic component of the culture, especially if it is deeply held by many senior consultants.

All this apparently made it difficult, if not impossible, for both sides to correctly hear and give full value to the priorities of the other. And even if they had, in this situation no exchange might have been satisfactory anyway. Marta confided later to a friend, "I know that if I would have taken the job as it was offered, I would have been so resentful that I couldn't have functioned effectively." (This complex example has issues of gender interwoven throughout; for more on gender and influence, see Chapter 8.)

Another problem occurs when personal discomfort with one currency or another keeps you from using it. For example, some people are so uncomfortable with conflict that they can't do anything controversial, no matter how necessary. "Oh, I can't ask for that; it will make him argumentative and attacking." Similarly, some people are so in need of being liked that they can't discuss anything that might produce anger before the other person has a chance to digest the request. Still others don't like intimacy and, therefore, have trouble dealing with people who want to exchange feelings and closeness.

The last problem is one we have mentioned before: refusing to pay in a particular currency because you don't like or approve of it and don't think anyone should value it. Perhaps those who want power and domination get your blood boiling. Perhaps you are turned off when people strive for status because you believe that everyone should treat others equally. Or maybe you see colleagues so worried about being seen as self-seeking that they deflect every compliment until you never want to say anything positive to them. But influence is about what you have to do to get cooperation, not about imposing your preferences on others. You are entitled to feel so strongly about some currencies that you refuse to pay in them even though it would get you the influence you want. You can choose to be right (by your definition), rather than effective. Just do it knowing the consequences.

Be Flexible about Achieving Goals

Even when they know their primary goals, people can lose influence by being too inflexible in the way they go about achieving them. Sometimes, having an exciting idea and high commitment causes one to become single-minded about how that is achieved. Getting locked into one approach leads to ignoring the variations that also could work. Thus, they miss the chance to get half a loaf—or sometimes an improved, though different, loaf—through the adaptation of their potential allies' ideas.

Research found that people who had carried out important changes from the middle of their organizations were both highly persistent and flexible.[1] They stuck to the essence of the desired results they envisioned but were open to change their approach as they dealt with the many stakeholders whose cooperation they needed. Occasionally, even the fundamental vision changed as encounters with reality brought to light new limits and possibilities, but, more often, it was the details and pathways that changed while the vision remained intact.

Les Charm, for example, knew that he wanted his own business, and the skills and contacts to do that. Initially he thought he would work for Prudential for only two years, but when the importance of experience and connections became clear, he stayed more than five to continue learning and building his network.

Adjust Expectations of Your Role and Your Ally's Role

People can limit their potential power and cut off options when they arbitrarily define the job boundaries between themselves and their potential allies.

There are several reasons that conventional job descriptions overly constrain people. One is the changing world of work. The historical contract (or exchange) between organizations and individuals was, "Do your job and the company will take care of you." This emphasized staying within the lines and boxes of the organizational chart and not interfering with anyone else's carefully limited job. People now must do more than what's in their job descriptions because no single set of rules can anticipate all the changes. As a result, now initiative, rather than conformity, is required.

People also tend to overly constrain themselves from outmoded attitudes toward authority. It is one thing to step over the bounds in dealing with peers, but it is another in dealing with a superior with formal power over you. Also, traditionally, there has been an explicit exchange between boss and subordinate. "Let me make the important decisions and I, the wise boss, will do them right." Subordinates buy into this exchange because they can in effect delegate the difficult issues upward. Who doesn't dream of the perfect boss: the manager who is considerate but doesn't forget the work, who can correct you without being harsh, and who is capable of giving autonomy without casting you adrift? But such a wise and omnipotent superior exists only in imagination, which leaves the hope-filled subordinate trapped in an organizational box. If bosses don't "do what they're supposed to do," what can someone lower in the hierarchy possibly do?

You Can Influence Even Your Boss

Although we offer a whole chapter (9) on influencing your boss, we briefly explore the topic here as one key area where most people act less influentially than they could. Too often, they limit their focus to "doing quality work on time" or "keeping their noses clean" and ignore the other vital currencies the boss needs. They too seldom do what Les Charm did: learn the boss's critical needs and then figure out ways to meet them that also meet the direct report's needs.

When you are genuinely aligned with your boss's goals and interests, you can push hard for what you want. You can disagree with your boss and be praised for it. In most cases, delivering what your boss needs lets you make demands, talk straight, and effect change.

But just what do you have that your boss needs? What currencies do you command? Although every boss has unique particular interests, most bosses would be delighted to receive some widely valued currencies beyond those we mentioned in Chapter 3. Think of those you control (Table 5.1).

Although the list in Table 5.1 is far from exhaustive, if you are aware of how to generate such currencies, you move from just "making a request" (when you depend on the other person's good graces) to linking your requests with the boss's goals and/or creating credits to exchange for your desired outcomes.

Know Your Needs and Desires, but Don't Forget the Person You Want to Influence

In the first section of this chapter, we stressed the importance of knowing your own goals and gaining a clearer picture of your needs. While crucial, that serves only as the first step for dealing with the person you want to

Table 5.1 Currencies You Control That Are Valuable to Any Boss

- Performing above and beyond what is required. This traditional way of building credit with any boss is still fundamental. When Les Charm (see boxed example) found unusual but profitable loan opportunities and then delivered, he was given extraordinary latitude.
- Your boss not having to worry about the subordinate's area, knowing he or she will deliver
- Taking into account the organization's political factors; not being politically naïve
- Being a sounding board; someone who makes sure the boss doesn't shoot himself or herself in the foot
- Being a reliable source of information from other parts of the organization, including from below
- Informing the boss of problems, making sure there are no surprises. Because so many distort what they tell their bosses, managers want and need reliable information. Try to anticipate others' reactions, warn about land mines, and make the boss aware of potential problems.
- Representing the boss (accurately) to other parts of the organization. The boss is then free for other important activities.
- Being a source of creativity and new ideas
- Defending and supporting the boss's (and the organization's) decisions to your own subordinates. That is, sell downward rather than subtly undermining the boss's credibility by implying that all unpopular decisions are forced from above.
- Providing support and encouragement, "being on the boss's team." It isn't always lonely at the top, but it's often impossible to explain exactly why certain required decisions or the power to affect others' lives can be tough burdens. Managers often especially appreciate a subordinate's loyalty, encouragement, or general willingness to give the benefit of the doubt. Even bold, strong leaders value having someone around who will stick by them through thick and thin. This works only if you genuinely appreciate the boss.
- Taking initiative with new ideas; preventing problems instead of waiting for them to happen. Even more than in the past, bosses need subordinates who can take initiative rather than wait for instructions that inevitably arrive too late.

influence. When you focus only on what you want, change will be defined in terms of meeting your needs, rather than the needs of the person you want to influence, which is less likely to be successful.

If you see clearly what you want (and if others can reasonably deliver these demands), you are free to focus on what they need from the transaction. Then, by examining what resources you command, you can decide how the exchange can meet their needs. Not being able to deliver a valuable currency is a formula for powerlessness.

Self-Traps: Power Outages in Making Exchanges

Reluctance to Assert Legitimate Claims. In the forthcoming example (page 92), Jim set out to create currencies that would be valuable to his boss. Some people, however, experience power failures because they don't know how to collect on obligations others have incurred. When someone "owes you" but doesn't acknowledge it, do you give up in frustration? Are you afraid pushing will harm the relationship? Have you considered that maybe the other person doesn't realize all that you have done or knows but isn't focused on it? Maybe your colleague assumed you were just doing your job, so you need to show how much effort you expended being helpful. Can you make it clear how much offering a currency costs you without sounding as if you are whining? Perhaps a factual recounting of the steps necessary to deliver will be helpful. And consider that you are probably valuable to your colleague, who might be just as concerned about losing your goodwill as you are about harming the relationship. At the minimum, some testing is in order.

You don't have to become a miser, hoarding currency and constantly reminding people of their debts, to stake legitimate claims when others fail to notice your efforts. At the very least, initiate a direct conversation in which you ask straightforwardly but politely if your view that your efforts on their behalf are being ignored matches theirs. Until your colleague understands your side of things, you are tossing away the ball before the match has started. Raising the question doesn't guarantee the response you desire, but at least it puts the ball in play.

Reframing a Personal Need into a Possible Benefit to the Boss; (Jim and Wes)

Jim encountered a problem with Wes, his boss, who tended to withhold information. Jim was often first told about new plans coming down from corporate headquarters by his own subordinates, which wreaked havoc on Jim's credibility and influence.

For example, Jim found out from one of his people that corporate was planning a major divestiture of another division. The subordinate was clearly surprised, then embarrassed, that Jim hadn't yet heard.

Jim's previous attempts to ask Wes to keep him better informed had produced no results. Jim began to fear that Wes saw him as demanding and insecure. To get better information, Jim needed to provide something Wes valued. Rather than emphasizing what he needed for himself, Jim went to Wes and said, "We've talked before about the importance to our department of being seen as knowledgeable and on top of issues. As you've said many times, we get credibility by being 'in the know.' I agree with that and want to deliver, but sometimes I can't. When things are breaking and I don't hear from you, the department looks foolish. Could we set up a ten-minute meeting each Tuesday morning where you can quickly brief me on what's coming down the pike?"

Phrasing his request in terms of Wes's (and the organization's) best interests—rather than just Jim's—finally did the trick. Jim offered Wes currency—departmental reputation—that Wes valued enough to hold regular meetings.

Reluctance to Demand What You Need. A variation of failing to remind people of legitimate obligations is failing to make clear demands for your primary goals. This happens when you know you can't give orders and you expect the other person to be resistant, so you speak only indirectly about what you want. If you are doing an important project not for your personal glory but for true business reasons, you don't have to hold back and sound mealy-mouthed or try to back into your request. Just asserting that your cause is just may not be enough unless you help others see how compliance gets them something desired, but requesting with confidence helps.

Reluctance to Collect Debts. Sheila Sheldon, a curator of an important collection at a major art museum, complained that she accommodated many other department heads' needs, but they didn't respond well to her requests. "I'm always going out of my way for people, lending staff members for projects, researching questions, or giving up storage space. But I can't bring myself to remind them when I want something. They should know! That's the least I can expect if they're good colleagues. Why can't they live up to their obligations?"

Sheila's model of influence and relationships depended solely on her colleagues' awareness of her effort, its value to them, and their goodwill, any of which could be lacking. Did they realize how much she had inconvenienced herself for them? Did they think she was only doing her job? Did they find the usefulness of her gestures far more modest than she had thought? Because she always suffered in silence, were they completely oblivious to her efforts and her need for reciprocity, or were they led to believe she was happy to be self-sacrificing? Without raising the issue, she had no way of finding out.

Monitor Your Self-Awareness

To achieve all the power of which you are capable, you must understand yourself as well as your potential ally. Use the checklist in Table 5.2 to monitor your self-awareness.

Table 5.2 Self-Awareness Checklist

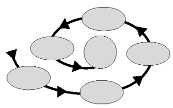
- What exactly are your task or project goals?
- Which goals are primary, and which can be set aside if necessary?
- What are your personal and career goals, and do they help or hinder task success?
- Are you using all available resources?
- Do you see the many potential currencies you can earn and have available to trade?
- Can you be collaborative or confrontational as needed?
- Are you willing to assert your legitimate claims for collection?
- Are you reluctant to use some currencies, even when they would work? Do you know what is stopping you?

Pay careful attention to the questions on the checklist if you want to be as powerful as possible. You will then be able to gain influence by making successful exchanges.

This should help you get the most from your capacity for influence. Next, in Chapter 6, we discuss in greater depth how to acquire, build, and repair relationships needed for influence.

CHAPTER 6

BUILDING EFFECTIVE RELATIONSHIPS: THE ART OF FINDING AND DEVELOPING YOUR ALLIES



The stranger within my gate,
He may be true and kind,
But he does not talk my talk—
I cannot feel his mind.
I see the face and the eyes and the mouth,
But not the soul behind.
The men of my own stock,
They may do ill or well,
But they tell the lies I am wonted to,
They are used to the lies I tell;
And we do not need interpreters
When we go to buy and sell.
The men of my own stock,
Bitter bad they may be,
But, at least, they hear the things I hear,
And see the things I see;
And whatever I think of them and their likes
They think of the likes of me.

—Rudyard Kipling, "The Stranger"

RELATIONSHIPS MATTER

It's often not difficult to build relationships with those you know well and with whom you share similar goals, values, and tastes. Their assumptions and ways of viewing the world are familiar. Their behavior, even when disagreeable, is predictable, and they can be influenced by known methods. But organizations are filled with "strangers," those who view the world differently because they work for differing functions and managers; are a different sex, age, race, ethnicity, or country of origin; or have different training and experiences—because diverse expertise must be brought to bear on complex organizational problems. A wider range of people, backgrounds, and views is needed than in Kipling's time. Then, members of the British administrative services were trained to "think like the Queen" so that they would know what to do when messages and instructions took too long to arrive. Since they were recruited from the same narrow social class and shared the same blinders, they already had a running start toward cohesiveness and easily dealt with one another. Now you need more effort to build effective relationships with the range of people whose cooperation is needed.

In any circumstances, good, open, and trusting relationships have several benefits:

- Communication is more complete, so you are more likely to know the needs and currencies of the other person.
- The other person is more likely to take your word and to be open to being influenced.
- You can pay back later in a wider range of currencies and less exactly.
- With a connection, personal currencies become more important, so you can pay in a broader range of currencies.

Although transactions occasionally can be so clearly beneficial to both parties that their relationship becomes irrelevant, generally a poor relationship affects the likelihood of influence in many ways. For example, a poor relationship:

- Decreases the other person's desire to be influenced.
- Distorts accuracy of perceptions of each other's currencies and intentions.
- Increases burden of proof on:
  - The other person's performance.
  - Delivery of promises.
  - The value of what is offered to you for exchange.
  - Expected timing of repayment.
- Decreases tolerance for the ambiguity inherent in valuing different goods and services for exchange.
- Reduces willingness to engage at all and raises spitefulness: "I'd rather go down in flames than help that rat!"

There is a long continuum as to how well or strained a relationship is. There are some people you have worked with before and have a very positive connection with and there are others where there has been a history of difficulties either between you and the other and/or between your respective areas. Think of Larkin Mehta (Chapter 5), fresh out of graduate school, faced with making a relationship with a middle-aged male who calls her "Kiddo," which she considers demeaning. Or a federal inspector trying to make a relationship with operators of nuclear facilities after years of frosty, uncooperative relationships between the groups.

After your initial diagnostic on the other person's world, determining what is important to them and how what you want might pose demands and difficulties for them, think about the relationship. This has two aspects. First, as mentioned, is the nature of your relationship. What state is it in? Second is some initial sense of how they want to be related to. (You may have to test this with first-hand evidence from early interactions.)

We will start with the situation where the relationship is more neutral. There you haven't had much contact with that person, know them slightly, and are starting to discuss the change you want, so the issue you face isn't improving the relationship, but with figuring out how the person wants to be related to.

How Do You and the Other Want to Be Related To?

One of the most accessible areas for building relationships is work style. All people have a certain work style—a way of solving problems, dealing with others, and doing their jobs. Some people prefer careful analysis before action; others like blasting through and patching any holes later. Some managers want subordinates to come to them only with solutions, while others want employees to seek help when the problem is still developing. Some like to start with personal exchange, such as recent events, social activities, family news, then get down to business, while others find that truly annoying until business is finished—if at all. In building a working relationship, some people like to get to know a colleague before dealing with the task, while others feel they cannot consider closeness until they have interacted successfully on work. (See Table 6.1 for a sample of possible work styles.)

Preferred styles come from training and experiences, the demands of jobs, and individual personality. Cultures create work styles, too. In many Asian and Latin countries, no work can be undertaken until colleagues have

Table 6.1 Work Style Differences

Focus on problems [glass as half-empty, what hasn't been accomplished, what failed]	Focus on successes [what has been accomplished]
Divergent thinking [explores new options; expands what is being considered]	Convergent thinking [reduces options; pushes quickly to solutions]
Want structure [likes rules and routines; predictability, not surprises]	Comfortable with ambiguity [few rules and regulations]
Analysis, then action [studies options before acting]	Action before analysis [acts quickly; collects data from results, modifies]
Focus on the big picture	Focus on the details
Logical/rational [wants facts/data, does not trust intuition in self or others]	Intuitive [relies heavily on hunches, own "gut"—places less reliance on facts/data]
Seek risks [likes to take chances, willing to fail, try new approaches]	Avoid risks [tends to be very careful, prefers the "tried and true"]
Respect authority [supports established authority, may defer and not push back]	Discount authority [disagrees, pushes back on authority]
Relationships first [sometimes willing to sacrifice task quality for good feelings]	Task first [greater emphasis on task success than on good relationships]
Seek/value/encourage conflict [and disagreements]	Avoid/suppress conflict [and disagreements]
Competitive [likes to compete, turns situations into personal win-lose tests]	Collaborative [prefers to collaborate; seeks win-win outcomes]
Respond primarily to own needs [and concerns]	Take account first of others [needs and concerns]
Like to be in control [determines direction, nature of activities, wants to approve all decisions]	Like others to take control [determine direction, nature of activities, accept decisions]
Optimistic [about how things will turn out; sees probability of success]	Pessimistic [about how things will turn out; sees likelihood of failure]
Like working alone [on projects]	Prefer working with others

consumed many cups of tea or coffee and exchanged pleasantries. In parts of the United States, however, people get impatient if they don't tackle tasks early and save socializing for later.

Objectively, there's no "right way" to interact, declared in heaven and engraved in stone. Subjectively, however, people often do feel there is one right way—theirs! They often are not aware of their style; it feels so natural, it must be inherently correct. But, in dealing with others, it is important to be aware of your style and that of the person you want to influence.

Sometimes differences in work styles can be very compatible. The "big-picture" CEO may work well with the detail-oriented COO (though reverse the roles and the styles are likely to be problematic). But in many cases, differences in work styles cause problems, especially if these differences can't be discussed and dealt with.

Take the person who is a divergent thinker. Jean loves coming up with new ideas but is working with Sandy who is more convergent, gets impatient at what she thinks is excessive brain-storming, and pushes for closure. Soon they start to polarize. Jean, sensing Sandy's tendency, rushes to suggest three new ideas while there is still time, and Sandy closes her ears to these new possibilities. Both become frustrated, and their relationship is strained.

A Complete Mismatch of Work Styles and the Negative Consequences

Like a Greek tragedy, the mismatch between Jack Walters and Alexander Athanas played out to its unfortunate end. Jack had recently been named vice-president of marketing. This lateral transfer from production had the twin goals of broadening his experience and using his considerable skills in the crucial (but underdeveloped) marketing area. With his engineering training and production background, Jack was used to solving problems himself and taking them to his boss only if stuck. He liked things tidy and wanted to know all the issues.

Alex, the company president, had come up through marketing. His experience (and personal style) made him comfortable with messy problems. He wanted to hear about difficulties when they first arose. He didn't necessarily have to solve every problem himself; he could accept a subordinate who said, after discussing the various options: "I hear your input and certainly will consider it carefully, but I want to handle this on my own." What Alex needed most was being informed and feeling that he had been heard.

Jack's and Alex's opposite styles led to polarization, then suspicion, distrust, and even paranoia. When Alex was concerned, he would ask Jack if there were any problems. Jack heard this as "any problems that you can't solve?" and said no. Alex would think that Jack was withholding information and probe even further. Jack would feel his competence was being questioned and become even more withholding.

From Jack's point of view, the problem was Alex: "Damn it," he thought, "he is paying me good money to be head of marketing; why doesn't he let me manage? I guess he really wants to run marketing himself." Jack's failure to recognize the role of his own style in this problem meant that the problem grew and grew, until Alex saw Jack as not only disloyal but also sneaky and untrustworthy. The problem "ended" one day when Alex strode into Jack's office and fired him.

Dealing with Work Style Difficulties

So what can you do to prevent such problems and deal with them when they occur? The first step is to set aside blaming the other and engage in self-reflection. Using the table of common work style differences, identify your own preferred style. Then assess the style of the person you want to influence and contrast the two styles. Do different styles account for some of the difficulties the two of you have working together? If so, then you have choices. One option is to modify your approach (for example, do you really have to generate that many new ideas?). This doesn't mean that you have to totally adopt the style the other person prefers, although that is another option.

A third option, if the other person is willing, is to discuss your differing styles and see if there is a way to proceed that would satisfy both of you. But how to do that when you are annoyed at the other? It can require a change in mind-set.

The other advantage of considering work styles is that they are about behavior, not personality. If Jean views the problem as Sandy's personality defect, she might well confront her with something like, "The trouble is that you are rigid and too much of an anal-compulsive!" That is not going to help the relationship.

That kind of attack on personality causes defensiveness, and even without it, changing personality is slow and difficult. But most people have more control over their behavior. They can modify particular behavior far more easily than their inner personality. Thus, if Jean realizes that she is dealing with irritating behavior and sees that the dilemma is caused by how both parties interact, then she could likely say some variation of:

> Sandy, can we talk about how we are working together? I think we are both doing things that are frustrating to the other. It seems to me that you like to make decisions quickly. So, my liking to explore new possibilities must drive you as crazy as your quickly wanting closure frustrates me. Can we talk about how we can each use our tendencies productively?

This moves from name calling to potential joint problem solving.

But sometimes talking doesn't work and it might become necessary to use distance. Can the project that Jean and Sandy are working on be separated so that Jean does the idea generation aspect and Sandy the execution?

A final option to get the other to take the issue seriously can be confrontation and even threat. But, as we warn elsewhere in this book, use that option with care so it doesn't escalate or force the other to dig in. Doing this successfully requires more than a willingness to be tough because threats with no resources behind them are empty and self-defeating. Your own skilled performance powerfully undergirds confrontation. You don't want to get into the position of barking a threat only to hear the snide retort, "Got a stamp? Use snail mail to write to someone who gives a damn!"

Although differing work styles are often enough to cause serious problems, sometimes conflict results from genuine differences of substance. Very smart and strong people can have opposing views about, for example, fundamental strategic direction. Because they feel so strongly, they begin to think the problem is the other person's bullheadedness, not legitimate business disagreements, and will be unable to reach agreement. We do not want to minimize these honest disagreements as a source of influence disputes. However, don't compound them with communication problems caused by unrecognized differences in work style. Resolving genuine task disagreements is difficult enough without adding the extra burden of conflicting work styles.

For Every Season: Increasing Your Work Style Repertoire

Although most people limit their power because they define too narrowly their range of currencies, they also can lose power by overspecializing in only a few preferred styles. As we have said, all approaches on Table 6.1 are appropriate under some situations. And all of these are behaviors that can be learned (even if some are more preferable to you than others). Thus, the ability to fit your approach to the setting increases your ability to have influence. Try expanding your style to adapt to the preferred style of the other party, even if at first it feels awkward. You may want to practice with a trusted colleague to get more comfortable with a more suitable style for the particular partner.

DEALING WITH THE SITUATION WHEN THE RELATIONSHIP IS BAD

We have talked about how to build a productive work situation when the initial relationship is neutral, but what about an initially negative relationship, either from past battles with the person or bad blood between your departments?

Table 6.2 Improving Relationships through Task or Relationship Approach

Start with Working on Task	*Start with Repairing Relationship*
Animosity is mild.	Animosity is strong.
Task can be accomplished even with animosities.	Bad feelings block task success.
Task success likely to improve feelings.	Even with task success, feelings won't improve.
Culture represses being explicit.	Culture supports being explicit.
Ally can't handle directness.	Ally welcomes directness.
Your style not suited to directness.	Your style suited to directness.
Task failure would hurt both.	Task failure won't harm the other person.

The goal is not to build intimacy, magically converting your bitterest enemy into your best friend. Remember, the nature of alliance is for both sides to accept that they may have very different objectives and styles but can find some common ground for limited, mutually beneficial transactions. Although friendships sometimes grow as a by-product of getting past old wounds and doing business with each other, the goal is just to create a satisfactory enough relationship to finish the necessary tasks.

The question is, can you (temporarily) set aside feelings and focus on the task or is it better to try to improve the relationship? Frequently, successful work allows the parties to know each other better, move beyond stereotypes, and build a better relationship. On the other hand, the initial problems may be so great that they prevent a positive outcome, causing the relationship to worsen. Resolving interpersonal issues first increases the probability of accomplishing the task, but not all parties are amenable to such personal discussion. (Table 6.2 provides some guidance about when to use each approach.)

Degree of Animosity

When two people have too much prior animosity, it blocks their working together on any task. The feelings bubble to the surface at the slightest provocation and drive out real work. Any disagreement deadlocks decision making, and both parties look for ways to prove how bad the other is—and how virtuous they are. With moderate animosity, the pull of a difficult task may carry both parties past their feelings. They "get interested," and the work proceeds despite their reservations about each other.

How Interdependent Is the Work?

Some jobs can split up as we suggested above with Jean and Sandy so that contentious parties have minimal contact. Where tasks are easily divisible this approach might work. However, if the job requires much interdependence and free-flowing information exchange, negative feelings can block task success.

Degree of Explicitness Approved by the Culture

An increasing number of company cultures foster an open style and encourage confronting differences of all kinds. Members are expected to let one another know what is on their minds, and anyone who doesn't speak up is considered weak and unduly constrained.

Unfortunately, an open, direct culture is less common than cultures that discourage straight talk. Many traditional organizations (for example, banks, insurance companies, and service firms) reinforce members for being circumspect, holding disagreements down, and avoiding sharp interpersonal confrontation. In such cultures, disagreements are "managed" to avoid embarrassment, and it is considered bad form to discuss a relationship directly with a colleague.

Skills in Having Direct Discussions

Some people are skilled at raising relationship issues, while others are ham-handed and immediately manage to insult the person with whom they are trying to patch things up. Some allies welcome a direct discussion about relationships, while others are too shy or uncomfortable for an open discussion of differences. A further difficulty is that not everyone is good at understanding what the other person really prefers, but often they assume reluctance when there is eagerness or assume eagerness when there is great reticence.

An example of successful assessment involved Les Charm, the entrepreneurial MBA (Chapter 5), whose very direct approach created the kind of working relationship he wanted in a very conservative organization. He assessed that the division head he negotiated with was a deal maker by profession, so Les's directness was appreciated. Imagine Les Charm trying to talk that way with a circumspect and rule-bound auditor. He would have been (perhaps politely) shown the door.

Fears of Direct Discussion of Relationship Problems

There are many reasons other than the listener's resistance that people are reluctant to raise relationship problems directly with a difficult ally. Concern about hurting the other, fear of retaliation, worries about possible embarrassment in future dealings, fear that the initiator is really the one at fault and will be told that in no uncertain terms—or just plain dislike of unpleasant encounters—are all reasons we frequently hear. The question you must answer is whether the potential pain caused by an attempt to tell the ally your concerns is worse than the very real and present pain of continuing on in an unsatisfactory way. In general, we believe that the actual confrontation is seldom as bad as anticipated; therefore, we encourage directness—but only with the kind of skill you can learn in this book, of course!

The Initial Diagnosis

The first step is a careful diagnosis, focusing on any situational factors underlying the animosity. As we have repeatedly stressed, be careful not to fall into the easy (but often false) trap of assuming that the other is stupid or evil. Part of this examination asks the self-challenging question, "Are you part of the problem?"

As maddening as it can be to deal with someone who isn't relating to you as you would wish and as easy as it is to blame the difficulties on the other person, you must examine your own attitudes and behavior. Have you prematurely written others off, making it impossible to see how to approach them? As we have stressed, you must keep an open mind about the other person's worth. A strong negative conclusion will affect how you interact and usually radiate negative feelings, turning off the target of your scorn.

When mistrust has entered the relationship, we naturally tend to avoid the mistrusted other. This reduces the very contact that might inject new, more favorable data into the relationship. The absence of favorable data creates a fertile breeding ground for more mistrust and negative assumptions, leading to a vicious negative cycle. Somehow, the cycle must be broken.

A related problem is that once you judge someone, it is very human to see only evidence that you are right and ignore everything else. People see what they expect (and want) to see and feel vindicated by the "proof" that they were right. In addition to the problem of locked-in perception, pay attention to the possibility that you are provoking the very behavior that you don't like in the other person. For example, remember the discussion of work styles;

does your penchant for risk-taking provoke the other to be overly cautious, or vice versa?

The next step is to carefully assess the other person's world to understand what might cause the difficulty. If you have read Chapter 4, you know that we advocate looking as closely as you can at the other person's organizational situation. Doing so helps you not only determine the other person's likely currencies but also understand more about what causes the behavior in question. The better you understand what is driving the behavior, the more patient and sympathetic you are likely to be. Instead of feeling indignant, you might feel sympathy or empathy and use that to make a positive connection. Knowing the causes of behavior does not excuse bad behavior, which you are certainly entitled to find objectionable, but that doesn't usually improve the connection.

Downplay Personal Feelings and Start to Work

Perhaps the most common way to attempt fixing poor relationships is to overlook feelings and concentrate on working together at tasks. Successful joint accomplishment can improve trust and foster a better relationship. When the relationship is poor and neither party can order the other to engage in a joint effort, often they never find a cooperative task. The most dissatisfied person usually just avoids the other or stalls. But even when two combatants agree to work together, that does not guarantee an improved relationship.

Unfortunately, the very problems that created the original difficulties are likely to stymie task cooperation. This is similar to a divorcing couple trying to negotiate their own settlement. If they could talk reasonably with one another, dividing the property would not be difficult; but if they could talk reasonably, they probably wouldn't be divorcing in the first place.

Nevertheless, circumstances sometimes force people to work together, and then they find the task demands so compelling that they can put aside their differences, and, as a by-product, their relationship improves. When that happens, both parties are pleasantly surprised and can build from there. But the odds of such a happy outcome are not great.

If you choose not to work directly on the relationship, it is still useful if you first acknowledge that the relationship has problems and share the intention of creating at least a workable relationship by effectively working together.

Furthermore, when the relationship is not good, there is a greater need for specific task agreements along the way, because each party is less likely to give the other the benefit of the doubt on commitments. In addition, it becomes even more important to deliver exactly as promised each step of the way, which can start accumulating trust. It can be especially useful if, when discussing the exchange, you give a little bit more than is being asked to demonstrate goodwill.

The risk in all of this, however, is that if agreements are not met, the relationship will deteriorate and be even more difficult to improve in the future. Even then, all might not be lost. Hold back from jumping to the conclusion that the other is devious and untrustworthy and get into inquiry to find out what is the cause. Is it simply forgetfulness? An unclear agreement? Often it is the second conversation that produces the change.

Speak Directly about the Relationship Problems

In general, we believe in raising relationship issues directly whenever possible, to reduce possible misunderstandings, to test assumptions, and to clarify reasoning behind behavior that makes sense to the individual even though the other sees it negatively.

If, by their nature, poor relationships depend for continuation on reduced contact, the obvious solution is increasing contact and making a direct attempt to patch the difficulties. When done well, this can make a very big difference in the way two people deal with each other.

During the course of our work in organizations, we have frequently observed people reluctant to discuss their poor relationships openly. Many factors besides personal preference determine the appropriateness of dealing directly with relationship problems rather than trying to carry on with the tasks.

When to Proceed with a Task or Initiate a Direct Discussion to Improve a Relationship

Dealing with the Task

Let's assume that your diagnosis of the situation leads you to conclude that it is better to deal with the task first and see how that affects the relationship. As part of your assessment, you have reflected whether you might be doing something inadvertently that is compounding the problem (such as not providing information or using an incompatible work style).

You have also assessed that you can set aside your negative feelings and see the other as a potential ally. Setting feelings aside does not require that you deny or forget them, only that they won't leak into conversations or cause you to blow up at the first disagreement.

Even though you will not deal with the strained relationship at this point, it is usually important to at least acknowledge it. This may require nothing more than saying, "Casey, I know we have had difficulties in the past, but I wonder if we can set them aside and work on this task that is important to both of us."

Just reaching an initial agreement doesn't mean that it will hold throughout the entire task. The poor relationship might begin rearing its head repeatedly, which requires dealing with it directly. This transition may require nothing more than saying, "We seem to be having a lot of arguments that make it difficult to work on the task; could we take a break from that and see what is going on between us so we can clear that up and work better together?"

But that problem may not arise. In the best of all possible worlds, work is proceeding reasonably well, so you can achieve a mutually beneficial outcome. With that success under your belts, this might be the time to talk about what went well in the relationship that you would want to duplicate in the future.

Dealing with the Relationship

Alternatively, assume that your original diagnosis makes you conclude that jumping right into task work would be too hard, so you want to try to improve how you are working together. Again, you have done your self-reflection to identify if you are doing anything to compound the problem.

You also are clear about your primary goal in this upcoming discussion. This is important because it is easy to get derailed from the key objective of an improved work relationship. Do you also want Casey to accept blame for past problems? To change in numerous ways? To validate your wisdom? Knowing just what you want can save considerable aggravation and prevent an approach to the ally that is awkward, confusing, or unnecessarily irritating.

A Very Direct Request That Worked

When Tom Jeeter became upset by something his boss told him that a colleague, Mark Stobb, had said about him, Tom called Mark and said, "Are you free now? I just learned you have a problem with me, and I'd like to get it straightened out. I wish I'd heard it directly from you, Mark, but it sounds as if we should talk. Okay?" Mark, embarrassed, quickly agreed to meet with Tom to clear the air, and they did. That led to the beginning of a deeper working relationship and, eventually, long-term friendship.

Acknowledging the Situation: Sharing Intentions. As we mentioned above, it is always good to acknowledge the present state. Denying present reality doesn't help anybody. But be sure that "acknowledging" isn't an excuse for an attack! Saying, "We have had some difficulties" is different from accusing the other as being the difficult one. After acknowledging the past state, it is usually good to then share your intentions. "I mention this because I want us to work better. Can we talk about what gets in the way so that we don't fall into the same patterns again?"

It would be nice to think that such an offering would start a calm, objective discussion. But it could also open Pandora's box and produce a torrent of recriminations. What if Casey retorts, "Your voice rises and your tone gets belligerent. You just want to dominate and win." Now the shoe is on the other foot. Earlier you were trying not to attribute negative motives to her, but she has now done that to you. And rather than her being "to blame" (which you didn't at all mean to convey), she is now putting all the blame on you.

Hearing this is hard, especially if it doesn't match your picture of the situation. Feeling misunderstood is painful and can tempt you into some form of retaliation: "At least I'm the one who comes up with new ideas; you just sit there passive-aggressively shooting down anything I say!" And then the argument escalates with the danger that your relationship gets even worse.

Instead of this kind of tit for tat, can you see the silver lining in her initial statements? You are hearing her world and learning what is important to her. Rather than explaining yourself, can you explore why she finds your style and behavior so difficult? You don't have to agree with her, but understanding her is important. And that stance is likely to reduce her animosity.

If you have done that, then you can make your own world visible. What forces and assumptions led you to do what this potential ally dislikes? For example, perhaps pressure from your boss for a solution has in part caused your impatience. Can you help her see your framework just as you have seen hers—with understanding, if not acceptance? This is far easier to do if you first demonstrate your understanding of the other person's position.

As difficult as this discussion might be, it is even worse if Casey refused to talk about it in the first place or, once the issue had been broached, cut it off. Few things are more dangerous than agreeing to disagree about an interpersonal issue. That only drives the issue underground to simmer and explode again at an inopportune moment.

Instead, is this a time to talk about currencies? What costs are both parties paying for the present situation, and what benefits can both gain from a successful resolution? Has Casey also been complaining about the aggravation of delayed decisions? Has she mentioned issues she wanted to deal with but has hesitated to bring to the table? The objective is an increased desire to deal with your relationship difficulties. You are describing a new type of exchange where the benefit of resolution outweighs the cost of sticking in and dealing with these difficult interpersonal issues.

Learning from the Past, but Focusing on the Future Work. The purpose of this conversation is understanding what went wrong and what each party needs to have a successful work relationship. The goal is not to affix blame but to change the future. Even if there have initially been mutual accusations that may feel messy, can you not get stuck there, but move beyond it by saying something like, "I don't think it helps us to find out who is to blame for what has occurred. Don't we want to make sure this doesn't happen again? How do we want to operate better in the future?"

Hearing about the past can be valuable; it not only gives information about the concerns of the other, but once something is expressed, it may be easier to let it go. But it is more important that Casey is telling you what matters to her. Hear her complaints as her negative currencies that she doesn't want to be paid in again.

Moving into Joint Problem Solving; Reaching Agreement. The purpose of this conversation is setting up win-win exchanges on the task. But in working out the relational problems, you are using the Cohen-Bradford Influence Model! You have (hopefully) seen each other as potential allies, have shared your mutual worlds (for example, the perception of what went wrong), and the complaints which are the currencies each wishes to be paid in. Now it is time to set up win-win relational exchanges. What does each need to work well together?

Sometimes, just fully understanding the other person is sufficient. If Casey knows that you aren't purposely being rude, just raising your voice because of heightened involvement, she might stay in the room. Likewise, once you learn that she is concerned about not being listened to, you might become a bit more sympathetic and sensitive to your behaviors that might appear domineering.

Or, it might call for one or both of you to modify your behavior. Can you explore how to alter your behavior so this potential ally will allow a task relationship to grow? And do you need some things from her? The objective is to work out your interpersonal relationship so you can both productively engage in trades around task goals. (For more ideas about approaching feedback, see the section "Feedback as Exchange," in Influencing Difficult Subordinates at www.influencewithoutauthority.com.)

Importance of Specifics in the Resolution and Follow-Through. If the conversation has been difficult, the temptation is to end it as soon as possible. The danger is that the desire for early closure will lead to (useless) generalizations: "Yes I will try harder." The more strained the relationship, the more important it is to have specific agreements. And, of course, the relationship will really improve only when subsequent behavior matches those pledges.

Even when both parties are committed to these agreements, backsliding is inevitable. You must also discuss how to handle times when one person feels that the other has not come through. Silence only builds resentment and cements in the belief that the other is untrustworthy.

Self-Traps in Finding and Developing Allies

There are many actions that may keep you from creating or enhancing requisite relationships.

Waiting for Problems before Bothering with Relationship Building. Building a good relationship is far more difficult when there is a problem between you and the other person. Effective influencers use every opportunity— including membership on committees or task forces, incidental contact, and even sitting next to strangers at lunch and chatting— to gather information and to build the connections before they have to ask for anything.

Anticipating That No Approach Will Work, So Holding Back Too Long. Everyone knows some types of people whom they don't expect to be able to connect with, whether it is gruff, intimidating individuals, seemingly aloof colleagues, very confident and ambitious folks, shy non-initiators, or some other type. It is tempting to assume that the difficult person is immovable and avoid any approach. But there is almost always a human being with emotions and wants lurking within even the most difficult-appearing person, and avoidance only makes it more difficult to connect later.

Saving up Frustrations and Exploding. Too often, people fear saying something negative to a difficult person, so they hold back and start to fume. Then, some small event causes an outburst that can totally dissolve a distant relationship. Perhaps "count to ten" before saying anything when angry is a good idea, but counting to ten million is not. Fix relationship problems close to their origins.

Reverting to Negative Assumptions when You Find Behavior Puzzling. We can't warn about this often enough: If you have tried to influence another person or group and aren't getting anywhere, resist the temptation to assume that there is something wrong with them. If you hear yourself writing someone off as stupid, selfish, not interested in the company, or defective in some way, stop at once, step back, and ask yourself, "Could there be another (more positive) reason for their actions?" For example, are they not responding to your requests because they feel pressure from a demanding boss? Or from a role overload? With that orientation, you are more likely to open the conversation in an inquiring and supportive manner than the negative accusations that the first assumption cause.

Perhaps it will help you check yourself to know that Napoleon long ago declared, *"Never ascribe to malice that which is adequately explained by incompetence."* He recognized that what looked like behavior that was deliberately negative often had a much simpler cause, not aimed at the one harmed, but a result of ignorance, ineptness, oversight, incorrect assumptions, or false information. You can at least start there before "convicting" the other party. The relatively rare truly malicious people will soon enough reveal their true colors, and then you can go into attack mode if necessary.

We have an extended example of how Brian and Dennis, long-time partners in an international financial services holding company, made exchanges that restored a relationship that had recently deteriorated; go to "Partners Making Exchanges to Improve Their Relationship" at our website www.influencewithoutauthority.com.

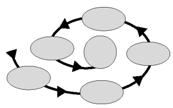
CONCLUSION

The goal is not to make everybody best friends. And it is possible to get work done when there are interpersonal difficulties. But relationship problems can be a serious barrier to effective task success, and it is usually worth the effort to turn troublesome relationships into at least acceptable working ones. You can develop the influence approaches to make that happen.

We complete fleshing out the influence model by looking at the process of making the trades that achieve influence. Chapter 7 looks closely at the ways to make exchanges that sustain and improve your relationships while attaining influence.

CHAPTER 7

STRATEGIES FOR MAKING MUTUALLY PROFITABLE TRADES



> When people feel appreciated, they will help you. You can storm things through once but never get help again. You definitely catch more flies with honey. Being collaborative takes more time sometimes, but if I'm living here in the company, there's a good chance I will encounter them again, have to live with them sometime in the future.
>
> —*Mary Garrett, Vice President, Marketing, IBM Global Services*

We have examined the steps that lead up to the trading process, which include knowing your ally's world, clarifying your own objectives and resources, building trusting relationships, and matching your resources with your ally's desired currencies. In preceding chapters, we included some examples of the process of exchange. In this chapter, we address in detail the actual strategies to follow for a win-win outcome. Remember that many exchanges, especially among good colleagues, just take place naturally without forethought or planning; here we are looking closely at situations that need careful attention.

Exchanges can take many forms and become complicated because there are many ways to "pay back." The payment can be a simple agreement to accept a request that is not burdensome and is within job expectations, or it can involve considerable costs in time and resources. Many, if not most, transactions occur in a series over time, so an exchange is not just one request in return for one payment.

The exchange begins to take place before trading is explicitly started. In fact, it has been happening throughout the previous steps, and we separate the process into different chapters only because we can't discuss everything at once. *Every influence-related contact you have with any eventual ally is part of the eventual exchange.* Whether you simply smile the first time you are introduced or make an honest effort to learn the other person's interests so you can offer something in return for the desired cooperation, each interaction feeds the likelihood of successful exchange.

Not only does your general reputation and relationship with the potential ally affect trading, but also how you find out what's important is already shaping your reception when you finally make your request and offer. How and what you ask, whether and how you listen, the kind of interest you show, and the sincerity of your concern for addressing the ally's real interests all become part of the trading process. You smooth the way or make the terrain rough by how you do your early diagnosis and relationship development.

Some aspects of making exchanges have similarities to attempts to create win-win negotiations, where the object is to have both parties benefit from the back-and-forth discussion, so we can learn from them. However, the difference is that influence in organizational life must always start with two goals: not only gaining the particular objective at hand but also at least maintaining and preferably improving the relationship with the other person or group.

In your organization (or in the organization's orbit), future dealings will be easier and more beneficial if trust is enhanced, openness increased, and willingness to explore possibilities improved. Therefore, while you may occasionally need to become more confrontational as a last resort, begin with a mindset of seeking to increase authenticity rather than just "winning."

As with any kind of negotiation, planning is the most important part. If you have badly misdiagnosed the situation, clever techniques probably won't save the day. Given their history and constant competitiveness, the Boston Red Sox aren't likely to deal with the archrival New York Yankees, no matter how slick or tempting the presentation. Thus, you need to plan carefully. But you also need to discuss the actual exchange in a way that takes into account your previous relationship with the other person or group, eases the transaction, and improves the relationship for the future. This can be a complex process, even though the actual transaction may be brief.

PLANNING YOUR STRATEGIES FOR EXCHANGE

Although many strategies for approaching trade discussions have been mentioned in earlier chapters, they are worth reviewing now to help

Table 7.1 Trading Strategies and When to Use Each

Strategy	*Conditions to Use It*
Straightforward trades (free-market trades)	Each has something other wants Roughly equal value Good existing relationships
Show how cooperation helps achieve ally's goals	Your interests match
Uncover hidden value	You can find unexpected benefits
Compensate for costs	You don't have desired resources. But you know costs and can pay in some other currency

you focus carefully on what conditions determine which approach to take. To be an effective influencer requires versatility in selecting among exchange strategies.

The difficulty of making an exchange depends in part on how closely your interests match. It is always easier to start with an exchange strategy that demonstrates that your request will accrue benefits to the other person. We explore this strategy first, but then we move on to ways of addressing the ally's interests when the benefits of cooperation are not as evident. (Table 7.1 summarizes strategies and indicates when to use each one.)

FREE-MARKET TRADES: CLEAR MUTUAL GAIN

If both sides readily see the advantages of the outcome and believe each payment of time, trouble, or resources is approximately the same, the exchange is equivalent to going to the store and exchanging money for a fairly priced item. And, if the parties already have a good relationship, neither has any reason to distrust the other's motives or integrity. Neither side is doing the other any exceptional favor; value is exchanged for value. Free-market exchanges can work even without a good or longstanding relationship, and they can involve very different currencies as long as they are seen as equivalent.

There may be important secondary benefits. For example, a successful win-win transaction may indicate the other person is cooperative and worth trading with again, or it may increase reputation and strengthen the relationship.

A free-market trade may still require good diagnosis and careful planning, because the other party may not immediately see how the request meets his or her needs. Thus, it is almost always important to have a good understanding of the other side's world and needs.

SHOWING HOW COOPERATION HELPS THE POTENTIAL ALLY ACHIEVE GOALS

There can still be mutual benefit if you show how cooperating with your request will help the potential ally achieve other goals (i.e., payoff in a valued currency). For example, an area manager wanted more current information from his regional manager but didn't want to seem prying or critical of the regional manager's close-to-the-vest style, so he decided to frame the request in terms of the genuine need for information to help defend the region's decisions to skeptical branch managers. Because this very currency was an objective for the regional manager that year, the proposed regular staff meeting was seen as helpful, not a time-consuming nuisance. The area manager had known enough about his boss's currencies to ask in a way that the regional manager would see positively.

UNCOVERING—AND TRADING FOR—HIDDEN VALUE

Sometimes, the mutual benefits are not readily apparent and take some effort to discover. That was the case with an enterprising production manager who wanted his general manager's approval for automated technology in the plant. Because the standard payback analysis based on labor savings would not be fully convincing, he analyzed the impact of faster turnaround time on preventing lost orders. With this innovative capital expenditure method, he could persuade the general manager that automation was in the division's interest.

Such an approach is becoming increasingly common. Measures that reveal hidden benefits include:

- The total cost of employee turnover
- Carrying costs for excess inventory
- The link between satisfied employees and increased sales
- The value of customer loyalty
- The cost of bottlenecks or service delays

COMPENSATED COSTS

An alternative strategy calls for acknowledging that costs will be involved and developing a plan to compensate the potential ally. Although the need to find equitable payments often makes it difficult, this may be the only approach to engineer an exchange when you cannot show the other person your request's benefits. For example, a person requesting a special report from an analytical group could offer to compose a rough draft using existing unanalyzed data, reducing the analysts' load by providing them the approach and format.

In any circumstance, you must determine the potential ally's costs of compliance so you can determine whether you can help defray the costs. For example, a secretary wants a flexible early morning arrival time from her boss, who prefers that she is already there when he arrives. But she knows that her willingness to stay to complete urgent jobs is even more important to him, so she agrees to stay late when necessary in return for leeway in the mornings when her day care arrangements may require an extra ten to fifteen minutes. Both get what they want by exchanging in the same currency: time available for work. The boss's cost is compensated by gaining time in tight situations. Or perhaps she can negotiate doing some work from home if the company provides a laptop and Internet access, a potential win-win for her, the boss, and the company.

How to Make Hidden Costs Visible

In determining what is an equitable exchange, the other party needs to know how important your request is—what refusal to cooperate will cost you and the organization—just as you need to know what your request costs the other party. Potential allies see only their inconvenience, not your costs. This can be especially difficult when you want something from your boss, because you do not want to sound whiney or threatening in specifying consequences. Peers need the cost information because they haven't done your diagnosis and often are unaware of your world and your needs, even if you consider those aspects obvious.

When you have been highly responsive, others may not understand how complex your situation is (and how much extra time you have put in). In these circumstances, plan a way to make clear the costs you have been paying, as well as those you will pay if you don't get your request. For example, can you prepare a spreadsheet of steps taken to get to this point? Perhaps a joint time line would reveal the work behind the scenes. Can you casually mention late nights or weekends spent on the ally's work? Can you joke about how you just do things by waving a magic wand? Not all allies will respond to your inconvenience after becoming aware of it, but in reasonable relationships, this kind of information can help create more responsiveness.

Making hidden costs visible is especially relevant when others initiate the exchange to make requests of you. While being agreeable is usually good, be careful that you don't underrepresent your costs. Your response that it was "no trouble" might not be true. Don't go through a long litany of how inconvenient the request is, but ensure that both parties understand the effects of the demands. You could, for example, "think out loud" about the steps required to fulfill the request, what you would have to juggle or let go, then agree. Otherwise, your payback might be less than what you think you deserve, which can damage your relationship.

STRATEGIES THAT USE THE TIME VALUE OF CURRENCY

In a good working relationship, there is considerable latitude about the timing and the form of the eventual payment. However, in a poor relationship with a difficult history, low trust makes each transaction subject to close scrutiny. An outside observer might wonder why one person's request receives smiles and genuine effort to please, while another's is resisted—politely or otherwise. The history between the parties, or even between the groups to which they belong, can very much alter the value and costs of requests and payments. Indeed, often the complex economy of exchanges is so difficult to unravel that people desiring something important consider it impossible and give up.

Time can enter exchanges in three ways:

1. *In the immediate present.* For what you ask, you can pay now, either by the direct benefit of your request or in an acceptable compensatory payment.
2. *From the past.* From things done previously you have built up credit, so you are collecting on earlier behavior. Alternatively, you may have a deficit because of history and must overcome the past.
3. *Promise for the future.* You agree on a debt—specific or unspecified—you will pay later. Here again, the past may affect the other party's willingness to believe that you will repay in the future at a satisfactory rate.

Thus, a key set of strategic considerations involves the way to utilize past or future obligations to achieve desired goals. Strategic use of time extends what is possible in alliances.

BUILDING CREDIT: SAVING FOR A RAINY DAY

An old joke about banking is that banks want to lend money only when you can prove that you don't need it. There is a grain of truth in the joke: you must be able to repay the loan, at least at some date in the future. For this reason, it is often wise to invest current financial resources so you can borrow or draw on savings for future needs. The same reasoning applies to exchanges in organizations: *Whenever possible, accumulate obligations from others long before you want to ask for anything in return. Before you get to the actual exchange, it helps to have made payments to the favor bank—investments in future considerations.*

This is easiest when your job gives you command of valuable resources so that you can naturally do work favors for many people. The people who decide information system priorities, control the scheduling of production, or provide valuable services to line managers are constantly building credits, especially when they help others out by altering priorities or giving extra service. The best way to build credit is to do useful tasks in return for future obligations to help you do your job better. That keeps the focus on real work, not influence for its own sake.

Of course there is always the danger that others will take your extra effort for granted or start to see it as a regular part of your job, so you may have to learn graceful ways of mentioning what you have done, depending on how visible the effort is, but as the examples below show, that isn't always necessary. Valuable contributions often have a way of getting noticed.

Although not all jobs have such an advantageous positioning, you can often discover alternative ways to help others. Because different players value different kinds of currencies, you have many opportunities for extra efforts to be helpful, considerate, or thoughtful before you need others' help. If you have energy, some ability to determine what might be valuable to others in their work, and an inclination toward creating multiple alliances, you can find daily opportunities to earn credit by being useful.

We can look, for example, at the middle-level manager who inadvertently built credit when he forwarded potentially interesting "FYI" job-related articles to the many organizational members he knew. Naturally interested in people and ideas, he enjoyed chatting with others about what they were working on or excited about. As a reader of many magazines and newspapers anyway, he remembered and converted his natural interests into an activity that he genuinely enjoyed and was always appreciated. Although he never cynically sent anything just to build support, the result was that his thoughtfulness did earn credit from others, so his subsequent requests for his own department and projects always received the benefit of the doubt.

Think about any natural advantages you have—extra knowledge, good humor, a long memory, instinctive empathy, or anything else that others might value—and spread the wealth early and often.

SLEAZE ALERT

In some situations, the ally you want to influence doesn't value any work-related currencies, or you cannot access any that he or she does want. Thus you will be forced to use more personal currencies as account deposits if you want to build credit. Many personal gifts such as kindness, good humor, or bringing snacks for everyone are good social lubricants and can create goodwill.

Even though sometimes necessary, trying to create obligation in ways not related to work has a danger. Unfortunately, some employees who realize the power of having credit in the reciprocity bank are tempted to do favors in a self-promoting way, currying obligation for its own sake. Even when this works, there are often considerable costs to reputation that you cannot overlook.

You can easily overdo unrequested favors, especially if the recipients suspect that you are doing the favors only to create obligations or if the recipients do not find the favors valuable. Many years ago, for example, Dale Carnegie advised people to win friends and influence people by, among other things, learning their names promptly and using the name frequently in early conversations because everyone likes the sound of his or her own name. Imagine a newly converted disciple who floods a conversation with "Yes, Seymour, it certainly is a swell day, Seymour. Would you, Seymour, be interested in hearing about what a fine fellow you are, Seymour?" It's easy to see how readily the currency can be debased. Insincerity can cancel out the benefits of otherwise effective ways of building exchange credits.

This leads to an interesting paradox about "building credits for the future." On the one hand, having "money in the bank" is always useful for future needs. On the other hand, overt efforts to create deposits can create mistrust and suspicion about your intentions. If others worry that you will someday "put the hit" on them to collect, they will be chary of your offers.

What is the way out of this paradox? Two guidelines can help:

1. Be explicit. Sometimes you can remove suspicions by being open about your intentions: "I would like to help you now because I have some slack and I know that I am going to have to come with requests second

quarter when deadlines get tight." It also signals ahead of time the nature of the exchange, clarifying implied obligation.

2. Put the organization first. As we have insisted before, if others see that you are helping them primarily to further organization goals, then any secondary gains to you and your area are more likely to be acceptable.

Using Resources in a Questionable Way That Backfired

Maintenance Manager, Manipulator

The head of the physical plant in a service organization (not usually a position of great power) volunteered to organize the December holiday party each year. He always arranged for a photographer to take pictures of managers and their families. A few weeks later, the people who controlled resources or were otherwise central got an enlarged photo "compliments of" the physical plant manager.

Because there was some doubt whether this gesture was an act of kindness or a ploy to build obligations, many coworkers were wary of this manager. Because his goodwill was valuable for getting office equipment moved or repair work done, no one confronted him about this game, but many were uncomfortable in dealing with him.

Although the photos were never overtly mentioned in subsequent requests for his department, his purpose was to build goodwill that could serve him later. When he needed something during the year, people seldom refused, although they grumbled about feeling trapped. As a result, although he got what he wanted, he was never fully trusted in the organization and was never promoted.

Robert Moses, Master Manipulator

On a far grander scale, Robert Moses was reported to have used the resources of his position as New York Commissioner of Parks to create subtle obligations among reporters, commissioners, and politicians. When he wanted to push through a project, people to whom he had catered found opposing him difficult. Moses used limousine rides, fancy meals, and meetings in spectacular places to court supporters or neutralize detractors before putting the bite on them. As a result, he built roads and parks on an unprecedented scale. At the same time, he rode roughshod over the poor, disrupted neighborhoods, and spent vast public sums to further his personal vision of New York.

Moses used many other influence techniques, including covert, indirect ones such as burying clauses into complex legislation that later gave him almost unlimited power, but he also knew how important relationship savings in the bank were for withdrawal in tight situations. Apparently, he was also charming enough—and dealing with sufficiently seducible allies—to overcome concerns about his sincerity.* Possibly, in complex public situations with many differing constituents and interests, only skilled manipulators can

(*Continued*)

make something happen, but the process produces enormous cynicism and public costs that make the enterprise questionable. Any tool can be abused.

*For a full and fascinating account of Robert Moses at work, see Robert A. Caro, *The Power Broker* (New York: Knopf, 1974). Caro's volumes on Lyndon Johnson are also revealing of a master manipulator/influencer.

CALLING IN PAST DEBTS

If you want to influence a person for whom you have done things previously and the debt level is sufficient to cover your request, exchange should be relatively easy. This assumes that the colleague recognizes the debt previously incurred and considers it at least equivalent in value to the cost of your request. If the relationship is good, you can even collect in excess of the existing debt because, among trusting colleagues, the accounts can swing from surplus to deficit and back again depending on circumstances.

Although the concepts in this book are relevant for any influence attempt, much organizational exchange happens more or less automatically as a natural part of doing the work. Elaborate exchange discussions take place only when you need something out of the ordinary. Thus, it is useful to signal to your potential ally early on if a transaction is unusual and calls for special attention. It is not just a routine part of your job, and it is important enough to spend time on.

What Can You Do When Others Won't Admit What They Owe?

Interesting problems arise, however, when your signal is ignored. What happens when you make a request of a debtor who does not acknowledge any obligation? Confusion can arise in polite or high-allegiance organizations that have strong norms against explicit exchanges. The past lender may believe that an obligation is created, but the borrower may consider past help just part of the lender's job, so there is no debt. It can be very deflating if you suggest a past favor deserves a current response and are told, "Big deal. You were just doing what you're supposed to do." That is especially discouraging when it comes from your boss, who may not know what delivering on a request has cost you.

Some organizations may consider it crude to say anything as overt as, "You owe me one," so gentle hints are required. In other organizations (try many New York–based companies and hospitals), it would be considered naive not to bludgeon colleagues with your expectations about their obligations; everyone considers it a fact of life that the world works on self-interest and quid pro quo. Be sure to adapt your language to the culture. If you're still new in the culture, stay alert for phrases that are clues to appropriate levels of directness.

If accepted practice in your organization is not to discuss such issues, you may have difficulty resolving these differences without elaborately talking around the point. Instead of saying, "I've knocked myself out for you in ways you don't even know about because I didn't want to burden you; how about some consideration in return?" you must approach influence attempts indirectly, with statements such as, "Well, it's not technically part of my job, and we do have a lot of other things we are responsible for." Such subtle references may have low impact (unless the other person is very tuned to reading between the lines), which often causes the influencer to prematurely give up in frustration.

It is usually best to assure reciprocal expectations before the gift is given, not afterwards. Each organization tends to have its own language for conveying strong expectation of a response. At one consumer goods company, members convey the importance of an issue by saying, "This is a strike issue," even without a union involved. At another organization, people say, "I'll go to the mat for this one." "This is a biggie" is another way that members of a certain company signal that a request is not routine. Somehow or other, you need to use the organization's shorthand or jargon to indicate the seriousness of what you are giving. Don't cry wolf, though; be sure that you mean it and that you are communicating your true costs. You might also ask a longer-term colleague about approaches; you might learn a particular way of talking or even discover a volunteer to intercede for you (creating a new obligation, of course).

What If Currency Payment Isn't Valued? (I Know You Said You Love Me, but You Never Bring Me Flowers)

Even when direct discussion is allowed, there can be very different ideas about what is owed. Exchange rates are imprecise enough that even when you say, "You owe me one," and the potential ally agrees, genuine disagreements may arise. Sometimes, the other person cannot see the effort put forth to comply with a request, so the receiving party isn't proportionately appreciative. We have seen situations in which someone responded to a request that wasn't particularly urgent as if the organization's future depended on it. The person who moves heaven and earth to accommodate another may not be fully appreciated if the person making the request didn't consider it that important. In that case, any attempt to collect a perceived debt could be met with, "Hey, cool it, I was just making a suggestion. I didn't expect you to turn yourself inside-out, so don't try to lay a guilt trip on me."

Conversely, we have seen organizational members who routinely knock themselves out on behalf of others but then downplay their efforts by saying, "It was nothing," in response to thanks. When the beneficiaries are sensitive, the person who has extended himself or herself is properly appreciated, but not every recipient of favors picks up subtle cues. As a result, some givers feel that they are being taken advantage of, while the recipients go blithely forward, not realizing that resentment is stirring.

If you have made an effort for a potential ally, it requires a certain grace to point it out without sounding too crass. But hiding your light under a bushel may be a waste of wattage. You should let the potential ally see you sweat a bit, without complaining, so your effort is visible but not flaunted.

However, you don't want to be seen as overly preoccupied with the bookkeeping of obligation. The ability to be recognized for delivering without calling attention to every last deposit in the obligation bank is a rare but critical one, so you should cultivate it. You might even ask a few trusted colleagues to discuss together how to do it in your organization. One of the most influential organizational members we have ever observed regularly performed miracles for others from his "assistant to" role, but he never acted as if it were a big deal. Because his colleagues knew how difficult it was to move the bureaucracy, they appreciated what he must have been doing, and he accumulated great respect and obligation. When there was an opening as director of an important new division, he had many supporters and was selected for the job, even though he had fewer formal credentials than other candidates.

Borrowing on Credit: Deferred Payment/Collateral

If you've had no chance to build prior obligations and either cannot immediately command the currencies the potential ally wants or lack the time to mobilize them, you may need to request a loan. If you have a reasonably good reputation, you can offer to repay later, either with specific goods or in an unspecified currency to be named later. Where there is prior mistrust, you will probably not be able to use this approach, at least not without considerable collateral, but if the existing relationship is at least not negative, then you might obtain cooperation on the basis of a promise to pay later.

Similarly, in her study of successful innovators within organizations, Rosabeth Kanter[1] found many examples of managers who promised future payback for current backing, use of resources, or budgetary transfers. They would offer better support services in the future, recognition when the project was successful, or other forms of later payback. Sometimes, all they asked for was a pledge of resources or backing, to be paid only if others also came through. Then they would parlay the initial pledge commitments into further commitments, since they could demonstrate widespread support and eventually could pay back the initial "investors." The backers who made early loans or pledges not only received particular goods or services they wanted but also gained positive reputation for being able to spot good ideas early and support them.

Paying with a Promise for the Future

Marcia Allen, a consumer goods company product manager, needed a rush order for special-size packaging to ship product to stores in time for the scheduled advertising campaign. This request could cause difficulties for the purchasing manager whose cooperation she wanted: Rushing her order would slow down other priorities, which the purchasing manager made very clear when Marcia approached him. Eager to see the important promotion succeed, Marcia made her request in return for a later payment: She offered to include the purchasing manager in future planning meetings so that fewer surprise rush orders would be needed. He would get early warnings about plans, so he could make suggestions about timing and alternate materials before plans were finalized. She got her materials, and subsequently the purchasing manager was included in meetings where he made significant contributions to decisions about special promotions.

If what you are pushing is suspected or you are not fully trusted, you may have to explore whether you can put up a form of "security bond" when trying to borrow. You might, for example, offer to publicly support the potential ally before he or she has to deliver on your request, with the understanding that your support only demonstrates good faith and does not repay the cooperation. This can be very awkward to discuss, but it is preferable to just being turned down or stalled. It can be very freeing to a poor relationship to say something like, "I see you are not comfortable with me, and I want to turn that around. What can I do to show good faith? Would it be helpful if I did?" Such a direct acknowledgment of the problem can open a discussion of difficulties or ways to possibly do business even when the relationship is less than desirable.

OTHER STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS: WHO AND WHERE?

Several other factors can shape your influence exchanges.

Deciding with Whom to Attempt Exchanges

Many influence attempts involve only one other person, but complex situations usually have multiple stakeholders, each with his or her own currencies. One of the strategic choices in these situations is whom to engage with directly, whom to just touch base with, whom to work around gingerly, and whom to avoid entirely. Influence is hard enough without trying to take on the world. But projects that involve large-scale change inevitably require judicious exchanges with multiple players.

Considerations for deciding how to exchange directly with a potential ally include:

Centrality of the Ally

- How powerful is the other person? Power means more than hierarchical position: What needed resources does he or she control? How exclusive is the person's control of those resources? How dependent are you on that person for success? How much does the person's opinion affect others? If the person gets angry with you, can he or she harm your project?

Amount of Effort/Credits Needed

- Do you already have a relationship with the person, or will you be starting from scratch? Can you quickly establish a working relationship, or is the process inherently slow?
- Is the person likely to insist on trading in currencies you do not command or cannot access? How expensive will you find it to pay in the desired currencies?

- Will the person be satisfied as long as you at least pay your respects and stay in touch, without asking anything directly?

Alternatives Available

- Do you know anyone whose support will help gain the support of the potential ally? In other words, who can influence the ally indirectly if you cannot do it directly?
- If you can't influence the person in the right direction, can you neutralize him or her? Can you reshape your project to take the person's opposition into account or to skirt the person's worst concerns?

In general, the important dimensions are the degree of your actual power relative to the array of potential allies and the degree of your dependence on each. This can be represented, as in Figure 7.1, by a two-by-two table, with four resulting strategies.

When you are relatively powerful compared to your potential ally, you should plan to conduct mutual exchange discussions of the kind we discuss throughout this book.

If, however, you have a position with relatively low power (even after using the techniques of Chapter 5 to increase your power) but are dependent on the ally's cooperation, you must either follow a submissive strategy or

Figure 7.1
Strategies That Fit Your Power Relative to Your Ally

		Dependence on Your Ally	
		High	Low
Your Power Relative to Your Ally	High	Mutual Exchange	Isolate
	Low	Plead, Get Help	Ignore (Pleasantly)

look for others who will help you and who can influence the person. Submissive strategies are those in which you essentially put yourself at the goodwill of the ally, which can create sympathy. You may be able to bluff from a low-power strategy, but within your own organization, bluffing seldom works for long—and then you reduce the likelihood of a sympathetic hearing.

When your power is relatively high and you aren't especially dependent on the ally's cooperation, work around (isolate) the person and create relatively little need for interaction. Finally, when you have low power but low dependence, you can ignore the potential ally, or better yet, keep a friendly manner and pass along information but spend relatively less effort on influence. As we have stressed, being gratuitously unfriendly or nasty is never justified because the person may become important later, but your purpose is to allocate your necessarily limited energy.

Your Place or Mine? Choosing a Setting

Another strategic factor is the location of the actual exchange discussions. With good colleagues you know well, choice of location is less important. You can do business on the fly with no loss of impact. Some people are used to quick hallway conversations and prefer brief early approaches. Others want to see something written first. Location may also matter very little when you are requesting something relatively easy. But when you do not know the person or there is history of negative feelings on either side, setting can matter a great deal.

In general, people feel most relaxed on their own turf, at their own pace. Sometimes, however, the ally's office is subject to constant interruptions, so it becomes impossible for the two of you to concentrate. In these circumstances, try to meet in a neutral conference room, over lunch away from the office, or (if it fits your organization's norms) after work over a drink. Any of these would be better than asking the potential ally to come to your office. Making an appointment that specifies the time you expect the discussion to take is another way to keep the relationship on a comfortable and relatively equal footing.

It is almost never appropriate to influence colleagues with cheap negotiating tactics, such as placing the other person in an uncomfortable chair in your office with the sun in his or her eyes. Remember, you will probably have to work with the person again sometime.

FIVE DILEMMAS TO BE MANAGED DURING EXCHANGES

You may need to manage five possible dilemmas during your exchanges:

1. Escalate or back off?
2. Openness or partial truth?
3. Stick to plan or react to the moment?
4. Positive or negative exchange arguments?
5. Stick to task or work the relationship?

Escalate or Back Off?

To try to collect on past debts from people not responding reasonably, gradually increase the pressure. Unless the potential ally is deliberately determined to take advantage of you, use the least pressure necessary to induce cooperation. The ally could have other reasons for delay. The other party might be doing a "cost/benefit analysis" or not realize the task's importance (to you). If you decide that the potential ally is unwilling to reciprocate for purely selfish motives, you can up the ante if you are willing to be seen as tough or risk permanent anger toward you.

In one form of escalation, your first step is to express explicitly your view of the obligation and ask why the person is not responding accordingly. The next step might be to insist that the potential ally respond. If the response isn't favorable, you could then point out that you will be (reluctantly) forced to withhold future cooperation. You might then have to say that you will make the lack of cooperation visible to others or that the project may be delayed or even fail without cooperation.

These escalation steps are graduated to reduce the use of the potentially most explosive ones. But if all else is failing, the next step is to raise your voice or lose your temper, trying to make the potential ally uncomfortable enough to comply. By so doing, you alter the exchange currencies, for control of your temper is a new currency to trade: you become willing to drop your anger for (reasonable) compliance with your request.

Such emotional blackmail works only when the potential ally dislikes emotional confrontations; when improperly applied, it can easily backfire and escalate resistance. You have to decide whether you can risk blowing up the whole relationship.

But if you decide in advance never to use this kind of pressure, you can be at a disadvantage trying to influence someone who trades in the currency of toughness. These traders in hot emotions often expect that opponents may be too inhibited to make a big fuss, so if you hold back, you are playing into their hands. Turn up the pressure just a notch by making your requests in public, in a friendly way at first or with irritation if that does not work. If you say (with a smile) in front of colleagues that the recalcitrant potential ally hasn't learned to give and take or wants to only take and not give, the game player can find it very difficult to keep refusing. Because this is no way to endear yourself to anyone, use this method only when thoroughly convinced that the potential ally is deliberately trying to grind you down.

Openness or Partial Truth?

In the best exchanges, both you and your ally get all that you both want at the lowest cost. Where each side very much wants what the other side has and each is happy to trade, both make a considerable profit from the transaction. You can both go away feeling good about the deal and about the relationship.

The Three Rules of Being a Diplomat

Never tell a lie.
Never tell all the truth.
When in doubt, go to the bathroom.

—Source Unknown

However, there is a built-in temptation for you to exaggerate. If you make your ally think that your cost is higher than it actually is, the ally will think it is an even better deal and feel more future obligation. Thus, there is always temptation to exaggerate your own costs (and minimize the ally's) in the interests of getting what you want at the lowest cost.

Furthermore, what if you can give more than your ally realizes? Why reveal everything you are willing to do, especially costly things, if you can gain what you want for less? That will leave more to spend on other influence attempts. However, when you hoard currencies, doling them out only when forced to, or get caught exaggerating your costs, you may reduce all chances for profitable exchange.

Concealing or altering information can have two negative effects: (1) The potential ally may not know enough about what you value to find creative alternative ways to be helpful, or, even worse, (2) he or she may sense that you are not being wholly aboveboard and refuse to deal with you or try to drive a harder bargain to be sure there isn't more hidden in your treasury. Although there is potential gain from being shrewd, exaggeration or concealment may create the exact behavior you do not want in your potential ally.

A few managers are wonderful actors and can conceal their true feelings, but most managers' belief in their own acting talents cannot possibly be true—for almost all managers are certain they can spot insincerity in others. Indeed, in virtually every organization we have observed, consistently covert and unforthcoming managers are eventually tagged as untrustworthy and slowly frozen out of important transactions. That can be hard to believe when the nastiest person gets a promotion or has the boss's ear, but, over time, few of these people endure in their organization. *Nice guys don't always finish first, but nasty ones seldom do, at least not in situations where they can hardly get anything done without the cooperation of others. No one wants to be a sucker, yet the process of extreme self-protection may be self-defeating.*

In any particular exchange, however, both sides will be tempted to exaggerate costs. Unfortunately, once either one begins to do that, the other is likely to feel the need to do it also, and mistrust grows. But if one side does it and the other does not, the exaggerator may gain an advantage, so the temptation remains. If you point this out when it starts to affect behavior (even your own), that may be enough to stop it and increase authenticity on both sides. Even better, show how it spurs exaggeration on both sides, making authenticity difficult. Ask if it wouldn't be better for both if they refrain.

Another kind of disclosure, however, does help increase authenticity and trust. That is openness about what is going on in the discussion; the dilemma about how much to reveal when the other person is obviously holding back to gain an edge; how hard that makes it for you to be open and get all the information on the table so you could solve the problem jointly; your preference for a collaborative process but unwillingness to be a sucker, and so on. Such "meta" revelations can and often do change the tone and level of disclosure without putting you at unnecessary risk, and they signal your preference about how to proceed. We call it "naming the game," and recommend it as a way of avoiding constant attempts by both sides to be tricky and clever; those mostly increase suspicion and mistrust rather than produce creative joint problem solving.

Stick to Plan or React to the Moment?

The third dilemma arises from a dual need: you must prepare for discussions with your ally to fit your case to the ally's interests and style, but you must also be ready to change course if new information emerges during the discussion. There is a real danger you may miss important data about the ally during the exchange conversation if you are too focused on carrying out your plan.

Trades often can founder under two conditions. The first is the person wanting influence failing to do the necessary homework, missing the potential ally's valued currencies or personal preferences about interaction style. The other trap is to lock into the predetermined game plan so intently that obvious messages about what matters to the ally are missed.

Do It Like the Pros

Some professional coaches carefully script the first 10–15 plays, then after assessing the opponent's tendencies and weaknesses, modify their subsequent strategy. This combination of extensive planning and real-time adaptation leads to better results than either alone.

Blindness to the potential ally's signals can be monumental. The resistant ally may say in ten different ways what to do first to obtain his or her support, but the determined influencer persists because the game plan says "stick to high lobs."

The challenge is to be so thoroughly prepared that you can dispense with your agenda in a flash and tune into the hints about interests, goals, and concerns that any ally will give during conversation. This requires treating objections as clues, not irritants, and staying poised to explore valuable clues whenever they appear. Planning a hike in the country but refusing to detour around giant boulders just because they were not on the map is a good way to spoil a journey. You can still reach your destination if you respond to unexpected barriers as trail markers.

Positive or Negative Exchange Arguments?

The fourth dilemma involves deciding whether to stick with positive arguments for cooperation or use negative arguments about potential costs—and recognizing when to switch. If you never raise the possibility of negative exchanges, you may be vulnerable to stubbornly resistant allies. But always using them can create enemies unnecessarily or damage your reputation and hamper future exchanges. It is hard to walk the line between naiveté and cynicism.

Your power and dependence relative to the other should shape your willingness to threaten negative consequences for noncooperation. If you have relatively low power, don't make threats. Also, the ally's honesty and responsiveness will help determine whether you need to, and effectively can, focus on negative costs, such as withholding your own future cooperation. While some allies need reminders that they work for the same organization, others would be insulted that you thought it necessary to mention it.

Stick to Task or Work the Relationship?

The fifth dilemma arises when you have a troubled relationship with a potential ally. Should you focus on the task about which you want to make an exchange or stop and work directly on the relationship, improving it so the task can be more readily addressed? As we suggested in Chapter 6, this choice can be difficult, and you may need to work back and forth through several rounds. We discussed in detail there the conditions when each might be the preferred route.

STARTING AND STOPPING THE EXCHANGE PROCESS

It is important to mention that just as the way a potential ally prefers to be approached can be an important currency, the timing of the exchange discussion can also be very important. Where is the person or group in their work cycle, or in relation to impending deadlines? Does the person prefer end of day or week, or beginning? Compressed decision making, or plenty of time for absorbing and reflecting? Accommodating the ally's pace helps to build comfort.

Knowing when to insist on making exchanges and when to back off is an art, not a science, but it is worth exploring. You must assess the relative power of the other person, the importance of the issue to each of you, your future interdependence, and your own ability to avoid competitive warfare.

It probably isn't wise to have heated battles with someone far more powerful whose future goodwill is important to you. When what you want arouses strong negative feelings, consider just how important the ally's cooperation is and examine other possibilities. If there is no other reasonable alternative, then going slow, working harder to understand why the ally has such strong feelings, and listening respectfully to the ally's concerns—or determining if feelings about you rather than the particular issue are causing problems—are appropriate strategies.

During transactions, it is also useful to pay attention to your own hot buttons. Experienced negotiators recommend that you never lose your temper except deliberately for effect; although that advice usually presumes a one-time opponent rather than a potential ally, it is not entirely off target. If it is easy to get your goat, a tough ally will instinctively provoke you on sensitive issues.

Thus, it is in your interest to understand what makes you angry or drives you to become nasty in ways you later regret, so you can learn to recognize when you are headed for trouble. Then you can take time out to decide whether you want to go to the mat on this issue, want to raise the temperature, or calm down so that you don't do anything rash.

Although you must sometimes be very tough in making exchanges (see Chapter 16, a practical applications chapter on hardball), being nasty or attacking the other person instead of his or her position on an issue is almost never wise. Walk away and breathe deeply for several minutes, if necessary—whenever you feel yourself wanting to deliberately hurt a potential ally. You can be tough and honest without deliberately being hurtful; pain that is a by-product of honest exchange doesn't cause the same reaction as pain from a conscious attempt to maim for revenge.

AFTER THE EXCHANGE: CHECKING OUT THE PROCESS

> I've been able to perpetuate what my dad started. . . . He always told me that in any negotiation to let the other guy feel he won. Don't take the last nickel from the table.
>
> —Brian Roberts, Chairman and CEO, Comcast,
> *New York Times, Sunday Business Section, August 8, 2004*

Though it isn't always possible, the goal of any exchange is a win-win solution that also satisfies the other person or group. This is important because organizations almost always have long-term relationships, so you might need the other again. (And remember the secondary goal of affirming and building the relationship.)

Even after a successful agreement, and especially after a difficult negotiation, think about how to leave your ally with dignity and good feelings about the outcome. You lose if the other party feels used. Especially with complex deliberations, it is useful to check afterwards:

- Does the other remember the agreement as you do? The final negotiation can be anxious and thus distort memories.

- Do both parties fully agree on the details? A quick check can save a lot of grief.
- Does the other harbor any second thoughts? Do they think they have taken on more than they wanted to? Are there complications that they didn't think about? Again, you don't want the other to feel resentful or have buyer's remorse.
- You might want to legitimize talking about the relationship. If it went well, showing appreciation can be valuable.
- But if there was any strain, it should be discussed (so it doesn't grow and fester).

Even when the ally has not "lost" but the issue has required intense trading activity, it is not a waste of time to rebuild the relationship and create a feeling of mutual satisfaction and trust. At the very least, it will save valuable time in your next exchange.

(For a detailed account of how a manager, Warren Peters, navigated through the complicated shoals of a danger-laden set of exchanges, see the example at our website, http://influencewithoutauthority.com.)

MAKING SATISFACTORY EXCHANGES AND AVOIDING SELF-TRAPS

Making trades can be very simple when trust and mutual knowledge already exist. Adjusting requests to fit the potential ally is then almost automatic, and each of you willingly gives the other considerable latitude.

If you don't have such prior trust or your request is unusually costly to the ally, then other exchange strategies become necessary.

We have already discussed various ways to try shifting a difficult exchanger to a more collaborative way of engaging. But when someone is trying to take you to the cleaners, you need to be tough. Gradually raising your voice, going public, or calling the person's bluff are tools you need in your repertoire, but it is preferable not to use them. Use such tools when absolutely needed, but keep them in cold storage as long as possible.

Finally, shape your approach by how much you depend on that ally, and that ally only, for getting exactly what you have requested with no substitutions accepted and on the ally's continuing goodwill. Your willingness to risk is also an important determinant of strategy, modified by the long-term versus short-term consequences you are willing to live with.

Because existing positive relationships greatly increase the likelihood of satisfactory exchanges on reasonable terms, start building your network of relationships as soon as possible. Isn't there someone you could be meeting now?

Finally, avoid these traps when making trades:

Self-Traps in Making Trades

- Failure to do your homework on what the other person probably cares about
- Failure to change your previous analysis in the face of new evidence happening in real time
- Getting stuck on *your* way of solving the problem (rather than seeing the problem solved)
- Bluffing—especially from a low-power position
- Fearing negative reactions so much that you don't use all possible exchange tools
- Forgetting that you will probably see the other person again and going all out to win at the expense of the relationship

PART III

Practical Applications of Influence

This section of the book is designed to help you quickly locate the kind of influence problem you are currently wrestling with and to give you specific, down-to-earth advice on how to solve it. We take the concepts elaborated in Chapters 2 through 7 and directly apply them to the most common influence challenges we find in organizations. The problems in the chapters toward the end of the section are organizationally more complex, and we frequently cross-reference other chapters that can contribute to the practical solutions offered, as well as the detailed examples on our website. We wish you the best in working through the influence barriers to your greater effectiveness at work.

CHAPTER 8

GENDER AND INFLUENCE: BEYOND STEREOTYPES

Coauthor, Nan Langowitz

INTRODUCTION

Influence would be easy if only everyone was just like you! But workplaces are becoming increasingly diverse with inevitable changes in demographics and technology. This chapter considers gender, one significant aspect of that increasing diversity, as the workplace has evolved to include more women at all levels than ever before. (Other demographic characteristics, such as race, sexual orientation, and cultural or ethnic backgrounds, can create similar challenges for developing and exerting influence, but space led us to focus only on gender.)

Here you'll find additional considerations that may warrant attention with respect to building influence and using the Cohen-Bradford Influence model. This isn't a catalog of all injustices inflicted on women by males and male-dominated organizations; that is another book. And contemporary life has a wide spectrum of male-female, male-male, and female-female behaviors that affect influence. You won't find "an answer," because there is no one "right" approach. As in all things with people, each encounter, experience, and relationship is specific to the individuals involved. It's impossible to talk about "all women" or "all men" as monolithic groups, though many are tempted to do so, using their own experiences or popular books and articles propagating half-truths and catchy stereotypes.[1]

Though you may see some patterns in your own interactions, you recognize that every man is not necessarily like every other and that one

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When we were planning to revise this book, our colleague Nan Langowitz, an expert on gender issues who knew our work on influence, suggested a chapter on gender. We readily agreed and enlisted her help.

woman is not necessarily like the next. Nonetheless, it's evident from everyday experience and the examples below, as well as patterns revealed or confirmed by research, that stereotypes and traditional gender expectations can readily create static in building relationships and developing influence, whether or not the stereotypes are true.

In fact, it is useful to remember the quote attributed to American humorist Will Rogers: "It ain't so much the things we don't know that get us into trouble. It's the things we know that just ain't so." Many women and men are convinced that they know how women and men behave, and we all sometimes slide into generalizations that seem right, but recent research has revealed numerous myths or less than fully true beliefs about behavior: such as women don't ask for raises,[2] are more likely to leave their jobs or organizations,[3] or don't want tough feedback.[4] Due to such gender expectations, women and men often are treated in traditional ways, which create problems and dilemmas, and sometimes those treated according to the stereotypes react as if they were true. This chapter tries to help you understand some of the complexities, give you a chance to examine your assumptions and to explore those of your colleagues, and let you make more informed choices over time.

Our own experiences show that even those in this territory with heightened consciousness can easily slip back into old assumptions or stereotypes, especially when reinforced by friends or colleagues who—seriously or jokingly—make comments about "all women" or "all men." Do many professional men frequently interrupt women at meetings? Do many women like to talk about relationships? Sure, but it's definitely not true of *all*, and even when a particular person does so, the reasons may be very different. So it's worth the effort to learn to test your own assumptions before leaping to conclusions and (if possible) to find a colleague as a partner in mutual friendly monitoring.

This chapter covers potential tendencies and behaviors related to gender issues that may impact your success in building relationships. Gender awareness may assist your leadership growth as well as prove valuable for specific use when deploying the influence without authority model to build influence. The goal is to offer you one more tool for building the most constructive alliances you can, enhancing your ability to get things done. We start with a brief primer on key mechanisms by which gender often comes into play in social interactions.

This will allow you to do the homework that increases the likelihood you can have the productive discussions that let you find out what is really going on with each person and engage in productive ways.

Some Key Mechanisms by Which Gender Can Influence Interpersonal Connection

Gender, a social construct irrespective of biological sex traits, differentiates between what is considered masculine and feminine.[5] It creates accepted norms of social behavior and influences our assumptions about ourselves and others. Because gender is socially constructed, these norms may vary widely by region or context and are changing. What used to seem simple to many—men were men and women were women—has more nuance. Social norms for gender suggest particular attributes of behavior and attitudes that are considered acceptable for women and men. The result is typically an automatic linkage of certain characteristics as either feminine or masculine; certain authoritative characteristics (dominance, self-reliance, competitiveness, ambition, and aggressiveness) have often been associated with masculine gender, while communal or collaborative characteristics (friendliness, affection, gentleness, sensitivity, and sympathy) have usually been associated with feminine gender.[6]

Such automatic linkages, ingrained by social culture from an early age, in the absence of other data trigger implicit automatic assumptions about another person. Because our brains naturally work by quick categorization, fast associations or assumptions create the potential for unconscious bias;[7] thus there is a risk of relying on socialized assumptions rather than actual interpersonal experience in judging the potential of a relationship. Too often, we "see" what we *expect* to see (and have been trained to expect) rather than what *actually* happens. And part of our natures automatically leap to fast conclusions that someone "like me" (even superficially) is more likely to be an ally with the same needs than those "not like me."

In the workplace, most modern corporations and many nonprofit organizations have a hierarchy that values behaviors traditionally associated with (presumed) masculine characteristics. Expectations of leaders are frequently based on a masculine model of taking charge, so both men and women may sense misalignment between person and role (role incongruence) when women take leadership roles or use authoritative behaviors.[8] "Think manager, think male" has been shown to be deeply ingrained in corporate life,[9] and the stereotype that leaders are masculine persists[10] despite the vastly increased presence of women in today's workplace.[11]

This can be a source of difficulties for women who pursue and take on leadership roles. An additional challenge for women is the potential to experience stereotype threat, which is to internalize the prevailing stereotypes of women and their capabilities.[12] For example, the gender stereotype (not fact!) that "women aren't good at math" may lead to a loss of confidence in financial-based decision making. To counteract such a stereotype, another woman may insist on revisiting a financial analysis to "prove" that she's more than capable of handling quantitative thinking.

As more people who do not match the expected stereotype take organizational roles, opportunities for strong emotions, mixed expectations, and misunderstandings increase in all directions. This is most evident with increased attention to proportions of women in various jobs, especially managerial ones, and hiring patterns. We knew before we started the research for this chapter that the subject was loaded. But we have been struck by the level of intensity when we just mention our interest to almost everyone we encounter in organizations, male and female.

Men too are affected by these changing gender expectations. Do they have to stop and determine just what a female colleague expects from them? Do they support more gender-neutral relationships but find that others, male or female, disagree? Even if they don't believe that women are generally more emotional, do they have lingering concerns that the woman may cry if they have a tough conversation? Do they expect a female colleague to adapt to their ideas about proper gender behavior, or do they adapt, or can they discuss what is appropriate? Indeed, do they have different ideas about what is discussable, especially about relationships?

As an experienced female consultant told us:

> *Gender, race, [and] age are always in play. Whether we realize it or not, these demographics are always present and we are consciously or unconsciously responding to them. Even two men interacting with each other are taking account of gender even if it is the implicit automatic assumptions they are holding about how to relate [to] and influence each other. White males assume how they interact is normative and "make exceptions" when dealing with another's race or gender. The more we are aware, the more our responses can be appropriate (and we don't over- or under-respond).*

In addition to reviewing the relevant literature, we conducted intense interviews with women who have dealt with gender issues at several levels of organizational life, sometimes brilliantly, sometimes with considerable struggle. We use their words and make complete interviews (disguised when necessary) available on our website, www.influencewithoutauthority.com, so their voices can let you arrive at your own conclusions about appropriate actions for you, since you know your own history, context, readiness to risk and accept consequences, and skill level. Many women we interviewed are aware of traditional socializing forces, but not controlled by them.

Indeed, numerous women have reported that using the IWA model has helped them determine how to counter the organizational gender barriers they found—and many men have discovered that clarifying their own assumptions benefits them and their female colleagues.

To see many of these issues in action, we start with the experiences of "Anna," who worked in strategic planning at a not-for-profit organization we will call "A Better World." It helped young at-risk girls who were likely to get pregnant and/or drop out of school.

Anna Leads Successful Change at A Better World

A Better World used a federation model, being led by a centralized executive function, while the actual work was done in over 500 chapters throughout the United States. Each chapter developed programs to raise the girls' aspirations and help them feel empowered. Although the national organization raised some funds, it was expected that most programmatic money would be raised locally.

Anna's boss, Jack, was head of strategic planning and a member of the executive group. He realized that the basic model was outdated. Even though the present programs positively affected many girls, they did not address the core issues; each year a new group of girls came having similar problems. Could they do something to address the fundamental issues at home and in the community? He developed potential alternative approaches and presented them to the executive committee. They became intrigued, but that was not enough. They could pass multiple resolutions, but unless the chapter leaders and local donors were excited, nothing would happen.

The executive committee decided to use next year's annual conference to produce a major programmatic and strategic change. That meeting would involve over six hundred chapter leaders and their assistants plus two hundred potential donors. It was important to get both groups excited about these new proposals. If they were, then these changes might happen.

The annual conference was routinely planned by an eight-member group that reported to Jane, the COO. Since she was on the executive committee, she told the planning group that the Committee had decided on a major change in strategic direction and asked them to develop a conference program to build excitement and commitment in the attendees.

Anna was concerned whether the planning group was up to the job. Most members had been working together for over a decade, producing the same sort of program each year (often a series of speakers followed by a banquet). Part of the lack of innovation was

(*Continued*)

due to the organization's culture, which was risk-adverse and rewarded people for "playing it safe." Anna wondered whether they could break out of that pattern to develop a truly engaging program.

Anna's fears were justified; in spite of what Jane had told the planning group, their program proposal was a minor variation of what had been done before. The executive committee reacted negatively; "There is no passion in this plan. We need to reach peoples' hearts." After the meeting broke up, the director took Jack aside and said, "Make this happen."

At a retreat a few weeks later, Jack and Anna were taking a taxi back to the hotel when he said, "How would you like to join the planning group?" She asked him, "Is this an offer or a command?" He laughed, "A command."

Anna reflected:

> If I had been totally against it, I know that I could have turned it down. And maybe if it had been completely up to me, I might not have accepted. This was a risky venture; could the executive committee's expectations be met? I also didn't know how Jane would feel with my being imposed on her group. Furthermore, I would be the only woman in the group. But the problem could be with Norm, who was the most influential member and had a reputation for being very resistant to new ideas. And the other members probably wouldn't be too fond of me since they could see my boss's report as the cause of their problems. On the other hand, I like challenges and have a lot of self-confidence. I realized that this was risky, but I believed that the risk to the organization would be greater if we did nothing. Furthermore, my boss believed in me and he too liked challenges, so I knew he would be supportive of my new ideas. But most of all, I deeply believed in what A Better World was trying to do and felt fully committed to this new direction. I thought, "What would be the worst thing that could happen?" While I liked this organization, I wasn't wedded to it and I knew, if necessary, I could get another job.

Anna knew an event that "reach[ed] peoples' hearts" would likely involve some sophisticated media input. But this was not one of her competencies. In accepting the offer, she asked Jack for help and he assigned Lisa from media services. But that didn't fully solve the problem. They didn't know each other, and their first interactions were not promising. Lisa was initially dubious: "I think we are being set up for failure." Anna knew Lisa felt overwhelmed by all they had to do. She reasoned, "But one of my strengths is planning, so I laid out a blueprint of the specific steps to take and that made the whole enterprise seem doable."

This helped a bit, but Anna realized that plans are one thing and execution another. Lisa must believe that they could come through. Anna had contact with a very rich donor in San Francisco and approached him about hosting a small dinner that included the director of A Better World and several other key players. It was a smashing success, and the director's enthusiasm brought Lisa fully on board.

Next, Anna turned to the issue of her relationship with Jane. After that executive committee meeting where the director had turned to Jack to change the design, would

Jane feel resentful? Anna's relationship with Jane was slight, but she went about strengthening it.

> Whenever possible, I tried to have lunch or coffee together. Also it helped that we were both from Missouri and we could share stories. I think another factor is that I am good at numbers and that isn't one of her strengths. (Jane had actually gotten into trouble with the executive committee for not providing a quantitative analysis on another project.) I wonder if her knowing she could rely on me helped to build our connection?

Norm, the most resistant member of the planning group, was a bit tougher. In meetings, he sat leaning back with his arms folded, not being very supportive. Anna knew that if she got him on board, the others would follow. His thirty-three years in the organization gave him a lot of influence. Over that period, he had built strong ties with chapter leaders and donors. Norm was retiring at the end of this year; Anna realized that he wasn't likely to want to jeopardize those relationships.

> Since this was Norm's last year, I knew that he would want to go out on a high note and be seen as vital. One of Norm's strengths was his ability to build relationships with donors and chapter leaders, so I built on that by asking him to take on the responsibility of reaching out to potential donors to invite them to the event. I don't have a need to be seen as 'stage-central.' My commitment is to the purpose of the endeavor so I am willing to be in the background. That did the trick and he started to get committed. With his active involvement, the others came along.

Anna had a difficult conversation with Jane just before the event. Originally Anna and Lisa planned to do the opening introductions, but at the last minute, Jane wanted two others. "I knew that they didn't have the passion that the two of us had. In fact, I wondered whether they were really committed to this new direction. So my fear was that their introduction wouldn't set the right tone. It wasn't an issue of my needing visibility, but doing what was right." Anna stood firm, and Jane backed down.

But they weren't out of the woods yet. Even though Lisa had done a great job in developing different media events for the program, she felt uncomfortable standing before over 800 people describing what she had done. Anna was certain that Lisa could do the job, "And we were the voices that could convey the new path. It was right for the two of us, together, to stand up there. Also, I knew that her doing that would bolster Lisa's self-confidence and avoiding it would undermine it." Lisa reluctantly agreed.

It appeared that everything was in order for the next day and Anna went to her hotel room relieved. At midnight, the phone rang. "Anna, this is Lisa. Come to my room." She dressed hurriedly and found Lisa with an anxiety attack, not breathing easily and tied up with a muscle spasm. An ambulance crew was ready to take her to the hospital. She asked Anna to accompany her so she joined her in the ambulance as they went to the emergency room.

They waited a couple of hours before being seen; gunshot victims came first! At 4 am, Lisa received drip medication to relax her. The doctor reassured her that she

(*Continued*)

would be all right by morning but must remain on the drip for another two hours. Anna said, "I am going back for a couple of hours' sleep; see you at the podium at 8:30." Lisa reluctantly agreed.

The opening session went off beautifully and Lisa came through as Anna knew she would. The session included young girls speaking, a girls' choral group, and multimedia presentations, including several films showing the possibilities of this new direction. The participants didn't passively hear all this but were seated in small groups discussing the strategic proposals and giving input, all of which produced high engagement. This session was unlike anything done before and electrified the audience. (The director did a happy dance in the aisle!) They had truly "reach[ed] peoples' hearts."

Anna knew that "good feelings" weren't enough; the executive committee liked hard numbers. She developed an extensive follow-up survey, not only to measure reactions, but also to assess whether there truly were programmatic changes in the various chapters. The results showed that the strategic change was taking effect. Fund raising in the following year was the highest it had ever been. In addition, there was an important impact on the organization's culture. People saw that doing things differently and taking risks were rewarded. Also, all the cross-functional work that Anna and Lisa had to do started to break down the existing silos.

Note how Anna successfully used the Influence without Authority model with Jane, Lisa, Norm, and the executive committee by determining what was important to them and exchanging that for what she needed:

- *Jane.* To avoid possible resentment, Anna went out of her way to get to know Jane informally and used her comparative quantitative strengths as support. She pushed back when Jane wanted others to present to the executive committee, arguing that Anna and Lisa's passion for the plan would be persuasive.
- *Lisa.* Lisa felt overwhelmed and feared being set up for failure. Anna used her strength in planning to lay out specific steps, making the process appear more doable. She arranged a dinner with a wealthy donor and the director of A Better World, whose enthusiasm helped convince Lisa. She bolstered Lisa about presenting to a large audience.
- *Norm.* This longtime board member was very resistant. Anna knew he was retiring soon and asked him to invite potential donors to the event so he could go out on a high note.
- *Executive committee.* Not used to unusual event designs. Anna's event included organizational clients and interaction, then followed up with survey and numerical data demonstrating impact.

This case raises many other issues frequently mentioned in other interviews.

Importance of the Cause over Self-Promotion

One maxim for successful change agents is to give credit to others for success and not to claim primary credit for oneself.[13] This doesn't require being totally self-effacing, just not claiming all the credit or failing to generously recognize the contributions of others. This is true for both men and women. Nonetheless, women, like Anna have been socialized toward modesty and communal focus and may overemphasize praising others' efforts while downplaying their own role. They do not consider helping others accomplish goals as an exchange for personal benefit but as help in achieving a higher cause. For example, a manager we interviewed said: "In being task-focused, my emphasis is on the job (and helping the other be successful); it is not on myself or trying to prove my competence. My concern is that the last can be threatening to a man. Women, more than men, have to put their ego aside."

On the one hand, this approach of keeping your ego in check can build trust and minimize jealousy or competitive feelings. On the other hand, as another experienced manager put it, "This can also lead to not getting one's quo for the quid put in. Not only are women often socialized to more easily 'give' than ask, but it might be more risky for them to ask." This can be compounded when some women internalize any doubt toward them, which at its worst makes them question whether they deserve positive outcomes.

Note that Anna didn't fall into that trap; she pushed for her and Lisa to give the opening presentation. But again, she made the case from her belief in the larger purpose (generating executive committee enthusiasm), not for self-promotion.

Centrality of Relationships

Many respondents talked about how important relationships are, not just as a means to produce successful influence, but as an end in and of itself. Relationships for them are a currency valuable in their own right, so they don't even like thinking of them as means, as if that somehow cheapens them.

> I care for the other and this orientation keeps it from just being instrumental. I would not feel complete if I just got what I wanted. Instead, my viewpoint is "Have I helped them?" I care about the organization, my department, my team, my colleagues and, yes, I need to get things done.

This orientation can have a series of benefits:

- It can increase the willingness to work on relationships, as Anna did in going out of her way to connect with Jane.
- It can increase the effort to understand the others' world and what they value (their currencies). Anna figured out what Lisa needed to get on board, as well as Norm's needs. Furthermore, it helped her to go beneath the surface in understanding others. When Lisa had her anxiety attack, some in Anna's position could easily have concluded that Lisa wasn't fit for the job. But she had a deeper understanding of Lisa and supported her as a copresenter even when Lisa didn't think she could do it.

It leads to proactivity as a general stance. For example, here is how Crystal Bryant gains influence. She is vice-president, chief of staff to the chairman and CEO of First Republic Bank. Her expertise is not finance (she was a music major in college), but she leverages her relationships to get things done.

> In my role, I have authority over no one—in the sense that I have few direct reports and few people taking precise direction from me. But I have built relationships, and I have learned the importance of inspiring people to action rather than directing them specifically. Developing relationships and building trust is a big part of influence in my world. I collect people from different areas of business to get things done and when I ask someone if they want to be part of what I am working on, almost no one says no. I encourage them to contribute in their own way, and I work hard to do the same by adding value to their activities. I try to get to know them personally and find out what they need. And then I leverage my network to help them. If I can help them make something happen, connect dots across the organization, get a faster answer from our CEO, or enlist resources that wouldn't have been otherwise available, we all win. I never expect something in return; it is for the collective good. We are all on the same team.

As we have indicated, men as well as women often build relationships that enable exchanges that help accomplish work. Creating credit or positive "bank accounts" to build long-term relationships that one can draw on as needed is exactly what savvy organizational members do.[14] Nevertheless, men—or women—who think relationships are important only for short-term transactions are generally less influential and less trusted. It is likely, however, that a higher proportion of women value relationships as a high-priority currency in and of itself, due to either socialization about the importance of relationships or fundamental wiring—or probably both. That may become a potential and possibly under-recognized source of long-term influence.

A related question is whether women are better able to explore emotionally based issues when necessary. If their socialization leads them to explore the emotional realm more, this is likely. One manager suggested:

> Even though I try to understand the other before meeting with them, and am listening to what they say, that is often not enough when the other person is resistant. It takes probing and often the issues have a more emotional cause. Men are more likely to continue to make the logical argument and if they are probing for resistance, it is likely to be on factual/logical issues. I think women are better able to get at the emotional issues, which are ones men might back away from.

If a greater interest in and focus on relationships has these benefits, is there also a potential downside where the concern for building and preserving relationships can supersede other outcomes?

> I think women, and it is true for me, place greater values on approval, acceptance, and positive relationships. One consequence is that, at times, I find it hard to ask for things for myself. I ask myself, "How much of an imposition is this? Am I asking far too much? Does this feel fair?" Putting my own needs first is hard. I am more likely to worry about whether I am using the other, not being used.

Insofar as women may prefer relationship-building, does this ever cause them to give away potential power or influence? Do others expect this of women and seek to take advantage of that tendency or get upset when women don't?

In addition, it can be difficult for anyone to hold to demanding standards with subordinates and colleagues when they have close personal relationships. Many managers believe that they should keep a distance from those who report to them in order to remain objective. That tendency can be true for males and females, but it can actually decrease influence and effectiveness.

It is possible to care and be close *and* still hold to high standards as illustrated by the story of Jack Welch, then CEO of GE, and Jeff Immelt, successor CEO and then one of his key VPs. Jack and Jeff were good friends and their families often had barbecues together. At a management retreat, Jack took Jeff aside and said, "Jeff, you know I love you like a brother, but another quarter like the last one [at GE Plastics] and you will be gone!"[15]

Gender norms may make the sometimes requisite leadership behavior of balancing strong personal connection with strong feedback hard for men and women in different ways; it's worth considering what that feels like for you.

Issues around Relating (and the Process of Building Relationships)

If female gender expectations cause a greater proportion of women to excel at relationship building, that can be an advantage in creating conditions for influence. Recent research on emotional intelligence as a key determinant of success in many occupations supports that women could be at an advantage for their presumed greater social interest and skills.[16] But it also can create complications.

Several women we interviewed spoke of walking a greater tightrope than they thought men walked.

Men are more easily "forgiven" if they are primarily task-focused with poorer relational skills. This is less so for women, who would be seen as "cool/cold" and aloof. The expectation is that they will be good at relational issues and, if not, they will pay greater penalty than a male would.

> I am actually a fairly logical task-oriented person and this helps with relationships. It is a mode of interacting that men tend to be more comfortable with. But I can overdo it and have to remind myself to also use my affective side in building relationships.

Another dimension is the ability to work across differences in work styles and resolve them. As discussed in Chapter 6, everybody has their own way of getting work done; of making decisions, influencing others, and being influenced in turn. Some like to focus on problems, others on opportunities; some like a lot of analysis where for others that is less important. Part of influencing others is understanding how they want to be dealt with.

- One of the effects of socialization is that people from the same culture, background (and gender) are more likely to have somewhat of a common understanding—a set of agreed upon rules about how to deal with each other, at least superficially. Men start with some understanding of how to relate to/influence men (as is likely to be the case with women to women). But this may be less true between genders.
- Most people pick up cues, see what works and what doesn't, and (at times) may even discuss how they need to work together (more about that below).

- In the best of all possible worlds, both parties adapt to the other, each giving what is most important to the other in exchange for what is most important to the self.

But this is modified by several factors. One is power; those with lower power tend to give way to those with greater, so subordinates are more likely to modify their style to fit the boss than the other way around. Another could be gender. While the world is changing, traditionally women have adapted (at home and at work) more to men than the other way around. As another respondent said:

> When interacting with men, I see my job as making them comfortable with me. I tend to be task focused. Part of that is because I get satisfaction from task success, but as much, it is because I think that will make the man comfortable.

Again, this isn't true of all women. And with increased emphasis on emotional intelligence, many men have learned the importance of social skills to influence and produce success. But if women are more likely to feel this more strongly, is it a double-edged sword? Does an increased awareness of the other person's world and needs (currencies) yield a greater ability to set up win-win exchanges? Or does a greater concern for "the relationship to go well" mean that they give up too much too readily? As one woman noted:

> Are men likely to have a harder time with a woman disagreeing than with a man? Often the man's self-image is that he ought to have the answer. My initial entry is likely to be more cautious, and I have to be careful that my history doesn't get me to be overly cautious.

Another said,

> I think it is more "costly" for a man to "lose" [an argument] to a woman than to another man, so I sometimes wonder how far can I push on an issue before that fear gets activated. And if I push too far, is there no coming back?

But at times it is crucial to push back. Judi Wise, at the time an independent consultant, faced this with the possibility that she could have lost a consulting project, but she believed in her position.

> I had a contract to develop training materials for a company that was implementing SAP. They had a broad array of employees ranging from scientist PhDs,

> accountants, and rock quarry workers, and it would be difficult for them to understand the implementation, as it is everywhere. I suggested stories, with "SAP" as one of the characters, who influenced other characters, and have it narrated so when in training, the stories could be segmented. Then we could ask the trainees what horror stories about SAP they had heard.
>
> I wanted to use a professional woman narrator, but I got strong resistance because the company was southern and they were afraid that would be too soft. I argued that it depended on the quality of the voice, and it could lessen fear. I had to argue all the way up to the CEO, who finally agreed. We recorded it and got the outcomes we wanted. Might have been different if I hadn't stood up and pushed for a woman.

Another talked about being careful of the setting when disagreeing with men.

> I am conscious of the setting when I disagree and more likely to do it one-on-one. I am especially conscious if the man is with other men because I am concerned how he will feel in front of other men if I disagree with him.

Being judicious, though good, could stifle disagreements in group settings. Also, you don't always have choices. How do you raise a man's problematic behavior in a way that can enhance influence? Here is a tough example from an internal training and development employee at an insurance company that utilizes physicians to train other physicians. Physicians can often be a difficult audience.

> I was training physicians on meeting facilitation, including how to handle difficult situations. During the session, a physician storms in, looks me up and down, picks up the material, folds it, stares at me, sits down and folds his arms. Then he starts arguing with another physician about why they had to come to such a meeting. I said, "OK, take a break." Another physician came up and said he was sorry, and I replied that I appreciated it. The other one said nothing. When I started the meeting again, I said, "Sometimes someone comes in late, looks you up and down, etc., and not everyone will like you. Physicians don't always want to be trained by a person who is not a physician. What do you do?"
>
> We had a great discussion and my problem physician opened the book, started paying attention, and wasn't any further trouble.

What was so skillful about this approach is that she didn't avoid the issue, but bypassed setting up an interpersonal win-lose situation by turning it into a learning opportunity (and having the peers of the problematic member indirectly speak to his disruptive behavior).

Can We Talk About This? The Challenge of Discussing Forbidden Subjects

As mentioned above (an approach stressed throughout the book), the ability to openly discuss issues that are getting in the way of finding common ground is valuable.

But that assumes not only that you have the skills to hold these "difficult conversations" but that they are considered legitimate in the first place (which they may not have been in the previous example). Traditionally, "talking about our relationship" has been seen as (feminine) "touchy-feely" talk. Will the woman be seen as weak if she directly raises it? But that doesn't have to be the case, as this situation illustrates.

> I was running a workshop on authentic leadership and after the event, but with some people still milling around in the room, the CEO came up to me and out of the blue, called me an asshole. Even though everyone knew that he was like a high-school guy who was quite crude and not really malicious, I was totally unprepared. Men don't usually call you an asshole openly. I couldn't believe it. He held my future in his hands. I felt bad, angry, but I decided not to confront him there. When I got back to my room, I thought, "I don't let people call me names." The next day, I went to him and said, "I didn't appreciate what you did in front of others, and wouldn't have even if we were alone; I don't let anyone treat me that way." He looked stunned. His response was "Oh, I was just trying to be real." I replied, "That's not OK." He never called me a name again and we got on well afterwards. He was still the same somewhat sexist guy in general, but treated me with more respect. It changed our relationship.

In this case, she decided not to confront him in front of others, fearing that he would be either backed into a corner or too embarrassed. But her sense of her own worth overcame her concerns (along with her confidence that in the worst case she could find another job), and she directly told him that what he did wasn't acceptable. She didn't say, "Oh, you hurt my feelings, and I would like to discuss how you could be so hurtful," nor did she ask for an explanation. She just directly declared "that isn't acceptable," and he backed down.

Another alternative, consistent with lessons from authentic leadership as well as demonstrating her demands for being respected, might have been to say something like, "If you didn't like something I was doing I don't mind getting feedback from you, and I can take it, but publicly calling me a name is not only useless but just plain hurtful. That isn't acceptable." That might have been her response to his weak attempt to justify his behavior by saying that he was just trying to be real, as if there are no appropriate boundaries for authenticity. But of course it isn't always so easy to think of just the right counterpoint in just the perfect language while under incoming fire!

Context Matters. What's the Gender Ratio?

Another factor in building relationships is taking into account who's in the room or situation. While this includes things like power and roles, gender can be an important aspect, too; the proportion of women (or any other minority in a group) creates context. There is a big difference between being the only one or a few women and being part of a more evenly mixed group.[17] In the former, men are more likely to set the rules of engagement, consciously or not, thus limiting how much influence a woman can have. Nancy faced that as the only woman in an internal staff group.

> I was the only woman working with seven men as part of an internal consulting group that served other divisions in the company. We were a new department, so part of our job was to show the other departments how we could be of help. Demand was slowly growing, but we were impatient.
>
> In one of our staff meetings, the topic came up whether we should significantly increase the size of our group to twelve—[almost] a 50% increase. "Let's go for it." "If we build something, they will come." I was concerned because the company had an internal billing system so the different staff groups were expected to "pay their own way" by getting enough internal work to cover all costs. If we hired this many more people and there wasn't a corresponding increase in internal business, we would be in the red—and that was something the company frowned upon.
>
> I raised these concerns, but was soon shouted down. "Let's show that we are to be taken seriously." This all seemed very "high-school-macho," but I felt that I couldn't say that. This issue wasn't being discussed on rational business terms, but more personally. Even though I had a reasonably good relationship with my colleagues, it wasn't of the sort that I thought I could get away with questioning their motives—especially those.

Feeling totally outnumbered and blocked from having any influence in the total group, she tried a different strategy.

> Instead, I decided to have a series of individual informal meetings with each of them. But this didn't turn out to be very successful. I saw Steve as a key person, and if I could influence him, then there might be some chance with the others.

> I pointed out to him that if we were seen as begging for business, it could lower our prestige as contrasted to having more demand than we could meet. In the latter case, the other departments would be supporters of our increasing staffing rather than seeing us as empire building.
>
> But all my arguments appeared to fall on deaf ears. Steve came back with strong enthusiasm. "You are too cautious; we can do it if we show our confidence." My talks with others produced the same reactions, so the decision was made to hire the new four members.

As Nancy feared, they could not generate enough business over the next two years to keep all twelve fully employed. She had argued her position not out of self-interest but for the department. Nancy had built enough relationships in the company to be fully booked personally, but finance continued to badger the group for its deficits. Her actions also didn't interfere with her peer work relationships. "I continued to work well with my colleagues, including a successful project with Steve."

But the issue still lingered for her.

> I continued to feel annoyed at what I thought was an impulsive, not thought-out action. I didn't want to rub their noses into it, but I also didn't want this to pass unmentioned. I thought, "If I were a man, I could point out that their 'penis competition' didn't work out well," but I knew that would be alienating, even emasculating.
>
> So I held myself back and when the year-end figures came in, I went up to Steve and, smiling, I asked, "How is that working out? I understand we haven't made budget in the last two years." Steve laughed and said, "Guess you have seen the results."
>
> This satisfied my need to bring up the issue and I continued to work well with the group. But what lingered with me was the resentment that I had to hold myself back both initially and afterwards. A guy could have been more direct.

Crystal Bryant faced a similar situation in a group with super-macho norms but handled it differently.

> I was a music major at Indiana University; there were 40–50 trombone performance majors, and I was the only "girl." Life as a female trombonist was not without challenges; the easiest way to overcome them was to be better than other players. But's it's not really that simple. Being good at what I do helped me gain respect, but that's not the same thing as gaining acceptance. That was more personal. And it's definitely easier if you are "one of the guys." Most musicians make a living by freelancing, which means relationships

> matter, because people tend to hire those with whom they like to work. Of course, I wanted to be liked. While I could never be a "guy," I could still build relationships with my colleagues and be a fun, nonjudgmental friend. And it turns out that we were not all that different. We drank, we laughed, we played practical jokes on each other. We also watched marathon opera DVDs, listened to orchestra recordings together, and played chamber music late into the night. To this day, those guys are some of my closest friends, and I even married one of them.

In another case, Yin, a short, slight-looking Chinese American engineer working for a wind-power company, told us:

> I am aware that because I am female, and actually a physically small female, people don't see power/authority through me, but they don't see me as a threat either. This means that they could be less defensive/insecure in front of me since they don't need to show they are more powerful than me. Most of the time, I am totally OK that they think I am less powerful, because it means I can influence them in my own way. . . . When I get out of the truck at the wind-farm, the men look at me wondering what I am doing there. But I am the first one up the pole and can talk as loudly as they can. It's not a problem and sort of fun. [I] climb the 100-meter tall tower . . . with similar pace though I had the option to use the elevator, but I know the norm in the field is technicians with tools use elevator and the others climb to save time.
>
> I ask lots of questions, and some of them are not true questions, "Why didn't we do it this way? Can you help me understand it better?" All those questions help me understand their motivations, worries, and make them to rethink their decisions as well. Then I will offer help to do more analysis, to facilitate conversations with whichever party needed, etc. Eventually, I achieve the changes I intended through others, and they feel they are part of . . . I will give them as much credibility as I can. The truly powerful people do not feel the need to show off. [I] go deep to technical stuff right away so they know I know the design and I can tell them things they don't know, how certain technical decisions are made and my hypothesis of the problem. Most times, they are very surprised/shocked and it became easier for me to get all the info I need and even more, and they will provide the help I need.

Years ago, Mary Barra, now CEO of GM, deftly called out harassing behavior (and got it to stop), enhancing how she was perceived while building relationships and influence and honing valuable career skills.

As a new engineering graduate, her job was to find ways to open communications with line workers at an assembly plant. Whenever she walked through the plant, she was greeted by a shrill wolf whistle from a particular employee and catcalls and stares from others. After several such encounters, she stopped and asked the wolf whistler what he was doing. Taken aback, he replied that he wanted to attract her attention. She responded that if he wanted her attention he should just say "hi," and she would respond the same way. He did, and after that they greeted each other when she came by, and soon others quieted down also.

This experience helped shape Barra's future leadership style, a key aspect of which consists of trying to look at the world through other people's eyes. She told author Joann Lublin, "I have this fundamental belief that everybody is pretty rational. . . . If you can understand what is motivating them or change what is motivating them, you can accomplish things."[18]

Even early in her career, Mary Barra could avoid getting hooked on inappropriate, harassing behavior and instead move into inquiry, assuming that the employee might actually be a "potential ally," which he indeed became. Such reframing can be a very useful way of breaking through automatic stereotypes or assumptions, as can unexpected use of humor. Again, as noted earlier, staying even-tempered in the flash of interactions isn't always easy, but you can build up better reflexes over time if you practice.

These ways of fitting in can be adaptive or educational, and the cost they carry will vary for each woman. Crystal, Yin, or Mary Barra don't seem to think that they were "selling their souls," but others might. The challenge is to try stepping back and considering possible choices, since you often have more options than may at first appear. To keep from being trapped with "no choice," keep seeking what currencies the other person seems to be seeking, what forces are likely to be driving the desire for those currencies, and how you might address those in some other way.

Self-Confidence

Many examples throughout this book have described how a person faced challenges when introducing something new, which frequently involves dealing with opposition and resistance without the full or sufficient support of formal authority. In many cases, people question not only the wisdom of the change effort but the initiator's ability to do the job. This also often requires persistence.

Here is a situation that Judi Wise faced when she was trying to build an independent consulting business:

> I was on a flight from Salt Lake City to Omaha and was sitting next to an engineer, who was a director at Union Pacific Railway. We discussed his

> needs, and I proposed a contract. (Since this was an organization of men, and it was the railroad, they usually didn't use women contractors.) But he was interested and made a verbal commitment on the plane. But then I didn't hear anything. I called him three days later, and he said, "Oh yeah, I remember," but then weeks went by. I felt put off and didn't know if he just liked me on the plane ride because he was drinking. After several weeks, I called again, said, "I was the woman on the airplane; where do you stand on funding?" He said he was waiting for funding. I kept calling, I was going to do it until he said, "No, go away."

Many people would have given up after the first or second phone call. She was not impervious when the director didn't respond. In fact, she reported, "At first I felt insecure, threatened, didn't know what he was thinking about me," but she persisted—and eventually got the contract.

Having doubts is reasonable. No one can be certain of success in a new and challenging project involving resistant stakeholders and untried methods. In the above example, Judi strongly believed that she could come through. But what if this were truly a new project, like Anna's at A Better World. Anna had no assurance that she would succeed. What would happen if she failed and the conference presentation she planned bombed? She might not have lost her job, but would her standing and reputation in the organization suffer? Would she have less influence in the future and lose interesting assignments (and promotions)?

Lisa in that situation had major doubts. First, could she and Anna come up with a program that would "reach peoples' hearts," and then, even if they did, would she be able to give the opening presentation before 800 people? (It took Anna's persistent support to keep Lisa on board, and such external support isn't always available.)

Men as well as women have such doubts, but gender socialization and lived experience may combine to create higher hurdles for confidence among women in many situations. One successful leader admitted:

> One of the major problems is a lack of confidence. When I think of taking on a new task or make a request, I wonder, "Do I have what it takes? Do I deserve this?" I think a lot of this comes from socialization. Teachers call on boys more than they call on girls. Men don't get interrupted as often as women. Men don't nearly as often experience a comment they make getting ignored and then repeated ten minutes later by a man and acknowledged.[19] All of this raises internal questions of "how much value do I have?"

Another woman offered,

> I think men and women respond differently when questions are raised about either the project or their ability to do it. Men see it as a challenge, whereas women go into self-doubt. Also, men often hide self-doubt and pretend confidence to the outside world even when they don't feel it inside.

Clearly that isn't true for all men or all women. For example, Anna liked challenges; that was one reason she took on the project when the planning team had first failed.

Sometimes overt acts can undermine, as Kate McKone-Sweet (now a college professor) reported.

> I was a new engineering college grad and got a job at Procter & Gamble in charge of a production area with 60 people. They were all older than me, ranging from 30 to 60 years old. For each 15-person team there was a line leader and an assistant line leader. The line leader on the third shift wouldn't talk to me, and I was his manager! He would just leave when I tried to talk to him. His line was one of the best, but he wouldn't say why he was so successful.

Kate was faced with what could be seen as insubordination as well as disrespect.

> I don't handle anger well so I didn't respond to that. I attributed the situation more to age than to gender and felt that I had to gain trust. I would go in late at night to see how he did it. Turned out that he jerry-rigged equipment. But he didn't want to do paper work, so I did it for him and got him recognition for it. My sense was that was how to handle him.
>
> It doesn't mean that I avoided conflict when necessary. One time, one of his favorite techs messed up, causing a big quality problem. I pulled the tech in, chewed him out, swore plenty, but gave him a break. Then I really let loose and swore to the line leader, ending with, "If this ever happens again, there will be big consequences!" After that, he still didn't talk to me much, but it built some trust, and he would do what was needed. I think it was the swearing that did it.

This still doesn't answer the question of why some (men and women) have self-confidence and others don't. Anna said, "Because I believe in this cause" (and she knew she could get another job). Crystal got confidence from being as good as or better than most other trombone players (and probably from being accepted by her peers). Judi kept going because, she said, "I believed in what I had to offer and the money was significant to my business, so I was going to fight for it." Lisa presented to a large audience despite her fear because of Anna's support.

But the internal demon of self-doubt is something that probably everybody, male and female, has to struggle with. Judi went on to say:

> Getting the railroad contract was a transformative experience. I went from being insecure, questioning, to believing in myself. That I could win other contracts while waiting helped. I was very worried about what people thought of me at the time; I needed to learn to not worry about what others think, since you can't control that, though I still sometimes do. I just go with my proposals because it is the right thing. I struggled a long time with that. You don't want to come off as too emotional, but not as not caring. It's a big balancing act.
>
> No one wants to be told "no," get rejected. I used to be emotionally drenched, focused on one negative evaluation no matter how many positive ones there were. Over time I had to look at what I was good at, what I wanted to be, if I wanted to be a woman in business, not be aggressive but assertive, stand by my services, not be unable to give quality services if I am told no, be able to talk to people in a boardroom so that they listen, not just pay attention to how I look. You have to go through this evolution of self-discovery.

Nevertheless, for women, even quite successful ones, a residue of reluctance to advocate for themselves can remain. Listen to Bonnie, who has built a very successful consulting firm:

> I struggle, as a consultant, asking for the rates my male colleagues get. One has less training than I have but charges top rates—three to four times what I do—and he gets them! He says, "One out of three prospective clients should complain that my rates are too high." I worry about disappointing a client, which causes me to "low-ball" my rates. I tell myself that I would rather undercharge and overdeliver than be perceived as not providing the value the client has purchased.
>
> Where does this come from? Part of this is a lack of confidence in my competitive competence—even though I have built a million-dollar business. But part of it is historic. I am the first-generation college graduate from immigrant grandparents who struggled through the Great Depression. But part is my mother's voice. I was instructed not to "toot my own horn" but just to work hard and that would be rewarded.

> The irony is that I am a very successful recruiter and skilled at negotiating highly attractive compensation packages for my clients. But it is different when it comes to negotiating for myself. My alpha white male clients rarely struggle with this issue in the same way. But I have observed that female leaders are much better advocating for their teams than for their own compensation needs.

In addition to Bonnie's explanations for her success in negotiation on behalf of clients, recent research suggests that women find it easier to advocate on behalf of others because then there is no concern about gender stereotype backlash. They may not be fully aware of this kind of concern, but it may undermine confidence when they are asking the maximum for themselves.[20] Similarly, the McKinsey study (note 2 in this chapter) had as one conclusion, "The probability that a woman was going to be perceived as bossy, aggressive, intimidating—words that we specifically asked about—versus men who asked for the same thing . . . was almost 30 percent more likely." As the beginning of this chapter noted, gender is complex.

The Dilemma of Gaining Confidence

We wish it were true that there is a shortcut to:

1. Gaining the confidence needed to willingly explore what is important to others, even if that seems threatening in some situations, and
2. Acquiring greater confidence about pushing back against comments or actions, intentional or inadvertent, that reduce your influence (especially when you believe the resistance is inappropriately gender-based).

Gender dynamics may add an additional nuance to building confidence, if you don't come by it naturally. Yet we know that it is impossible to gain confidence without taking action in a difficult situation and somehow succeeding or at least surviving, as several women described above did. While there are no guarantees, we believe that greater awareness of the dynamics and complexities of gender, especially as gender expectations are changing, can be helpful. We also believe that a posture of inquiry helps a lot; instead of leaping to assumptions about what others mean or intend, get in the habit of asking nonjudgmentally and then listening carefully to the answer for an opening that will allow you to exert savvier influence.

CONCLUSIONS

This entire book is about the factors that let you have influence when you have no formal authority. As applied to gender, these include:

- *Seeing the other as a potential ally* even when the person is very different, resistant, or hostile, as was true with several of the examples. Don't write anyone off without a lot of exploration; they may be making erroneous assumptions about you based on gender misconceptions, and vice versa.
- *Fully understanding their world*, including the factors in the organization that drive them, such as how they are measured and rewarded, what their boss expects, and the culture of their unit.
- *Being aware of your (primary) goals*. What are your needs, and how do they relate to your task objectives? What risks are you willing to take? What will you accept short term? Can you determine how to balance task effectiveness and relationship?
- *What is the nature of the relationship* and how does the other person want to be related to? Can you adapt to that? Can you discuss the relationship without becoming uncomfortable when someone is not used to it?
- *What is a win-win exchange* so that you meet your goals and the other also does? Can you negotiate exchanges collaboratively even when the other person is trying only to win?

This book demonstrates that achieving all this is not easy. But as this chapter shows, it can be made easier when you take into account gender and gender relationships. The dynamics can make the situation incredibly complex. On the one hand, suggesting universal solutions would be presumptuous, given the wide range of the ways men and women see and respond to this topic. On the other hand, we can offer you dimensions or dilemmas to help frame your considerations, in the hope that you can now work through them better in your own way.

Can You Hear the Bias?

It used to be that most symphonies were played by men. It is unlikely that during yearly auditions the judges thought, "Symphonies ought to have men because women can't play as well; we are objective." Hoping to eliminate the predominance of men, they moved to blind auditions, but gender composition didn't change much. Then they realized that the judges were unconsciously picking up the sound of women's shoes. Only when the players came to the auditions barefoot were women chosen.[21]

Though this chapter may inadvertently sound as if it is addressed primarily to women, men also must face gender assumptions and expectations and determine how to account for or escape them when they limit possibilities.

Caution, however, should not shut down increased self-awareness or continuing curiosity. This chapter might be a guide to places where you should pay close attention, test assumptions, ask clarifying questions, acknowledge your own blind spots, and ask for advice from or have exploratory conversations with friendly colleagues, who are likely to be pleased when you want their views on these matters. Remember that gender is just one aspect in influence strategy, though if you had not invested prior thought or work on it before, hopefully you are better primed now. Nevertheless, it is a territory in which we all need to explore and learn. Good luck.

CHAPTER 9

INFLUENCING YOUR BOSS

> I don't want any yes-men around me. I want everybody to tell me the truth even if it costs them their job.
>
> —*Samuel Goldwyn, Movie Producer*

Moving your boss without getting fired—or receiving as a boss powerful messages helpful in achieving your goals—are the aims of this chapter. Could being more effective with your boss grant you more latitude, more support, or more challenging assignments? Or would you like to influence something about your boss's management style, such as more effective ways of dealing with higher-ups? The challenge is to gain influence with your boss in ways that build your relationship rather than threaten it. Too many managers and leaders are not very good bosses, and those who are good could be even better.

As the person with less formal power, be careful not to give away your power unnecessarily, so you can be fully effective. One temptation is heroic thinking about leadership, succumbing to the assumption that leaders have all the responsibility and control, so you only need to deliver what is formally assigned to you and "delegate upwards" everything else, without taking initiative to accomplish unit goals. A related temptation is expecting perfect problem solving from the boss and becoming judgmental when that's not the case.[1]

Your boss's effectiveness is part of your job. It starts with you. This is a fundamental mind shift in today's organizations! You are, in part, responsible for helping your boss be a more effective manager and a better boss to you. Whether you or your boss see it that way, you are partners in making your department or team work well:

- *Your boss has only half the relevant information.* It would be lovely if every boss knew exactly what you needed and provided it without your asking, but that is not likely. Your boss is not a mind reader—you are the one who knows how you should be managed to achieve your potential.
- *The world is growing so complex that bosses couldn't handle everything even if they wanted to.* They are too overloaded and have subordinates with too many differing styles. Also, subordinates often have knowledge and special competencies that bosses must use to achieve excellence.
- *You have expertise about how well your manager achieves his or her intentions in managing you.* Your boss might want to provide clear direction, but only you know what is clear to you. In other words, your boss needs you.

We are suggesting that the basic nature of the manager-employee relationship should change from the old superior-subordinate form of interaction (with all its implications of all-knowing dominance and ignorant submission). Instead, we advocate more of a partnership relationship.[2] While a difference in hierarchy remains, junior and senior partners still form a partnership.

How do junior partners act? They take a "partner" orientation. Irrespective of status difference, partners don't let their partners:

- Make huge mistakes.
- Inadvertently look bad.
- Go uninformed when one partner knows things the other partner should know.
- Stay loyal to the senior partnership's objectives.
- Instead, partners (until forced to believe otherwise):
  - Place the organization's good ahead of their own short-term good.
  - Value and take advantage of differing skills and perspectives.
  - Tolerate each other's foibles.
  - Assume that bad behavior comes not from bad intentions but rather from misinformation or misguided views. They assume that senior partners are basically intelligent and competent people trying to do their best for the firm.

No self-respecting partners could stand silently by when other partners, no matter how senior, are about to make a costly blunder, overlook important opportunities, or miss information vital for success. A partner is obliged to be as responsible as possible, even at the risk of personal discomfort or embarrassment.

This obligation asks a lot of you, but wouldn't you want the people who report to you to have that basic mind-set? Accept responsibility for the relationship with your boss; both of you win if you are more productive. That is the leverage point for influence with your manager.

Accepting responsibility can get you the benefits many people want: greater scope to your job, better supervision and coaching, a closer or more open work relationship, or a boss who is more effective in the organization. (Not all managers may, at first, welcome such a partnership relationship, and we deal with that later.)

THE APPROACH

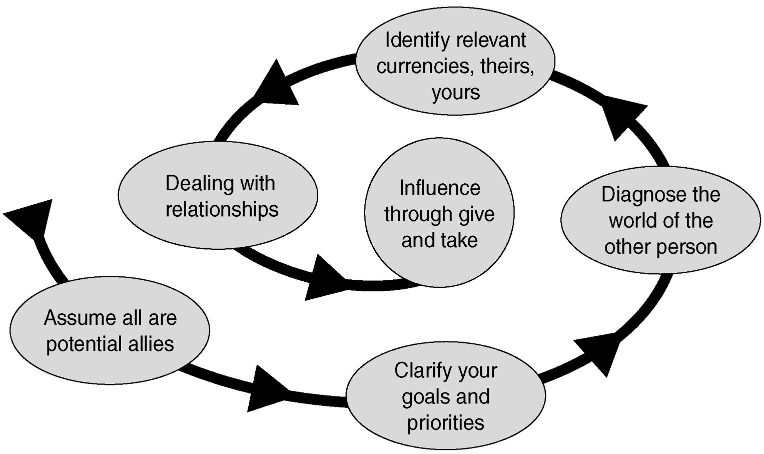
To get the kind of influence with your boss that will pay off, you should do five main things (Figure 9.1):

1. See the boss as a potential ally (a partner).
2. Be clear on what you really want (your goals and priorities).
3. Make sure you genuinely understand the boss's world.
4. Understand the resources (currencies) you already have or can acquire.
5. Pay attention to ways in which the boss wants to be related to.

Is your boss incredibly demanding? Do you find your boss highly judgmental, jumping on you for the slightest mistake? Would you prefer it if your boss began interactions with you by addressing how you can develop, rather than merely judging every action? Before writing him or her off as totally impossible, assume that your boss might be a potential ally, a partner very concerned about success and deeply worried about failure (not a huge leap for the ambitious person that he or she is). With this orientation, maybe you won't just cringe at the boss's comments but look for what to learn from them.

Do you want to influence such a person? If you see that kind of person as a potential ally and partner, wouldn't you want to try to understand his world? Chapter 4 warns against jumping to a "personality analysis" of the other instead of looking at situational factors that often are more powerful. Say it is New York real estate, a rather cutthroat industry in a competitive city, with very large fortunes made—and lost. In that situation, doesn't a manager need to know that he is working with the best, with somebody who is skilled and savvy in deal making rather than running operating businesses? A boss with

Figure 9.1
Summary of the Cohen-Bradford Model of Influence without Authority



those pressures probably won't be very patient with subordinates. A real estate tycoon's likely currencies include street smarts, financial acumen, people whom he can rely on, toughness, ability to spot big opportunities, and thoroughness.

Examine what you bring to the party. Let's assume you have the basic financial knowledge. You control how hard you are willing to work, how thoroughly you analyze opportunities, and how tough and tough minded you are. Can you be as nervy as your boss would like, creating confidence in your bold thinking? Can you actively seek deals and talk to everyone in the industry to hone your skill in spotting opportunities?

Then consider how he interacts with others—clients and business associates (especially those of lower status). Is he usually gruff and blunt? And how does he respond to people who are forceful rather than deferential? (Not infrequently, people who appear domineering respect those who stand up to them.)

Then be clear about what you want. Is a warm and fuzzy boss really important to you? Or one who gives you challenging assignments?

Once you understand the currencies in your arsenal and how such a boss likes being related to, could you make the following approach (perhaps adapting your language and tone to his)?

> Sir, I am as hungry as you to find great real estate deals and to protect your investments. I work long hours and am always ready to work longer if needed. You have years of hard-won experience in New York. When you see me do something wrong, you would get more for your investment in me if you didn't just hit me as hard as I deserve but also talked to me about how to do it better. I want to learn, and I can take it, no matter how tough you are with me. But I want to be sure that I learn the lessons that will help both of us.

Influence Strategy

We can't guarantee that talking this way would definitely work with your boss, but it has a chance because it follows three central principles:

1. *You are showing your boss how altering behavior is in his or her interest.* Notice the difference between saying that you want your boss to help develop you because it will make you happy and wanting development because it creates return on the boss's investment, which he or she cares a lot about.
2. *You are showing your boss that his or her best interest is for you to be successful and satisfied because that produces the best work from you.* You acknowledge your interests but connect them right back to what your boss (almost certainly) wants.
3. *You are delivering your preference in a style that your boss prefers.* You have used a tough, no-nonsense tone, asserting that you can take anything that is dished out but will be more productive if your boss thinks about your learning.

We will assume that you have used the basic model to develop a well-thought-out plan that takes account of your boss's world, speaks to his or her currencies, and furthers the organization's objectives.

The first question is, how have you presented it? Does it consider the boss's style of working?

For example, does your manager like fully developed ideas (rather than input early on)? If so, you probably need to sort your ideas first, testing their feasibility with colleagues. Because experience tells you that your boss is likely to resist new ideas, don't bring any if you haven't worked them out or aren't reasonably certain of their benefits.

Perhaps the way you present the ideas creates the problem. Have past responses left you irritated and frustrated, so you come in with a chip on your shoulder, expecting a refusal that proves what a hypocrite your boss is? That isn't likely to create a positive reception.

The goal is to always be on your boss's side, not a critic or antagonist. You are always seeking to help the boss meet his or her goals unless you truly can't stomach the goals, in which case no technique is likely to work. (If you are that opposed, get out as soon as you can.)

(For an example of someone who stood up to a boss insisting on an unreasonable action while remaining on the boss's side, see the example of Fred and Dave in Chapter 16.)

Typical Issues with Bosses

This section takes a sample of actual statements about what people want from their bosses and uses the statements as the basis for questions and answers about influencing your boss. Several more can be found at www.influencewithoutauthority.com.

Problem 1: My Boss Resists My Ideas for How to Improve Things in Our Area. "I often have new ideas for doing things better around here. Yet, when I raise these ideas with my manager, he resists them and often lists all the reasons that an idea won't work or isn't worth the trouble. I find it very discouraging, especially since my boss always says that he wants us to take initiative."

Possible Answers. Why would a boss be so resistant?

- Does your boss really believe that you are on his or her side? Do you present ideas only in ways that help your area, or do you also speak to your boss's concerns?
- What pressures affect your boss? Has he been recently burned with an idea (from somebody else) that went wrong? Or does she face similar negative challenges from her boss and need to cover all the bases?
- You might have stated the expected benefits of your ideas, but have you assessed the costs? Have you gotten into a "sell mode" rather than presenting a balanced picture? (And perhaps all your boss's questions are an attempt to provide that balance.)
- Are you overloading an overloaded boss? Too often subordinates make requests in this form: "Here is a great idea, and you just need to do B, G, X & Y." Have you understood your boss's world and the forces that

> might be inducing resistance? Does your boss already feel overloaded and out of control, as many do currently? (That may well explain why your boss asks for initiative without responding well to it.) If your idea creates more work for your boss, even temporarily, she may be reacting to that, not the idea itself.

If your boss is overloaded, how can you help? Can you do things to ease the burdens, rather than add to them? Can you do more homework on your idea to show that it is already fully worked out and that you can take on more burdens so it's easier to implement? Can you do the analysis and the lobbying, or round up supporters so it's more attractive for your boss to agree?

But let's assume none of these points apply. Then the question is, "How have you treated the objections?" Did you see them just as excuses and resistance? What if you saw them as concerns (currencies)? How could you resolve them (e.g., pay the boss by addressing the concerns in exchange for your project)? That is how junior partners act.

The question of why your boss resists your ideas contains two angles: (1) What creates resistance to the ideas, and (2) why does the boss declare a desire for innovation but then undermine it?

The previous diagnosis mostly addresses resistance to your ideas, so we turn now to the second issue: the possibility of being undermined. Without real inquiry, you are guessing about what bothers your boss and what he or she might want from you. Go to the horse's mouth: Could you, in a non-accusatory, truly inquiring mode, ask why you are getting the responses that you are?

Such a direct approach might not work. In spite of your spirit of really wanting to know (and not as a veiled attack on his competence), your boss might think that your question is too presumptuous or can be answered only with uncomfortable levels of self-disclosure. So you might have to rely on your initial diagnosis.

If asking doesn't work, you could still directly raise the issue by framing it in terms of your development. This can sound phony unless you really are curious, so be cautious. "I really want to take you up on your request for all of us to initiate more, but I have tried several times and you do not seem to encourage my ideas. Can you help me see how to improve them so that they will be acceptable?" That is not antagonistic, and it gives your boss several choices: tell you how to strengthen your ideas (e.g., calculating payback ahead of time or identifying all the stakeholders who will have to buy in), reassure you to keep trying and to make the ideas bigger or smaller or whatever will help them gain acceptance, tell you more about why he has been discouraging (which helps you understand what currencies would alleviate the reasons), or possibly rethink how he has reacted and start to be more welcoming. "Help me learn" places the onus on you, not the boss, if done sincerely.

Utilizing Partnership to Gain Responsibility/Greater Scope for Your Job

Problem 2: How Can I Get What I Want from My Boss in Terms of Improved Job Scope, Challenge, or Autonomy?

> I can do so much more if he will let me. And it would be a lot more interesting, too.

Answer. The first thing is to reframe the question. The present statement focuses on what you want. But how could you focus on the boss's (and the organization's) best interest? One implication of partnership is that it lets you bring more to the party than acting as a deferential subordinate does. With an altered job scope, you could share in the responsibility for the success of the unit and take on new tasks to help that happen. That should lighten the boss's burden because you are taking on more challenging and meaningful tasks. The best way for this to occur is if you become a partner in deciding how tasks will be allocated, because you know your own capacities and interests—and know which stretches would be reasonable and which would pull you apart. That is why your participation in the decision process is reasonable. Asking for a part in the decision is not a request to displace your boss but to ensure the process includes you, a person with important data that can produce a more informed decision.

However, your boss may not agree with your assessment of your capacities and readiness. Rather than seeing this as a defeat, see this as a way to gain crucial information (which may lay the groundwork for a win-win outcome).

First, you want to find out the source of his hesitancy. Is your boss holding on to the time you messed up on a previous assignment? Or are you asking for something so different from previous tasks that your boss is concerned whether you can come through? This is important information to have, both because it can be good learning and because it lets you formulate a solution.

Again, using the notion that his concerns are his currencies, could you work out the following possibilities?

Rarely do managers want to underuse the employee's abilities. So there is a discrepancy between your view of your performance capabilities and your boss's.

The key is to initiate a discussion in which you listen very closely to the concerns. This will be difficult because you will be tempted to rebut. But you must keep in mind that you are having the conversation to discover the concerns. Are they about something you did (or didn't do) in the past? About how you work with others? Or are the concerns not about you, but about the project's visibility and his own exposure if you fail?

You may not agree, but you have to start with the concerns—they are real to the boss, if not to you. This won't be easy to hear, but this approach has a double benefit: You learn the concerns and, therefore, the currencies you will have to deliver to address them. You also reassure the boss that you can take it when he or she tells you any negative stuff that he has been sitting on all along.

Now you are able to suggest some win-win exchanges. If your boss wonders whether you can do this expanded job, ask how you can improve your performance. If he is worried that you will go off on tangents, work out periodic checkpoints in exchange for the assignment. Can you agree on a small portion as a test? You are paying in the currencies that he is most concerned about in exchange for your acquiring the challenging work you want.

As an example of what can happen even in a situation that seems almost impossible, here is what a female lawyer in a male-dominated law firm in Jordan did when she kept getting turned down for partner, even though it was clear to her that she was more talented than the men who were making it. When she carefully diagnosed what her boss cared about and offered an exchange that included a way for him to afford the promotion, it worked. She eventually was made partner! Note that she implicitly follows the Influence without Authority model, determining the currencies of the law firm's owner and showing him both the short-term and long-term benefits of giving her what she wanted.

> [I said to the owner,] "If you can't keep me, you can't ever keep anybody like me. . . . So, let's talk about a structure that can probably incentivize somebody like me. . . . You overpay a lot of people . . . you don't fire people that perform poorly . . . [You need to] free up some of the cash of the company so you can actually pay [high performers] proper bonuses, by letting go of the nonproductive lawyers." . . . We spent about eight months going back and forth, back and forth. I created time lines and milestones . . . it involved firing people . . . it involved cutting down the allowances of the partners initially so we can create a better profit.[3]

Improving the Superior–Subordinate Work Relationship

Traditionally, any problems between superior and subordinate were considered the problem of the subordinate, who had to adapt. That's just the way it was. However, with the current knowledgeable workforce, when no single individual has a monopoly on talent and answers, good junior partnership requires more than constant agreement with the boss. Bosses cannot afford to send in the clones; they must create, value, and work with strong individuals who have the knowledge the boss does not have, and both must learn to blend views rather than always fight to win or compromise away strength.

Thus, powerful forces are pushing everyone in supervisory positions to seek partner-like responses from subordinates. Bosses need to be able to say, for example, "I am good at seeing the big picture but not at attending to crucial details; thank heavens that the junior partner is conscientious about little things that mean a lot," rather than look at such a difference and proclaim, "I can't be bothered with that midget-mind who can't see the forest for the trees."

Nevertheless, not all bosses are interested in work relationships with subordinates that include openness, full trust, and expression of all feelings or collaborative problem solving. What can you do if your boss is not ready for the kind of partnership you want?

Problem 3: My Boss Doesn't Want a Partnership. "I have tried to use your suggestion of being a junior partner to my boss, but he doesn't seem to want this. In fact, he seems quite annoyed and defensive, as if he thinks I am criticizing him. He even said once, 'You were hired to do your job; I can do mine quite well, thank you.' Should I just give up?"

Answer. Apparently your boss has a heroic idea about leadership, where not knowing how to do something is considered a terrible flaw. The idea that the subordinate should just stay in place and let the boss be the boss is a very old one, created when work was simple and subordinates weren't highly educated, so they needed to be told what to do. Possibly this boss really isn't movable and you will have to lump it or leave the position.

Nevertheless, keep in mind that in some ways you can act like a junior partner without your boss's permission. Perhaps you cannot directly influence your boss's style or discuss the nature of your relationship, but "partnership" can be more than that. It is seeing the larger picture and taking the initiative to do more than the minimum job requirements. Doing so can create the influence you want while building credit.

Look for ways to contribute within the role as your boss conceives it. Can you do something that the boss doesn't like to do or avoids (e.g., memo writing, speeches, organizing meetings, drafting follow-up notes, checking on milestones of projects)? Can you anticipate needs and have information or reports ready in advance? Can you acquire information the boss would like to know? No matter how your job description is written, as a loyal subordinate you can do possible activities that are not explicitly spelled out to gain appreciation and, possibly, eventual latitude to be more of a partner. Start with asking for one or two and, if successful, ask for more. Demonstrate by being helpful that you are capable of adding value to the boss and unit. That begins the process. It might even be possible to do one or more without asking, if you see an unfilled need and can jump in without stepping on anyone's toes.

How your boss defines leadership. Many leaders act heroically because they don't have any other model. They also believe that this style is the only way to gain their subordinates' respect. If your boss is ever in the mood to discuss leadership (admittedly unlikely), you can mention that this isn't true for you. Some bosses may be more open to the published word. A book on modern leadership (that we are inordinately fond of) discusses alternatives to heroic leadership, *Power Up: Transforming Organizations through Shared Leadership.*[4] You might well benefit from reading it, especially Chapter 2. If the boss is a reader, you might share a copy of the chapter, but definitely without suggesting anything more than that it is a different and intriguing point of view.

In any event, pay attention to the style most comfortable to your boss. Often, bosses with such structured ideas about respective roles have acquired them from the military. In that case, raise any leadership questions in a more formal and respectful style, emphasizing that you recognize that the boss always has the right to decide what to listen to, which you do not challenge. Instead, you wish only to add to the boss's resources and respect the role of leader deeply. You might gently point out that today's military seeks more input from those below; for example, the Army has instituted After-Action Reviews, where all who participated analyze each engagement in the field and where all participants' opinions are welcomed.[5] But keep emphasizing that none of this is intended to undermine the top person's seniority and ultimate control.

A Tool for Using a Business Approach: Cost-Benefit Analysis Language

Certain bosses are too uncomfortable to ever directly discuss their relationship with their subordinates, but some ways to ease into a discussion have a better chance of working. The operating principle is using language that is more businesslike than relationship-like, expressing your views less personally.

One major business concept is cost-benefit analysis. Usually used to assess investments or other big decisions, it can be applied to your relationship with your boss. Your analysis could go something like this:

> Boss, can we examine how we communicate and decide if it affects our performance? Our current style has many benefits. You inform me on a need-to-know basis; that saves time and lets you preserve important confidences. You ask my opinion when you think I have a contribution to make; that's efficient and lets you control communication from the people working for you. And you can ignore what I say when you don't agree, which saves hassles. It also lets me spend more time on my job.
>
> But we should look at the costs as well. Things are moving so fast you aren't always aware of what I need to know, so I sometimes go in the wrong direction without the right data. Other times, I know things that could help you because my training and assignments give me different kinds of data, but unless you talk with me, you sail into mined waters with one eye blindfolded. As a result, it's difficult for me to fully support some of our departmental decisions. I could have helped you navigate around unnecessary blowups, but I never got the chance.
>
> Are the benefits worth the costs? Would we be more cost effective if you and I found a better way to pass information back and forth?

Notice that this approach omits relationship-oriented words and phrases such as "share feelings," "trust," and "openness." Instead, it uses businesslike and hard-headed language about information exchange, which is (at least partially) what trust and openness are about. This way isn't guaranteed to work, but at least it doesn't wave a red flag in front of a bull-headed boss or one uncomfortable with discussing relationship issues.

Disagreeing with a Boss Who Wants to Be in Charge

We worked with a manager who had a difficult, and apparently unapproachable, boss. Malcolm Miller, a controller in a large scientific organization, was concerned about how to deal with his new boss. The boss had been a high-ranking military officer before joining the organization. In several early meetings, "the general" had suddenly interrupted Malcolm's attempts to argue a point based on his knowledge of the organization by saying sharply: "Wait a minute, let's get this straight; I'm the boss and you're the subordinate! I don't want to hear any more about this."

Extremely frustrated, Malcolm believed he could do nothing to counter such a hierarchical attitude. We suggested utilizing currencies the boss would value, in language that fit his style. When he pushed back, he would need to establish respect for the power of the boss's office and use language that fit the general's experiences, but at the same time he would demonstrate that it was possible to be respectful while disagreeing. Malcolm's approach went something like this:

"Well, General, I would never question that you are the boss, and I fully respect your position. I'm a very loyal person, and I want to be sure that you make the right decision. Part of my job as your subordinate is to protect you from snipers, and here I think you are walking into a trap. That's why I resist backing off on this one. . . . Of course, if you order me to stop, I will, since you're in command, but I really want to make sure you you're not ambushed on this issue."

To his slight shock, Malcolm noticed that the general was listening to him on more of his points.

Indeed, Malcolm later learned that another colleague—one on Malcolm's level—had refused to back down from the general. The peer insisted on taking the matter to the general's boss, and the risk paid off. He won the issue and established a more peer-like relationship with the general as well. So the apparently invulnerable lion had already been bearded in his den, and the challenger had survived to fight another day. Malcolm had overestimated his boss's unassailability. And the two peers gained better footing and greater voice. So there is often more than one way to solve a problem.

Disagreeing without Being Insubordinate

Problem 4: My Boss Is Often (or at Least Sometimes) Wrong, but Seldom in Doubt. I Want to Prevent Big Mistakes but Too Easily Get Perceived as Insubordinate. It's not so easy, you say? You're right. Some managers are highly resistant to any kind of disagreement from subordinates. Even though this position is very costly to them, since it cuts off news they need to hear, some diehards still imagine themselves to be ruling by divine right—and to be speaking ex cathedra when they take a stand. At least some of these managers are impermeable, but by using the kind of approach we advocate, you may be more likely to influence such a tyrant than you ever assumed.

Malcolm has plenty of company in the world. Many people assume the worst if they think a boss can't be influenced, so they never learn that they could do more than imagined. Labelling the boss a negative, impossible person, they decrease interaction just when staying in touch is most important. After all, staying in touch not only makes it easier to gather information about the currencies your boss values but also allows you to demonstrate that you are on the boss's side as a true partner who will do everything possible to prevent the boss from making a mistake that would go against his or her own objectives.

It is by no means easy to get that kind of message across, but when you do, you can make a friend for life. Strong bosses who prevent all disagreement are their own worst enemies; they try to dominate everyone, but when they succeed, they suffer by cutting themselves off from the kind of information they need. Saving bosses from their own strength is a risky but potentially very rewarding business; the rewards increase when everyone else who deals with that boss is too afraid to test the possibilities.

Nevertheless, once again we have to urge you to also consider whether the problem rests with you and your approach to the disagreement. Could it be that you constantly come across as impatient and frustrated, seem to imply that you are smart, and act disappointed with a boss who doesn't meet your idealized expectations? Are your good ideas adding to the workload of your already overworked manager?

Is there any chance your boss sees you as oppositional, a blocker to progress rather than someone on his or her side? One way to be direct in your disagreement *and* be on the boss's side is to differentiate what you disagree about.

Any boss finds it easier to tolerate disagreement about means to accomplish agreed-upon objectives than about the basic goals or objectives. All too often when disagreement is raised, it gets heard as opposition to the entire plan rather than as a question about the steps to reach that plan. If you do agree on goals and objectives, then make that explicit, disagreeing only on how to accomplish them; that allows you to be a partner and be direct.

For example, instead of just fighting misguided cost reductions and seeming negative, try something like, "I am totally behind our cost-saving goals, but cutting out the coffee station doesn't save enough to make up for the ideas generated when people bump into each other, discuss their projects, and share customer experiences. Besides, it comes across as petty rather than a smart move to cut waste; there would be a lot more enthusiasm for cutting back on color copies, for example, or fancy catered lunches. And perhaps we could rationalize our mailing and shipping processes, where there is a lot of waste."

Problem 5: How Can I Help Develop My Boss? "My boss really wants to be a good leader, but he doesn't do some things well, such as lead meetings. He seldom remembers to set agendas in advance and stifles dissent when he means to encourage it, so he's is less effective than he could be. I want him to succeed, but how do I go about it?"

Answer. One of the most desirable areas for influencing managers is improving their ability to do their own jobs, so that ultimately you can better perform yours. Many people have good relationships with their bosses, are satisfied with the levels of challenge and autonomy they are granted, and receive the supervision they want, but they find they could improve performance if they could influence how their bosses function in their roles. Nothing is more frustrating than watching your boss do something poorly when you could help but don't know how to assist without making the boss resentful.

Helping the Boss Become More Effective

Catherine Weiler, an HR manager in a manufacturing division of a high-tech company, knew that the lack of initiative from his direct reports frustrated her boss, the division general manager. Yet, he was blind to how he created their passivity. At the meetings he ran, he frequently oscillated between laissez-faire openness and impatiently taking charge when frustrated, leading subordinates to believe that he would inevitably do things his way, no matter how often he requested their ideas. Catherine believed that if she could help him see how his own behavior sent the wrong messages to his people, he would be far more effective and tap his team's considerable talents.

Catherine initially held back her observations, from concern about his pride, wondering if he could take a suggestion about leadership style from a subordinate. But eventually she decided that, as his loyal supporter, she should try to be helpful. She knew that her boss was impatient, so Catherine decided to approach him in terms of a currency he valued: time.

She asked him if the way the meetings were going satisfied him, and he confirmed they did not. Then she said that she thought she knew how to speed up decision making and would gladly help do that if she could. She caught his attention. He began to discuss the issues with her, so it was easier for her to say that she thought he inadvertently made the problem worse.

Although he never became an outstanding meeting leader, he did try to break his self-defeating pattern and encourage his people's initiative by making clear requests of

(*Continued*)

them, with deadlines, and then waiting for them to take hold. Equally important to Catherine, he was grateful to her; he became willing to plan with her and then review results after meetings. Upon seeing what the general manager was trying, other team members invested more effort, and the team became somewhat more effective.

True Grit: Being a Worthy Partner

Often, it seems that only great courage would allow you to tell your boss that there is something he or she could do more effectively or offer to be helpful. And courage is required because there is always risk involved. Nevertheless, if your motive is genuine help and not punishment, you really care about the effectiveness of your boss, and you do it in the spirit of partnership, many bosses will be more grateful than resentful. Part of the reason it is lonely at the top is that so few subordinates see that bosses need to learn and grow, too. Good bosses appreciate the person who is genuinely willing to help. The exchange of information about performance or advice on how to improve it, in return for appreciation from the boss (and, with luck, better ability to do your job), is a beneficial exchange that happens too seldom.

There are two ways to be on the boss's side when offering new possible behavior: Make clear your agreement on goals but concerns about the means being used, by saying something like, "I buy into your goals; let me help on the ways you are going about it." In this case, for example, "I agree that we need more diversity of opinions; here is what I believe you need to do in order to encourage that and not inadvertently block them."

This approach can work on task issues or leadership style, whichever needs attention.

As your boss's partner, you have an obligation to be forthcoming with information that he or she needs. On many issues, you automatically have useful information: for example, you know what impact the boss is having on you and, often, on your peers. You may also know how the boss is seen further down in the organization, in other units, and possibly by some of his or her colleagues and superiors. In addition, you may have some skills that your boss lacks, like the organization member mentioned earlier who was good at writing memos while his boss was not. So you can always ask, "Are there things I can do to help [prepare for the meeting/facilitate a discussion/get notes out quickly/and so on]?"

Barriers to Implementation

What gets in the way of implementing these sensible, supportive steps to helping bosses become more effective?

Too often the tone of subordinates is subtly (or not so subtly) critical rather than supportive. For a variety of previous experiences with those in positions of authority, subordinates can have trouble remembering that their bosses are not—and can't be—perfect at everything. Instead of seeing flaws in task-related issues (such as strategy or decision making) or leadership style (such as running meetings or giving feedback) as all-too human and worthy of help, they become critical and judgmental. Somehow they forget that they would want others to see their similar flaws as worthy of support and development.

Thus their own attitudes toward authority keep people from doing what Catherine did. Overly dependent subordinates believe that the manager knows everything without any help from below, so they are reluctant to risk offending the manager by offering help. They may also become disappointed when the manager turns out to have feet of clay, as is inevitably the case.

Feelings of counter-dependence also do not lead to offers of help, except in sarcastic or punitive ways that any boss finds difficult to accept. And the independent subordinates figure that the problem is the boss's and needs no attention from them. Only a subordinate who accepts the idea of genuine interdependence, of full partnership, will willingly look for supportive ways to make the manager more effective. Think of yourself that way and you are most likely to have a stance that will be perceived as worthy of listening to and working collaboratively with.

Table 9.1 lists ways you might be limiting yourself from influencing your boss.

For further knotty challenges and answers in influencing bosses, see www.influencewithoutauthority.com. The resources include *Earning Your Boss's*

Table 9.1 Ways You Can Limit Yourself in Influencing Your Boss

Treating your boss like a jerk, instead of a partner needing help.
Withholding critical information out of fear of the reaction, or because it isn't your job.
Being so focused on what you want that you forget the boss's needs.
Being so afraid of displeasing the boss that you don't say what you know that he or she needs to know.
Trying to show up the boss instead of helping him or her look good.
Being too compliant, even at the expense of the work performance.

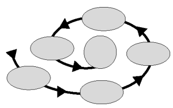
Confidence Even When in Trouble and *How Do I Change the Quality of Supervision My Boss Provides and Get the Development and Coaching I Want?* (This problem has three variations: (1) "I could be much more effective if I received some coaching, but my boss seems to have a sink-or-swim philosophy. I am concerned that asking for advice would be seen as a sign of weakness." (2) "I'm not afraid of my boss; in fact, I like her. But I can hardly get her attention, let alone her help. She is so busy and so preoccupied that I am left to drift. And when she does pay attention, I only get a quick criticism. I could use a lot more coaching and direction." (3) "My boss is all too willing to give me advice. In fact, that's the problem; he moves from 'helping me' to 'helping the hell out of me.' I would welcome some general guidance but he dives into the details and won't let go.")

Visit at your convenience. More ideas for forming an effective partnership await.

In addition, the flip side of influencing your boss is influencing subordinates. Since many of the ideas are the reciprocal of what this chapter covers, for space reasons our advice is included on our website at www.influencewithoutauthority.com.

CHAPTER 10

WORKING CROSS-FUNCTIONALLY: LEADING AND INFLUENCING A TEAM, TASK FORCE, OR COMMITTEE



THE CHALLENGE OF GAINING COMMITMENT

Managing task forces and cross-functional teams is one area where having only limited authority frustrates many. Yet the number of cross-functional groups is growing because the need for more diverse specialties and experts, along with spreading organizational locations driven by more global competition, requires more complicated organizations. Even when you are in charge of your own team of direct reports, getting full cooperation isn't automatic. As the boss, you can push people hard if they aren't fully engaged, but gaining full commitment can still be challenging. If team members do not report to you, the challenge is that much greater.

The critical question is how to gain genuine commitment to the team's core purposes—especially from groups whose members are not your direct reports. In that case, members can be caught by divided loyalties between ongoing assignments in their "home base" (the source of their identity, formal evaluation, and long-term security) and this new temporary grouping (committee, cross-functional team, task force, or project team; see Table 10.1).

In committees, members usually come as representatives of their home team. They may try to reach agreement, but all work hard to ensure that their area is fairly represented and gains a fair share of the outcome. (This is one reason that committees can be so annoying and so often produce weak compromises rather than creative solutions.)

Matrix organizations work best when members are equally committed to both their home team and to the project team. However, for maximum performance in task forces and cross-functional teams, a majority of members must be committed to this composite group's purpose. Gaining that commitment is extremely challenging because members' pay and promotion usually rests with their home team.

Table 10.1 Percentage of Commitment between Home Assignment and New Grouping

(Home Group:New Team %)		
Committees	Matrix Teams	Task Forces, Cross-Functional Teams
70:30	50:50	30:70

In this chapter, we look at ways to build the necessary 70 percent commitment to the cross-functional team or task force. We focus on those groups because they are more difficult, but the points apply as well to matrix teams and committees (and even your home team).

What do you do when your team members' central loyalty, supervision, measures, and, often, rewards lie elsewhere? What would make it attractive for members to be committed to your team's goals? What is in it for them? Remember, the heart of influence is trading valuable benefits for what you want.

Special Cases When Leading a Team in Your Own Area Requires Special Treatment Similar to Cross-Functional

- You have one or more brilliant members (e.g., scientists) interested only in their specialized work and not in the team's goals. How do you connect individual interests with overall goals?
- You need all members to be deeply committed to constantly challenging, complex work. Commitment of that kind can't be ordered. How do you get it?

Selection of Members

To build commitment to the committee or task force, start with who the members are. If, as often happens, you cannot control their selection, you can go right to understanding what they want. But if the team is forming, think about the best mix of members and your criteria for choosing them—especially basic beliefs—and then work to influence the selectors from other areas. You want a mix of original thinkers, experts, and experienced people with a demonstrated ability to think about the good of the whole organization, not just their own areas. At least some should be people who are widely known and respected, so when the time comes to present your findings, they will have already helped to sell the recommendations and make them respectable.

If you already have lots of relationships (important for gaining influence about anything), you can use your connections to make your case for either selection criteria or particular people. Getting the specific individuals you want may take great effort, because they are probably already fully engaged and seen as valuable where they are, but use your inquiry skills to understand the objections and think about ways to reduce the concerns. What does the person's boss need from you to let go? Can you accept less than full-time appointments? Can you loan or arrange help on the tasks that person won't do while working with you? Can you offer early information from task force findings or early access to a new product or process?

If, however, you are assigned too many members to work effectively, think about forming a core team of seven to eight people, and utilize other members by forming an advisory group or giving them separate assignments and inviting them to core team meetings only when their particular expertise is needed for that day's agenda. And determine a way to keep them informed of overall progress.

Understanding What Matters to Members

If you can select team members, this process will be closely intertwined with finding out what they care about and value—their currencies. (See Chapter 3 for a full discussion of currencies.) Each member will have favorite currencies, including preferences for how the team should function. You need to know their currencies to see how to make the right trades.

Much of this information can come from understanding their worlds, their work situations, and the pressures from their jobs. If you determine the goals, objectives, and concerns of each person's home area, you are more likely to know what is important to each of them or to their current bosses. You can often determine much at a distance from the public information about their areas. (See Figure 4.1 on page 59 for a graphic representation of many aspects of any person's work world.) Their daily tasks, the way they are measured and rewarded, their place in their careers, their educational background, and so on give many clues as to what they are likely to value.

You can then preliminarily assess likely currencies for each person. You will probably want to have one-on-one discussions to know each person and confirm what he or she cares about. Ask a lot of questions. Most people like the chance to tell their story—to talk about their work and their aspirations—so you can build your relationships while gathering information.

You must also find out the team members' interests in and concerns about the project. Do they start with excitement or dread? Do they consider it the chance of a lifetime to do something they believe in, or a waste of time? Has something similar been tried before and failed? Does the preliminary charter conflict with their home team's goals? Do they see political minefields? Do they envision the chance to learn in an important territory? In the process, you will also learn something about their personalities, which will come in handy, too.

Such conversations can also help prevent stereotyping. Not all engineers want everything carried to the third decimal point, and not all marketing people are creative conceptualizers. Your preliminary notions of what each person might value must be tentative so you don't miss anyone's unique talents. Furthermore, this kind of understanding can help you set norms for valuing differences in the team. You wouldn't bring together people from diverse parts of the organization with differing specialties if you didn't understand how the creative clash of perspectives can produce excellence. And you wouldn't want to lose that potential because some members feel they are not valued or heard because they have divergent views.

Increasing the Attractiveness of the Project

One challenge to gaining commitment is finding ways to make the project more attractive to members. There are several possible approaches.

Dealing with the Charter

One payoff from learning members' interests is that it can raise questions about the team's charter. Is it clear? Do you understand the intended scope's impact? Is the scope too narrow, so it's less exciting that it could be with enlarged or modified goals? Or is it so general and amorphous that whatever you come up with won't fit certain people's expectations? Are you clear on how much authority the team has to solve problems or recommend and present alternatives? Never take these aspects for granted. If you answer any of these questions "no," then you have work to do. Perhaps you only have to go to the manager who formulated the idea of the task force to get the answers, but if the executive committee owns the charter, you may have to do some one-on-one influencing to make it more reasonable or more inspiring.

Find out from the chartering group what the intended parameters are, whether there are sacred cows to be avoided, whether they have a preliminary (or even final) answer in mind, and how ready to change their views they are, who they believe should be consulted, and so on. It's easier to ask questions ahead of time than late in the process, and plan accordingly.

The more exciting the charter, the more ways you have to link individual members' needs with the team's purpose, so it will be easier to inspire members with the vision.

However, a charter that's too grand has some dangers. Think about the history of the organization. Have task forces or committees often been asked to solve "world hunger," only to be shot down because their solutions require too much money or time? Are they asked to think outside the box, only to be criticized for likely resistance and difficulty in implementing an unusual approach? Does the chartering manager already have a solution in mind and expect you to deliver it? And what are the probabilities that recommendations will get implemented? Do recommendations tend to disappear into the top management stratosphere, never to be heard from?

You have the best shot at getting the proper mandate and backing upfront, before you start. You can credibly express your concerns and negotiate for something different before you come up with specific solutions to be pushed. If a top manager evades answering by saying to you, "Oh, don't worry, just go ahead, and if you do a good job, we will back you," you can always respond, "I'm sure that is true, but my experience tells me that greater clarity upfront is critical. I'm very concerned about not wasting your time and the valuable time of all the good people who will work on this. You don't want us to end up with a report that goes into the round file, do you?" Few managers will say that they don't mind wasting time. Remember, you should show how your request is in the other person's interest.

Bringing in the Sponsoring Senior Executive

Another way to make the project more attractive is to ask the senior manager who gave the charter to talk with the team. Team members can ask questions directly about the charter, scope of authority, and top management intentions, testing the commitment from above. This not only helps gain clarity but also demonstrates management's interest in the project. If a senior manager can show how the project is vital and will help the company, it should overcome some natural skepticism and probably increase team members' commitment. (For that matter, taking a public stance should also increase the manager's commitment to the outcomes, which is useful to you.)

Linking Member Goals with Team Objectives: Paying in Currencies Each Member Cares About

At the start, members will likely have more loyalty to their regular jobs and departments, but once you have a reasonable diagnosis of all team members, try to get each something they care about. Some might want more challenge, others greater visibility, others a greater voice, and so on. (To help you think about a wide range of possibilities, see Table 3.1 on page 38 for a list of common currencies.) Think about ways to allocate the work that accommodates each person's valued currencies.

For example, members interested in visibility might be asked to contact senior executives for information or to make presentations to higher-ups. Those interested in challenge might take on the most complex, ambiguous portions of the work, especially areas with no known solutions. Some might want to do benchmarking visits to expand their experiences of other companies.

Collective discussion can reduce ambiguity and generate excitement. One way to increase attractiveness is to remove resistance. Have members talk about problems that this project might cause in their home group and how the team (or leader) can help to deal with that. This starts to give them a stake in solving the organizational problems that they will be worrying about anyway.

In addition, as part of your role, addressing and resolving organizational barriers for the team creates a win-win exchange with team members, deepening their commitment to team goals.

To increase the value of these currencies, talk about the team's goals in other parts of the company and with potential members' bosses. It is never too early to do in-company marketing of the group's mission.

Don't overlook that many find the opportunity to learn attractive. Because cross-functional groups usually have challenging tasks for which the organization does not already have solutions, they should offer many chances for exploring new areas and learning valuable information or skills. Similarly, don't be afraid to sell team members the benefits of networking with people from different areas or specialties. This creates potential new allies who can help in doing future work, serve as contacts for new assignments, and become advocates for one another.

Tell potential and current members that serving on an important task force is a license to learn and to build reputation and contacts. What better way to build capital for future influence? With some imagination, you can often pay everyone in a valued currency or two. The idea is to find links between team members' individual goals and interests and the needs of the team to accomplish its goals.

USING VISION, A VALUABLE COMMON CURRENCY

As suggested, a powerful currency for getting team members' commitment is vision, a picture of the wonderful outcomes working together may create. Because members have a home base that they are likely to consider their real job, without a vision of the payoffs, they will not commit to the team. (Even when you are managing your direct reports, they still work best with a clear vision of what the team does that is special and unique above and beyond their assigned jobs.)

You need to think about the team's goals and inspiring ways to express them. Team members need to believe that the task has meaning and makes a real difference to some group or groups of people—customers, clients, other departments, or society as a whole. If the team's main goal is expressed in that way, buy-in and wholehearted commitment is easier to get. The inspiring vision can overcome members' natural resistance to new work. Even if they are on your team full time for a substantial period, they will be wondering whether the outcome is worth the effort. They also could wonder what comes next—whether they will still have their old job. Vision can overcome this pull back to home base.

In this context, members who do not buy into the vision should have a chance to say why. Can the vision be modified or extended (without being watered down) so everybody feels connected? If accommodating their desires would take your charter too far off course, you should try to find them another place. If people lack commitment to a job's goals and aspirations, there is no shame in telling them or higher-ups that they should not work on it or would be more valuable elsewhere.

For a rich example of a low-status summer intern, Rich Wheeler, effectively leading a product development team using these influence ideas, see our website, www.influencewithoutauthority.com. His efforts led to the offer of a full time job after graduation. Another example of someone successfully leading a complicated task force with three divisions that had very different views about the challenging problem they were asked to solve is also available on the website as "Lucia Emerson and

Influence across 3 Divisions." (Note: this is replicated from Cohen and Bradford, *Influencing Up*.)

DECIDING HOW THE TEAM WILL OPERATE

Leading a cross-functional team places special demands on your leadership style. It requires a combination of your preferred style and what members want. Some of them may not like a lot of meetings and prefer that you lay out the options and assign tasks, while others prefer more involvement in defining problems and roles. Yet you can't just hand it over to the team, since you have preferences and limits as to the ways you like to proceed. Furthermore, the team's initial setup is critical to its success and member satisfaction.

Yet you focus on hands-on control at your peril, and if you normally steer meetings to predetermined conclusions or stifle disagreements over difficult issues, you risk demotivating members. All members need to feel that their ideas are valued, they have reasonable autonomy in daily work, and opposing points of view will be taken seriously. You will want to move to collective decision making on the big issues (rather than merely taking their advice) because that helps build commitment. You are establishing an agreement that members will give their commitment in exchange for a full voice in important decisions.

Part of your responsibility will be to legitimize conflict over the work, data, and judgments, but not about personal differences. You need to use conflict to energize, get all the data out, get creative solutions, and allow everyone to contribute. You set the climate: show that disagreement is okay, but if discussion veers into personal attacks, step in and refocus it on work issues. You don't have to create a team where everyone loves working with everyone else, but you need people to feel open and direct because that gets the best results.

At the same time, a lot of work must be done behind the scenes outside meetings. You must hold one-on-one meetings at times to gather information, monitor progress, lobby hard for critical issues being considered, and so on. When some members are not fully committed or carrying their loads, it's tempting to jump in and do their work or provide your own solutions, and that may occasionally become necessary. But if it happens very often, members will quickly devise a negative exchange, delegating work upwards to you. You are left with too much on your plate, and they sacrifice the very reasons they are there. They will also not be committed to the eventual solutions and may purposely or inadvertently undermine them when talking to their bosses or other key players.

Don't be a purist and insist everything must be decided by group consensus; you (or other team members) can do many things offline that will be gratefully received because they facilitate the team's work. Just be sure you are enabling team members to concentrate on the stuff they know and care most about, rather than taking over. (For more ideas on managing team members between meetings, see Chapter 12.)

SELLING SOLUTIONS BEFORE FORMALLY PRESENTING THEM

One common influence mistake that project teams and task forces make is to assume that once they have a great solution, they must have it completely worked out and presented whole to get the best reception. But especially when the solutions change some existing work arrangements, organization structure, or the power and status of key players, it's not a good idea to surprise decision makers. You and team members should test your ideas with key stakeholders and decision makers along the way. This testing not only helps improve the plans but also lets those people get used to new ideas and signal when your ideas violate taboos so you can adjust your plans and they won't be uncomfortable with them. The implicit exchange with the decision makers is: "We are checking with you early so you will support what we come up with later—no surprises from either party."

Furthermore, you will have to manage the external environment as well as the internal team. Various stakeholders will "wake up" at different times, realize that they may be affected, and try to undermine the team's work. You, with the cooperation of team members, must monitor these political moves and address them as they occur, before they can gather steam. The charter also has a natural tendency to creep—or metastasize—out of good intentions, and that also must be nipped in the bud. Keep track of all the "great ideas" that "won't take much to add in" and promise to investigate them in later versions once initial implementation is successful. Perfect is almost always the enemy of good—or successful.

This circles back to team membership. When forming the team, consider finding at least some members who have influence with important decision makers and opinion leaders. While you will need original thinkers, you won't be taken seriously if the team has only rebels and iconoclasts. If the team was created without your input, then you may need to form an advisory group or other collection of organizational members who are widely respected and close to the top. That group can also serve as advance scouts and influencers, carrying the ideas and testing them early.

Pay attention, however, to the problem of divided loyalty of task force members. Although you want their commitment to the findings and recommendations, that sometimes places people in opposition to their own areas or bosses. That is a tough position for anyone, and when your members face such loyalty squeezes, work with them to plan their approaches. In exchange for continued commitment to the project, you may need to explain and sell the findings to their bosses and help buffer the member or get a higher-up to help in that way. You may need to help the boss see the benefits (and not just the costs) if a valuable subordinate is on the task force; that person can represent he department's views in the process and may come back with increased skills and knowledge. That exchange can help gain support.

In turn, you might encourage members to work out with their bosses (implicitly or explicitly) the exchanges expected for participation. How will the regular work be covered? What reports of the task force work does the boss expect to hear, and in what detail? Are there particular departmental issues to be brought to the task force proceedings?

You definitely don't want members to feel they are in a bind and suddenly fail to support the recommendations, not mention to their bosses what is happening, or, even worse, surreptitiously tell their bosses that the report is all wrong, thereby creating an opponent who helps kill the project.

Although cross-functional teams are complicated to manage, they aren't going away. Organizational complexity and change now require that people come together from different functions, products, and regions to create products, set policies, introduce innovations in process, and attempt to predict the future. If you can demonstrate skill at pulling together such diverse resources, influencing them to cooperate, and discovering good solutions that are implemented, your future value and influence will increase.

As you practice these skills, don't forget that most are highly relevant to managing your own team, which probably has many of the same features and challenges. Any team would benefit from careful selection of members, determination of what they care about, assignments that give them more of the currencies they want in return for their energy and commitment, a clear vision of what difference the team makes, leadership that taps their best talents and gives them full voice, and thoughtful upward influence to get their ideas supported and implemented. Do you hear opportunity knocking?

CHAPTER 11

INFLUENCING ORGANIZATIONAL GROUPS, DEPARTMENTS, AND DIVISIONS

In many ways, influencing a whole group in your organization is parallel to influencing individuals:

- First, you must not demonize them; don't characterize them with negative stereotypes, tempting as it might be.
- Second, you need to understand their world: what they value, how they are rewarded, what pressures they face, and so forth.
- With that information, you now have a sense of what currencies you could trade for what you want from others.
- But, even more than when you are dealing interpersonally, it is important to pay attention to the nature of your relationship. Just as you may have stereotyped other people, they have probably done the same in return.

Any good diagnosis has many facets, but it is important to pay attention to some particular issues when dealing across groups, departments, and divisions. Are the dominant currencies of the group valued by all members? How much latitude will individuals have to trade for different currencies? Do you need everybody in the unit to comply with your request or just some people?

As organizations grow more complex, there is hardly any group that doesn't need cooperation from other units. Furthermore, often the other group does not have to follow your requests. If you work in a central staff function (purchasing, legal, information technology, quality control, finance, auditing, or human resources), even when you can set or shape policy, you might not so easily be able to enforce it. Or, you might be in a line operation and spot a terrific opportunity (e.g., a new product or service to develop, a new practice, or a new market), but another department must approve or implement it, and they see your hot new idea as just another demand on their time or something changing their processes or priorities.

A common characteristic of intergroup relations complicates matters: a group often gains its identity and increases cohesiveness through invidious comparisons with other groups. "We in marketing take the larger picture, not like those pedestrian thinkers in sales." "Being in sales gives us a much better understanding of customer needs than those isolated eggheads in product development." "Those bean counters in finance only play with numbers and don't care about people as we do in human resources." You need to find ways past those feelings.

The group whose cooperation you want may resist for a variety of reasons. Discovering those reasons—the currencies they care about—is part of the challenge. The other part is figuring out how to address their concerns and still get what you need done, without sacrificing the aims of your request.

HOW TO GO ABOUT GAINING INFLUENCE: APPLYING THE MODEL

There are several ways to approach the groups you want to influence.

Step 1: Seeing the Other Group as a Potential Ally

A history of conflict and even interpersonal animosity may exist between some members of the two units, but that need not stop you. You are working for a potential alliance. You don't have to like or become close friends with members in the other group to work out what you need, but you must find a way to respect them and their work, accepting that their role differences makes them see things differently from you.

You may still compete with them for some things such as budget or priorities from others yet find a way to form a strategic alliance that gives both of you something desirable in a specified, limited area. This kind of "co-opetition" is increasingly common among individuals, groups, and companies, and managing the tension is an important part of organizational life.

Nevertheless, the better you know what another group values and why, the likelier you are to feel empathy and to form a good working relationship. That's why the next step is so important.

Step 2: Understanding Their World

Start with the nature of the work. What do people do all day? What skills are central? What special training do they need to do their jobs well? Do they direct others or react to requests or demands? Are they in a separate space or nearby? Does their work belong to a profession (e.g., accounting, law, engineering, science), which might make them identify more closely with their profession than the organization? The work people do powerfully shapes what they are likely to care about. It pulls people toward more or less precision, more or less interaction with other areas, faster or slower pace, greater or fewer challenges and novelty, more or less satisfaction and meaning, and so on. You may find their attitudes strange, but is that because you have work of a very different nature and, therefore, different views of how to behave and what to care about? If you could truly understand the nature of their work, would you find their actions more reasonable? (For more on how to use the organizational world to understand likely desires and goals, see Chapter 4.)

What sort of people are most likely to have those skills? What are their education, background, and work experience? What are their values? The educational backgrounds of most members of a department can make an enormous difference in their values and goals—their currencies. Engineers are drilled in precision and hard work. Scientists are steeped in the long, slow search for truth. Lawyers are trained to look for vulnerabilities and risks. Liberal arts graduates have often learned to value precision in language but think in broad, sweeping generalizations. Each educational background tends to shape its members, affecting their patterns of thinking, language, and, sometimes, values.

What is the group's language and jargon? Many organizational groups and departments develop their own vocabulary and language style. Knowing this serves two purposes: it often reveals what the group considers important, because the language will focus on the things they pay attention to, and it gives you clues about what language to use when talking with them.

For example, people in finance often have well-developed language for talking about costs, returns, and ratios because that is how they measure the world, translating all organizational activity into numbers. If you are in management development, for example, instead of seeing their language as too mechanical and impersonal, can you explain your proposal in terms of cost benefits? If you want an example of a training manager who hired a former CFO to teach him how to make hard-nosed proposals to the finance department controlling his budget, see the case of William "Will" Wood on our website (http://www.influencewithoutauthority.com). (For a slightly tongue-in-cheek guide to talking across language borders, see Table 11.1.)

Beware of stereotypes. Before we say more about this way of thinking, we must warn you to check out any of your conclusions on any of the people

Table 11.1 Mini-Translation Guide

Management Development Says	*Finance Says*
Developing coaching skills	Enhancing return on investment
Building trust	Reducing trading friction
Team building	Maximizing collective returns
Increasing management skills	Raising economic rents

you are dealing with from the other group. The analysis we are suggesting can reveal only general tendencies, and you should always try to find the exceptions to the general experiences. These generate *hypotheses* that should be tested with those specific individuals or groups.

Not all financial people think in economic and numbers terms, for example. Recently, we were working with a task force focused on how to keep everyone healthy (not just the currently insured) when a senior underwriting officer of Massachusetts Blue Cross Blue Shield, a cost-conscious health care insurer, proclaimed: "Finance is trivial and incidental! We can make the numbers work."[1] Similarly, not all lawyers are deal killers, not all human resources people are sentimental and afraid of delivering tough news to underperformers, and so on. So, use your diagnosis to guide what to look for before you have too much contact but verify it in each individual case.

Often, the nature of the work and the people who do it may reveal some common currencies, so you can form a working idea and test it. You are looking for what the group you want to influence values, what they care about. We call these currencies because they are things that can be traded. Although there is always danger of overgeneralizing, we have listed common situations and resulting currencies of selected organizational groups (Table 11.2).

The list comes from people like you, people trying to discover what groups in their own organization considered important. Take this list with a grain of salt, but use it to start understanding the group you are interested in.

The list in Table 11.2 is partial; consider it, at best, only the beginning of a careful diagnosis. We urge a direct approach. Getting the facts from the involved players has two payoffs:

1. It can be more accurate than your own speculation.
2. It is a way to build the relationship.

Table 11.2 Sample Common Situations and Currencies of Different Groups (As Seen by Colleagues in Their Organizations)

Sales Representatives

Since a high proportion of sales attempts lead to rejection, they:

- Have to be confident to constantly start building new relations
- Need strong egos
- Constantly need to be convincing

Are very focused on the customer:

- Have to figure out customers' needs/personality/likes
- Talk the language of clients
- Have to figure out micro cues about customers

Generally manage their own time; they are independent, so they usually hate bureaucracy

Want acknowledgement of contributions

Competitive

Money oriented

Status important to them

Manufacturing

Have to meet numbers—hourly, daily, weekly

For them, the buck stops there

Get-it-done attitude, very down-to-earth

Come from mixed backgrounds: some up through ranks, some college hires

Predominantly male, therefore often "macho talk"

Speak very directly and bluntly, expect the same

Engineers

Work is detailed

Have to fix things, build for manufacture

Mostly men

Hard-working (from education in challenging engineering programs)

Taught to avoid risk, often rule-bound

Tend to see the world in black-and-white terms, which may lead to a narrower perspective

Drawn to "things" (less concerned with and often naive about people)

Like tinkering, endless revisions, so deadlines necessary

Technically competent but overcontrolling

Impatient with anyone not understanding their area

Possibly less interested in customers

Determined, driving

Love challenge

(*Continued*)

Table 11.2 (*Continued*)

Finance
Concerned with:
• Market information, growth
• Measurability
• Precision
• Safety, risk aversion
• Process clarity
• Clarity of the business case for spending
Problem-solving style tends to focus on logic and rational arguments
Place value on control, audit readiness, and predictability
Workload is usually in predictable cycles
High needs for inclusion in management team
Human Resources
Want to be known as "caretakers of people"
Value soft skills
Can sometimes be bureaucratic, valuing rules and regulations
Called in to clean up messes (and may resent this)
Often don't fully understand or highly value the economic side of the business
Don't fully understand the pressures managers are under, how tough their jobs are
Because they are often seen as organizationally impotent, concerned about being included in management decisions

In terms of relationship building, could you go to the head of another department and say something like:

> Our areas are highly interdependent. We could both be more successful if we helped each other more. I need some things from you, and I think that I could do some useful things for you. To do that, I need to know what you need from me. I have a rough idea, but it would help me if we could talk about it. How could I be more helpful?

This offer, by itself, isn't enough. But it provides the beginning of a conversation. You are reaching out to the other group (paying them in the currencies of respect, interest, and willingness to help—important ones in the organizational world). As the conversation develops, it lets you test some of your assumptions about the other group.

This tactic works only if you are really interested in the other area and truly want a better relationship. As a "technique," it would be quite transparent and could backfire.

Step 3: Understanding What You Need from the Other Group

It helps to be clear about your goals. There are numerous questions to help sort out what you really want.

Are you trying to gain agreement/cooperation/implementation on a specific project? Or is your primary goal an improved working relationship between the two units? Probably a specific task led you to think about how to deal with the other group, but wouldn't it be wise to improve the relationship so agreement could be easier for your next request? Sometimes you can simultaneously complete the task and improve the relationship, but if only one is possible, what is more important to you now?

What actual behavior do you most care about? Giving you information? Trying a new method? Lending resources? Performing some task? Speeding up their responses? All of the above? Which requests are most crucial, and what is the minimum you will settle for? Will you be satisfied with half a loaf, or is it all or nothing?

If you want a change in attitude (for example, a new respect for what your area does), is that more or less important than getting cooperation on a specific task, which could begin forming new attitudes? Or is the attitude change such a critical part of overcoming pervasive problems that specific cooperation won't help?

For example, assume you are in a central procurement office and see excellent opportunities to save money by consolidating office supply orders from previously autonomous divisions. Is it more important to have others fill out forms about their needs ahead of time, or should they now see central procurement as a valuable resource to the company? How will you respond to their inevitable complaints that central purchasing takes too long and that buying locally is often cheaper? Would you get ahead faster by picking one commonly used product, such as copier/printer paper, and buying that product centrally as a demonstration, or do you need control of all office products to make a dent?

How many members of the group, team, or department must buy in for you to accomplish your intent? Do you need everyone or just some opinion leaders or pioneers who will try what you want? Would a cooperating subgroup work well as a start? Would a pilot help work out kinks and facilitate wider buy in, or allow costly delay?

It is helpful to think through such priority questions in advance. You will have to make your own judgments about each influence situation, but Table 11.3 offers general guidelines.

Table 11.3 Guidelines for Setting Your Own Goals and Priorities

The narrower your request, the greater the likelihood of success.
Pilot projects are more likely to gain cooperation than wholesale changes.
Decide importance of meeting task goals versus improving the working relationship.
It's easier to change behavior than attitude or values; attitudes often change after new (successful) behavior.
Try not to mix your desire for respect or status with specific practices you want to change.

Step 4: Dealing with the Relationship

Certain kinds of relationship issues arise among organizational groups with differing views and may need special attention. We refer to relationship in three senses: (1) What is the attitude of each group toward the other one? (2) To what extent do you have a personal relationship marked by trust with a significant member of the other group? (3) How does each group want to be related to?

We assume that, in most cases, you want a positive relationship and are playing for the long haul, but the relationship is presently strained. Because you have likely stereotyped the other group, they have returned the compliment. Do you have a sense of how they see you, especially the negative views they hold?

One issue is whether you attempt to talk about the relationship directly or work on the task as a way to improve the relationship. Talking about it directly works well when:

- The relationships are clearly getting in the way of successful work.
- There is a desire to resolve the relationship difficulties.
- There is enough trust to begin the dialogue without intense recrimination.
- Both sides have conflict resolution skills (or a consultant is engaged to help).
- Sufficient time to work the issues through has been set aside.
- It fits the [unit, organization, national] cultural norms.

When these conditions do not exist, finding small tasks to do together is more useful, thus slowly building credibility of intentions and trust that your group wants to be a good partner. This takes much longer but can build the potential for having a more direct discussion later. It is also possible to visit the other site, find opportunities to socialize (though these can be awkward when there is bad history), or choose another task to work on together.

If you do talk about it, you can set a positive tone if you acknowledge what you and you area have done in the past that might have caused problems. Humorously talking about how they likely see you can also decrease defensiveness. In discussing the present negative exchanges going on, make sure you use objective language without blaming the other party (because it is likely that both of you have done things to produce this negative exchange). It is also useful to discuss the costs of the present dysfunctional interaction while holding out a picture of the potential benefits if the working relationship improved. You want to have some vision to work toward and to offer a reason to go through the pain of direct discussion.

Another choice is whether to work on the relationship one to one or to bring the groups together in a session, usually offsite, where many people can interact. Sometimes, two peacemakers must make a connection before their own groups are willing to engage with the other.

PREFERENCES IN HOW TO BE APPROACHED

Just like individuals, teams develop their own ideas of "proper" ways to interact. One big determinant, seldom explicit but a strong underlying belief, is that the higher status group, as determined by the industry, company strategy, and history, should be deferred to, the ones who take initiative and call the shots. If their status isn't being recognized, or market changes are shifting importance as has been happening, for example, with the rise of AI in retail and medicine, the involved groups can feel out of sorts with one another. Or perhaps it is about style. Even in 2017, east coast finance executives still dress far more formally than their west coast counterparts. It would be hard to imagine their response to the head of a flourishing Bay area startup who said he almost didn't participate in a panel opening the NASDAQ building in San Francisco because he had to wear long pants and shoes instead of shorts and flip-flops. Sometimes preferences are visible and sometimes just "understood" by one group but not the other.

WAYS PEOPLE SELF-LIMIT THEIR INFLUENCE

Forget That Rome Wasn't Built in a Day

Individuals have long memories, but groups have longer ones! Even a successful exchange won't remove years of encrusted distrust and animosity. It takes many positive interactions to erase the past, and even one slip-up can undo several successful interactions. So look for some small early wins and build on those.

Don't Jump to Blame

When it is difficult to get what you want from another unit, the natural tendency is to blame them. Sometimes they deserve the blame, but the "blame game" rarely helps to build the relationship you want. While we need to learn from the past, your focus should be the future: "What can we do so that we don't get into this situation again?"

Self-Imposed Barriers

There are two significant ways in which people inflict self-imposed barriers that limit their influence.

I'll be Damned If I'll Give You What You Want. Even with an understanding of what the other group values, the frustrated group refuses to pay them in a reasonable currency. For example, a technical research group had ongoing difficulty with a federal agency overseeing their work. After a careful diagnosis, they sheepishly recognized how their group withheld the exact information that government examiners needed to do their jobs, but they got stuck trying to decide if they were willing to do what was necessary for a better relationship. In their own eyes, it would "demean" them by focusing on "trivial bookkeeping." Furthermore, the past relationship had so irritated them that they resisted "giving the feds anything that would help them."

You Aren't Worth the Extra Effort. Other people don't do what they know they should because they believe that the other group is not worthy of their efforts. For example, John Sloan, a Canadian country manager, was criticized for resisting all influence from HQ staff but was reluctant to drop in on headquarters groups to build relationships; he saw informal interaction with them as slimy and playing politics.

I'd Rather Be Right Than Effective

Some people get too much pleasure from feeling superior to the other group. Or they want to prove a minor point, and that becomes more important than a successful exchange. Finally, they want to "win" personally and feel they "lose" by giving the other group what it wants.

I Don't Value What You Value

They fail to accept the right of the other group to value differing currencies, especially when your group does not approve of this currency and is thus reluctant to use it.

Like the previous barrier, this one is caused by parochial snobbishness about the other group. "Okay, maybe they have to care about short-term goals, but we are protecting the business's long-term future and can't let them have petty wins." Conversely, "All they do is talk about some distant future, as if we don't have to meet payroll. We're not supporting their research fantasy land."

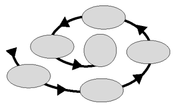
These self-limiting traps aren't inevitable, and though it can be challenging, it isn't impossible to overcome strong feelings between your group and another one. For an excellent example of an individual who used the influence concepts to make a difference, see the story of Mike Garcia, a member of a headquarters software marketing team dealing with country managers in Latin America (available on our website as "Finding and Paying in Valued Currencies; Overcoming Skepticism in Country Offices about Headquarters and Marketing," www.influencewithoutauthority.com). This is a classic organizational problem: like John Sloan, people in distant regions don't want to listen to headquarters "experts." A more mutually influential relationship is necessary.

Mike Garcia instinctively found that if he brings something valuable to the regional managers—advocating for their needs at headquarters, providing them with tested helpful ideas, and respecting their expertise—they will allow him to have influence over their marketing practices. None of this is easy; he has to fend off his headquarters colleagues who want to maintain a sense of superiority. But he is helped by being a Latin American himself and by having genuine respect for what they know in the various countries. He also realizes that one visit can't turn around this situation; it's a continuous process with each interaction slightly improving the relationship. He has patience and persistence. No doubt, he would love being powerful enough to order them to follow the central marketing department's advice, but he realizes that isn't possible. He has found a way to be highly effective.

For more on influence at a distance, see Chapter 12.

CHAPTER 12

CAN YOU HEAR ME: INFLUENCING AT A DISTANCE



A U.S. executive, concerned about the security of one of his factories in Korea, ordered the installation of a new alarm system. To ensure that those responsible understood exactly how important the system was, he arranged to inspect it personally. Several weeks later, the executive arrived as scheduled. Four of his Korean subordinates, including the factory manager, met him at the entrance. After appropriate greetings, he walked up and pushed on the door equipped with the new alarm. Nothing happened. No sound at all. The executive was a patient man and understood that sometimes things got confused. He explained very slowly, in precise terms: "When . . . I . . . push . . . on . . . this . . . door . . . the . . . alarm . . . is . . . to . . . go . . . off." This went on [each day] for four days, with the U.S. executive's blood pressure approaching stroke level and his Korean employees continuing to apologize. Finally, the Korean factory manager . . . pulled the executive aside and asked in a very quiet voice: "Mr. Boss. It is off?"[1]

WHY INFLUENCE AT A DISTANCE HAS BECOME SO IMPORTANT

A variety of forces have increased the amount of work done at a distance rather than face-to-face:

- Companies with multiple sites (due to outgrowing their space)
- Mergers and acquisitions
- Advantages of geographical dispersion (reduced costs, closeness to customers or expert suppliers)
- Greater access to technologies that enable people to work from home (either by choice or because companies want to reduce office space costs), though some companies are pulling employees back
- Desire to be able to work across different time zones

These forces have made it either imperative or highly probable that organizational members at all levels have to work with and gain collaboration from others that they seldom or never see in person. Often they must deal with others who are technically in their own organization but might as well be outside it, working as contractors, vendors, internal "customers," or other experts.

Even when these people at a distance are direct reports, influence skills are still needed; though you can give orders, challenges and complexities to gaining cooperation may increase with distance. And in many instances, the work will involve leading or being a member of virtual teams or taskforces, in which influence provides the only way to get anything done. In addition, increasing numbers of managers now have direct reports whom they seldom see in person, so they must do the difficult tasks of managing without meeting face-to-face, including shaping how team members influence one another. Gaining full cooperation and achieving influence are hard enough in person; distance just increases the degree of difficulty.

Therefore, we believe that it is worthwhile to give special attention to using the core *influence without authority* model when you face the extra challenges of understanding and building relationships with the person or group you want to influence when you have no, little, or only sporadic face-to-face interaction. And of course, problems are compounded when you are interacting with people who do not all speak the same first language or share the same cultural backgrounds and assumptions.

It isn't as if a considerable amount of work cannot be accomplished at a distance. Distance work and influence can be highly effective when the interacting individuals or group members:

- Already know each other (and meet face-to-face periodically)
- Already have a reasonably high degree of trust
- Agree on the overall goals of their work together
- Identify with the organization and its vision or purpose
- Understand that some communications will be synchronous and some asynchronous
- Are comfortable with the technologies used
- Feel individually and collectively valued for their contributions
- Have a process for recognizing when and how some individuals need to be encouraged into the conversation

But these conditions, while becoming more common, are too seldom met. Many managers take for granted that these conditions exist without realizing that they must make special and persistent efforts to create them when working at a distance. But as the U.S.–South Korean example at the beginning of this chapter shows, even interactions that look straightforward contain many opportunities for misunderstandings or worse. The conundrum is that it can be difficult to build those enabling conditions without face-to-face contact!

The very nature of communication contains potential ambiguities, as the phrase "go off" in the alarm example illustrates. Furthermore, a considerable amount of understanding is conveyed by nonverbal signals: tone of voice, pace, body movement, expressions of the face and eyes. Then there is the initial impact of the setting, previous interactions, the presence of other parties, relative roles of those interacting, cultural expectations of the organization and of the wider culture, and so on. When people work in the same location, their opportunities to bump into others, chat, and get to know each other usually happen without systematic planning. But more is required when working at a distance.

Let's illustrate with a difficult, but not unusual situation:

- A six-member multicultural team is located in six different countries
- They meet with their U.S.-based manager via an extended phone conference call.
- The meeting is not just to transmit information, but to come up with a creative solution to a problem affecting them all.
- Here is what the manager can't "see" that is normally noticed face-to-face:
  - Hans is leaning back with a frown even though verbally he seems to be positively involved.
  - Juan is fiddling with his cell-phone, catching up on e-mails.
  - Yasu, from Japan, agrees verbally but doesn't look happy.
  - Suzanne grimaces every time Hans talks.
  - Juan rolls his eyes when Suzanne promises to deliver critical data.
  - As the meeting ends, the manager proposes an action step and everybody verbally expresses agreement, but all nonverbal clues would say otherwise. Indira never lifts her eyes from the table.
- Not only does the leader not have this information (and more), but members don't have it about each other. Hans doesn't know that Suzanne grimaces at his comments, and she doesn't know that Juan doubts that she will come through.

- With all this, it's difficult to have the ideal conditions described above. While members might be aligned with the same goals and accept the organization's vision, it is difficult for peer knowledge and trust building to grow naturally under these conditions, and for true collaboration to develop.
- This representative team is missing the normal social associations that occur in a colocated face-to-face setting. Might Hans wander into Suzanne's office and ask what's up, either on his own or because the manager, noticing the interaction in the meeting, encouraged him to do so? Team members miss all the knowledge and opportunities for creative collisions usually gained through informal interactions over coffee, at lunch, in the corridors, or at drinks afterward.

With the constricted information:

- Members and the leader are more likely to stereotype each other and less readily see how each member, even the most different, could be a potential ally.
- Fully understanding each other's world is more difficult, so it is harder to understand what each is likely to care about or need.
- In turn, that likely restricts the currencies that the person desiring influence thinks she has at her disposal to exchange.
- Because most interactions probably have been relatively formal, members are less likely to develop more personal ways of relating and building valuable trust.

Therefore, a core task for the leader (or anyone trying to influence working at a distance) is a conscious attempt to add those things that naturally occur face-to-face not only for his or her own relations to members, but also to facilitate them between members. These include the use of increasingly helpful technology (with active listening and communicating), considerable one-to-one communication in addition to and between meetings, clarity on goals, and as many face-to-face meetings as possible.

Remove or fail to add some or all of these, and there is great potential for trouble, as anyone who has ever sent a perfectly well-intentioned e-mail and received explosive responses has learned.[2] (The authors speak from plenty of personal experience!)

Leaders can take a series of actions to compensate for the lack of consistent face-to-face contact. We have grouped these under the following five areas:

- Use of technology
- Clarity on goals
- Special attention to meeting processes
- Attentive listening and communication
- Maximizing face time and using it well

USE OF TECHNOLOGY

Technology is not a cure-all, but certain forms can help significantly. Furthermore, they are improving all the time. Telephone calls can be better than e-mail or regular mail, and adding video, especially as quality continues to improve (provided that it is equally good at both ends) can restore much of the communication bandwidth. Even speaker phones have improved for capturing meeting participants. The recent forms of chat and instant messaging also enable frequent interactions in real time, enhancing the sense of one another's presence.[3] The explosion of new technology such as virtual reality also promises to narrow the gap between distant contact and face-to-face. But even with these advances, depending on how complex the topics are, how fragile the relationship is, how well the language being used is understood, how much trust already exists, and how many people are involved, still many opportunities exist for things to go wrong.

We have included observations and suggestions from managers who are using technology to overcome some of the limitations of distance. All the technologies work best with fewer participants (one-to-one or small group meetings), and none work well if Internet or cellular connections are weak, intermittent, or unreliable. The larger the company, the likelier that bandwidth and reliability are at least adequate, although some entrepreneurial companies can be quite advanced in using cutting-edge technology. Accommodating time differences depends on human sensitivity and willingness to be inclusive.

In general, *the more complex the situation, the more important it is to move up the gradation toward advanced technology*. Complexity comes from group size times member unfamiliarity with one another times the need for movement from information transmittal to joint problem solving for innovative outcomes. But technology has differential effects depending on some other variables, as a tech-savvy manager explains.

Jody Boatwright, VP of technical services at the media company ASG, lives on the U.S. East Coast, but few of those he manages or coaches, or his boss, are in the same area. When he isn't seeing them through travel, he uses screen-sharing applications.

When a team is having a structured, shared agenda, it's more productive to meet over the technology, because it is more focused, and there are less side conversations. One-on-one can be more effective if people are comfortable, [but] less productive if they are not. With clients I travel because they are more guarded—not so with employees. It's just the same with employees who acclimatize to the technology. Lots of times employees have less to say in person! Clients have more to say off video. There is reservation in the relationship. If I have good relationships with the team, more vulnerability is allowed. With customers, there is more distance, so there is more comfort in person; they can ease in, and I can read their body language. Certain conversations I won't even have [remotely]; I just wait until we are together in person. We are often talking about people and it is harder to get into subtleties unless we are face-to-face.

Video and screen sharing work incredibly well for one-on-one or small team virtual management. However, with managing large change initiatives across the company or creating broad participation and accountability, they are not enough. High-level concepts, strategic direction, and synergy of activities get lost. A broader digital transformation of information management could have a huge impact.

Some of my recommendations to solve this challenge have included shared file structures and repositories, Intranet (publishing strategy and goals, dashboards, service metrics, forecasts, project management data), standardized project management software, revamping accounting systems to allow for cost accounting and information sharing, standardizing quoting tools, revamping equipment order management, staffing software (for managed services group), and a CRM. Creating a digital ecosystem that demonstrates what our goals are and how we are progressing should help encourage adoption and shift old cultural assumptions.

The Limitations of Phones

Jody has learned when to avoid using distance technology to get the most out of his obligations and opportunities. When one-on-one or just transmitting information, the phone can work, but with problem solving, all the difficulties described in our prototypical situation are likely to occur. Even worse, under those conditions the leader (and members) may not know what other communication is simultaneously going on.

For example, Sarah, a global project manager, noted that "there is constant temptation for team members to be working on other tasks during team meetings because often the particular project is not their only assignment."

A middle-level technical manager at IBM told us that during group conference calls with her boss and peers, she would text different people in that meeting during the call to ask for or add information that wasn't publicly shared. Gopi Parampalli, a technology leader at EA who manages many people at a distance, mentioned his way of counteracting this drifting of attention:

> To help engage the remote employees we started using video conferencing, because often they were busy with other things like messaging, e-mails, etc.; using video, it was easy to see whether they were engaged. To keep them involved, I ask lots of questions, make sure they engaged; I keep my monologues short, to [the] best of my abilities, so it is not boring. Before, they wouldn't engage or contribute; once we started using the webcam, it was easy to see. I still use the phone, but only for short meetings. We use a number of technologies: desktop sharing and video conferencing. Each person is at their own desk, [so] we can see everyone at once, which makes it easier to gauge facial expressions, nonverbals, and can figure out if they have questions.[4]

It is important to be sure all are comfortable with the technology. Grant Miller, Salesforce.com director of alliances, points out that if you are not comfortable being on camera, you should practice and spend time interacting with people through it.

> As the technology becomes so commonplace, if you are not adept with not only the technology—which is not really that hard—but also translating it cognitively as people speak, you will miss much of the nonverbal communication, because you must do probably five times or six times as much signal processing to make sense of it. But the current quality that we get from PCs, Macs, or our phones is fantastic. You can see more close-ups. You should try to make it second nature for you, because then the technology is not in the way and you can concentrate on deep listening.

It's easier to be comfortable with technology when you know it will work. Matt Abrahams, an expert on distant communications, advises speakers to verify before an important presentation that all features work (including at the audience sites) and recommends having technical support readily available if problems arise. "Technology should not be a distraction so that you and others can focus on your message."[5] The same would apply in meetings and task forces

Advantages Provided by Technology The discussion thus far has implied that distant interactions are inevitably inferior to face-to-face ones, but that is not always the case. Remember Jody Boatwright's comment above that "when a team is having a structured, shared agenda, it's more productive to meet over the technology, because it is more focused, and there are less side conversations." Furthermore, technology can provide more immediate feedback that wouldn't be possible in a presentation to a larger group. It is possible to take an immediate poll about whether the points are clear. Also, the meeting manager can arrange for somebody in the audience to give electronic feedback as the presentation is going on.

At the beginning of this chapter, we noted that the leader might not be able to pick up nonverbal cues, especially in conference calls. However, advanced technology offers the possibility of noticing things that could be missed face-to-face. For example, a manager who holds distant video meetings reported, "I have multiple screens in front of me—one for each direct report—so I am actually better able to see everyone than at an in-person meeting, where if I look left, I don't see the person on the right."

Finally, some people are able to be more open and personal when not speaking face-to-face; for them, opening up is easier when there is less intensity than might exist in one-to-one interaction. In conclusion, technology can help bridge distance, but as Gopi indicates, it requires thoughtful decisions, such as using the phone only for short meetings, and awareness of when not to use technology, such as for personal conversations with customers, as Jody mentions. For exceptions to the rule, however, see the next section, where Sarah goes way beyond her comfort zone and usual practice. This is probably not the wave of the future, but it suggests that limitations may be overcome when necessary.

WHEN INFLUENCE BECOMES VERY PERSONAL (SARAH DOES A LAYOFF AT A DISTANCE)

If an open relationship has developed, even truly difficult interpersonal conversations can be carried out. Sarah explained:

> Recently I had to give strong feedback at distance. It was not all of a sudden. We had talked over the year. A new incident had occurred just before the review. It was unpleasant, just as if it were face-to-face. She was still upset. She knew it was not a good thing. She wears her heart on her sleeve. Maybe it was easier for her not to have me two feet away; she was in a conference room and on the phone; there was screen sharing with documents shared. I had met her in person, four [or] five times face-to-face; she already had issues before starting to report to me. We had talked about these issues face-to-face during

> the year. I don't feel not seeing her negatively impacted the conversation, because it is our norm. It seems less personal. I don't think it would have gone differently. We are both "what you see is what you get" people.
>
> I talked to HR about whether to fly out to see her, but they thought it didn't really matter. She worked through an action plan as a result. But when the company did companywide reductions, she was included, not by me, but by company ratings. Then we had a layoff conversation, where HR was in the room with her, I was on [the] phone for a few minutes (as HR had told me they wanted to do). I was there to say "sorry, must be a shock," then I was off the call; HR handled the rest. That was my first layoff of any kind.

Clarity on Goals

With extra clarity about goals and assignments, you can reduce the need for as frequent communication between manager and team members, or between members, as when there is more opportunity for easy informal conversation. Sarah, for example, pulls together people from various functions around the world as well as some of her own direct reports. The lack of face-to-face contact, and variable writing skills, even among smart individuals, makes clear written and oral communications imperative, because there are fewer informal meetings to clarify misunderstandings and ambiguities. Nevertheless, as we will show below, intense one-to-one conversations are still necessary.

Getting goal clarity can be a big aid to influence. Gopi Parampalli, who is directly supervising 155 team members and 260 contractors in 26 countries, has discovered it is an enormous help to him. He found that influencing at a distance is different with team, boss, peers, customers, and supply chain. Some require different amounts of shrewdness and savvy.

> As a technology leader at EA, influencing starts with setting the organization agenda. At its core, the agenda is list of critical annual objectives that solves business problems by applying people, process, and technology vectors. I use a slight variation of the Balanced Score Card to set these objectives:
>
> - Talent and leadership (people objectives applicable to all people managers that my team members care about)
> - Operations (running the business objectives that matter to my customers and executives)
> - Innovation (new business capabilities that matter to my customers and executives)
> - Financials (managing the budget plans objectives that my manager and executives care about) and
> - Customer satisfaction (measures my internal customers care about).

> As you can see, for me to get the agenda right, I need to work very closely, get influenced and influence them on my organization objectives. Agenda is what connects us all. This is the context under which influencing works. Once the agenda is locked after getting buy-in from my directs and managers, I follow a quarterly cadence to review progress vs. objectives.
>
> People objectives are driven by everyone. That is the ultimate device for holding teams accountable. I don't force things from top down at the beginning. Once I go through plans, we write it down, and then I don't bug them weekly, only once [per] quarter, when we have honest discussions around the objectives. If an employee is not aligned in the first quarterly review, we discuss the problem, and I basically say, "Tell me how I can help." I ask questions, like "Have we looked at this, or that?" I help them understand.

Gopi is comfortable with holding people accountable for results as a natural part of his role, even though he doesn't give them detailed advice about doing their jobs. Much of his influence comes from insisting on a process that starts with customer needs and builds goals from there, and he is not afraid to use his position to ensure that goals are set. Once they are set, however, he works to build relationships so he is seen as helping, rather than giving orders or telling people how to accomplish the goals. And as mentioned earlier, in addition to whatever influence he can gain by understanding what is important to the various stakeholders and offering some of what they want, he is also willing to take advantage of the potential of various technologies to allow for a form of peer control, as for example when video broadcasts of the meetings make visible those who are not focused on agenda topics.

Special Attention to Meeting Processes

The first question to consider is what technology to use with what objective. When will a phone call suffice, and when do you need a webinar or more elaborate technology? Then consider familiarity with the technology, not only for the speaker but the audience as well. Is some form of training needed (especially for those less familiar with the tools)? The third question is the format of the meeting itself.

For formal presentations, communications expert Abrahams notes, "Audiences begin to lose attention after roughly ten minutes of hearing from the same presenter. If [the] communication is likely to exceed this time window, then use interactive activities to keep [the] audience engaged, such as asking questions, changing presenters, or taking a poll." Also, he suggests, for presentations with slides, it is best to show video of the presenter only at the beginning and during questions at the end, removing the video during the body of the talk to avoid distracting the audience from the material.

Then you must pay attention to the meeting itself. Sarah, whose career as a manager we have followed for years, works at home yet runs project and program teams on global supply chain issues for a very large technical company. This has forced her to master distance skills. She passes along her methods:[6]

> It is critical that everyone be involved, but those whose personal style is more introverted may still have trouble being heard and team members may have to take that into account just as they would in a colocated team. Agreements have to be very carefully managed and communicated. Making sure that everyone has input before a decision is made, even if the decision is not in the hands of the team, is a cultural value at the company.

Also important are the norms that are set up. At Sarah's company, employees are obligated to contribute, even when others don't agree, but then also obligated to support final decisions wholeheartedly. Right from the beginning, employees are taught about constructive confrontation, learning to strongly dissent but then commit, whether colocated or in different parts of the world.

Presenting, in distant learning, produces a paradox. On the one hand, for most technologies personal information may be lost due to missing nonverbal cues and the like. But people talking on the phone or to a camera also lose reciprocal nonverbal cues from the audience, so the speaker may become even less animated. Speakers are coached to compensate by varying their tone, pace, and intonation to express more of one's self than they would normally do.

Sarah has her way to handle this. When on a conference call with the team or team members, she tries hard to smile, even though she's in her office by herself. In her view, smiling influences her tone of voice. Clearly the right state of mind is just as important on calls as it is in an important face-to-face meeting. Her goal is to be genuine, but she's aware that demonstrating this can be harder without face-to-face contact. "I try to smile when talking with team members by phone because they can tell, perhaps not directly, but it shows through, just as when you're meeting with someone face-to-face."

It's also important to pay special attention to meeting dynamics. Sarah adds:

> With distance meetings, when you get many on line, you have to be conscious about jumping in. You see women say, "Oh no, you go ahead" if two people talk at the same time; the man will just keep talking and the woman will slowly stop. You have to be tuned in at any slight break; the facilitator has to be good at saying, "Hey Jane, we haven't heard from you." I try to pay attention, but it is harder in a virtual meeting. It is like what happens in person, but the symptoms are amplified; for women you have to get out of your comfort zone, be "pushy," jump in, because you cannot use eye contact.

But being concerned with meeting dynamics isn't limited to the actual meeting time itself.

> I spend considerable time between meetings talking one-on-one with members to build closeness and make them comfortable so that they can more freely contribute. I have one-on-one standing meetings with direct reports, [so I can] check in about our meetings. I ask "How did it go, do you have more comments," or I give feedback. With others, it is ad hoc. With a new person, I set a time, maybe once [per] month. It is more ad hoc with others who are working regularly, based on whether I see value. With peers, I have standing meetings. Also with my boss. Maybe once or twice [per] week, three [to] four minutes, less if not needed, but better to have it on the calendar, so I don't have to chase to match the calendar. There are long days when I am all over the globe, but mostly I work out of my house. Some travel, 15 [to] 20 percent.

Attentive Listening and Communicating

Careful listening is a critical underutilized management (and influence) skill that becomes even more important in distance settings. As Sarah pointed out in describing her work with teams, it requires not only careful attention during meetings but also other informal occasions when she can ask the quieter people for their opinions, come back to people who have been cut off, and sense when someone might have a stronger point of view than is being expressed. She also has frequent one-on-one conversations between meetings, not only soliciting opinions and encouraging full participation but exchanging personal information to build the relationships. She considers this a vital part of meeting management and influencing at a distance.

For another rich view of active listening, both in the short term and for long-term relationship building, here is an excerpt from an interview with

Grant Miller, the senior executive with Salesforce.com. Usually, the word "selling" brings a lot of talking and persuasion to mind, but note how Grant emphasizes the power of good listening, while he discusses working with a very upset Salesforce client; a contractor had bid $600,000 for implementation but had run up charges of $1.8 million and still wasn't done.

> Over a period of time the contractor's work continued, they submitted bills, reviews were made, and the customer accepted the work and continued to pay. And so, finally there was a breaking point and the customer reached out to our sales vice president, who then looked at me and said, "Could you help me out because this involves a partner?"
>
> So, I spent an hour and a half on the phone listening to the emotional release and my gut told me going into this . . . not try to solve the problem right from the get-go but to just listen. It would sound like they were finished, and I would say, "Let's see, and what else? What else do you want to share with me?" And they continued to emotionally vomit for quite some time. Their point of view was deeply emotional, less grounded in facts than about how distraught they were over the situation.
>
> The drawback of not being face-to-face without having any prior relationship established is [that] you have to really listen empathetically; it's that second part of listening, not just to the words, but what emotional things are going on in the background. It's listening not just to play the sympathy violin, but to really deconstruct what is going on inside of the person who's pouring their heart and soul out. What is going on inside this other's person's head, what's the white space in between the lines, gaining a sense of where they are set.
>
> It's not necessarily at that point to solve their problem, it's just connecting with them at a very human level and this comes out of some personal life experiences. Men especially have a tendency to want to fix things, it sort of was a kick in the pants for me in my personal life to figure out how to tune in and I began to see it had a great deal of benefit and pay off in the professional context.
>
> So, the key is to listen first. And then, only after you've mirrored how they are feeling, and you get a sense of what this might mean for them, can you be a little more rational and less emotional in your responses: "Is it more important for you to kick this partner out of this project or to get the project done? What is it that really is ultimately going to give you the outcome that you want?"

Grant's urgings about the power of listening for underlying feelings first, whatever technology you are using, in order to connect about what really matters, are consistent with the best advice about influential coaching relationships.

Maximizing Face-Time

In some situations teams never actually fully meet face-to-face, but usually they at least occasionally hold meetings, sometimes quarterly or semi-annually, or when the manager attends a regional meeting or visits the member's home sites. Sometimes the manager may meet mainly with individual members, but is there an opportunity for the team to get together? The challenge is maximizing time together, either to repair relationships, work through unresolved issues, or deepen working relationships and trust to make work at a distance more effective going forward.

It is painful to recall the number of times we have seen managers or planning teams try to design meetings bringing people together to do work and supposedly create closer bonds. Too often the planners fill the meeting time (and schedule overly long days) with senior people making presentations, often with dense PowerPoints, telling the attendees what has happened, what has been decided, and what they must do to accomplish the next period's predetermined goals. Too much information is thrown at participants, who are enthusiastically and repeatedly urged to commit, while participants struggle to have a voice and connect with their counterparts.

Sometimes the schedule may have times for members to (re)build connections, but planners are nervously concerned about whether participants will turn them into petty complaint sessions. As a result, genuine open-ended questions are too seldom asked, group sessions are too short for meaningful discussion, real debate and legitimate conflict are suppressed, so participants become cynical, which organizers see as confirmation that leaving things open just wasted time.

We know from our own and others' consulting experiences, however, that it is possible to design time together that both accomplishes important work and helps develop interpersonal and team connections. Here are some of the elements:

- Preassign topics to individuals or small subgroups who will write position papers.
- Assign readings with differing points of view on the appropriate topics.
- At the meeting, form small teams to brainstorm on the topics.
- Establish ground rules about participation: all are expected to contribute, no interrupting, etc. If possible, use facilitators.
- Have teams do brief reports, then all participants will group together ideas and vote on the ones that are most viable or need more investigation.

- Create follow-up assignments that virtual teams can do, with responsibilities and reporting dates assigned.
- Allow for ample informal social time; structure different activities or seating charts to mix participants, one homogeneously and another heterogeneously.

Face-to-face time, wherever and whenever it occurs, is especially precious. If relationships are new, then getting to know every individual is a high priority, and conversations and activities that promote deeper acquaintance are extraordinarily valuable. But work should also begin early, with time devoted to discussion of and agreement on the more problematic relational issues that often arise:

- What are the norms for dealing with disagreements?
- What are expectations for participation in meetings?
- What should members do if they are having trouble following the conversation in the agreed-upon language? What are their peers' obligations when they notice any member having trouble?
- Are team members expected to address issues outside of their own area of expertise?
- Will meetings have time for each person to talk about personal activities and interests? Is that considered legitimate and valuable?
- How much time will be spent one-on-one with the boss outside of meetings? Will all those discussions occur only at the boss's initiative? How does the boss prefer to be contacted and about what kinds of issues?
- What technologies will be used for what kinds of communications? Will video be required; if so, when?
- Are there any sacred cows or off-limits issues?

The answers to these questions are probably less important than ensuring that they are discussed and resolved, because that will both help overcome distance and set norms about ways of openly addressing issues not yet discussed.

Subgroups can discuss these issues and bring them to the total group for resolution (with facilitation if necessary), making sure that their decision-making process can be a model for how to discuss matters and make decisions when not face-to-face. When a group is together, it is easier to spot when members are holding back, some are dominating, others are not fully invested, or members don't see some topic(s) as legitimate ones to discuss;

the team can then be encouraged in real time to get everything on the table. And time for having good food together and socializing is not wasted; though business issues might be pressing, it is exactly such "work" in the crevices, where people get to know and enjoy one another, that is a key part of the agenda.

Here is how Gopi works when he can get face-to-face:

> I don't do face-to-face meetings every day or week, but go at least once a year, see the work they are doing, show I am interested in that work, connect their face to name, let them know how I interact, what I care about. It makes all of our interaction a whole lot better. They like to have an HQ visit about the work they do.
>
> The way that I avoid the headquarters seagull perception of flying over, eating their food, pooping on their heads, and flying away is not to have my visits focus on reviews. I spend time one [on] one. My questions are on understanding what you do, the difference you make, how what you do can be leveraged by others. I don't come with answers; If I know them, why show up? I have a genuine need to connect. I'm not a fluffy guy, so I still need to see results. No one wants to think about how many tasks there are on your task list. When you ask questions this broader and more interested way, they start thinking about the work in a fresh way.
>
> In addition to the differences between their educational backgrounds and functional assignments, there are inevitable cross-cultural differences. I am Asian myself, so I understand the hierarchical tendency to hold back. I ask people from each place what I should do. When I visit China or India, I know my team members won't speak directly, that I have to ask questions 5 ways.
>
> Fortunately, in our company there is lots of cross-pollination. I go to websites that have country advice, make sure I don't expect them to be an exact replica of me. If a project has gone really badly, it is tempting to get to the bottom line immediately, but I have learned it doesn't work that way. 1:1 works better for being candid. I talk to the whole team to get different perspectives. Asking in many different ways helps me in what I am trying to figure out. Unless I ask in different ways I don't know what question I am really trying to answer. It helps get to the real question I need to answer. It's frustrating, but I need more patience; getting frustrated is not effective in the long term. When it is a complex multifaceted issue, straightforward won't get me the answer.

IMPACTS OF DISTANCE ON KEY STEPS OF THE IWA MODEL

The very nature of distance reduces the quantity of face-to-face interaction, and therefore the richness of communication and understanding. (This varies, as noted, with the technologies used, number of people involved, disparities in common language and culture, levels of preexisting trust, and the interpersonal skills of the parties.) Thus it poses special problems for use of the influence model.

Determining Who You Have to Influence

This can be challenging above and beyond the necessity to think about who will have a stake in the issue about which you are trying to have influence. Sometimes it is not the person who appears obvious on the organization chart. Sometimes you have to go through one individual to get to the more crucial person. And when this is done long distance with video conversation, you can't always be sure who else is present. If a team is involved this problem can multiply. On complex projects crossing geographical and/or organizational lines, it might be imperative to try to track in advance who will have a stake, who has power to affect the issue, what the currencies of the various stakeholders are likely to be, how you will go about determining those if you don't know. And in all of this, who can be handled virtually and who will you need to see in person?

Without careful advance thinking about who the players are, it will be hard to engage in the rest of the steps necessary to gain sufficient relationships to be able to make mutual exchanges that can lead to satisfactory influence.

Assuming Others Are Potential Partners or Allies

We know that the more overt differences the person or group you want to influence has, the more difficult it becomes to see or find commonalities or for the other to see commonalities in you. Because distance often diminishes how much information is conveyed—which in part determines how humans decide whether to trust others—letting go of initial stereotypes and categorizations can become more difficult. By deciding to smile even when others can't see her, Sarah is openly acknowledging how hard it is to convey friendly acceptance without the usual available cues. If data-centric engineers have problems dealing with marketing people focused on customers' emotions in person, imagine how much more difficult distance makes it for them not to tune each other out but appreciate their shared concerns. Consider different cultural assumptions, such as how direct to be with people of different rank in the organization, the meaning of silence, looking down rather than directly at someone, or whether conversations start with social chitchat or dive directly into problem solving. These factors (and others) can make it very difficult to avoid negative assumptions about those who seem hard to influence.

Understanding How They Want to Be Related To

In that vein, one currency that helps reduce distance is understanding how the other party wants to be related to about work. People differ in terms of factors such as how directly they want to be approached, how openly they expect to speak to one another at work, how much they reveal or discuss about personal issues at work, or whether they prefer hearing an overview and conclusions before a lot of detail or don't want to hear recommendations without thorough, careful analysis. When you work at a distance, you may find such factors harder to discover, especially when the other party isn't direct when you don't get it right and you can't easily notice or interpret the nonverbal clues. And, of course, when working across cultures even face-to-face interactions can be opaque, since some cultures reinforce indirect communication and only give off very subtle clues about their reactions, which are essentially invisible to those from more overt cultures.

Understanding Their Worlds

If you understand the organizational context of those you want to influence, you will find it helpful in determining the currencies that they probably value. Distance may make it difficult to know the nature of the work being done by the other, their boss's expectations, the way they are rewarded and measured, their local organization's norms, and the expectations of the wider culture in which they exist. You may be dealing with individuals or groups that have come with acquisitions or mergers, individuals or teams who are doing work you are not familiar with, people from cultures you don't know or understand, with educational backgrounds that don't provide you clues as to how they are likely to think. Unless you can get on the ground and do a lot of observation and informal inquiry, you will be subject to working blind or making assumptions that could easily only be correct by chance.

Building an Open and Trusting Relationship

Even in person, it can be difficult to build the open and trusting relationships that make mutually beneficial exchanges easier. However, working at a distance can create giant barriers, especially if people are uncomfortable with technologies used for remote meetings; face-to-face meetings are rare, rushed, or formal; and at least one party believes that extended conversations and improved work relationships must precede opening up and allowing closeness. The latter may be a significant problem for those from efficiency-oriented cultures like Americans and Germans, who may consider personal conversations a waste of time and always want to "get down to business." They believe in speaking clearly and leaving no room for misinterpretation.[7] On the other hand, as the cost of global communications has come down, it is quite possible and not so uncommon for colleagues in different countries, if they wish, to have short and frequent video chats, where they talk about more personal things that reinforce closeness. And even exchanges of short text messages can keep relationships going and build a sense of connection.

THE GRADUAL BUILDING OF TRUST

Kavita Bhat had been working as a team lead, managing small teams for the past few years, but quite recently joined a startup company where her team is located in a different country.

> For the past few years, although we all work remotely, we interact with each other very frequently. It was challenging and interesting in the beginning. My challenge was not only building trust but also to work on building a good working relation with them. I started first by building a skills inventory of each team member (learning about competencies) and worked with them individually identifying their strengths and weaknesses. Depending on their strength I assigned them tasks and worked with them independently. This helped me to build trust. Initially, our conversations were very formal but quite recently I noticed that they are opening up more to me and we are having conversations outside of work. I provide recognition to my team members. If a monetary award is not possible, a simple note of "Thank You" or "Good Work" brings a lot of positivity in them. As we are not physically present in one location, providing timely feedback about their work is quite essential.

She discovered that just as when working face-to-face, the effort to know them and design work to fit their strengths won their confidence over time, so working freely at a distance became easier.

Mark Murphy suggests a monthly conversation: "What things would you like to get better at this next month?" Of course, this helps you understand where they'd like to grow and develop. But it also says to the remote employee "you're important, and I care about seeing you grow and develop." It sends a clear message that you, as their leader, haven't forgotten about them; in fact, you're heavily invested in helping them realize their potential.[8] And it allows you to follow up about improvements they have made, accomplishments, and lowlights, all helping to build a bond.

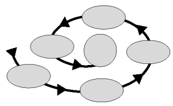
Making Mutually Beneficial Exchanges

A challenge with exchanges at a distance is to keep them from all being more formal. If the relationships have been built, it is possible to have warm agreement (though not so easy to have a celebratory glass of champagne together!), but it may be difficult to pick up all the nonverbal cues that make it easier to move toward win-win conclusions. A lot depends on how well the parties already know each other, how much face-to-face time they have had, and how readily each can see how the exchange benefits their own side. Unless you will never have any more dealings with those you are trying to influence, you don't want them walking away feeling uncommitted despite verbal agreement. Nor do you want them to feel defeated or unhappy enough to consider retaliating in the future; being at a distance has the disadvantage of fewer opportunities to sense their mood and work on the relationship if necessary. There may also be some temptation to feel less close to someone at a distance, which can make people more willing to take advantage of others, but as we have often noted, this is usually shortsighted.

Although influence without authority becomes even more difficult when done primarily at a distance, with care it can happen and be effective.

CHAPTER 13

INFLUENCING DIFFICULT COLLEAGUES



With very few exceptions, everyone at work is dependent on colleagues to get his or her work done. That's the nature of current organizations: complex, interdependent tasks and specialized roles have increased the need for people to work together across departments to deliver complicated products and services. The first seven chapters of this book deal with many of the problematic collegial relationships. But some colleagues are particularly difficult to influence.

The core concepts, exchange and reciprocity, are still central to gaining cooperation with them. Even the colleagues who are also competitors might respond when they see that they will get something they value when they give you what you need. But that seldom is easy and often requires changes in mind-set.

FRIENDLY COMPETITORS: "CO-OPETITION"

One great challenge in organizations is how to balance your dependence on peers you have to get along with yet also compete with—for resources, attention from the boss and others, rewards, and promotions. Even organizations without forced rankings among department members (like the ones at GE until recently) have some implicit competition; the flattest, most collaborative organizations also have limitations on resources, advancement, and other opportunities. The difference is one of degree and overtness about differentiation. At the same time, the very nature of differing job assignments in a complex world means that peers need one another. Peers have information, expertise, resources, connections, and desirable support that all must gain to be effective.

The related challenge is to balance caring for your own needs and responding to requests (influence attempts) from others. Responding can build status and credit but also drains time and resources from achieving your own goals.

The people in the vast middle of organizations can falter if they don't balance these opposite necessities. Acting too competitively creates resentment and eventual retaliation. (People find incredibly creative ways of hanging colleagues out to dry when they think the colleague is behaving viciously.) Likewise, responding only to your own needs isolates you. But if you are too collaborative and selfless, you may get walked on and fail to meet your obligations. The art is to be "more collaborative and helpful than everyone else," a subtle way of competing without being competitive. But you can't do this as a trick, or you will seem phony and underhanded, undermining your effectiveness. The second guideline is to be as inventive as possible to create win-win outcomes, where you achieve your goals while helping others achieve theirs.

Helping your colleagues look good is part of being an effective organizational member and worth learning to do automatically. Don't wait for "big" occasions; you have endless chances to look out for your colleagues' interests and help them.

This concept connects to recent research that found that people making exchanges as part of daily work life had higher status and were more productive. Their relationships with colleagues were rich and involved, not just occasional and distant.[1]

OVERCOMING MISTRUST

If others do not like or trust you (or your department), work on that directly. Start by asking what is bothering them and what concerns they would have about collaborating. Listen carefully to the answer, and don't let defensiveness turn off your hearing aid. Even when they are reluctant to be specific, you can often read between the lines or sense what they avoid. If necessary, you can specify what makes you think there is mistrust. You can refer to awkward silences, phone calls not returned, averted glances, or anything that makes you think that they don't fully trust you. This direct, concrete offer of data, though perhaps uncomfortable, may edge the colleague toward greater openness. You are putting the cards on the table, so you are more trustworthy.

The other reason for listening closely is that by doing so you also build trust. Unless you pounce on what you learn and use it to put the colleague at a disadvantage or look bad, listening intently and demonstrating your understanding of and concern about what they say are relationship builders.

Often past events (real or imagined) shape people's attitudes. It is helpful to ask about past experiences that might affect current perceptions. If you or your department did something wrong, admit it. Evading responsibility for mistakes makes you seem untrustworthy, while owning up to them makes you more credible. Besides, vulnerability often creates some reciprocal willingness to be more vulnerable and open, so it is a way of utilizing reciprocity to make a good exchange. (For an example of overcoming bad history between HR/training and payroll in a professional organization, see http://www.influencewithoutauthority.com.)

Be sure to ask a lot of questions about the other person's interests, challenges, and preoccupations and respond with unfeigned interest. Few people do not want to be understood, and, again, demonstrating real interest and curiosity helps reduce suspicion. Furthermore, almost invariably really understanding the other person's world makes you feel more sympathetic, which is critical to enhancing the relationship.

Next, think about ways to make a deal that shows you are trustworthy, especially where you take the first risk. Can you offer the equivalent of a free trial, a "money-back guarantee," or a pilot project that not only demonstrates your offering's value but also proves that you deliver as you claim? Can you go out of your way to be accommodating: literally traveling a long distance, being available at odd hours (e.g., holding conference calls with Asian colleagues when it's convenient for them, not you), or obtaining requested information? Anything you do to be at more risk than the colleague helps reduce suspicion of you or your department.

DEALING WITH HARD BARGAINERS

If you are dealing with someone who believes in driving a hard bargain, first, do not take it personally. Separate your personal identity from your role. Consider bargaining with the other person as a kind of sport, played for high stakes perhaps, but not a personal insult. Some cultures or subcultures bargain for everything, so depersonalize it and figure out how to negotiate. If you are dealing with someone who operates that way, it isn't about you; it's just about negotiating hard.

If the currency of toughness is valued, you will have to use a similar style, despite your personal preference. Although a few people bargain mercilessly and get pleasure out of double-dealing and dominating (like the entrepreneur we observed who would make an agreement then keep asking for another concession; agree, then ask for another), a tough style doesn't necessarily indicate nastiness. You just need to find out the best response to the colleague's rough exterior (you may need to adopt a similar approach), but always think about ways to come to agreement and keep the relationship going. People who use a tough style often don't dislike tough opponents; they respect them. (In the ironic words of a friend who went through a difficult divorce, "I want my ex-wife's lawyer to represent me if I ever get divorced again.") And with colleagues good at bargaining, hanging in there and parrying their arguments with strong counterpoints can sometimes create a positive relationship as well as a win-win task solution.

If you have quick verbal skills, use humor to deflect attacks. A quip instead of a counterattack can ease tension, reduce the impact of the other person's aggression, and help build the relationship. When in doubt, use self-deprecating humor such as, "Oh, I see, all you want me to do is to cave in, go belly up, and hand you everything you want. I guess I must come across as the weakest player in the universe." And with tough bargainers, don't give in too soon; otherwise they might worry that they could have gained more and left too much on the table. In such cases, you must let them believe that they have wrested every last concession from you.

TREAT EVERYBODY AS A LONG-TERM CUSTOMER

Treating everyone as a long-term customer is one of the first principles of selling. This principle indicates that you should frame what you sell in terms of what others care about, not its importance to you. You can immediately see the parallel to the general requirement for knowing and valuing the situation of the other person.[2]

Just as a salesperson wouldn't want to take an ongoing customer for granted, you will also find it useful to consider your colleague somebody you could lose. In some organizations, colleagues outside your area literally can go elsewhere: they can buy their own support services, give priority to other issues, or just shut you out. Even when using outside services (for example, buying training from an outside vendor) is not officially permitted, they can usually ignore your requests or stall.

Second, just as salespeople have a stake not only in selling their product or service but also in the customer's success, you, too, have a stake in your colleagues' success. Not only do you belong to the same organization, but your assistance also builds credit to draw on in the future and probably enhances your and your department's reputation.

DEALING WITH COLLEAGUE BEHAVIOR THAT IS ANNOYING OR WORSE

So far, we have addressed problems with colleagues who are less cooperative than you would like. But a colleague's interpersonal style or other behaviors can also be problematic. Behavioral influence is difficult but not impossible.

As we discussed on pages 97–101, often bothersome behavior is not an unresolvable personality conflict but a difference in work styles. Review that discussion to see if that is the case. At other times, there may be a less resolvable basic difference in values. While there are a few slimy people (and we have met—and worked with—a couple of them), in most of the cases we have been able to explore, the issue is more the label that has been placed on particular behavior. The other might have described an incident differently from you, but does that make him an "incorrigible liar?" Or another has once too often told someone else what you think is private information, but rather than writing her off, maybe you can still work with her, managing your own discretion.

How can this way of thinking apply to the following situation?

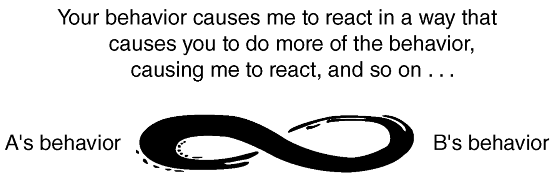
THE PROBLEM OF THE COLLEAGUE'S MADDENING BEHAVIOR

"One of my colleagues drives me crazy because he always focuses on the tiniest details and never sees the bigger picture. Even when I don't need his cooperation, his general attitude is maddening. I put a lot of energy into conceptualizing better ways for us to serve our customers, but he seems to be speaking some other language; he never responds with enthusiasm to any new idea. All he can say is, 'How many man-hours will I have to schedule next year?' or something like that. Sometimes I feel like Moses coming down from the mountain, and all he wants to know is why I didn't use a number 6 chisel!"

Possible Solution: The world might be more pleasant if everyone were just like you, but productivity suffers without diverse skills and perspectives. If you are a creative conceptualizer, that is extremely valuable, but your ideas are likely to be strengthened or executed better when someone like your colleague buttons down the details and makes sure the ideas are practical. (In turn, your soaring imagination is probably a necessary antidote to your earthbound colleague.)

Thus, to start influencing this colleague (and most colleagues), you must first examine your own expectations and behavior to see whether you are doing anything that creates or contributes to the problem. In this case, your

Figure 13.1
Reciprocal Role Relationship



impatience is as much about you as it is about him. You need to consider how to appreciate skills complementary to yours and find a way to value them. Understanding your own limits and the value of other people's differing approaches will go a long way.

In addition, look closely at whether your impatience with your colleague's attention to detail is prompting him to be even more finicky. Sure, he is naturally conscious of details, but you may be so extreme in your insistence on staying in the clouds that you tempt him to stick to concrete details with even greater delight. And that stimulates you to be even more soaring, which goads him, and on and on. (This reciprocal role relationship is depicted in its most general form in Figure 13.1. See also Chapter 6, "Building Effective Relationships," for more on dealing with colleagues.)

The interconnection between your attitudes and his behavior implies that one (or both) of you might have to change some behaviors to improve the relationship. It isn't necessarily just him. But if what he does and your reaction are connected, then either of you can take initiative to break the pattern. Because you are the one who is bugged and can control your own behavior most easily, think about ways to end the mutually reinforcing behavior.

One way to start is to test the pattern out on the other person. Draw the pattern, and ask him if he sees the two of you that way. Often, just recognizing the pattern can be freeing and alter the relationship with no other intervention.

If you find that uncomfortable, you could start a conversation by admitting that sometimes his focus on detail irritates you (provide a few examples), then ask whether you are doing anything that provokes it. You could explain why it is so irritating, which could open up a discussion about your fear that he will never get on board (and, probably, his fear that you will never come down to earth). Once something like that is on the table, it isn't too difficult to begin offering exchanges, such as this one:

> Oh, I certainly don't want to just be pie in the sky, but if I can't get on a roll, it really blocks my ideas. If you could wait a bit before shooting me down with the details, I would be glad to go over all of the ideas for practical details and drop any that haven't a prayer. I can give them up as easily as they trip off my tongue, so you can be sure I won't go on and on, insisting on something totally impractical.

Or perhaps, "I will promise to stop after each idea so you can respond if you'll agree to give practical objections in a way that we can discuss later, rather than as pronouncements of doom." Or possibly, "I prefer staying on a roll once I get going, so I will agree to take up any points you like if you list them as I am going. I promise to consider each one. And by the way, I will be happy if you build on something once in a while—and maybe I will even critique some of my own ideas if I don't think you will do all of it." The possibilities are great once you both see what the difficulty is. Poking fun at yourself doesn't hurt, as some of the dialogue suggests.

THE INTERCONNECTION OF JOB-RELATED AND INTERPERSONAL ISSUES

For illustration, we have separated the problem of influencing a colleague about a task from the problem of solving interpersonal issues. But sometimes these two areas intertwine. Task disagreements—inability to gain cooperation—create frustration. Then the person who wants to influence colleagues begins to see them negatively, so the issues become entangled. Quite often, personality or interpersonal problems result from failures to agree with the colleague on cooperation, but that gets lost in the hard feelings.

For that reason, we suggest that for any negative perceptions about a colleague, you try to determine whether job-related reasons are the cause of the difficulties or whether it is purely the person's style.

Job-related disagreements are easier to work on with currencies and exchanges, so if you can, start there. If there really are style issues, then remember that you are one half of interpersonal relations, so don't treat the colleague as impossible. If nothing works, you can always conclude that, but starting with that assumption blocks possible progress.

Trying to move colleagues raises many traps, especially ones related to who you are and how you see the world. Success is probably less a matter of skills with currencies and exchange and more about not being too

Table 13.1 Personal Issues That Get in the Way of Resolving Influence Problems with Colleagues

Hard to let go of the past, insisting on determining who was "right" when the disagreement started
Reluctance to admit your part in the problem
Fearing you will be vulnerable
Piling on; responding to a colleague's admission with another accusation
Feeling only competition with the colleague, despite talking of collaboration
Perceiving that finding a solution, especially for a relationship problem, might require that you give up a sense of personal righteousness
Lapsing back to good versus bad thinking about motivation, rather than seeing genuine complexity
Preferring feeling "right" (about how idiotic or wrong the colleague is) to being effective
Worrying too much about looking good in front of the boss
Locking into a position, then focusing on saving face in front of others

self-protective and spoiling your chances of altering the relationship. In organizational life, effective influence seldom flows one way; without mutuality, many organizational members will dig in, become resistant, or wait for their chance to right the balance (by upsetting yours). Especially with colleagues, mutuality is critical, but that can be difficult when the organization reinforces competitive views. Table 13.1 lists the many ways that personal baggage can prevent you from being influential.

CHAPTER 14

INITIATING OR LEADING MAJOR CHANGE

All influence is about making change. No matter what your purpose is—a new product development process, an improved organizational structure, a new compensation system, a great idea for a new business, or an alteration to your supply chain to save millions—you will have many people and groups to influence. But you face some special aspects when leading or initiating a major change effort for a goal you care about.

Because influence requires giving something of approximately equal value in return for what you need, major changes pose key challenges in acquiring the needed influence. You will have to influence people above or to the side of you in the hierarchy, getting them to provide resources, information, support, or approval. You will have to cope with and master organizational politics. You will have to assemble a working team whose members believe in your goal. And you will need an incredible combination of patience, persistence, drive, and flexibility to keep your ultimate goal in mind while adjusting along the way.

Major change is complex and a thorough exploration requires a book in itself. So, in this chapter we focus on several key dimensions for maximum influence. To illustrate them, we start with a real example (only names have been changed) of a person faced with a problem others saw as intractable. With "no money and no authority," Sheila Conrad mobilized the resources to produce major change in her company.

NO MONEY AND NO AUTHORITY

Sheila Conrad, head of renovation for a major hotel chain that operated independently owned hotels, faced a significant dilemma. Many of the hotels needed serious upgrading, but she could not simply order this; the owner of each hotel made the actual decision. Also, she didn't hold the purse strings. Money had to come from the different outside investors of each hotel. This meant that corporate could set standards and recommend renovations but not "order" them. Investors often resisted; they didn't necessarily agree with corporate that it was necessary to renovate and maintain a hotel at the suggested standards. Thus decisions about improvements were implemented on a unit-by-unit basis after the individual hotel manager and that unit's investor negotiated. The hotel manager might think that an improvement would increase occupancy but lacked definitive data to prove it. Thus the manager was reluctant to push hard on the investor.

Since Sheila did not deal directly with the owners, she wondered how she could get managers to buy in to the recommended improvements that her area felt was important. And how would they in turn become more willing to pressure their investors? This problem was compounded because the units were international as well as all over the United States, so influence attempts rarely were face-to-face.

Internal challenges within corporate further complicated the issue. Corporate had no process to go from assessing needs to a coordinated response that would engage the hotel managers about the need to renovate. The corporation lacked a strong vision of its standards. Without this underlying structure, upgrades that were supposed to occur cyclically weren't always consistently enforced.

Sheila faced other problems within corporate. For renovation to be similar across the different hotels, various groups such as quality assurance, finance, and legal needed to coordinate. But they all had their own priorities and time lines, which meant that decisions had to be made each time, often haphazardly. Again, there was no standardized decision-making process.

At a closer level, Sheila wasn't receiving strong support from her boss. While he agreed in general with the problem, he did not take strong positions without an equally strong guarantee that it could work out.

All of this could seem overwhelming—especially to the various stakeholders. To get her hands around the issues, Sheila carefully studied the present situation. She collected hard data about how much was substandard in all hotels. This allowed her to show definitively what their current state was and how vastly off standard they were. She couldn't calculate lost revenue precisely but could show how guest satisfaction declines the longer a substandard hotel goes without renovation. From that, Sheila then produced a road map that broke down the various steps. (This had never been done before because people said it was too much hard work; it required complex mapping of various scenarios and legal issues across all the organizations.)

Not only could this road map reassure stakeholders that the project was manageable, but it also let Sheila start to develop a vision, both for the current renovations and (more importantly) for a process of cross-area coordination to facilitate future projects. Seemingly insurmountable issues were now brought down to size. As Sheila said: "We showed how they would be addressed, and had the answers to all the questions."

Planning was one thing and implementation another; Sheila knew that she would need to create a support team. She first reached out to Gary, a colleague she had worked with before in quality assurance. He bought into the vision: "This was the right thing to do." Fortunately, as Sheila was aware, her vision also supported the work that he was doing globally.

Their next step was getting broader support from senior management. While senior management couldn't order the change, their backing would be very helpful for the project. Gary and Sheila identified a senior vice-president who faced a deadline in his task of reinvigorating the brand. They showed him that their project would make his life easier and thus got his support.

Then Sheila and Gary begin to cobble together a work team that represented the various areas. They didn't have any money so this would be work above and beyond the others' regular jobs. What they found impactful was the vision. The difficulty of working across silos had frustrated members from other areas, so seeing a way to collaborate was very appealing. Sheila and Gary convinced others not only by showing specifically how groups could coordinate but also by arguing, "This is the right thing for the company" and "We can really make a difference." Sheila said that with a lot of selling, others slowly started to buy in. (Later, one team member enthusiastically declared, "We are doing God's work.") It also helped that all the team members could see the part they needed to do and its place in the overall plan.

As the project got traction, Sheila's boss became more involved. Although he had never tried to block it previously, actively promoting it was not a priority. Sheila told him that she was getting acceptance from others, including some senior managers, which reduced his concern. Now that others were becoming enthusiastic, he no longer worried about being too far ahead but of being left behind, so he started actively supporting it.

With people at corporate (including the various functions) on board, Sheila faced perhaps her hardest challenge—getting the hotel managers to buy in. She realized that they were hesitant because they did not want conflict with the unit owners. Since the managers lacked any hard data showing that renovations would increase revenues, they didn't feel they had a basis to argue with the owners. Sheila realized that pressuring the hotel managers would probably not work, so she changed her ideas about the target: "We need to put the fight where it belongs." The team told the hotel managers that they "would go to the owners and make the case." This did the trick, and the managers promised to provide secondary support.

Next was the most challenging target—the unit owners. Even though Sheila lacked concrete data showing a direct relationship between unit upgrades and revenue, the relationship between renovation and customer satisfaction was highly suggestive. And the integrated program that she had put together was also persuasive. That, with the increased emphasis that corporate was putting on brand, made a strong case to the owners. As a result systematic renovations began. They had created a program that, even though complex, could be launched globally. It turned out that "the devil was in the details" of mapping out the component parts for an extraordinarily complex program, generating broad enthusiasm and a "belief" that it was possible. As Sheila concluded, "It was believing that it was worth a shot to try, and being able to adjust for things we didn't necessarily plan for, that was one key to success. Another was that we engaged with hundreds of people along the way, and created a 'movement' to try to fix the perennial 'unsolvable' problem."

THE IMPORTANCE OF VISION

Develop a clear vision of what the change is to accomplish, in terms of its effect on customers and clients of the change. Vision is an important currency for attracting support for your change. Many people will respond more favorably if they can see how your idea will make a difference—to the company, customers, or the public. It isn't the only currency you can use, but it is a good starter, and it appeals to many different people. If they can see that implementing the change eventually produces something good, they are more likely to help, forgive mistakes, and think more inventively about how they can support the effort.

A powerful vision paints a graphic picture of how its successful accomplishment changes the lives of some important group(s). It doesn't just describe what will occur but why it's important. It usually won't be as effective if all you say is that it will make (or save) a lot of money, although that might initially grab the attention of high-level managers (in all cases, adjust the currencies offered to the audience). At best, vision can help people see important meaning to their work—the sense that what they do matters. It grabs them and appeals to their best instincts, paying them in larger significance.

Thus you should develop a good story (not a fictional one!) that you can tell at a moment's notice. Venture capital experts talk about "rocket pitches" or "elevator speeches" for entrepreneurs—a condensed, potent version of their business plan that they can complete in an elevator ride. They need to differentiate their plan from others and quickly capture attention. You may not always have so little time to describe your change to someone whose cooperation you need, but important people are likely to be busy, so be prepared. A compelling vision without a good idea of how to make it happen won't be much help, but you can't execute a terrific plan if you can't get anyone's attention long enough to believe in it.

And remember that the vision must generate passion. It must be something you feel passionate about.[1]

Sheila had a vision about how different corporate areas could work together to ensure that renovations were made regularly and systematically. Note that this worked with Gary and with the others who joined her team. It not only got them on board but gave larger significance to their work, leading one member to exclaim, "We are doing God's work."

But vision was not equally attractive to all. It didn't appear to bring her boss on board, and we are not sure that the vision was a factor in the senior vice-president's support. It certainly would have little appeal to the unit owners; for them the bottom line was likely the primary currency.

Link vision of change with the organization's core values, objectives, strategies, and present dilemmas. By definition, any change you try to accomplish does something different from current practices, but showing how your change connects to tradition and culture will make people less uncomfortable and, therefore, less likely to resist automatically. Sometimes that is difficult, especially if you are convinced that the culture itself must change—for example, from inward looking and comfortable to customer focused and aggressive—but usually you can make some connections. You may have to go back to a much earlier stage of the organization's history and remind people that the company was once some other way, but it is worth the effort. That helps make the new idea less strange, so people stay open to it.

MANAGE TENSION

Vision not only lays out direction but also can create useful tension about the distance to go to realize the vision. Without some tension between the way things are now and the way they could be, there will be no movement. If the vision is compelling, it can clearly show the distance between the present and the desirable future. If the vision is inspiring and achievable, it creates a healthy tension. People are most ready to learn or change when experiencing moderate tension. Too much tension makes them freeze (as with math anxiety); with too little they don't see why the change is worth the effort.

With this insight, you can not only adjust your vision but also make those who must cooperate more ready to change. You can make them more or less uncomfortable, either by stressing the gap between the present state and the desired future one or by focusing on all that is wrong with the present. Either can work, but by telling colleagues how bad things are, you risk making at least some of them defensive, especially if they helped create present conditions. So use vision to create moderate discomfort when you can.

While tension can show the desired end state, the direction to go, and the gap between the present and the wished-for future, it does not necessarily indicate the steps in how to get there. As desirable as the goal is, if the journey does not seem attainable, the vision loses its power.

Note that Sheila started not with the vision (which would have been seen as unrealistic) but with managing the tension. Since that comes from the gap between the present and a (realizable) desired state, she first grounded her study in present conditions. Even though most people in the organization knew there were problems, quantifying them was important. But stopping there might have increased the level of discouragement. Her next step was creating a feasible plan for dealing with them. Only then could the vision be credible and engaging.

One interesting complexity about change is that some people are highly resistant, some eager to join, and many quite ambivalent, both fearful and curious. You may not be able to influence the extreme resistors very well, but you want to pay a lot of attention to those whose feelings (and therefore readiness) are mixed. They will respond best to moderate tension. You can increase tension by emphasizing the gap between the present and the future, going faster, making the dissatisfaction of customers or others more visible, and so on. And you can ease tension by taking steps like slowing down, focusing more on the steps that need to be taken, encouraging more thinking through the issues, honoring the past and present practices, and spending more time educating people in any new skills. Pay close attention to the people in the middle, which Sheila did, and manage the tension to maximize their readiness.

IDENTIFY KEY STAKEHOLDERS WHO MUST BE INFLUENCED

For any change project, many people can have an impact on its eventual acceptance: those with an interest as recipients, those implementing it, managers, planners, and those likely to be affected indirectly. This also includes those who will be the beneficiaries, those who will be negatively affected, and some outside groups such as the financial community or the press. From among this list, try to select all who must make important decisions for your dream to become a reality. Identify these stakeholders as early as possible by systematically looking inside and outside the organization.

For each stakeholder (individual or group), decide which ones you absolutely must influence, which would be nice to influence and win over, and any you can ignore even if they are unhappy with the changes. Then focus on those you must win.

In Sheila's situation, there were numerous stakeholders: her boss, a key colleague, heads of other corporate departments, workers in those areas, senior management, the hotel managers, and the unit owners. She couldn't deal with all of them at once but decided who was initially more important and who could be dealt with later—her boss, the hotel managers, and the unit owners. Too often, those producing change think that their immediate boss and/or the final decision makers (the unit owners) are key, but this situation illustrates that isn't always the case.

For each stakeholder, try to determine the currencies they value, using any information you can get: first-hand knowledge and observation, anything they say that gives clues about what they value, the situations they are in that might shape what they care about, and knowledge you can get from colleagues. The concerns they raise about the change effort provide good clues about what's important to them. (See Chapters 3 and 4 for more information on identifying currencies and diagnosing the worlds of others when you don't know them.)

Different currencies were needed with different stakeholders. Sheila's previous relationship with Gary helped, but her vision and the tangible steps to achieve it would likely be highly attractive to anybody in quality assurance. Also, she offered him a "partnership" in this change project. She "paid" her boss by not pressuring him for support, and he reciprocated by allowing her autonomy. Her (and now Gary's) goals were attractive to the senior vice-president because they could help him with his business objective. As we mentioned, her vision was an important currency for those in the other units frustrated by their inability to produce coordinated, systematic improvements.

How to Influence Distant Stakeholders

Decision Makers

Complications arise when you do not personally know the decision makers whose support or approval you need. Here are some ways to make progress.

Does your list of decision makers include the CEO or someone reporting directly to him or her? How about the chief financial officer or equivalent? A technology guru? One or more division heads or country managers? The board? The organization's bankers? The earlier in the process you can identify them, the more time you have for the necessary homework to discover what they care about and how you can provide them with what would give you the decisions you want.

Forces That Might Help Diagnose Distant High Level Stakeholders

Once you have your list of decision makers, you try to understand their situations (their worlds) and determine the currencies they value. What will they need to know or have happen to support you?

Based on what you know, what are the likely pressures from their roles? Pressures will vary by the industry or sector the organization is in, its competitors, and context, but decision makers are usually affected by well-known economic and political forces.

Which conditions are the decision makers likely to think and worry about? What keeps them up at night? The higher the decision makers' positions, the more likely it is that long-term issues and the expectations and influence of the external financial community are at the forefront of their thinking. What will your change do to share prices (or bond rating), and how will that be received? Will the press respond in some way, and does the decision maker think about organizational reputation? Again, the higher the position, the more important considerations of overall organizational benefit are likely to be.

The decision maker's role and scope of responsibility will also shape what the person pays attention to. Does the person automatically focus on supply chain issues and possible disruptions or on customer preferences and shifting demand? Is a particular region on the radar screen, or does their role require only domestic focus—or constant global scanning?

A rich source for understanding what the decision maker might value is anything that the person is quoted as saying, whether in the annual report, a speech, internal memos, or articles about the organization. Though you must account for caution and how public relations departments sanitize public statements, you can still infer a great deal. Even if the executives are only saying what they want you to think, that still reveals much that is important to them. Just try to notice whether they are talking about growth and innovation or cost cutting. And beware the executive who "doth protest too much" that things are going beautifully; distinguishing clear signaling from whistling in the dark can be difficult, but if you listen closely and know the company, you can probably tell.

This background checking will help you create an appeal that might speak to decision makers' concerns. Then you can try to tie what you need to ways you might supply what they need or want. In this vein, can you sense what information they might not have that they would find useful? If you have a sense of their likely concerns, you may be able to deduce if you know something helpful or otherwise inaccessible to them.

Sheila faced two distant stakeholders in the hotel managers and the unit owners. Since they were so geographically dispersed, she could not assess their needs first-hand, but she didn't need much research to accurately assess what they cared about.

In the short run, she "paid" the hotel managers by not asking them to pressure the unit owners to fund the proposed renovations and later by taking on the primary responsibility of dealing with the unit owners.

With the owners, even though she could not show a direct relationship between renovation and increased occupancy (and revenue), the positive relationship between customer satisfaction and unit improvements strongly supported her case. Equally, if not more important, was the systematic program that Sheila put together integrating all the parties at corporate.

IS YOUR ELEVATOR PITCH READY?

Since these key decision makers may be hard to meet, you must be ready to explain your vision and how they can help in a condensed way, at a moment's notice. Here you can use your change vision—the 30-second "rocket pitch" or "elevator speech" that you can pull out instantly if you happen to meet a decision maker on the elevator or walking down the corridor. At Montefiore Hospital some time ago, several executives sheepishly confessed that to get ideas to the world-famous and notoriously busy director of the hospital complex, they would study his schedule and then casually read the bulletin board outside his office, "accidentally" bumping into him when he was going somewhere, so they could quickly mention their current project or requests. Whether he ever caught on to this mild deception or just played along, everyone benefited. Imagine you're lucky enough to be on a flight with a key decision maker; would you be ready to capture his or her attention in a few sentences and then make your case?

INFLUENCE THE INFLUENCERS THEY LISTEN TO

If direct access isn't easy, can you find out to whom they listen and how to meet those people? If you identify the influencers of the people you want to influence, you still have an influence job, but perhaps with someone who is easier to talk with or to get information to. You will have to find valuable currencies for the influencers, utilizing the kind of reasoning explained throughout this book.

Sheila did a variation on this. She couldn't influence all the senior managers but found a key one whose support (and her success) got others on board. Likewise, she couldn't influence her boss directly, but he became engaged upon seeing that others were.

Some other external methods can provide access to key decision makers, but they are definitely difficult. Here are a few ideas. Can you get to the press or write an article extolling the merits of your idea and its benefits to the company? That can help shape opinion. (For an inspiring example of using a press relationship to help promote change, see Montana Miracle, the description of raising interest in wind power, on our website, http://www.influencewithoutauthority.com.) Can you place ideas with any customer or employee groups? Would a customer survey yield useful information about potential demand, or can an existing employee survey be interpreted in a favorable way? You must be very careful not to do anything that can be interpreted as illegitimate for your role or detrimental to the company, but if you keep it positive and celebrate the organization and its accomplishments, it becomes less risky.

WHAT DO YOU HAVE TO OFFER?

Carefully diagnose the currencies you have that each key stakeholder might value. Some currencies you command are obvious going in, such as your reputation for hard work, expertise on the change, track record in getting things done, and, as we have suggested, a vision of the benefits. But you may recognize some only after seeing what the stakeholders value. For example, if one key stakeholder feels strongly about fair treatment of employees, you might show that your plan (or an adjusted version of it) could protect employees from layoffs.

Sometimes people assume automatically that money and formal authority are the only crucial currencies, but that wasn't the case for Sheila. There the key currency was a plausible plan for systematic renovations. Yes, she had other currencies tailored to specific people (as we have described above), but none depended on money or authority.

You should constantly look for what "payment" you can offer to differing stakeholders. Remember, these payments can be explicit, such as promising their division early input on a new product design, or implicit, such as feeling pride that they could help move the organization in a positive way, as was true in Sheila's situation. What will be received as valuable can be quite different for different stakeholders; some may care a lot about doing good, and others far more about bonuses or gaining visibility to top management. The same project can have differing payoffs to different people; in fact, the same payoff may have different meanings to people. Your praise to the stakeholder's boss can be seen as helping a promotion opportunity or a form of appreciation that reinforces feelings of professionalism. Stay open to the possibilities.

If you have little to offer some stakeholder, can you find someone else with valuable resources to be part of a three-way deal? For example, a skeptical department is holding you back. You have nothing to offer directly, but perhaps you could trade with another group—such as, "Loan me two analysts, and your division gets first crack at the final product"—then use that commitment to demonstrate your project's value to the doubting department and gain grudging support.

When you are stuck, think of those not cooperating as temporarily mismatched with your currencies, not as enemies. You may not change their minds, but how you respond to those who disagree determines whether they only disagree or resist actively when not treated well. One cause for resistance is enough!

DIAGNOSE AND ENHANCE THE RELATIONSHIP

As with anyone you want to influence, a good, trusting relationship at the start makes things easier. (That's why the most influential people in organizations often have the most relationships long before needing anything in particular.) But not all important stakeholders will be close colleagues. You may need to establish a minimum level of trust to gain their willingness to work with you.

Although we have personally encountered a handful of people in organizations who were truly inept at making relationships, most people can do it if they focus on it, rather than thinking they are too busy to bother. Start by tuning in to others and their interests in social conversations or by doing small trades where you take the initiative to give first, thereby establishing your worthiness.

One important way to enhance a relationship is to listen closely to each stakeholder you don't already know. Not only are you likely to learn much about what the stakeholder values, but also almost everyone considers being listened to and taken seriously a valuable currency. If you are responsive and demonstrate that you have thoroughly understood the other person, you do not need to make spectacular comments to be seen positively. However, asking another's opinion without a serious intention of considering it is usually transparent, doesn't buy you anything, and tends to backfire by building mistrust.

How you approach the person or group is another aspect of building relationships. Some people are happy to discuss directly any bad history between you, while others just won't engage in such conversations. If you perceive that they are uncomfortable with directness, do not wade in just because you are willing or prefer it that way. Go slow, test a bit, and if you get signals to back off, try a less direct path. Can you find common business topics or outside interests to chat about? Do you have any mutual friends who can casually arrange a get-together or common meeting or, as in Japan, intercede on your behalf? It might be that you must first build a relationship with someone they trust, so that person can eventually open a door.

If you have no way to form a relationship that lets you make exchanges or have no mutual valued currencies to trade—and the stakeholder is critical for success—you may have to slow down or even find another change to pursue. But don't give up too quickly. With the influence approaches we have discussed, you can often find ways to connect with apparently impossible stakeholders.

One further important aspect of dealing with relationships: everyone has a preferred style for interactions. When selling a change project, you must determine whether stakeholders want to see early thinking or well-developed plans. Would they be insulted by anything less than several years of financial projections in spreadsheet form, or do they like early back-of-the-envelope estimates to get a feel for the magnitude of the payoff? Will the lack of endorsement from a key technical person or department kill the discussion, or does the person like to proceed as if the technology can be perfected later? Does the person like to hear the big picture concept first or a lot of details showing thoroughness? Such stylistic preferences can be a huge barrier or enabler, so doing your homework is worthwhile. Someone you have a good relationship with will know the person's preferences if you don't and would be willing to tell you. And if your relationship is strained, look at Chapter 6 for lots of advice on rebuilding problematic ones.

DEVELOP YOUR EXCHANGE STRATEGY

Before you move forward, think about whether you still need some information or must check out some assumptions. The same concept of listening closely applies here.

Next, think about the sequence of whom to approach. You must juggle three variables as you think about how to proceed:

1. Your relative power.
2. How likely is a positive response.
3. How critical is the other's support.

Are some key people likely to be early supporters, so you want to get them lined up? Early wins help as Sheila found. Are there stakeholders whose support will bring along many others? What are your chances with them? Do you need to work through issues first with some less prominent people to ensure that you approach the opinion leaders with a strongly developed case? Do some stakeholders have expertise needed to improve your idea? You may want to get to them early. Is anyone likely to be negative if not in on the ideas from the beginning? Are some important stakeholders so busy that you will get only one short shot, so you should approach them near the end when many other pieces are in place?

Finally, will some stakeholders cooperate only if you shape the concept to fit their interests? Should you see them early so it's easier to accommodate their views? Or wait until you have enough in place to narrow the territory for discussion? It is important to reflect on these questions early; you may not get it right, but plunging in may get you too far down the road to retrace your steps with some critical players. Some answers may become clear only when you start to produce change. Be open to new information and modify your approach accordingly.

CHANGE ROLES: MOVING AMONG DIFFERENT-SIZE GROUPS

For any major change project, in addition to the change champion (you) and a sponsor (individual or team) at higher levels, you will need a small working team to manage the process (the core team), and occasionally greater numbers of people will be included, individually or at large meetings. This was the case with Sheila, who had the tight relationship with Gary, a small team, but eventually had over a hundred people working on the project.

How many to involve, and when, is another aspect of strategy. If your in-group is too restrictive, you can go much faster but might leave out stakeholders whose knowledge and support will be critical for ultimate success. Involving too many stakeholders or involving them too early can be wonderfully inclusive, generating lots of ideas and feedback, but it can be so unmanageable and difficult to shape toward final decisions that the project gets paralyzed.

The solution? Use what we have called the accordion method. There are times for large meetings with many stakeholders and times to squeeze down to small meetings of the core group. Don't stick to only one. Small groups can develop a first cut at the change, and then large groups can give reactions and ideas to pursue. Then go back to a small group for winnowing out the most useful suggestions and developing the plan further. Then back out to the larger group for reactions. Don't try to make decisions in large, multi-constituent groups; that is the function of the small core group.[2]

PLANNING VERSUS CALCULATION

Because you must plan so comprehensively for change, you must be careful that in executing your plans you do not become mechanical or manipulative, which can backfire. For example, there is definitely a difference between (a) taking stakeholders to lunch to get to know them, using the conversation to better understand them, and in the process feeling closer; and (b) being totally instrumental in the conversation, mechanically feigning interest but only going through the motions. Occasionally some people are so hungry for attention that they are easily fooled, but much more often the recipients of phony interest sense it and are turned off. Being asked your opinion and then having your ideas totally ignored is more insulting than not being asked in the first place. Once they suspect that you are courting them just to get something from them, they become more resistant.

Here's an example we witnessed firsthand. A rather inept manager was trying to get independent professionals to collaborate but had developed almost no support. She couldn't proceed without allies but wasn't making progress. Her manager told her who key players were with whom she needed at least cordial working relationships. A few days later, he ran into one of the people he had identified, who exclaimed, "I just had the strangest visit from Hannah. She came to my office unexpectedly, and I couldn't figure out what she wanted. It was so strange; I felt like I was being checked off some kind of list!"

No one wants to feel so depersonalized or made into an object. Thus, while you may offer compliments, friendly small talk, various favors, or even valuable resources, without sincerity behind them, they can readily backfire. It is like giving a fake Rolex; it may look nice at first, but after a few minutes, the glitter fades. You can hardly expect deep gratitude.

But genuine interest in the colleagues you approach will come through and help you receive a fair degree of latitude in following transactions. In fact, once you have a good relationship, you can sometimes make more tough-minded requests for cooperation. As long as you can show that your overt offer is in the other person's best interests, you can go straight to the point. With a good colleague, you can say something as direct as, "Listen, I need help, and I know it will be a pain for you to do it. So I'm going to tell you how much I need you because this will make a difference to our customers." That kind of statement might be deadly with a stranger or someone you were hustling for a one-time favor, but a friend would try to respond if possible. You would be trying to do something worthwhile by trading on the good history, and your friend would presume that he or she could do the same with you when in need.

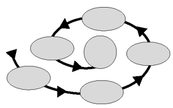
To see an example illustrating the principles discussed in this chapter, go to http://www.influencewithoutauthority.com for the extended case study of Will Wood, a training manager figuring out how to get financial and organizational support for an innovative online training system. (And an excellent example of how Paul Westbrook, a project manager of worldwide construction, used indirect influence to gain support for sustainability at Texas Instruments can also be found at www.influencewithoutauthority.com.)

FURTHER IDEAS ABOUT CHANGE

Because organizational change can be so complicated, its related issues require a separate (but relevant) chapter. In larger organizations, introducing change can create many complexities from the varied interests and power of different groups, departments, divisions, and geographies. A victory for one point of view can cause other stakeholders to become opponents. To go deeper into this complex territory, see Chapter 15, "Understanding and Overcoming Organizational Politics."

CHAPTER 15

UNDERSTANDING AND OVERCOMING ORGANIZATIONAL POLITICS



Even when you're out to get something done—not to do someone in—you have to play politics.

—*Michael Warshaw, "The Good Guy's (and Gal's) Guide to Office Politics,"* Fast Company*, April 1998*

Organizational politics—a dirty word, a cynical explanation of all that is disagreeable, a descriptive term, or an opportunity? Many people are cynical about politics in organizations, by which they mean a rotten version of politics, the underhanded promotion of personal interests. That is one kind of politics, probably more aptly described as sheer nastiness. It doesn't take organizational life to find self-serving behavior.

Such behavior is self-oriented politics, with the primary goal benefitting only the individual, without concern for the organization or department. The people out for only themselves may use methods seen as duplicitous, such as saying opposite things about their opinions to different people, currying favor with false compliments, harming colleagues by innuendo, or spreading false rumors.

Those distasteful behaviors are certainly unpleasant and do occur. But often, people interpret more innocent behavior as self-seeking or underhanded because the offender's motives or style aren't clear. It is too easy to attribute bad personal motives to the person whose behavior you don't like and not bother to find out directly the motives from that person. When you already believe someone is nasty, why take the chance on unnecessary interaction? That can feel too risky. Be sure you aren't leaping to negative conclusions.

Indeed, the premise of the influence model in this book is that everyone has personal interests—currencies—that they value, which are perfectly legitimate sources of motivation and must be met to gain influence. Difficulty arises only when people consistently and completely place those interests ahead of or at the expense of the needs of the organization, unit, or everyone else.

The second kind of political behavior requires awareness of how organizations by their nature are political, because different groups have different assignments and interests, and some individuals, by role or behavior, have more power than others. You can't be fully effective without understanding this more benign but potent form of organizational politics, in which unique and idiosyncratic customs develop and impact behavior. This is a normal development of all social systems and should be understood, not disparaged.

This chapter will focus on this second type of "politics" (and we will revisit how to deal with the first type in the next chapter). In our discussion below, we will make the case that "organizational politics" are not only inevitable but necessary as the organization adapts to current conditions. And then we will show how you can be influential with that.

THE NATURE OF ORGANIZATIONS

For the second form of politics, the subject of this chapter, the sources are the nature of organizations. No matter how clever the designers, planning and predicting all the ways people and groups will have to interact is impossible. The formal organization is a blueprint, but in everyday life, many improvisations arise to fill in the gaps that people can't adequately account for. These improvisations inevitably create an informal organization, in which some individuals and groups do more or less than expected—and needed—to make the organization function. Just think, for example, of how important the president's assistant is when some things require immediate attention and others can be stalled. Some people who want appointments are obnoxious while others are pleasant, some executives need information that's closely guarded, certain customers can't be ignored whereas others can. Over time, the assistant develops responses that go beyond the president's simple rules or policies because he must judge how to cope with new situations. The responses become a pattern, and soon informal arrangements become more routine. The three favored executives may have coffee with the assistant from time to time, discussing topics when it's not formally required. Multiply these kinds of informal arrangements many times, and soon a professional mapmaker would be needed to reflect the constantly shifting distribution of interaction and decision making. Organizations would be less efficient and effective without the informal organization alongside the formal one.

As a result of the informal organization (and partly causing it), individuals accrue more or less influence, depending on their individual knowledge, past jobs, personal history, competence, and personal style. Not infrequently, people the charts say should have little power actually have a lot, and vice versa. To get things done, you must know who is who and what actual influence they have.

In addition, the natural bumps in work outcomes and the collision of work styles lead organizational members to develop different feelings about one another and whole groups of people. This history is very much present, though perhaps just "understood," even when the original sources of tension are long forgotten.

Furthermore, parts of organizations created to accomplish specific goals and activities, especially when measured on them, tend to pursue those goals even at the expense of the total organization or other parts. This doesn't mean they are selfish or bad corporate citizens; it is just inherent in the design. Whenever decisions are made, each group tries to influence the decisions in their favor, which is exactly what politics is about. Thus, politics refers to pursuit of interests; it would be strange if each area did not do that. (The leader's job is to find ways to make the overall organizational goals at least as attractive, so components pull together.)

All organizations also have a history, preferred procedures or protocols for doing things, certain key gatekeepers and trendsetters, and certain symbols that have to be invoked. Many members are aware of these, consciously or instinctively, and operate within the preferred structure.

When you look at organizational politics this way, part of your job is to understand the dynamics and inevitable conflicts, accept them as part of organizational life, and learn to work through them to accomplish your work. Savvy organizational members account for all of this as they proceed. Knowing the landscape is part of effectiveness. But if you define this type of "politics" as bad, you won't understand it and therefore you lose influence.

Knowing it and working through and around it, however, does not require anyone to descend into the worst kind of personal politics. Though sometimes tempting, that seldom produces good long-term results. Therefore, don't put down politics. Don't be "above" politics. That attitude is not only naïve but also a harsh judgment that reality is "bad" and, in its own way, is just as political a position. If you avoid or scorn politics you give away power, while underhanded, secretive, or nasty behavior creates poisonous relationships and eventually hurts your reputation. Play hard but fair.

CULTURE DETERMINES THE WAY POLITICS ARE PLAYED

Organizations differ in their cultural beliefs about politics. First, they vary greatly in how easily they accept the idea that it's okay for departments or projects to actively pursue their own interests. No one thinks that departmental interests don't matter, but they might believe that departmental benefits should only be byproducts of good work for the organization. In other organizations, pursuing departmental self-interest is seen as natural and inevitable, so almost anything is fair game.

The second cultural difference is how much conflict among departments is accepted. Some organizations frown upon the very idea of conflict and opposing positions and try to suppress differences. When that occurs, opposing positions don't disappear, but have to operate underground, which makes them more difficult to handle and can produce the negative personal politics that can be so nasty. (If you have dealt with many nonprofit organizations, you will recognize this pattern.)

The alternative doesn't have to be like some companies in New York, where fighting is an art form, and winning the battle is more important than achieving organizational goals. More and more organizations are seeing the value in openly expressing differences and then working to achieve creative win-win outcomes. Much of the material in this book can lead to that form of productive conflict.

GET THE LAY OF THE LAND

For you, the important lesson is to know what game you are in. You shouldn't descend into petty backbiting just because it goes on in your organization, but staying back and saying "tsk, tsk" to yourself leaves you completely out of the action. Conversely, don't assume that everyone will cheerfully wade into arguments just because that's your preference. And you must consider how legitimate the overt pursuit of your department's interests is and be upfront about what you are after. Knowing the game you are in is perhaps the first rule for effectiveness. (This rule is parallel to the relationship advice we give about understanding how individuals prefer to be approached.)

When you must get something done that is likely to touch other areas, learning their rules of engagement is part of the work. Just as we advocate that you understand how individuals want to influence and be influenced, so do you need to understand what is important in that other area. What might work for those in production might not be effective in dealing with scientists in the lab.

COLLECTING POLITICAL INFORMATION

If you are relatively new and don't know, ask. You can seek out old-timers or people who seem well connected, and ask how things work. In Table 15.1 we provide some of the kinds of questions you can ask to understand how things work and how to proceed.

DIAGNOSE STAKEHOLDERS

All of the preceding is background work you do to diagnose the organization's important players or groups. If you tune in to the culture and politics at the start, you will better identify who is important and must be dealt with. Knowing the key stakeholders is critical to success.

As we have stressed, influence happens when you provide something the person you want to influence values in return for what you want. (Some people might argue that such clarity about how influence works encourages organizational politics, but the politics of interests are built in, as we discussed earlier.) To deal with the natural interests of individuals and groups that might not be compatible with what you want or have to offer, you need to understand each of them very well. Besides the obvious departmental benefits, what other things do they care about? If you can figure that out, you increase the range of possible areas for making exchanges.

Table 15.1 Questions to Help Determine How to Operate Consistently within the Political Climate of the Organization

What are the key stakeholders' hot buttons?
Where are the land mines buried; what issues are loaded?
Is there any significant history that I should know?
Who are the powerful but hidden people?
Who are the king/queen makers?
Are there people with (established) connections that you must not cross?
Who must be courted so they don't oppose you even if they do not fully agree with your plans?
What are the unspoken rules for getting along?

The Ten Commandments Exercise

We have often worked with management teams that wanted to reduce their organization's negative politics or make changes to enable more people to succeed. A useful activity—one that you could do alone or ask veterans to help with—is the ten commandments exercise. We ask, "If you wanted to help a terrific new hire learn quickly how things work around here, what are the organization's ten commandments—things not written down that everyone knows?" The list is usually instructive and provokes good discussion.

In general, we advocate a direct approach and conversation about interests, and if in your organization most people acknowledge the legitimacy of personal and departmental interests, you can ask. The question might look like this: "I need your cooperation, and I know you will need to feel you are benefiting, too, so if you can tell me what matters to you, I will try to satisfy your goals." If, however, such straight talk is frowned on or if (even worse) relationships are so suspicious that any request makes you feel too vulnerable, you will have to diagnose at a distance. Chapter 4, "How to Know What They Want," and Chapter 3, "Goods and Services: The Currencies of Exchange," give lots of advice on how to do this, but here we summarize and add to it.

Think about the stakeholders' organizational situation. What pressures and forces act on them? Early in this chapter, we talked about how the culture is part of these forces, but there are others. What are their actual work assignments, and which other key players must they interact with in their assignments? How are people measured and rewarded? How pressured are they? What technologies do they use, and how do those affect their ability to do their work? What are the most typical educational backgrounds of the people in that area? Is there a history of tension with your group? Do they always have problems with certain other areas?

Answering these questions can alert you to what each stakeholder might value, which allows you to appropriately frame your request and the payoffs to the stakeholder. The answers also can help you decide in advance how to talk to each important stakeholder about your plans. What you emphasize will vary with your views of each person's interests and values; any complex influence attempt will have many possible benefits, and you want to be seen in the best light for each one. It isn't a matter of lying, but of knowing what to stress. If you anticipate, for example, that one group may feel threatened by your initiative's potential impacts, then you might focus on some potential benefits to them when you approach.

THE IMPORTANCE OF KNOWING YOURSELF

Dealing productively with the political system requires intense attention. You must make complex trade-offs when deciding where to push and where to back off and need considerable nerve to navigate among competing points of view. Thus, you will find it especially important to clarify your own objectives and understand your own attitudes and values. What are your needs—your hot buttons— and what is most likely to throw you off balance? Your values and ethics will probably be tested, as you decide when to be completely open, when to say only what is necessary, and when to bluff. Thinking about how to fit your approach to many different people and groups can feel like an overwhelming burden. You will need great clarity about your objectives and boundaries. The more self-aware you are at the start, the less you must learn on the fly when you are most pressured.

This is crucial if you are in an organization that plays dirty politics (and dealing with that will be the focus of the next chapter). But even when that is not the case, self-awareness is necessary. All organizations, by the very fact that they have to allocate scarce resources, are competitive for the personnel, money, and space that you want. You are also going to have to influence others further up in the organization, so clarity on what is primary and what is secondary is important.

To illustrate that and see a skilled, high integrity political player at work, look at how Fran Grigsby handled a complex political situation where she was faced with possibly killing a $100 million project of a well-liked senior peer—while having to navigate organizational politics in the process.

Fran Grigsby held important management positions in a number of companies. Some years ago, she moved from DEC to Commuco and soon found herself faced with a really tricky task in an organization with a tough culture. She was asked to head a project that most observers considered doomed, but it had been started by a respected senior manager who was still around and invested in it, and she had to figure out how to proceed.

> I was recruited out of DEC to be VP of program management for the info systems group at Commuco. This group was involved in everything that was not telephones and pagers. I was promised that if I [did] this functional job for a while, I would get to run a business. One month later, the head of info systems was moved; the new one reorganized the group, and gave me one of the four resulting businesses to run: Project SWITCH.
>
> *(Continued)*

History of Project SWITCH

It had been going as a project for four years with 200+ engineers and marketing folks with the assignment of designing a complex, high-end, multipurpose corporate telephone company (telco) switch. Commuco had been oriented to the individual consumer, and this was one of [its] very few really big projects for big companies. Commuco only knew wide-area networks; it didn't know the kinds of companies that were the telco customers.

This was a huge project that was failing miserably at the time; they had already spent $100 MM on it. The accepted truth around the company, which I had already heard as I got to know people, was that its software design was so badly planned and executed that you couldn't test if you were doing it right as you went along.

The project had been the brainchild of the advanced development VP, my peer, a brilliant guy, who had persuaded the company to let him run the software side of development. In general, advanced development people don't know how to do production code, but he wanted to. It was both ill-designed software by people who didn't know how to do it and money hemorrhaging at a time when the company couldn't afford to.

Project SWITCH Becomes a Business Reporting to Fran; The Political Challenges

So I was asked to take over this project, which was made a business, with all the elements for the first time under one manager, me. Those engineers, including the advanced development group, were transferred to me, and they also pulled marketing in. Plus there were political issues: there had been four years of hype, how wonderful the product was, how it would be the flagship for the company, with high visibility to the CEO. The VP of Advanced Development had built his life on it, so all his fans in the company wanted it to succeed. The cash cow at the time, modems, was turning more competitive, so there was pressure to succeed.

It was classic; a new boss who is pretty sure the project is a loser gives it to me. Both of us were new. I should have said "No, just send me back to DEC." But they gave the nasty work to the new kid.

I was new kid on the block in a company so old boy in style it took pride in "knuckle dragging"—old-fashioned male "king-of-the-gorillas" behavior. Since I was taking over his baby, I knew I'd have to do things the VP of Advanced Development wouldn't appreciate. To counteract all the affection in my group for him, I realized I needed to work the internal power base to have some support. I needed corporate level political cover.

[The issue was not only with the VP but also with the engineers. If the decision was made to cancel, she needed to make sure that the better engineers wouldn't "jump ship" (at a time when there was high demand for such talent). Would they see Fran as the adversary to the popular VP and not join with her in the new businesses that were developing? She first evaluated the project and concluded that it didn't have a future. But before acting on that, she decided that she had to first deal with her internal staff.]

First I had to get internal support: I had to wean my own staff away from other loyalties. They all had long histories with this group and Commuco. I had to convince them there was something in it for them from working with me. I gave them my personal commitment to manage them well and tell them the truth about the future of the group, and if it didn't work, offered them the promise of exciting new markets, interesting new technological challenges (for the engineers), the opportunity to identify opportunities and do an internal start-up. I can't say I completely converted all of them, but my strategy was to do as much as possible to give them a chance to be managed and productive. They had never been either. There was a payoff to them from getting work done, since as professionals they want to be productive. I gave them lots of product stuff to do that had nothing to do with this project. I gave them lots of external contact (since Commuco had been internally oriented); for example, I spent a lot on consultants to provide professional education, pull knowledge in, sent them to conferences, and so on. That provided benefits for them. I also tried to hire a good engineering manager who had worked for me before: someone with good engineering practices and who I could depend on.

Really important: I tried to have fun, like crazy. The stress was off the map; because of it we did all kinds of things. [For example], we gave insane birthday day presents, like rubber chickens, and had celebrations for no reason at all [except to] give them a reason to laugh, which we did a lot. We had to laugh because of so much stress. That worked really well; we lost only two to eight staff during two really hard years. (And I still work with two of them on a regular basis, because we became close.)

Building Corporate Political Support

The job was to run and evaluate the project at the same time. I thought the only way to evaluate it was to use Commuco corporate people to do it. If I went outside the company, that would have no credibility. Yet I needed evaluators with some distance. I went three levels up to my boss's boss's boss. I asked him to assemble us a team. He put together a competent cross-functional team from all over. (They were also politically savvy and well connected.) After several visits to the project, they made the recommendation to cancel, which politically was very useful.

Also, I made the rounds, took several trips to Chicago talking to people at headquarters—including the CEO—about what we were doing, how we were going about it, what the criteria would be. My message was "my value add is being a really good manager (not a politician)," so I went around being clean and straight. Yes, this was a political pose, but it was all I had to offer. I couldn't ask anyone to run interference

(*Continued*)

because I didn't even know who to ask. I hadn't been around the company for years to have a network already built to call on.

It went really well. When I cancelled the project, there was very little corporate repercussion. I had talked to everyone, so they knew we were thinking about it. But built in to the assignment was that it was already in big trouble; we'd spent a fortune but had already announced the product and done a market launch! I couldn't take that back, so I was doing the right thing paving the way, because there would be a big load of bricks falling when we ended it. There was Corporate PR to get involved, dealing with the press, all the groups in the company that were designing complementary products, etc. So the real impact was large, though I did what I could. I didn't get much fallout from the decision. I got a wave of e-mails, mostly from middle managers whose products were connected to our products, or who respected the advanced development VP, so they thought it a shame and that we should have found something else. But I got no peer or corporate flack.

I was worried about the advanced development VP's reactions but he laid that to rest. It became clear that I did not need to worry about his actively undermining my actions. I met regularly with him, first to familiarize myself with the project and his views about it, then to inform him about my decisions, then to jointly plan who would be laid off and which engineers would end up in his organization and mine. He was obviously sad about the project and probably embarrassed, since the failure had happened on his watch, but he did not talk openly about this. He retained his job as the organization still needed advanced development.

What to do with the people if we cancelled the project? Our assignment was to get into corporate networking (though the company was in pagers, etc.). We had to find a profitable opportunity to use them. The last thing we wanted to do was lose the hard-to-find talent. The fact was that there were just no projects to use all 200 people. So when we cancelled, I had to lay people off. I wanted to do it once and for all. Classic: quick and clean, but it still had a huge impact. First, I laid off 60% of the group.

It never makes sense to keep paying people if you don't have a job for them. I had laid off many people at Digital, so my skin was pretty thick by this point. However, many of these engineers had poured heart and soul into this project and I empathized with their disappointment at seeing years of their work down the drain (i.e., not getting to the market).

I never have been under so much stress. I wanted it to go perfectly. It was a hero thing. I wanted it all to work, but it couldn't. I wanted to personally make up for four years of overspending, while no one had done anything but look the other way, but it was contrary to fact, and I just couldn't. Everyone knew it was the right decision, but the impact of breaking up the team, the flagship product for this group, connected widely in the company.

LESSONS FROM FRAN GRIGSBY'S POLITICAL EXPERIENCES AT COMMUCO

Knowing the Environment

Note how Fran carefully assessed key stakeholders and what was important to them. She built alliances that allowed her to solve the issues and survive organizational politics. A lot of this has to do with mind-set (a key emphasis in this book). This is how Fran describes her thought processes:

> There are two components to political savvy: I think a lot about constituencies. Who are the groups and categories I'm dealing with? I do continual sorting in my head, whatever I'm working on. The strategy is churning in my head, whatever is going on. It's like a mental map; I do it naturally. I'm creating plans for each constituency. For example, I made sure that the evaluation team that was formed were connected, long time in Commuco, who got credibility from who they are, so when they say something, it is given credibility.

Your Needs Are Legitimate

We started this chapter by acknowledging that meeting one's own needs is legitimate as long as it is not at the expense of the organization. There are many ways to do that, of which performance is one of the most central. This includes past performance—your reputation is extremely important. It doesn't guarantee a lack of opposition, but it does help gain latitude and some support. It sounds obvious, but by doing good work early and often, you can acquire some of the armor of credibility.

If you are new to the organization, however, your past performance may not be worth much; some insular places may even hold it against you. So you must understand how to gain early credibility.

One way is to do a great job with an existing problem in the organization, especially when others haven't had the courage to deal with it. Of course, taking it on creates a risk, but a success will dramatically increase your credibility, as Fran experienced. You may not be as lucky as one young man we know: at his first job a huge mess in procedures had been unsuccessfully wrestled with for months, but with computer techniques he had just learned at school, he solved it in a few days. Instant hero! But you can seek out difficulties where your perspective as an outsider is useful.

You may well then run into the kinds of political barriers that Fran found; you can then demonstrate credibility by understanding the existing culture's concerns about what you are doing and asking a lot of questions about how things work. Not only does that give you valuable information, but by knowing enough to inquire and then doing so, you make yourself more credible. After all, to politically minded others, checking out the scene is only natural and prudent.

But performance only helps insofar as it is known. One doesn't have to be a blowhard to be known. Again, here is how Fran puts it.

> Also, you have to know which way the wind is blowing, doing things that will put you in a good light. . . . It's knowing how to make yourself look good independent of reality. Or for example, noticing external things, like what category of product is getting a lot of press these days. It's a gut sense, hard to say. There is a style of presenting things as a manager (you can think of it as creating your own wind), personal PR, that takes a project or opportunity and feels totally comfortable with discussing business plans, futures—where everyone knows the plans are not literally true, but if you have the guts and balls to say I will make it into a $5 billion business, that gains respect, because you are willing to say I can make the wind blow!

Be Prepared to Compromise When It Would Preserve Larger or Longer-Term Goals

Only you can decide when to back off from a dearly held position, but in most cases, that must be done at times to succeed. Balancing your vision and principles with tactical necessity is hard, and perseverance is important, but don't adopt a "my way or the highway" mentality. Actual politicians usually have figured out how to get along with even ideological opponents, and know that they have to give a little to get what they care about. Good politicians are natural exchangers and preserve relationships despite disputes.

Work the Network, Constantly Planting Ideas or Potential Plans and Building Your Connections

Working the network is the logical way to get good information about important stakeholders and form good relationships. Furthermore, if your ideas might force people to change something, they usually need time for digestion. What seems frightening or radical at first can become more comfortable with repetition and slowly acquired bits of information.

If What You Have to Do Is Personally Unacceptable, Get Out as Soon as You Can Find a Better Alternative

Even though Fran was successful, ambitious, and quite good at getting things done in a tough, high-pressure, political organization, she didn't want that kind of life and eventually left. Some people don't like working in a quiet, pleasant environment, finding it too sleepy, while others would find any large organization too pressured. Even some small organizations can be remarkably political—claustrophobic vipers' nests. Find what suits you.

CHAPTER 16

Hardball: Escalating to Tougher Strategies When You Can No Longer Catch Flies with Honey

The previous chapter addressed the organizational side of politics, where organizational structure and situation cause differential power and require careful understanding of the situation to determine how to proceed in a way that preserves the possibility of mutual exchange. But at times the political challenge is more personal, and it is necessary to take a tougher stance, one that is more confrontational and self-protective. Throughout this book, we have stressed the value of working toward a win-win outcome. In today's organizations, there is almost always a future, so any colleague you defeat today could be out to get you tomorrow. Better to have that person walk away satisfied.

However, at times an (implied) threat or "cost" might be necessary to achieve such a win-win outcome. Usually a good strategy is approaching others with the benefit of your proposal first, but that might not be enough. It is true that even positive offers can have an implied downside. It may be no more than the simple reality that when others don't accept the exchange, they miss out on its benefits. But at times it might be necessary to up the ante and talk about a potential negative exchange if the other person or group doesn't agree. This may involve—by direct statement or implication—threatening to raise costs by direct action or withholding something desirable. You may have to get tough to have any chance of moving the deeply resistant potential ally. By hardball, we mean how to put "teeth" into your requests when needed and what to do when others might be playing dirty pool with you.

This strategy can be tricky and may backfire. Even an implied threat can create resistance—especially if the other party gets upset and focuses on retaliation rather than what benefits the organization. We always emphasize leading with the positive because aiming for a win-win outcome is better. Second, we stress never to personalize the exchange. You are trying to achieve organization goals, not personal dominance. But sometimes, making clear that there could be a negative outcome—and that you are willing to do whatever is necessary—can not only get the other person's attention but also, in some cases, increase respect for you. Being willing to fight hard for what you believe in often engenders admiration.

What circumstances require a tougher, less mutually rewarding influence strategy? Sometimes, despite the organizational value of what you want and your best efforts, there is just not a match between any positive currency the ally wants and those you can deliver, so you can't create sufficient obligations. This may be a time to start negative escalation. For example, suppose you have gone out of your way to help an ally, but he has been deaf to your requests. You have inquired about this perceived inequality, and your colleague only offers excuses and says that he must fulfill his core set of responsibilities. Rather than writing that person off as a hypocrite and ungrateful sponge, you could say:

> Boris, I understand you are overworked—we all are—and that some of my requests aren't technically within your job scope. But your requests of me have required that I go above and beyond, and I have come through. Now there are two possible ways we can relate in the future. . . . One where we each go out of our way to help the other or one where we just play it by the rules. Which do you want? I want mutual help, but I refuse to be the only one who gives. If you want real give and take, then I expect greater responsiveness to my requests.

That should get his attention and, if he is not deliberately trying to take advantage of you, create a more mutually responsive relationship. You are willing to be collaborative but not to be taken for a sucker. Furthermore, the other person's refusal to cooperate has some direct costs as an inevitable consequence.

The following sections present some ways to be tough while preserving the possibility of eventual collaboration or alliance.

RAISING YOUR ALLY'S COSTS—GRADUALLY

When you desperately want something from a highly resistant person—because you are convinced that the good of the organization requires it—you

Carefully Escalating Costs for Unresponsive Colleagues: Sonny Day

Albert "Sonny" Day, a commercial insurance salesman, is very aware of how to increase gradually the costs of noncompliance with his requests on behalf of customers. Sonny's work involved long-term relationships with his clients. Preserving their business, however, required special services, so he needed cooperation from many other departments in the company. Sonny constantly had to request unusual attention—estimates, reports, calculations, expedited payments—from colleagues in line and staff jobs, but, in a highly compartmentalized company, he didn't always get what he needed to keep large accounts satisfied. He explains how he dealt with such difficult situations:

> Often the departments had too narrow a view; they only thought about the convenience of their own area. So, one of my functions was to provide them with the larger perspective of customer need: in the long run, we were all dependent on the clients.
>
> My initial strategy was to do a lot of asking and requesting, but I always made sure that I followed up. Sometimes it was just a note to that person or a letter or call to his superior. That was crucial.
>
> I started soft and then moved hard. If my requests didn't get anywhere, I upped the ante as far as I had to, until I was really playing hardball. For example, I'd say to someone who wasn't giving any help, "Your lack of response is pissing off my client, and if we don't get a satisfactory answer by tomorrow noon, I will tell the regional manager that you are the reason we lost this account!" I hated doing this; there was always a knot in my stomach, but I did what I had to.
>
> Then, for really tough cases, I used the principle that everyone has an enemy, and I tried to find that person's enemy. I didn't have to raise my voice or make nasty threats; I'd only have to say something like, "I'm having trouble getting anywhere, so I guess it will be necessary to talk to the insurance association." But I would do that kind of thing only as a last resort, when my survival was at stake.

Sonny's rigidly segmented company focused less on customer need than on departmental autonomy, which made reasonable consideration of his requests difficult. Other companies more attuned to pleasing customers would automatically respond quickly to any salesperson's request on behalf of a client, but Sonny started with a disadvantage. Thus, he was forced to seek more leverage than he personally preferred and eventually changed his employer. But while in this organization, he learned to push harder and harder, as needed.

Notice that, despite his desperation and his willingness to raise costs in stages, Sonny always tried to emphasize customer need and company benefit. He wasn't using tough tactics just for personal gain, although he could lose commission income if he couldn't serve his customers. He never asked for anything improper or against company interests, however, and always gave fair warning before doing anything that would make someone look bad.

must expand the currencies and style you use. The basic ground rule is to raise costs or indicate your intent to raise them a little at a time. Gradual escalation minimizes negative responses, gives you the most room for preserving the relationship, and increases your options. You may need to start with warnings before acting.

Stressing the negative—"Here's what will happen (or not happen) if you don't go along"—could be risky, but warning about it is less personal and may take the sting out of the extra pressure. In effect, you are saying that missing out on the benefits from compliance could be bad for the ally, thus emphasizing the nature of the transaction and not the person. It isn't the same as saying, "You're a jerk for refusing, and I'll get you for it"; rather, you're attempting to show recalcitrant allies that their behavior could lead to these significant costs.

This raise-the-costs strategy requires considerable finesse in its execution and should be used with caution. You can lower the risk if you also hold out the olive branch, by stressing how reluctant you are to take this negative route. This strategy clarifies that your goal is gaining cooperation, not harming the other.

In the boxed examples on the following pages, the people working hard to acquire influence move doggedly from step to step. We identify the variety of increasingly intense measures they devised to up the ante with difficult allies.

Increasing costs to a colleague doesn't always involve the direct threat of using customers or higher-ups to gain cooperation. Even without such measures, you can be tough-minded and get what you need.

When Your Boss Is the Difficult Colleague

When the person who is really difficult to influence is your boss and he or she is stuck in negative behavior, you have to work hard to find legitimate, nonprovocative ways to escalate the costs (see the box, "Backing off an Interfering Boss").

Who Has the Power?—Recognizing Your Power, Increasing It, and Using It Appropriately

In that example, even though Fred is Dave's boss (and has position power over him), we argue that Dave really (potentially) had the power.

Backing Off an Interfering Boss: Dave Offenbach*

Dave Offenbach, an engineering manager, found on a new job assignment that his boss was inappropriately hounding one of Dave's subordinates, and he struggled to find a way to get his boss to back off. Dave explained the situation.

> In March, I was approached by Fred Wilson, director of engineering of the eastern division of our parent company, about a job assignment that he hoped would interest me. Fred and I had never worked together but knew of each other's characteristics and accomplishments. Everyone told me Fred was brash, impersonal, demanding, and short tempered. During our prejob negotiations, Fred (who had been drafted for this division about one year ago) confided to me that corporate had given him approval to do whatever was necessary to make his division productive and efficient. He also explained that when he analyzed the personnel statistics, he found that the group (with a few exceptions) had been formed with lower quartile people. To upgrade the group, he immediately acquired a few key upper quartile employees. Fred was offering me a new position reporting directly to him. His ultimate goal was to return to the northwest division with me as his replacement in the east. On my first workday, Fred informed me that there were three "dumb ass" engineering managers working for me that he wanted replaced as soon as possible. Because of my recent arrival, I begged off for 30 days so that I might become familiar with the division. Initially, I assumed that Fred was correct in the assessment of the three managers; but as time progressed, one of the three (Ray) appeared to differ from the other two. Ray responded instantly to requests made of him, accepted any task that was put forth, and worked diligently to get good, justifiable solutions. My concerns for the job and the people influenced me to spend more than normal amounts of time observing their work habits and performance. At meetings and in discussions with other organizations, it became apparent that Ray had the respect and confidence of everyone on the program with the exception of Fred.
>
> During lunch with Fred one day, I asked him to explain his reasons for wanting to replace the three. His concerns regarding the other two were understandable, but I pursued his opinions on Ray. Fred considered Ray worthless and felt that all of the problems seemed to originate from Ray's area. His releases were usually late and/or incomplete, he lacked the answers to important questions, and he was continually asking for more people even though the manpower curve for the division was in the reducing mode.
>
> After expressing himself very vividly, Fred intensely questioned my concerns about Ray. Listening to my observations, Fred became very upset. He ordered me to quit wasting time with Ray and to speed up the process of his replacement.
>
> My next move was to check on Ray's background. Assessment of Ray's personnel folder revealed no negative statements. In fact, it was just the reverse. In his last 14 years in our company, he had a variety of engineering and management assignments. In every case, Ray's capabilities in design, management, and cooperation had been praised. This record was later verified when I spoke to his previous supervisors.
>
> Being thoroughly confused at this point, I decided to confront Ray. In the two-hour discussion that followed, Ray stated that prior to my arrival, Fred had told him that he was going to be fired. I asked Ray to explain his perception of Fred's reasoning. His story

concurred with Fred's. His releases were late, even though he was working 40 to 50 percent overtime. He repeatedly requested additional personnel, and his area was the major origin of problems. He also had difficulty answering some of Fred's questions related to the early parts of the program. But Ray also pointed out that he had been assigned his area of responsibility only six months prior to Fred's arrival. Since the program was over four years old, the design problems had been created by managers that Ray had replaced. However, each time that he had used this reasoning, Fred had become more and more irate. Ray also expressed the feeling that his workload was considerably greater than in other areas. I closed the discussion with the promise that I would continue to work on the problem and that, in my opinion, the harassment was unjustified. I told Ray that I appreciated the fine job that he was doing and requested that he continue his good performance.

Next, I studied the workload in all areas and found evidence confirming Ray's analysis. I then shuffled available manpower so that the capability was more evenly distributed. I explained to Fred that I had no plans to replace Ray and, in fact, thought that he was doing a creditable job. Fred became furious and made it quite clear that Ray's performance could reflect on me.

In the months that followed, Ray continued to do his tasks well. His group started meeting schedules and eventually eliminated the need for overtime. However, Fred continued his relentless badgering. In meetings and in the group, he continued to try to embarrass Ray, especially when I was present. To my amazement, Fred didn't apply the harassment to me. In fact, he seemed to give me more and more freedom and responsibility as time went on.

*This example is a case written under the supervision of David Bradford, "The Misbranded Goat," reprinted from Stanford Business Cases 1983, with the permission of Stanford University Graduate School of Business. The analysis is ours.

At first blush, Dave seems to be in a tough situation given his boss's style. But our model reveals that Dave's position is actually very strong.

- *The power of past performance.* Fred brought Dave in to turn around this division because Dave had been a top performer. Furthermore, Dave had the positive reputation—not Fred. So Dave held the ultimate card of resigning from this project if Fred wouldn't change. He could go back to his old job, and Fred's reputation would be damaged—not a card to play initially, but a great one to have in your back pocket—just in case.
- *Who needs whom?* Dave wanted to take over this division once Fred left, but he has other choices. Fred was drafted for this job and needs Dave's competence to turn this unit around quickly and return to the northwest division.

- *The power of information.* Dave not only did his homework by carefully investigating the situation, analyzing workloads, and so on, but he also reshuffled personnel to produce the results he wanted. This new data would supersede Fred's old information on the engineers.

Let's look at how Dave went about influencing Fred:

- *Credibility through action.* First, he bought himself time to do his homework. Then by terminating the two engineers who weren't competent in their positions, he increased his credibility with Fred as a person who could take action.
- *Potential ally.* Given what he had heard, Dave could easily have stereotyped Fred as an immovable autocrat. Instead, he constantly considered it possible to influence him. In part Dave did not fall into that stereotype because even when Fred got emotional around the topic, he wasn't abusive to Dave.
- *Knowing the other's world.* Dave, in an informal lunch setting, tried to understand Fred's position. Dave didn't argue with him even when Fred got upset. Dave took Fred's response as something to check out (thus paying him in the currency of careful listening).
- *Being clear on your goals.* Dave focused on what was fair and what was important for the organization's success. He did not inappropriately defend his people or fight a personal battle with Fred.

Even after this careful initial work, the problem of Fred badgering Ray continued. How could Dave get Fred to leave Ray alone? He had already collected Fred's data about problems with Ray, conducted his own investigation, explained the history of the problems, reorganized work to improve Ray's performance, and then gone back to Fred with evidence that Ray really was a solid performer. After a careful diagnosis, it's usually advisable to start with data and explain the logic of the case. But if this doesn't work, then Dave had to consider further escalation.

Dave had already shown his faith in Ray's ability to deliver by continuing to support him after Fred noted that Dave's performance rating could suffer from Ray's efforts. This is a step in the right direction; if you are willing to guarantee your own performance to your boss if you get to do it your way, that exchange is usually valuable enough to create the desired latitude. As a next step in raising costs, Dave might make this even more explicit than he did, adding that if Fred continued to harass Ray, Dave could no longer guarantee his unit's level of performance. It was Fred's behavior, not Ray's, that could undermine the success of the turnaround.

In part, Dave had to decide whether Fred could be confronted more directly. Would Fred respect him for being tough, or would he explode and nail Dave? He could make alternative attributions: Fred's a bully, he can deal only with a subordinate who says yes to everything, or he is impatient and doesn't believe in coddling people so he will be bugged by Dave's patience with Ray. But from the clues picked up in their interaction, Dave concluded that Fred was able to take direct pushing back. Fred had not been punitive to Dave ("to my amazement, Fred didn't apply the harassment to me"), which subtly communicated his respect despite Dave's refusal to follow his directions about Ray. That suggested that Fred's style is probably to keep pushing until he meets a tough response. Toughness is one of Fred's currencies. And Fred wanted Dave to succeed so that he could return to the northwest and leave the eastern division in good hands, which makes confidence in Dave's judgment another important currency. Apparently Fred found these currencies more important than data about Ray's performance.

Finally, Dave chose to escalate: "Look, Fred, you had enough faith in me to bring me on board to help you accomplish the turnaround. I've been getting results, and I want to continue doing that, but you're making it hard for me. We've talked about Ray lots of times. I don't think I can convince you to appreciate him. But, damn it, he works for me and I'm responsible for him. I am absolutely convinced that he can do the job, and he's doing it. If you won't get off his back, it could really screw things up. From now on, if you don't like what he does, talk to me, not him! If you don't agree to lay off him, I can't guarantee that I'll be able to continue our successes. So what do you want: to keep harassing Ray or to let me do the job well, using my best judgment?" Fred sputtered, then agreed.

When pushing back, Dave used several forms of negative currencies to create the desired space. He stressed performance as the most important outcome and made it clear to Fred that his behavior would prevent the performance he definitely wanted. Though he acknowledged Fred as the boss, Dave noted that his place in the hierarchy gave him the legitimate "right" to manage and judge his direct reports; continuously violating this right would undermine his ability to manage successfully. If Fred continued to interfere, he would be responsible if future results were poorer than current results. And, by referencing his successful track record and Fred's confidence in him on other matters, Dave implicitly threatened the loss of something valuable. Thus, Fred could avoid several negative costs if he would back off Ray, and he did. Furthermore, Dave's tough style of interaction reflected Fred's own behavior, which reinforced Dave's position in the exchange.

But, note that while Fred might have considered all this antagonistic, Dave always focused on getting good results for the company, not on harming Fred. Hardball can be about toughness, not necessarily about hurtfulness.

THE ULTIMATE ESCALATION: BETTING YOUR JOB

Dave never got to the point of directly threatening to quit if his boss Fred didn't stop harassing Ray, but that would have been his ultimate weapon. Unfortunately, that's not a total victory. Going back to the northwest division and disparaging Fred would not have altered Fred's behavior and would only have been a form of gratuitous revenge that we don't condone. Anyone cutting fellow employees down behind their backs risks ruining his or her own reputation more than the reputations of people targeted.

At times, however, all other attempts to influence an important ally, especially your boss, make putting your job on the line your only choice. Certain issues are too important to allow to die; maybe you are convinced that the boss is making a giant mistake, feel unjustly treated, consider the boss's requests unethical, or have decided that the job is not worth dealing with your boss's continuing behaviors.

If all else fails and you consider the issue important enough to take considerable risk, then the last resort is to make an offer that, based on your sound diagnosis of the boss's situation (you hope), your boss cannot refuse. You do this only when the possibility of being fired as a result is no more painful than continuing as is.

Sometimes, however, the bet loses, and your threat to leave is accepted. Whether that outcome is a bad or good depends on whether the situation was salvageable or not. A young leader we know built the company he was running from a few million in sales per year to over $80 million in two years but was never trusted by his boss, who undermined him in several ways. He tried everything he could to fix the relationship, and though he liked the high potential company and industry, he realized that without the support he thought appropriate, he was better off moving on. Then he turned to exiting in a way that would not enrage his boss and lead to retaliation, so having the boss decide to push him out with full termination pay was painful, but better for him.

Taking extreme measures to push back on your boss isn't always necessary, and sometimes if you can't achieve influence maybe either your idea is bad or your influence techniques are inappropriate. How much risk to take depends on your own capacity to live with the worst consequences and how long term a view you want to adopt. It is undeniably true that in the long run we are all dead, so ignoring the short term is foolish; but it is equally true that acting only in the short term while pretending that there is no long run is a good way to get bumped off. Judgment is needed.

INTO EVERY LIFE SOME RAIN MUST FALL: ROTTEN APPLES AND HARDBALL

In most examples in this book, the potential allies or partners have been difficult but not malevolent. Although it happens far less than most people assume, every so often you will encounter a genuinely rotten person, boss, or peer, someone so keen to get ahead that he or she uses dirty tricks to hurt you or even spreads false rumors about you. (We personally know a few people falsely accused of sleeping with the boss, stealing company funds, or even spreading nasty false rumors about others. And we are not counting or addressing bosses convicted of illegal harassment of any kind.) This situation calls for a different set of escalation tactics for self-protection if you are certain that the problem is only the other person and not something you have done or are perceived to have done. When that kind of thing happens, it is difficult to think about any mutually satisfactory way of responding; self-protection takes over.

Being nice won't always work as a way of influencing someone who wants to harm you; some measure of toughness is required for a full repertoire of influence strategies. But toughness isn't viciousness. While you could (rarely) encounter a person who will force you into retaliatory viciousness, we leave that kind of guerrilla warfare to those who still think killing for peace is the only way to settle disputes. Instead, we show you how to resolutely pursue your legitimate interests without turning transactions with difficult people into win-lose contests. You almost never want to initiate exchanges in ways that will create a permanent enemy.

We will use a not so uncommon experience involving Rudy Martinez, a young lawyer. After privately grumbling about their common boss, Rudy's colleague Walt urged that since they agreed about the boss's deficiencies, they should jointly confront him at a lunch. When Rudy arrived, Walt was already there with the boss, who said, "Rudy, I understand you have some criticism you would like to give me." Rudy, stunned and unprepared, was left to look like the only one who was complaining and disloyal. He muttered something very bland, said there must have been a misunderstanding, and quickly retreated. He later learned that Walt was notorious for using similar tactics in the law group.

THE CALCULATED CONFRONTATION

What choices did Rudy have? One approach might have been an early exit, collecting himself until he was sure of what to do, and then strongly confronting Walt.

Out of the Closet and into the Daylight

One of the best tactics when anyone tries to sabotage you is to get as much as possible out in the open. Dirty players count on working behind the scenes and undercover, relying on others' reluctance to be explicit when burned. But most nastiness when seen in broad daylight makes the initiator look shabby, so efforts to reveal everything are important. Doing that might have turned Walt's win-lose exchange into a lose-win.

Had Rudy been less stunned or less afraid of unpleasantness, he could have looked right at his boss and said, "I am really shocked that Walt said I'm the only one with concerns. When we talked the other day, he expressed a lot of concerns, too. I don't see how we can go further unless we clear this up. Walt, are you going to be open about what we discussed? I thought we were meeting to be helpful; if you're trying to make me look like a troublemaker, I won't play. I want us to have a strong practice group, not make each other look bad."

We have the benefit of time and distance, but we know that Rudy thought he should have said something like this all along, so it's not completely the result of hindsight.

Instead of being embarrassed in front of his boss, Rudy could have shown his desire to be helpful even while making Walt's game visible. Although formulating a perfect comeback when someone unexpectedly zings you is difficult, it isn't necessary to get it just right. Follow this simple principle: if you were genuinely trying to act for the organization's good, say so, and react openly to the surprise attack (assuming you don't want to jump up and wring the colleague's neck).

Maybe all Rudy could have managed was to exclaim, "I'm shocked!! I thought we were in this together. What's going on, Walt?" That would have been enough to start a process that wouldn't leave Rudy totally exposed. If Walt then denied everything, Rudy could explain to the boss that he was misled but that he truly wants to help the boss be more effective and will do that alone if necessary.

None of this would work if Rudy was also trying to do in someone else or nail his boss. If he was genuinely concerned about the division's future (which, indeed, he was), then saying so shouldn't be excruciating. The Walts of the world are so busy conniving that they never imagine someone else might actually want to do the right thing. This is their blind spot, their vulnerability. They don't realize how slimy they will look if their victim speaks up and talks straight. Possibly Walt doesn't even see himself as nasty but has another explanation for his actions. His behavior could have effects very different from his intentions; by forthrightly raising the question without attacking, you allow the apparently malicious person to reveal any hidden benign intentions. Yet that person might also learn that actions can have negative consequences.

Sometimes justice occurs. Walt was later turned down for partnership because he was seen as too political. Rudy was made partner but never became a mover and shaker in the firm because he wasn't seen as able to "work the system" productively. This example shows that one way of "being political" is dysfunctional, but lacking the skills to use the more functional form also has costs.

You can confront the manipulator with cool anger in front of witnesses or a controlled explosion in private. As experienced negotiators will advise, really losing your temper in an organization is probably a mistake, but allowing yourself to express genuine anger can be a useful tactic if deliberately chosen. Expressing controlled anger with laser-like intensity or screaming a bit can make the manipulator uncertain about what you will do in the future, which then deters future surprise attacks. You haven't prevented Walt from being successful in front of the boss, but you may have blocked him from trying such exchanges in the future.

One of the authors, then a department head, found that this worked when a colleague was trying to manipulate and bully him (about office space); looking right at the colleague and loudly saying, "Don't mess with me, Jack. I teach negotiations!" made him back off. Jack was much nicer from then on, because he assumed his ploys wouldn't work.

Spread a Little Sunshine

If direct confrontation is not possible, perhaps all you can do is spread the tale around the organization to warn others about the person. As we have noted, however, this has its own dangers. The nasty person probably won't be thrilled with you when word gets back and may be inspired to try for greater damage in return. Because you probably don't have the full revenge and bad temper arsenal he has, it's not a great idea to get into a contest of escalating swinishness.

Second, when neutral organization members see you talking about the person, they may see only your retaliation and consider you the dirty player, talking behind the other's back. Like the basketball player who gets called for a foul when swinging back after being unobtrusively elbowed, you may never have a chance for true justice (and you don't even get the benefit of instant replay). Nevertheless, because your reputation is so important in organizational life, as a last resort, you can try to ensure that the person who has nailed you gets the headlines he or she so richly deserves. Just don't abuse the tactic, and remember that some weapons are only for defense.

In general, all such tough tactics are far more potent when you only threaten their use. Once they are launched, results may be unpredictable and uncontrollable. It is thus better to convincingly warn the slime balls of the world of what will happen if they keep on playing dirty pool than to retaliate. Just be sure you are prepared to act on your threat if forced to.

Influence, Not Manipulation

The saving grace in organizational life is that anyone who manipulates events only for selfish ends will sooner or later be seen as more interested in advancing personal interests than in accomplishing the organization's goals and will lose credibility and clout. Although this process sometimes takes longer than is desirable, one bad act is reciprocated with another, and sharks get bitten. A similar process happens to those using reciprocity illegally (e.g., paying bribes for illegal favors), though again, justice's wheels can grind way too slowly.

Truly difficult people increase the temptation to cross the line. It is useful to identify manipulative behavior and distinguish that unethical behavior (which often produces unpleasant reactions) from skilled influence, which everyone in an organization can use without harm.

Table 16.1 summarizes our views about the fine line between influence and manipulation.

Influence attempts are not manipulative if you telling your potential ally your intentions causes no loss of influence. Following this rule does not require you to tell everything at once nor prevent you from making your

Table 16.1 Drawing the Line between Influence and Manipulation

Is it manipulation to:	*Answer*
Be aware of what you are doing to gain influence?	No
Fit your arguments and language to the other party's interests?	No
Not mention your ultimate goal if not asked?	No
Exaggerate your costs to make the trade seem better?	No
Push yourself to become interested in and concerned for the other person?	No
Do a favor you wouldn't do for everyone?	No
Paint the most favorable picture of the benefits?	No
Fake caring and interest for the other?	Yes
Lie about your intentions?	Yes
Lie about your costs?	Yes
Lie about the benefits?	Yes
Commit to a payment you do not (intend to) make?	Yes
Seek weakness and vulnerability in others to get them indebted in ways that violate their integrity?	Yes

best argument, but it does suggest that outright lies are beyond the pale. Negotiators know: "Always tell the truth, but you don't have to initiate the whole truth."

BE CAREFUL OF ASSUMING MALEVOLENCE

Yes, there are occasional rotten apples, but we have seen plenty of situations where those on each side were certain that their own motives were pure while the others' were poisonous, and neither could get past these biases. For example, a group of hospital administrators we consulted with behaved viciously to one another for years, each convinced that "everyone else but me" was willing to trample his own mother to harm others. Yet each one, without exception, told us privately that he hated how they treated one another but felt compelled to strike first because the others were so ready to attack. When this was revealed, after a collective sigh of relief they began to discover more virtues in one another than any had dreamt of! Think of their experience before leaping to negative conclusions about someone who won't behave as you'd like.

When an escalation strategy becomes necessary, however, another risk is that you will feel excessive stress and back off prematurely. You must be tough enough to hang in, even if you prefer to make that your last resort.

Table 16.2 Potential Negative Aspects of Reciprocity and Exchange

Corruption
Inappropriate, unethical, or illegal trades
Manipulation
Deceit about intentions, goals, and uses of what is received
Deceit about payment or repayment
Deceit about costs to the giver
Taking advantage of personal vulnerability to create obligations that can never be fully paid back
Deceit about genuine concern for the trading partner
Creation of an obligation where reciprocity violates the beliefs of the person or group that "owes" repayment
Revenge
Exaggerated sense of obligations and payback
Negative Organizational Climate
Organizations that overdo self-interest at the expense of the organization
Organizations that overuse explicit trades, so relationships that allow automatic give and take never develop
Organizations so afraid of exchanges that they can't do anything
Organizations that operate by fear of retaliation and other negative currencies rather than positive exchanges

Humans are apparently wired to cooperate, to create mutual obligation, and to exchange what others desire. But like all human mechanisms, reciprocity and exchange can be, and often are, abused. The abuse takes several forms (Table 16.2).

We mention each of these unpleasant aspects of reciprocity and exchange so you can be aware of the dangers and defend yourself.

CONCLUSIONS

Hardball can be dangerous to organizational (and personal) health, whether you are throwing it or being hit by it. You want to avoid playing it (if possible) but don't let fear of it make you vulnerable to anyone willing to make your life difficult. Keep looking for exchanges where both sides can win, even if you must use the possibility of—or actual—negative exchanges to level the playing field.

We urge you, however, to always look for ways to make the kind of relationships where escalation isn't necessary. That means you don't assume the worst of others at the start, even when they don't seem friendly, or don't warn about strong reactions before taking them. Make it clear that in the organization's and other person's best interests, you would prefer not taking actions with negative consequences; escalate gradually, so things can be straightened out before the heaviest guns are trotted out; and, if possible, don't do anything designed just to injure the other person.

Donna Dubinsky, who early in her career at Apple took on Steve Jobs and John Sculley and eventually helped to found and run Palm and Handspring, talks about always having "go-to-hell" money saved. You can be more courageous if you are not totally dependent on keeping your job. But you also have stronger position if you develop a positive performance record and build as many good relationships as early as you can. Having lots of potential allies is a good idea for acquiring influence, and it can help you play hardball with less fear of striking out. If you need a refresher, read Chapter 6 on building effective relationships again. Avoid these traps in negative exchanges:

Self-Traps to Avoid

- Backing off prematurely when somebody is resistant. Learn to use alternative approaches.
- Retaliating in kind without first using threats of negative consequences when somebody plays dirty. Don't waste nuclear weapons when threats of a slap on the wrist—or a kick in the pants—might work.
- Being unwilling ever to use negative exchanges. If you have only honey when a little vinegar is needed, you often get stuck.
- Using negative exchanges without holding out the possibility of a better future. Don't fear war, but keep making peace attractive.

APPENDIX A

Extended Case Examples and Supplementary Material Available on the Web

To view any of these examples in full, go to http://www.influencewithoutauthority.com. All examples are listed on the right under *Cases and Other Materials*. These are rich, detailed descriptions, many with analysis, of action on many organizational levels.

The Career of Nettie Seabrooks: Influence against All Odds

As an African American and a woman, Nettie Seabrooks had more than her share of hurdles to leap to acquire influence—especially at General Motors, where her career began. Her remarkable story of gaining influence offers invaluable lessons on the importance of:

- Doing quality work to gain credibility and a positive reputation, which are the entry price for influence. Influence requires more than a technique.
- Cultivating strong relationships.
- Placing the organization's interests first, so you are not seen as self-serving.
- Avoiding self-inflicted traps, such as writing difficult people off, missing learning opportunities, or failing to notice what others want.

Warren Peters Navigates a Complex, Multistage Exchange Process: Working within Organizational Realities

In trying to replace a direct report at his insurance company, Warren Peters ran into conflict with that direct report's more senior manager. Warren had to decide whether to fight for his choice, and once he did, find a way to preserve his relationship while getting the desired result. Warren's story illustrates these crucial principles of influence:

- Resisting the impulse to immediately attack when you are attacked
- Listening carefully to your opponents' arguments to distill what is most important to them
- Persisting in the face of objections, using steady patience to meet them
- Exiting gracefully when necessary

ANNE AUSTIN CROSSES OVER: SELLING A NEW PRODUCT IDEA AND GAINING ACCESS TO AN OUT-OF-REACH JOB

Anne Austin had trouble making herself heard when she spotted a new product opportunity from her market analyst's job at a Fortune 500 consumer goods company. But by incredible persistence and deft application of influence skills, she conducted a strong internal campaign to get her product idea accepted and land the job she wanted. Her story shows the importance of:

- Paying attention to exchange in every situation, so efforts are focused
- Keeping your personal goals, as well as task success, in mind
- Taking resistance seriously
- Being assertive, never antagonistic

LESSONS FROM A DETERMINED INFLUENCER: THE RISE, FALL, AND EVENTUAL RESURRECTION OF MONICA ASHLEY, REVOLUTIONARY PRODUCT MANAGER

This complicated example reveals many layers of challenges over several years and demonstrates how a project management job requires determining key players, figuring out what matters to them, and using a full palette of influence skills to bring a major strategic project to fruition. Monica Ashley, facing the deep resistance of a powerful technical guru, finally won the arguments about going outside for needed technology, but because of her approach she was removed from the product development project and spent a year in "the penalty box." If your job brings you into contact with multiple stakeholders you must win over, you will find the attention required to understand the situation to be well worth your time.

Some of the lessons from Monica's experience include:

- Having the right data is a start but often not enough for influence.
- Influence requires considerable relationship building and maintenance.
- You have to work your supportive relationships as well as overcome the resisters.
- When people you respect are not doing what you want, do not write them off; inquire and learn.
- The higher you go in management, the more the subtle norms of behavior are in operation, and the more they affect your reputation and career.

MAKING A MINOR MIRACLE IN MONTANA: USING INFLUENCE TO CHANGE PEOPLE AND GROUPS OUTSIDE YOUR ORGANIZATION

Timlynn Babitsky and Jim Salomon saw the enormous potential of wind power in Montana, but the locals, unfamiliar with their organization, were skittish. By partnering with several government-sponsored groups and landing some well-placed publicity, they could start a grassroots movement that taps into a powerful existing resource and improves people's lives. Important elements of their influence campaign include:

- Finding an issue you are passionate about to sustain the effort to overcome complex opposition
- Locating all the relevant stakeholders and using any connection to them you have
- Using every available communication device to spread variations of your message
- Providing information, access, responsiveness, and homework to relieve time pressure for key stakeholders

WILL WOOD SELLS E-LEARNING FOR TRAINING: A CASE OF SUCCESSFUL CHANGE IMPLEMENTATION

After being promoted to head of a messy division, Will Wood used careful change planning, considerable influence skill, and some calculated maneuvering to implement e-learning, a more effective training tool. But to succeed, he had to overcome skepticism and tight budgets. Some of the principles he practiced include:

- Offering a vision of how change would increase efficiency
- Building credibility through better performance

- Tailoring his interaction style to build key relationships
- Preparing for the political implications of his change

Why Won't He Listen? An All-Too-Common Example of Failed Influence—And How Using the Influence Model Could Have Helped

In this example, a manager is completely frustrated by a colleague's behavior, despite his best efforts to change it. We show that because he failed to consider what the colleague valued, the manager could not gain the kind of influence he wanted.

Building Collaboration across Warring Factions

Trying to bring together pro- and anti-charter school groups, each with very strong beliefs about its views and the other side, was an extremely difficult influence challenge. This is a teaching case, with many open questions to resolve and lessons about how they were tackled.

Dealing with a Difficult Colleague from a Department with a Poor History

This is an influence example of overcoming poor departmental history and negative feelings, making it very difficult to collaborate on what was supposed to be a joint project. (Note the effort to understand and deal with the feelings of the most "difficult" person from one department and its positive impact.)

Finding and Paying in Valued Currencies: Overcoming Skepticism in Country Offices about Headquarters and Marketing People

Miguel (Mike) Garcia is a member of the marketing team for software in Latin America at a Fortune 500 computer company. As a member of a headquarters function, he must gain the cooperation of country managers and others who resist anything from the central office and have their own ideas about what might be valuable to them. He invests considerable energy in making relationships with the country managers, listening to their concerns, treating them as partners, and framing his requests in terms of currencies they value.

INFLUENCING DIFFICULT SUBORDINATES

This complete chapter covers how to deal with subordinates who are direct reports yet are not easy to influence. It looks closely at how to tune into what matters to different subordinates and how to use their currencies to gain their cooperation, including how to give powerful feedback that helps them learn and grow.

LOW STATUS PERSON EFFECTIVELY LEADING A PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT TEAM

While an MBA student, Terry Wheeler did his summer internship at Healthy Bites, a growing health food company. To his surprise, he was soon asked to run a critical high-level product development project that required managing and coordinating over 20 individuals throughout all levels and functions of the organization. The product was expected to generate several million dollars in revenue in year one and provide a critical defensive position against competitive offerings. He scoped out the players and their currencies, dealt with a "nosy" colleague others considered difficult, got people to pull together, and succeeded.

LUCIA EMERSON AND INFLUENCE ACROSS THREE DIVISIONS

Lucia works in supply chain management at a very large global company, (called Grandetech in this disguised example), mostly virtually, and seldom has her own subordinates to manage. In this instance, she was asked to lead an important cross-divisional team whose members came from divisions with differing goals and objectives. She had to use all her influence skills to help them make a sensible decision for the company.

MORE QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT DEALING WITH DIFFICULT ISSUES WITH BOSSES

This extends the discussion in Chapter 9 with more examples.

MUTUAL MISINTERPRETATION, LEADING TO DECREASED INTERACTION AND UNDERSTANDING: OLIVER AND MARK

This is a sad, but not so unusual example of smart colleagues, each using unsophisticated ideas about influence. As a result, they enter a downward spiral, developing untested assumptions that produce a series of negative mutually reinforcing actions that eventually ruin their relationship.

Partners Making Exchanges to Improve Their Relationship

Using the Cohen-Bradford Influence Model isn't always easy, especially when strong emotions as well as negative (untested) assumptions are present. And two people hooked in a dysfunctional cycle cannot always pull themselves out of it. This case illustrates the difficulties, the importance of "sticking in there" to work it out, and the value of an objective third party.

Paul Westbrook: More on Gaining Support for Sustainability at Texas Instruments: Working through the Politics of Difficult Change

A wonderful example of using personal interests outside of work to promote an important initiative comes from Paul Westbrook, then a project manager of worldwide construction at Texas Instruments. Paul is passionate about sustainable practices in companies out of concern for environmental degradation and waste. A modest movement was growing in the United States around these concerns, but many enthusiasts within companies had trouble getting those in power to respond. Texas Instruments had a significant number of environmental and sustainability efforts at its facilities around the globe, but Paul wanted to move the company to the next level. Meanwhile, his passion caused him to use green techniques in his house, which used passive and active solar energy.

Successful Use of a Confrontational Style to Gain Influence

Chris Hammond, a sales trainee, was unusually successful in developing leads and closing high-ticket sales. But she was being held back in favor of her boss and a male favorite. After trying to get fair opportunities, she threatened to leave and take her best leads with her. This example details how she went about getting the opportunity she believed she earned and deserved.

The Power of Thinking about Selling

This example shows how selling, often seen as somehow unpleasant, can create positive transformations, even when dealing with internal colleagues.

APPENDIX B

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

TRAINING PROGRAMS

Babson College offers a residential five-day executive development program, Leadership and Influence, exploring vision, teamwork, and other leadership competencies needed to influence at all levels of an organization. This highly experiential program is for managers whose direct reports manage others and combines videos, case discussions, role plays, simulations, and a day of outdoor problem-solving activities linked to influence without authority and postheroic concepts. Participants request confidential questionnaire feedback on leadership style from peers and direct reports and utilize the results at the program. With a faculty team led by Keith Rollag, the program runs twice a year and has also been customized for numerous companies. More information is available from Babson Executive Education, Babson Park, MA 02157-0310; phone: (781) 239-4354 or (800) 882-EXEC; or http://www3.babson.edu/bee/programs/leadership.

Stanford University Graduate School of Business offers an executive program, Interpersonal Dynamics for High Performing Executives, for senior-level executives and general managers with at least seven years of management experience. It is appropriate for any industry, any size organization, and any functional area. The objective is to increase one's interpersonal skills and emotional intelligence necessary for high performance. This is a selective program accepting only 36 participants who will be divided into three T-groups (training groups) led by a Stanford Faculty member and senior facilitator. This experiential program (supplemented by lectures and short exercises) provides a personalized learning experience where participants learn from each other as well as from the staff.

Learning outcomes include: assessing and developing personal style in a way that builds influential relationships with a wide range of constituents; learning how to give and receive constructive feedback that strengthens performance and relationships; engaging in more productive interpersonal exchanges including how to raise and resolve differences; developing greater self-awareness to become a more effective and authentic leader; and acquiring practical skills that improve emotional intelligence.

More information is available from Stanford Executive Education, 518 Memorial Way, Stanford, CA 94305-5015; http://www.gsb.stanford.edu/exed/lead; phone: (650) 723-3341 or (866) 542-2205.

Custom training by Allan Cohen, David Bradford, or several associates has been designed for half-day, one-day, and two-day programs. These can be stand-alone or integrated into longer executive development programs. Contacts: cohen@babson.edu or dlbrad@stanford.edu.

SPEECHES

Keynote speeches and inspirational or informational talks on influence and various applications are available from Allan Cohen or David Bradford. Contacts are given above.

SURVEY

A 360-degree instrument on influence, or on influence and leadership, tied to the concepts in Influence without Authority and/or our leadership book, *Power Up*, is available. The questions ask colleagues, subordinates, and boss(es) how the person is doing now and how the respondent would prefer the person to behave. All questions are tied to actions that can be changed, so that the results are practical and connected to what people want. Sample questions are available at influencewithoutauthority.com.

CASES ON INFLUENCE

Extended examples and analyses of people who have exercised or needed to exercise influence are available at the web site http://influencewithoutauthority.com. (For more details about these examples, see Appendix A.)

INTERVIEWS/DISCUSSIONS ON INFLUENCE

For extensive podcasts with Allan Cohen and influence expert Kim Barnes, go to http://www.barnesconti.com/podcasts/influence.html. Also see Kim's book on influence, *Exercising Influence: A Guide for Making Things Happen at Work, At Home, and in Your Community*.

Notes

Chapter 1: Why Influence

1. By their very nature, models are simplified abstractions from reality, highlighting what is important and needs attention. Reality is usually messier, especially people with their differing perceptions, feelings, and assumptions. In any given instance, you may have to make adjustments and inferences, but a good model helps sort things out. Our influence model takes what social scientists had previously treated as descriptive—the presence of reciprocity among people—and makes it prescriptive and proactive. Combined with our research in organizations, the model breaks into steps what often is just taken for granted or feels overwhelming.

Chapter 2: The Influence Model

1. This inscription from a statue called Mantiklos Apollo was cited by Janet Tassel in "Mighty Midgets," *Harvard Magazine* (May/June, 1989).
2. Alvin Gouldner, "The Norm of Reciprocity: A Preliminary Statement," *American Sociological Review* 25 no. 2 (1960): 161–178.
3. Gresham M. Sykes, *Society of Captives: A Study of a Maximum Security Priso*n (New York: Atheneum, 1969).
4. Adam M. Grant, *Give and Take: Why Helping Others Drives Our Success* (New York: Viking, 2013).
5. Gary Yukl and J. Bruce Tracy, "Consequences of Influence Tactics Used with Subordinates, Peers, and the Boss," *Journal of Applied Psychology* 77, no. 4 (1992): 525–535.
6. The concept of exchange is central to this book and will be given detailed treatment in subsequent chapters. We draw on some of the classic literature: George C. Homans, "Social Behavior as Exchange," *American Journal of Sociology* 66 no. 6 (1958): 597–606; Peter M. Blau, *Exchange and*

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7. We use our version of attribution theory throughout the book. The theory was reported in H. H. Kelley, *Attribution in Social Interaction* (Morristown, NJ: General Learning Press, 1971) and F. Heider, *The Psychology of Interpersonal Relations* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1958).

Chapter 3: Goods and Services

1. Mazin Sidahmed, "Ramen Is Displacing Tobacco as Most Popular US Prison Currency, Study Finds," *Guardian*, Aug 22, 2016.
2. Rosabeth Kanter, *The Change Masters* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1983).
3. Kanter, *Change Masters*.
4. Peter M. Blau found this in his classic study of tax collectors in *Exchange and Power*; the expert who gave help in return for thanks soon found that he got so many requests he could barely do his own work, and the "thank-yous" became devalued.

Chapter 4: How to Know What They Want

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Chapter 5: You Have More to Offer Than You Think If You Know Your Goals, Priorities, and Resources

1. Kanter, *Change Masters*.

Chapter 7: Strategies for Making Mutually Profitable Trades

1. Kanter, *Change Masters*.

CHAPTER 8: GENDER AND INFLUENCE

1. In this chapter, we use the gender normative terms "women" and "men" while recognizing that gender identity is a spectrum and not all individuals identify fully with a single position on it.
2. McKinsey & Co., "What's Stalling Progress for Women at Work," (2016). http://www.mckinsey.com/global-themes/women-matter/whats-stalling-progress-for-women-at-work. "Who asks for promotions, and by the way, who asks for raises? Interestingly, they were not that different in terms of the percentage that asked, between men and women."

   "What was fascinating was the perception of the men versus the women that asked for a promotion or asked for a raise. The probability that a woman was going to be perceived as bossy, aggressive, intimidating—words that we specifically asked about—versus men who asked for the same thing . . . was almost 30 percent more likely." Similar findings were reported based on Australian research by Andrew Olson and Amanda Goodall, reported in Gloria Feldt, "Actually, Women Ask for Raises as Often as Men—They Just Don't Get Them," *Fast Company*, November 10, 2016. This was truer for women under 40.
3. McKinsey, "What's Stalling." "In fact, women are more likely to stay in their jobs, and they're more likely to stay with their organizations than men are . . . the number of women that are leaving is actually lower than men."
4. McKinsey, "What's Stalling." "There's real data that show that women are getting less feedback . . . they're not asking for less feedback; they're getting less feedback . . . women and men are asking for feedback to the same degree. They say they want informal and formal feedback and that they welcome it. The bad news is that women state that they're 30 percent less likely to receive it. But managers . . . believe they're giving it to the same degree."
5. Mary Holmes, *What is Gender? Sociological Approaches* (London: Sage Publications, 2007).
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9. V. E. Schein, "The Relationship between Sex Role Stereotypes and Requisite Management Characteristics," *Journal of Applied Psychology* 57, no. 2 (1973): 95–100.
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12. C. M. Steele, "A Threat in the Air: How Stereotypes Shape Intellectual Identity and Performance," *American Psychologist* 52 (1997): 613–629.
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14. Stephen R. Covey, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004).
15. Story told by Immelt at a Stanford Business School talk.
16. Daniel Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence* (New York: Bantam Books, 1980); Review of Hay Group Emotional and Social Intelligence Research, March 27, 2012, http://www.haygroup.com/co/press/details.aspx?id=33379, LaRue Que, "Emotional Intelligence Is a Woman Leader's Secret Weapon," *Forbes*, November 2, 2016. https://www.forbes.com/sites/womensmedia/2016/11/02/using-emotional-intelligence-is-a-woman-leaders-secret-weapon/#53a2a6b319f7, accessed 1/2/17.
17. Rosabeth Kanter, *Men and Women of the Corporation* (New York: Basic Books, 1977).
18. Joann S. Lublin, *Earning It: Hard-Won Lessons from Trailblazing Women at the Top of the Business World* (New York: HarperBusiness, 2016).
19. Deborah Tannen, "The Power of Talk: Who Gets Heard and Why," *Harvard Business Review*, Sept/Oct. 1995. More recently, see Alice Robb, "Why Men Are Prone to Interrupting Women," http://nytlive

.nytimes.com/womenintheworld/2015/03/19/google-chief-blasted-for-repeatedly-interrupting-female-government-official/.

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CHAPTER 9: BOSSES

1. These concepts and further ones just below about bosses as partners and allies and your boss's effectiveness as part of your job are developed in David L. Bradford and Allan R. Cohen, *Power Up: Transforming Organizations through Shared Leadership* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1998), and Cohen and Bradford, *Influencing Up*.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. See note 1.
5. "A Leader's Guide to After Action Reviews," Headquarters Department of the Army, 1993.

CHAPTER 11: GROUPS, DEPARTMENTS, AND DIVISIONS

1. This approximate quote was declared at a conference on May 4 –5, 2004, in a working group facilitated by one of the authors. Other members were surprised but shared compassionate views of doing what would help the most people.

CHAPTER 12: DISTANCE

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3. Helen Donelan, “Asynchronous and Synchronous Communication Technologies,” in *Online Communication and Collaboration: A Reader*, edited by H. Donelan, K. Kear, and M. Ramage (London: Routledge, 2010), 83–88.
4. For the entire interview with Gopi Parampalli, go to our website, www.influencewithoutauthority.com.
5. Matt Abrahams, “Tips for Giving Effective Virtual Presentations: What to Know before You Go Live,” *Insights by Stanford Business*, September 26, 2016, and for more ideas, Matt Abrahams, “Become a Better Virtual Communicator,” *Insights by Stanford Business*, May 20, 2015.
6. This description so far of Sarah’s work and company, and the direct quotes in it, are based on “Case 13.1: Sarah, A Brief Snapshot of a Manager Leading Distance Teams,” in James M. Hunt and Joseph R. Weintraub, *The Coaching Manager*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2017), 294–297. The rest of the example comes from our direct interview with Sarah, a disguised name.
7. Melissa Hahn and Andy Molinsky, “Having a Difficult Conversation with Someone from a Different Culture,” *Harvard Business Review Online*, March 25, 2016.
8. Mark Murphy, “Here’s What Scares Remote Employees,” in *The Little Black Book of Billionaire Secrets, Forbes*, online December 30, 2014.

Chapter 13: Influencing Difficult Colleagues

1. Francis J. Flynn, “How Much Should I Give and How Often? The Effects of Generosity and Frequency of Favor Exchange on Social Status and Productivity,” *Academy of Management Journal* 46, no. 5 (2003): 539–553.
2. Daniel Pink, *To Sell Is Human* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2012).

Chapter 14: Change

1. For more about vision and how to use it, see David L. Bradford and Allan R. Cohen, “Creating Commitment to a Tangible Vision” (Chapter 7), in Bradford and Cohen, *Power Up*. Chapters 9 through 12 provide more detail on how to lead change. Also, see Peter Vaill with Allan R. Cohen,

"Visionary Leadership," in *The Portable MBA in Management*, 2nd ed., edited by Allan R. Cohen (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1993).

2. The accordion method is our adaptation of an excellent concept, "the many-few-many-few technique," developed by Joel DeLuca in *Political Savvy; Systematic Approaches to Leadership Behind the Scenes*, 2nd ed. (Berwyn, PA: Evergreen Business Group, 1999).

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