

# POWER AND POLITICS

A Definition of Power  
Contrasting Leadership and Power  
Bases of Power  
Dependency: The Key to Power  
Identifying Where the Power Is  
Power Tactics  
Power in Groups: Coalitions  
Sexual Harassment: Unequal Power in the  
Workplace  
Politics: Power in Action

You can get much farther  
with a kind word and a gun  
than you can with a kind  
word alone.

— A. Capone

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying this chapter, you should be able to

- 1** Contrast *leadership* and *power*
- 2** Define the four bases of power
- 3** Clarify what creates dependency in power relationships
- 4** List seven power tactics and their contingencies
- 5** Explain how sexual harassment is about the abuse of power
- 6** Describe the importance of a political perspective
- 7** List those individual and organizational factors that stimulate political behavior
- 8** Identify seven techniques for managing the impression one makes on others
- 9** Explain how defensive behaviors can protect an individual's self-interest
- 10** List the three questions that can help determine if a political action is ethical

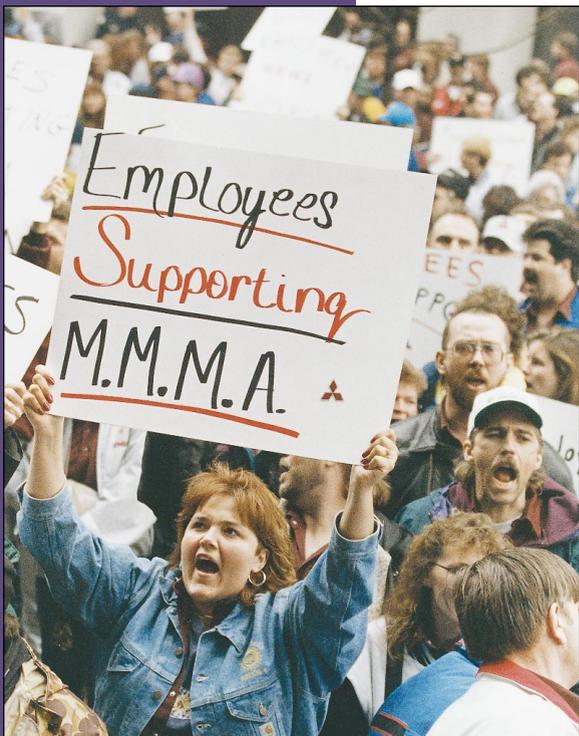


**A sexually harassing climate can make work intolerable. And when employees want to keep their jobs, it puts those being harassed in a situation**

of powerlessness. As studies of sexual harassment continually recognize, sexual harassment isn't about sex. It's about the abuse of power. The recent situation at the Mitsubishi Motor plant in Normal, Illinois tragically illustrates this point.<sup>1</sup>

Opened in 1987, female employees at the Mitsubishi plant had been complaining about sexual misbehavior on the factory floor since 1992, but those complaints were essentially ignored by management. In December 1994, 29 female employees had enough. They wanted to keep their jobs—which with overtime and shift-premium pay could run as high as \$60,000 a year—but they also wanted the relentless sex discrimination, sexual harassment, and sexual abuse by colleagues and supervisors to stop. They took their charges to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). An investigation confirmed the women's charges. There was clear evidence of “pervasive sexual harassment that management was well aware of” but did little to control. Some examples included: obscene, crude sketches of genital organs and sex acts, and names of female workers scratched into unpainted car bodies moving along the assembly line.

Women were called sluts and whores and subjected to groping, forced sex play, and male flashing. Explicit sexual graffiti were scrawled on rest-area and



bathroom walls. One male line supervisor stated, “I don’t want any bitches on my line. Women don’t belong in the plant.”

In May 1996, the EEOC filed suit against Mitsubishi. If the courts rule in favor of the EEOC, Mitsubishi could be held liable for compensatory and punitive damages in excess of \$150 million. Additionally, the company has been hit by a class-action suit on behalf of the 29 women.

Following the EEOC suit, you’d think that corporate management would have moved quickly to correct the plant’s sexist environment and to appease female employees. It didn’t. Quite the opposite. It chose to fight. It urged employees to speak up in defense of the company—and their jobs—by setting up a free phone bank with numbers of local news outlets and the names, biographies, and phone numbers of elected representatives. It even organized a demonstration to support the company outside the EEOC offices in Chicago (see photo) and coerced employees by giving them the “choice”: They could sign up for a free round trip to the Chicago protest rally on one of the 50 Mitsubishi-chartered buses, get a free box lunch, and win the approval of their bosses. Or they could report to the idled plant, clearly identifying themselves as disloyal.

While executives at company headquarters in Tokyo claim to have begun actions to improve conditions at the Normal plant, a recent incident indicates the hostile and abusive work environment continues. Opening her locker to start her 5:30 a.m. shift, Terry Paz, one of the 29 complainants, found a handwritten note reading, “Die, bitch, you’ll be sorry.” She left the plant fearing for her life. ♦



Power has been described as the last dirty word. It is easier for most of us to talk about money than it is to talk about power. People who have it deny it, people who want it try not to appear to be seeking it, and those who are good at getting it are secretive about how they got it.<sup>2</sup> OB researchers have learned a lot in recent years about how people gain and use power in organizations. In this chapter, we present you with their findings.

A major theme throughout this chapter is that power is a natural process in any group or organization. As such, you need to know how it's acquired and exercised if you're going to fully understand organizational behavior. While you may have heard the phrase that "power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely," power is not always bad. As one author has noted, most medicines can kill if taken in the wrong amount and thousands die each year in automobile accidents, but we don't abandon chemicals or cars because of the dangers associated with them. Rather, we consider danger an incentive to get training and information that'll help us to use these forces productively.<sup>3</sup> The same applies to *power*. It's a reality of organizational life and it's not going to go away. Moreover, by learning how power works in organizations, you'll be better able to use your knowledge to help you be a more effective manager.

◆ Power has been described as the last dirty word.

## A Definition of Power

**Power** refers to a capacity that A has to influence the behavior of B, so that B acts in accordance with A's wishes.<sup>4</sup> This definition implies a *potential* that need not be actualized to be effective and a *dependency* relationship.

Power may exist but not be used. It is, therefore, a capacity or potential. One can have power but not impose it.

Probably the most important aspect of power is that it is a function of **dependency**. The greater B's dependence on A, the greater is A's power in the relationship. Dependence, in turn, is based on alternatives that B perceives and the importance that B places on the alternative(s) that A controls. A person can have power over you only if he or she controls something you desire. If you want a college degree and have to pass a certain course to get it, and your current instructor is the only faculty member in the college who teaches that course, he or she has power over you. Your alternatives are highly limited and you place a high degree of importance on obtaining a passing grade. Similarly, if you're attending college on funds totally provided by your parents, you probably recognize the power that they hold over you. You're dependent on them for financial support. But once you're out of school, have a job, and are making a solid income, your parents' power is reduced significantly. Who among us, though, has not

### **power**

A capacity that A has to influence the behavior of B so that B acts in accordance with A's wishes.

### **dependency**

B's relationship to A when A possesses something that B requires.

known or heard of the rich relative who is able to control a large number of family members merely through the implicit or explicit threat of “writing them out of the will”?

## Contrasting Leadership and Power

A careful comparison of our description of power with our description of leadership in the previous chapter reveals that the two concepts are closely intertwined. Leaders use power as a means of attaining group goals. Leaders achieve goals, and power is a means of facilitating their achievement.

What differences are there between the two terms? One difference relates to goal compatibility. Power does not require goal compatibility, merely dependence. Leadership, on the other hand, requires some congruence between the goals of the leader and those being led. A second difference relates to the direction of influence. Leadership focuses on the downward influence on one’s subordinates. It minimizes the importance of lateral and upward influence patterns. Power does not. Still another difference deals with research emphasis. Leadership research, for the most part, emphasizes style. It seeks answers to such questions as: How supportive should a leader be? How much decision making should be shared with subordinates? In contrast, the research on power has tended to encompass a broader area and focus on tac-

- ◆ Leaders achieve goals, and power is a means of facilitating their achievement.

tics for gaining compliance. It has gone beyond the individual as exerciser because power can be used by groups as well as by individuals to control other individuals or groups.

## Bases of Power

Where does power come from? What is it that gives an individual or a group influence over others? The answer to these questions is a five-category classification scheme identified by French and Raven.<sup>5</sup> They proposed that there were five bases or sources of power: coercive, reward, legitimate, expert, and referent (see Exhibit 11-1).

### Coercive Power

The **coercive power** base is defined by French and Raven as being dependent on fear. One reacts to this power out of fear of the negative results that might occur if one failed to comply. It rests on the application, or the threat of application, of physical sanctions such as the infliction of pain, the generation of frustration through restriction of movement, or the controlling by force of basic physiological or safety needs.

#### **coercive power**

Power that is based on fear.

## Exhibit 11-1 Measuring Bases of Power

Does a person have one or more of the five bases of power? Affirmative responses to the following questions can answer this question:

- ◆ The person can make things difficult for people, and you want to avoid getting him or her angry. [coercive power]
- ◆ The person is able to give special benefits or rewards to people, and you find it advantageous to trade favors with him or her. [reward power]
- ◆ The person has the right, considering his or her position and your job responsibilities, to expect you to comply with legitimate requests. [legitimate power]
- ◆ The person has the experience and knowledge to earn your respect, and you defer to his or her judgment in some matters. [expert power]
- ◆ You like the person and enjoy doing things for him or her. [referent power]

Source: G. Yukl and C.M. Falbe, "Importance of Different Power Sources in Downward and Lateral Relations," *Journal of Applied Psychology*, June 1991, p. 417. With permission.

Of all the bases of power available to man, the power to hurt others is possibly most often used, most often condemned, and most difficult to control . . . the state relies on its military and legal resources to intimidate nations, or even its own citizens. Businesses rely upon the control of economic resources. Schools and universities rely upon their rights to deny students formal education, while the

church threatens individuals with loss of grace. At the personal level, individuals exercise coercive power through a reliance upon physical strength, verbal facility, or the ability to grant or withhold emotional support from others. These bases provide the individual with the means to physically harm, bully, humiliate, or deny love to others.<sup>6</sup>

At the organizational level, A has coercive power over B if A can dismiss, suspend, or demote B, assuming that B values his or her job. Similarly, if A can assign B work activities that B finds unpleasant or treat B in a manner that B finds embarrassing, A possesses coercive power over B.

## Reward Power

The opposite of coercive power is **reward power**. People comply with the wishes or directives of another because doing so produces positive benefits; therefore, one who can distribute rewards that others view as valuable will have power over those others. These rewards can be anything that another person values. In an organizational context, we think of money, favorable performance appraisals, promotions, interesting work assignments, friendly colleagues, important information, and preferred work shifts or sales territories.

Coercive power and reward power are actually counterparts of each other. If you can remove something of positive value from another or inflict something of negative value upon him or her, you

### reward power

Compliance achieved based on the ability to distribute rewards that others view as valuable.



have coercive power over that person. If you can give someone something of positive value or remove something of negative value, you have reward power over that person. Again, as with coercive power, you don't need to be a manager to be able to exert influence through rewards. Rewards such as friendliness, acceptance, and praise are available to everyone in an organization. To the degree that an individual seeks such rewards, your ability to give or withhold them gives you power over that individual.

## Legitimate Power

In formal groups and organizations, probably the most frequent access to one or more of the power bases is one's structural position. This is called **legitimate power**. It represents the power a person receives as a result of his or her position in the formal hierarchy of an organization.

Positions of authority include coercive and reward powers. Legitimate power, however, is broader than the power to coerce and reward. Specifically, it includes acceptance by members of an organization of the authority of a position. When school principals, bank presidents, or army captains speak (assuming that their directives are viewed to be within the authority of their positions), teachers, tellers, and first lieutenants listen and usually comply.

### **legitimate power**

The power a person receives as a result of his or her position in the formal hierarchy of an organization.



## Expert Power

**Expert power** is influence wielded as a result of expertise, special skill, or knowledge. Expertise has become one of the most powerful sources of influence as the world has become more technologically oriented. As jobs become more specialized, we become increasingly dependent on experts to achieve goals. So, while it is generally acknowledged that physicians have expertise and hence expert power—most of us follow the advice that our doctor gives us—you should also recognize that computer specialists, tax accountants, solar engineers, industrial psychologists, and other specialists are able to wield power as a result of their expertise.

### **expert power**

Influence based on special skills or knowledge.

## Referent Power

The last category of influence that French and Raven identified was **referent power**. Its base is identification with a person who has desirable resources or personal traits. If I admire and identify with you, you can exercise power over me because I want to please you.

Referent power develops out of admiration of another and a desire to be like that person. In a sense, then, it is a lot like charisma. If you admire someone to the point of modeling your behavior and attitudes after him or her, this person possesses referent power over you. Referent power explains why celebrities are paid millions of dollars to endorse products in commercials.

### **referent power**

Influence based on possession by an individual of desirable resources or personal traits.

Marketing research shows that people like Bill Cosby, Elizabeth Taylor, and Michael Jordan have the power to influence your choice of photo processors, perfume, and athletic shoes. With a little practice, you and I could probably deliver as smooth a sales pitch as these celebrities, but the buying public doesn't identify with you and me. In organizations, if you are articulate, domineering, physically imposing, or charismatic, you hold personal characteristics that may be used to get others to do what you want.

## Dependency: The Key to Power

Earlier in this chapter it was said that probably the most important aspect of power is that it is a function of dependence. In this section, we show how an understanding of dependency is central to furthering your understanding of power itself.

### The General Dependency Postulate

Let's begin with a general postulate: *The greater B's dependency on A, the greater the power A has over B.* When you possess anything that others require but that you alone control, you make them dependent upon you and, therefore, you gain power over them.<sup>7</sup> Dependency, then, is inversely proportional to the alternative sources of supply. If something is plentiful, possession of it will

not increase your power. If everyone is intelligent, intelligence gives no special advantage. Similarly, among the superrich, money is no longer power. But, as the old saying goes, “In the land of the blind, the one-eyed man is king!” If you can create a monopoly by controlling information, prestige, or anything that others crave, they become dependent on you. Conversely, the more that you can expand your options, the less power you place in the hands of others. This explains, for example, why most organizations develop multiple suppliers rather than give their business to only one. It also explains why so many of us aspire to financial independence. Financial independence reduces the power that others can have over us.

Steven Appleton provides an example of the role that dependency plays in a work group or organization.<sup>8</sup> Appleton became CEO of Boise-based chip maker Micron Technology in 1994 at age 34. After a number of run-ins with the company’s overbearing board of directors, composed of six Idaho agribusiness tycoons, Appleton was abruptly fired in January 1996. But the board quickly realized that they needed Appleton back when their handpicked successor quit after just a couple of days. To make matters worse, more than 20 executives confronted the board and threatened to resign if Appleton wasn’t reinstated. Meanwhile, Appleton wasn’t sitting around fretting over his loss. He had taken off for Los Angeles, had begun growing a goatee, and started planning a

biplane trip to Australia. The board pleaded with Appleton to come back. He did, but on his terms. His eight-day “retirement” came to an end when the board agreed to his demands—including an end to intrusions by the board, resignation of his primary board protagonist, and sweetened severance packages to protect managers who had voiced their frustrations.

## What Creates Dependency?

Dependency is increased when the resource you control is important, scarce, and nonsubstitutable.<sup>9</sup>

**IMPORTANCE** If nobody wants what you’ve got, it’s not going to create dependency. To create dependency, therefore, the thing(s) you control must be perceived as being important. It’s been found, for instance, that organizations actively seek to avoid uncertainty.<sup>10</sup> We should, therefore, expect that those individuals or groups who can absorb an organization’s uncertainty will be perceived as controlling an important resource. For instance, a study of industrial organizations found that the marketing departments in these firms were consistently rated as the most powerful.<sup>11</sup> It was concluded by the researcher that the most critical uncertainty facing these firms was selling their products. This might suggest that during a

- ◆ Dependency is increased when the resource you control is important, scarce, and nonsubstitutable.

labor strike, the organization's negotiating representatives have increased power, or that engineers, as a group, would be more powerful at Intel than at Procter & Gamble. These inferences appear to be generally valid. Labor negotiators do become more powerful within the personnel area and the organization as a whole during periods of labor strife. An organization such as Intel, which is heavily technologically oriented, is highly dependent on its engineers to maintain its products' technical advantages and quality. And, at Intel, engineers are clearly a powerful group. At Procter & Gamble, marketing is the name of the game, and marketers are the most powerful occupational group. These examples support not only the view that the ability to reduce uncertainty increases a group's importance and, hence, its power but also that what's important is situational. It varies between organizations and undoubtedly also varies over time within any given organization.

**SCARCITY** As noted previously, if something is plentiful, possession of it will not increase your power. A resource needs to be perceived as scarce to create dependency.

This can help to explain how low-ranking members in an organization who have important knowledge not available to high-ranking members gain power over the high-ranking members. Possession of a scarce resource—in this case, important knowledge—makes the high-ranking member dependent on the low-



ranking member. This also helps to make sense out of behaviors of low-ranking members that otherwise might seem illogical, such as destroying the procedure manuals that describe how a job is done, refusing to train people in their jobs or even to show others exactly what they do, creating specialized language and terminology that inhibit others from understanding their jobs, or operating in secrecy so an activity will appear more complex and difficult than it really is.

The scarcity–dependency relationship can further be seen in the power of occupational categories. Individuals in occupations in which the supply of personnel is low relative to demand can negotiate compensation and benefit packages which are far more attractive than can those in occupations where there is an abundance of candidates. College administrators have no problem today finding English instructors. The market for corporate finance teachers, in contrast, is extremely tight, with the demand high and the supply limited. The result is that the bargaining power of finance faculty allows them to negotiate higher salaries, lighter teaching loads, and other benefits.

**NONSUBSTITUTABILITY** The more that a resource has no viable substitutes, the more power that control over that resource provides. Higher education again provides an excellent example. In universities where there are strong pressures for the faculty to pub-



lish, we can say that a department head's power over a faculty member is inversely related to that member's publication record. The more recognition the faculty member receives through publication, the more mobile he or she is. That is, since other universities want faculty who are highly published and visible, there is an increased demand for his or her services. Although the concept of tenure can act to alter this relationship by restricting the department head's alternatives, those faculty members with little or no publications have the least mobility and are subject to the greatest influence from their superiors.

## Identifying Where the Power Is

Mike Cisco got a summer job, between his junior and senior years in college, working in the lab at Phoenix Lutheran Hospital. As a chemistry major, Mike had never taken any courses in management or organizational behavior, but he had seen pictures of organization charts before. So on that first day at work, when the assistant in the human resources department gave Mike his orientation and showed him where the lab fit on the hospital's organization chart, he felt pretty good. The lab ranked pretty high up on the chart.

After about a week or so at the hospital, Mike noticed that the lab's manager didn't seem to have near the clout that the managers of marketing and finance had. And what puzzled Mike was that all

Netsite : 

## OB in the News

### The Power of Subordinates

**W**atch out from below! Bosses aren't the only people in organizations with power. Subordinates have power too. They can effectively undermine your effectiveness and credibility with subtle actions like criticizing you to customers, peers, or bosses, or by excluding you from important decisions.

A New York advertising executive was hired to manage a major consumer-products account. He was chosen over Ms. Drew, an internal candidate, who had developed the account's brand strategy. Naively, the new executive assumed that Ms. Drew, who was now one of his employees, would support him during his first big meeting with the client. He assumed incor-

rectly. At the meeting, he recommended against creating an extension of the brand. To his shock, Ms. Drew literally slumped in her chair, undermining him openly. Her efforts to undermine him didn't end there. She continued to defy the executive and hurt his ability to perform by using her strong ties to the other agency people that he needed. One creative director, for instance, failed to attend a critical meeting with one of the executive's big customers—and the agency lost the account. Unable to gain credibility with his colleagues or clients, the executive was soon shuttled to another assignment. He quit a year later. And Ms. Drew? She got a promotion!

This incident illustrates that when a manager takes a new job or assignment, he or she needs to identify subversive subordinates early and take steps to win them over. Individuals who are particularly likely to become subversives include subordinates that had unsuccessfully sought the manager's job and close allies to the person that the new manager is replacing. Also keep in mind that it may be easier for managers to win over subversives than to fire them. These

Benedict Arnolds often have formed powerful friendships with senior executives who will protect them in a "shoot-out." Moreover, these ties with senior executives can be used to convey negative information about the way their manager is performing his or her job.

Based on J.E. Rigdon, "Look Out Below for Deadly Hits on Your Career," *The Wall Street Journal*, May 25, 1994, p. B1.



### Take It to the Net

We invite you to visit the Robbins page on the Prentice Hall Web site at:

<http://www.prenhall.com/robbinsorgbeh>

for this chapter's World Wide Web exercise.

three managers ranked at the same level on the hospital's organization chart.

Mike's first theory was that the marketing and finance managers were more aggressive individuals, but that clearly wasn't the case. It was obvious to almost everyone at the hospital that Mike's manager was smarter, more articulate, and more forceful than the



other two managers. So Mike was at a loss to figure out why the marketing and finance managers seemed to be considered more important than his manager.

Mike got his answer over lunch during the second week. Traci Chou, a summer intern in the admissions office who was also working on her masters in business administration, clarified it for him. “The organization chart is deceptive. It doesn’t tell you where the power is around here,” Traci stated. “Ten years ago, the lab was equal to or maybe more important than finance or marketing, but not anymore. As competition has increased in the health care industry, hospitals have had to learn how to cut costs, do more with less, and develop new sources of revenue. This has resulted in expanding the power of departments like finance and marketing around here.”

How do you determine where the power is in an organization at any given point in time? We can answer this question from both the departmental and individual manager levels.

At the department level, answers to the following questions will give you a good idea of how powerful that department is: What proportion of the organization’s top-level managers came up through the department? Is the department represented on important inter-departmental teams and committees? How does the salary of the senior manager in the department compare with others at his or her level? Is the department located in the headquarters building?



Software engineers at Oracle Corporation are important and powerful. Their technical expertise and inventiveness are critical to Oracle's future success, and the company provides them with every resource to facilitate their work. Oracle, the world's second-largest software company, plans to become a major player on the information superhighway and is counting on its engineers to develop the software that will make the communications and computer systems work together. The team of engineers shown here built the successful Video Server, a program that provides different digitized films to different locations at different times.

What's the average size of offices for people working in the department compared to offices in other departments? Has the department grown in number of employees relative to other departments? How does the promotion rate for people in the department compare to other units? Has the department's budget allocation been increasing relative to other departments?<sup>12</sup>

At the level of the individual manager, there are certain symbols you should be on the lookout for that suggest that a manager has power.<sup>13</sup> These include the ability to intercede favorably on behalf of someone in trouble in the organization, to get approval

for expenditures beyond the budget, to get items on the agenda at major meetings, and to get fast access to top decision makers in the organization.

## Power Tactics

This section is a logical extension of our previous discussions. We've reviewed where power comes from. Now, we move to the topic of **power tactics** to learn how employees translate their power bases into specific actions. Recent research indicates that there are standardized ways by which powerholders attempt to get what they want.<sup>14</sup>

When 165 managers were asked to write essays describing an incident in which they influenced their bosses, co-workers, or subordinates, a total of 370 power tactics grouped into 14 categories were identified. These answers were condensed, rewritten into a 58-item questionnaire, and given to over 750 employees. These respondents were not only asked how they went about influencing others at work but also for the possible reasons for influencing the target person. The results, which are summarized here, give us considerable insight into power tactics—how managerial employees influence others and the conditions under which one tactic is chosen over another.<sup>15</sup>

### power tactics

Ways in which individuals translate power bases into specific actions.

The findings identified seven tactical dimensions or strategies:

- ◆ *Reason*: Use of facts and data to make a logical or rational presentation of ideas
- ◆ *Friendliness*: Use of flattery, creation of goodwill, acting humble, and being friendly prior to making a request
- ◆ *Coalition*: Getting the support of other people in the organization to back up the request
- ◆ *Bargaining*: Use of negotiation through the exchange of benefits or favors
- ◆ *Assertiveness*: Use of a direct and forceful approach such as demanding compliance with requests, repeating reminders, ordering individuals to do what is asked, and pointing out that rules require compliance
- ◆ *Higher authority*: Gaining the support of higher levels in the organization to back up requests
- ◆ *Sanctions*: Use of organizationally derived rewards and punishments such as preventing or promising a salary increase, threatening to give an unsatisfactory performance evaluation, or withholding a promotion

The researchers found that employees do not rely on the seven tactics equally. However, as shown in Exhibit 11-3, the most popular strategy was the use of reason, regardless of whether the influence was directed upward or downward. Additionally, the researchers

## Exhibit 11-3 Usage of Power Tactics: From Most to Least Popular

	When Managers Influenced Superiors*	When Managers Influenced Subordinates
Most Popular	Reason	Reason
	Coalition	Assertiveness
	Friendliness	Friendliness
	Bargaining	Coalition
	Assertiveness	Bargaining
	Higher authority	Higher authority
Least Popular		Sanctions

\*The dimension of sanctions is omitted in the scale that measures upward influence

Source: Reprinted, by permission of the publisher, from "Patterns of Managerial Influence: Shotgun Managers, Tacticians, and Bystanders," by D. Kipnis et al. *Organizational Dynamics*, Winter 1984, p. 62. © 1984 Periodicals Division, American Management Association, New York. All rights reserved.

uncovered four contingency variables that affect the selection of a power tactic: the manager's relative power, the manager's objectives for wanting to influence, the manager's expectation of the target person's willingness to comply, and the organization's culture.

A manager's relative power impacts the selection of tactics in two ways. First, managers who control resources that are valued by others, or who are perceived to be in positions of dominance, use a greater variety of tactics than do those with less power. Second, managers with power use assertiveness with greater frequency than do those with less power. Initially, we can expect that most managers will attempt to use simple requests and reason. Assertiveness is a backup strategy, used when the target of influence refuses or appears reluctant to comply with the request. Resistance leads to managers using more directive strategies. Typically, they shift from using simple requests to insisting that their demands be met. But the manager with relatively little power is more likely to stop trying to influence others when he or she encounters resistance because he or she perceives the costs associated with assertiveness as unacceptable.

Managers vary their power tactics in relation to their objectives. When managers seek benefits from a superior, they tend to rely on kind words and the promotion of pleasant relationships; that is, they use friendliness. In comparison, managers attempting to persuade their superiors to accept new ideas usually rely on reason. This matching of tactics to objectives also holds true for downward influence. For example, managers use reason to sell ideas to subordinates and friendliness to obtain favors.

The manager's expectations of success guide his or her choice of tactics. When past experience indicates a high probability of suc-



Ellen Wessel (right) is founder and president of Moving Comfort, a manufacturer of women's athletic wear. She has created a corporate culture that encourages the use of kind words and friendliness. The environment at Moving Comfort is warm and relaxed because Wessel is supportive in empowering employees to make decisions. She views employees as goodwill ambassadors for her company and attributes the company's rapid growth to giving employees the freedom to make things happen.

cess, managers use simple requests to gain compliance. Where success is less predictable, managers are more tempted to use assertiveness and sanctions to achieve their objectives.

Finally, we know that cultures within organizations differ markedly—for example, some are warm, relaxed, and supportive; others are formal and conservative. The organizational culture in which a manager works, therefore, will have a significant bearing

on defining which tactics are considered appropriate. Some cultures encourage the use of friendliness, some encourage reason, and still others rely on sanctions and assertiveness. So the organization itself will influence which subset of power tactics is viewed as acceptable for use by managers.

## Power in Groups: Coalitions

Those “out of power” and seeking to be “in” will first try to increase their power individually. Why share the spoils if one doesn’t have to? But if this proves ineffective, the alternative is to form a coalition. There is strength in numbers.

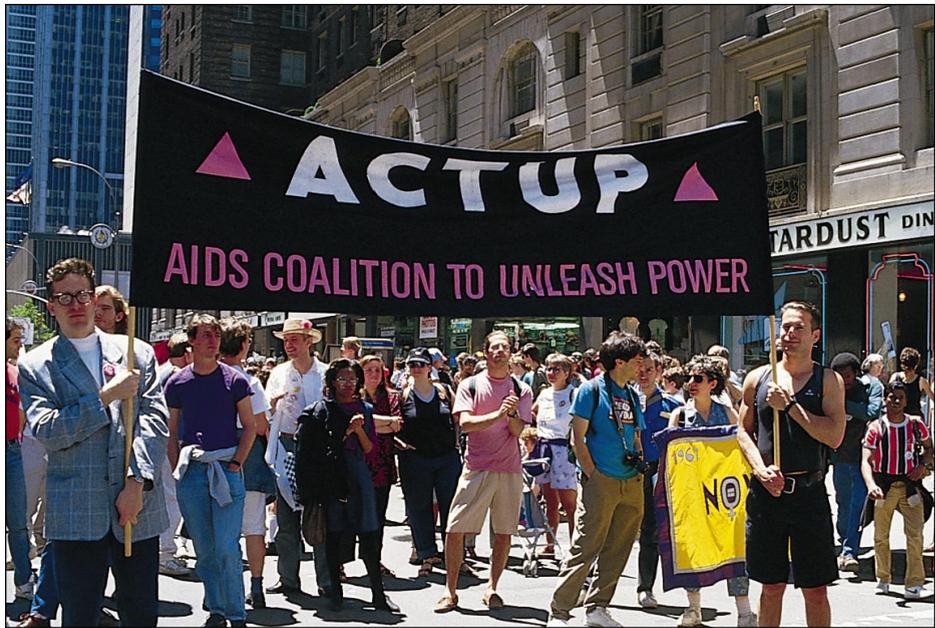
The natural way to gain influence is to become a powerholder. Therefore, those who want power will attempt to build a personal power base. But, in many instances, this may be difficult, risky, costly, or impossible. In such cases, efforts will be made to form a coalition of two or more “outs” who, by joining together, can combine their resources to increase rewards for themselves.<sup>16</sup>

Historically, blue-collar workers in organizations who were unsuccessful in bargaining on their own behalf with management resorted to labor unions to bargain for them. In recent years, white-collar employees and professionals have increasingly turned to unions after finding it difficult to exert power individually to attain higher wages and greater job security.



What predictions can we make about coalition formation?<sup>17</sup> First, coalitions in organizations often seek to maximize their size. In political science theory, coalitions move the other way—they try to minimize their size. They tend to be just large enough to exert the power necessary to achieve their objectives. But legislatures are different from organizations. Specifically, decision making in organizations does not end just with selection from among a set of alternatives. The decision must also be implemented. In organizations, the implementation of and commitment to the decision is at least as important as the decision itself. It's necessary, therefore, for coalitions in organizations to seek a broad constituency to support the coalition's objectives. This means expanding the coalition to encompass as many interests as possible. This coalition expansion to facilitate consensus building, of course, is more likely to occur in organizational cultures where cooperation, commitment, and shared decision making are highly valued. In autocratic and hierarchically controlled organizations, this search for maximizing the coalition's size is less likely to be sought.

Another prediction about coalitions relates to the degree of interdependence within the organization. More coalitions will likely be created where there is a great deal of task and resource interdependence. In contrast, there will be less interdependence among subunits and less coalition formation activity where subunits are largely self-contained or resources are abundant.



Individuals had little success in attempting to influence local, state, and federal legislation to protect the rights of those suffering from AIDS. However, coalitions like ACTUP have successfully increased public awareness and lobbied for greater rights protection.

Finally, coalition formation will be influenced by the actual tasks that workers do. The more routine the task of a group, the greater the likelihood that coalitions will form. The more that the work that people do is routine, the greater their substitutability for each other and, thus, the greater their dependence. To offset this dependence, they can be expected to resort to a coalition. We see, therefore, that unions appeal more to low-skill and nonprofes-

sional workers than to skilled and professional types. Of course, where the supply of skilled and professional employees is high relative to their demand or where organizations have standardized traditionally nonroutine jobs, we would expect these incumbents to find unionization attractive.

## Sexual Harassment: Unequal Power in the Workplace

The issue of sexual harassment got increasing attention by corporations and the media in the 1980s because of the growing ranks of female employees, especially in nontraditional work environments. But it was the congressional hearings in the fall of 1991 in which law professor Anita Hill graphically accused Supreme Court nominee Clarence Thomas of sexual harassment that challenged organizations to reassess their harassment policies and practices.<sup>18</sup>

Legally, **sexual harassment** is defined as unwelcome advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature. A 1993 Supreme Court decision helped to clarify this definition by adding that the key test for determining if sexual harassment has occurred is whether comments or behavior in a work environment “would reasonably be perceived, and is perceived, as hostile or abusive.”<sup>19</sup> But there continues to be disagreement as to what *specifically* constitutes sexual harassment.

### **sexual harassment**

Unwelcome advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature.



Organizations have generally made considerable progress in the last few years toward limiting overt forms of sexual harassment of female employees (an obvious exception being the Mitsubishi plant described at the opening of this chapter!). This includes unwanted physical touching, recurring requests for dates when it is made clear the woman isn't interested, and coercive threats that a woman will lose her job if she refuses a sexual proposition. The problems today are likely to surface around more subtle forms of sexual harassment—unwanted looks or comments, off-color jokes, sexual artifacts like nude calendars in the workplace, or misinterpretations of where the line between “being friendly” ends and “harassment” begins.

Most studies confirm that the concept of power is central to understanding sexual harassment.<sup>20</sup> This seems to be true whether the harassment comes from a supervisor, a co-worker, or even a subordinate.

The supervisor–employee dyad best characterizes an unequal power relationship, where position power gives the supervisor the capacity to reward and coerce. Supervisors give subordinates their assignments, evaluate their performance, make recommendations for salary adjustments and promotions, and even decide whether or not an employee retains his or her job. These decisions give a supervisor power. Since subordinates want favorable performance reviews, salary increases, and the like, it's clear supervisors control

resources that most subordinates consider important and scarce. It's also worth noting that individuals who occupy high-status roles (like management positions) sometimes believe that sexually harassing female subordinates is merely an extension of their right to make demands on lower-status individuals. Because of power inequities, sexual harassment by one's boss typically creates the greatest difficulty for those who are being harassed. If there are no witnesses, it is her word against his. Are there others this boss has harassed and, if so, will they come forward? Because of the supervisor's control over resources, many of those who are harassed are afraid of speaking out for fear of retaliation by the supervisor.

Although co-workers don't have position power, they can have influence and use it to sexually harass peers. In fact, although co-workers appear to engage in somewhat less severe forms of harassment than do supervisors, co-workers are the most frequent perpetrators of sexual harassment in organizations. How do co-workers exercise power? Most often it's by providing or withholding information, cooperation, and support. For example, the effective performance of most jobs requires interaction and support from co-workers. This is especially true nowadays as work is assigned to teams. By threatening to withhold or delay providing information that's necessary for the successful achievement of your work goals, co-workers can exert power over you.

- ◆ Organizations have made considerable progress in the last few years toward limiting overt forms of sexual harassment of female employees.

Although it doesn't get nearly the attention that harassment by a supervisor does, women in positions of power can be subjected to sexual harassment from males who occupy less powerful positions within the organization. This is usually achieved by the subordinate devaluing the woman through highlighting traditional gender stereotypes (such as helplessness, passivity, lack of career commitment) that reflect negatively on the woman in power. A subordinate may engage in such practices to attempt to gain some power over the higher-ranking female or to minimize power differentials.

The topic of sexual harassment is about power. It's about an individual controlling or threatening another individual. It's wrong. Moreover, it's illegal. But you can understand how sexual harassment surfaces in organizations if you analyze it in power terms.

## **Politics: Power in Action**

When people get together in groups, power will be exerted. People want to carve out a niche from which to exert influence, to earn awards, and to advance their careers.<sup>21</sup> When employees in organizations convert their power into action, we describe them as being engaged in politics. Those with good political skills have the ability to use their bases of power effectively.<sup>22</sup>



## Definition

There has been no shortage of definitions for organizational politics. Essentially, however, they have focused on the use of power to affect decision making in the organization or on behaviors by members that are self-serving and organizationally nonsanctioned.<sup>23</sup> For our purposes, we shall define **political behavior** in organizations as *those activities that are not required as part of one's formal role in the organization, but that influence, or attempt to influence, the distribution of advantages and disadvantages within the organization.*<sup>24</sup>

This definition encompasses key elements from what most people mean when they talk about organizational politics. Political behavior is *outside* one's specified job requirements. The behavior requires some attempt to use one's *power* bases. Additionally, our definition encompasses efforts to influence the goals, criteria, or processes used for *decision making* when we state that politics is concerned with "the distribution of advantages and disadvantages within the organization." Our definition is broad enough to include such varied political behaviors as withholding key information from decision makers, whistleblowing, spreading rumors, leaking confidential information about organizational activities to the media, exchanging favors with others in the organization for mutual benefit, and lobbying on behalf of or against a particular individual or decision alternative. Exhibit 11-4 provides a quick measure to help you assess how political your workplace is.

### political behavior

Those activities that are not required as part of one's formal role in the organization, but that influence, or attempt to influence, the distribution of advantages and disadvantages within the organization.



## Exhibit 11-4 A Quick Measure of How Political Your Workplace Is

How political is your workplace? Answer the 12 questions using the following scale:

SD = Strongly disagree

D = Disagree

U = Uncertain

A = Agree

SA = Strongly agree

1. Managers often use the selection system to hire only people who can help them in their future. \_\_\_\_\_
2. The rules and policies concerning promotion and pay are fair; it is how supervisors carry out the policies that is unfair and self-serving. \_\_\_\_\_
3. The performance ratings people receive from their supervisors reflect more of the supervisors' "own agenda" than the actual performance of the employee. \_\_\_\_\_
4. Although a lot of what my supervisor does around here appears to be directed at helping employees, it is actually intended to protect my supervisor. \_\_\_\_\_
5. There are cliques or "in-groups" which hinder effectiveness around here. \_\_\_\_\_
6. My co-workers help themselves, not others. \_\_\_\_\_



7. I have seen people deliberately distort information requested by others for purposes of personal gain, either by withholding it or by selectively reporting it. \_\_\_\_\_
8. If co-workers offer to lend some assistance, it is because they expect to get something out of it. \_\_\_\_\_
9. Favoritism rather than merit determines who gets ahead around here. \_\_\_\_\_
10. You can usually get what you want around here if you know the right person to ask. \_\_\_\_\_
11. Overall, the rules and policies concerning promotion and pay are specific and well defined. \_\_\_\_\_
12. Pay and promotion policies are generally clearly communicated in this organization. \_\_\_\_\_

This questionnaire taps the three salient dimensions that have been found to be related to perceptions of politics: supervisor behavior; co-worker behavior; and organizational policies and practices. To calculate your score, for items 1 – 10, give yourself 1 point for Strongly disagree; 2 points for Disagree; and so forth (through 5 points for Strongly agree). For items 11 and 12, reverse the score (i.e., 1 point for Strongly agree, etc.) Sum up the total: the higher the total score, the greater degree of perceived organizational politics.

Source: G.R. Ferris, D.D. Frink, D.P.S. Bhawuk, J. Zhou, and D.C. Gilmore, "Reactions of Diverse Groups to Politics in the Workplace," *Journal of Management*, Vol. 22, No. 1, 1996, pp. 32–33.

A final comment relates to what has been referred to as the “legitimate–illegitimate” dimension in political behavior.<sup>25</sup>

**Legitimate political behavior** refers to normal everyday politics—complaining to your supervisor, bypassing the chain of command, forming coalitions, obstructing organizational policies or decisions through inaction or excessive adherence to rules, and developing contacts outside the organization through one’s professional activities. On the other hand, there are also **illegitimate political behaviors** that violate the implied rules of the game. Those who pursue such extreme activities are often described as individuals who “play hardball.” Illegitimate activities include sabotage, whistleblowing, and symbolic protests such as wearing unorthodox dress or protest buttons, and groups of employees simultaneously calling in sick.

The vast majority of all organizational political actions are of the legitimate variety. The reasons are pragmatic: The extreme illegitimate forms of political behavior pose a very real risk of loss of organizational membership or extreme sanctions against those who use them and then fall short in having enough power to ensure that they work.

**legitimate political behavior**

Normal everyday politics.

**illegitimate political behavior**

Extreme political behavior that violates the implied rules of the game.

## The Reality of Politics

Politics is a fact of life in organizations. People who ignore this fact of life do so at their own peril. But why, you may wonder, must politics exist? Isn't it possible for an organization to be politics free? It's *possible*, but most unlikely.

Organizations are made up of individuals and groups with different values, goals, and interests.<sup>26</sup> This sets up the potential for conflict over resources. Departmental budgets, space allocations, project responsibilities, and salary adjustments are just a few examples of the resources about whose allocation organizational members will disagree.

Resources in organizations are also limited, which often turns potential conflict into real conflict. If resources were abundant, then all the various constituencies within the organization could satisfy their goals. But because they are limited, not everyone's interests can be provided for. Furthermore, whether true or not, gains by one individual or group are often *perceived* as being at the expense of others within the organization. These forces create a competition among members for the organization's limited resources.

Maybe the most important factor leading to politics within organizations is the realization that most of the "facts" that are used to allocate the limited resources are open to interpretation. What, for instance, is *good* performance? What's an *adequate* improvement?

What constitutes an *unsatisfactory* job? One person's view that an act is a "selfless effort to benefit the organization" is seen by another as a "blatant attempt to further one's interest."<sup>27</sup> The manager of any major league baseball team knows a .400 hitter is a high performer and a .125 hitter is a poor performer. You don't need to be a baseball genius to know you should play your .400 hitter and send the .125 hitter back to the minors. But what if you have to choose between players who hit .280 and .290? Then other factors—less objective ones—come into play: fielding expertise, attitude, potential, ability to perform in the clutch, loyalty to the team, and so on. More managerial decisions resemble choosing between a .280 and a .290 hitter than deciding between a .125 hitter and a .400 hitter. It is in this large and ambiguous middle ground of organizational life—where the facts *don't* speak for themselves—that politics flourish (see Exhibit 11-5).

Finally, because most decisions have to be made in a climate of ambiguity—where facts are rarely fully objective, and thus are open to interpretation—people within organizations will use whatever influence they can to taint the facts to support their goals and interests. That, of course, creates the activities we call *politicking*.

So, to answer the earlier question of whether or not it is possible for an organization to be politics free, we can say: "Yes," if all members of that organization hold the same goals and interests, if organizational resources are not scarce, and if performance out-

◆ Politics is a fact of life in organizations.

## **Exhibit 11-5 Politics Is in the Eye of the Beholder**

A behavior that one person labels as “organizational politics” is very likely to be characterized as an instance of “effective management” by another. The fact is not that effective management is necessarily political, although in some cases it might be. Rather, a person’s reference point determines what he or she classifies as organizational politics. Take a look at the following labels used to describe the same phenomenon. These suggest that politics, like beauty, is in the eye of the beholder.

### **“Political” label**

1. Blaming others
2. “Kissing up”
3. Apple polishing
4. Passing the buck
5. Covering your rear
6. Creating conflict
7. Forming coalitions
8. Whistleblowing
9. Scheming
10. Overachieving
11. Ambitious
12. Opportunistic

### **“Effective management” label**

1. Fixing responsibility
2. Developing working relationships
3. Demonstrating loyalty
4. Delegating authority
5. Documenting decisions
6. Encouraging change and innovation
7. Facilitating teamwork
8. Improving efficiency
9. Planning ahead
10. Competent and capable
11. Career minded
12. Astute



13. Cunning

14. Arrogant

15. Perfectionist

13. Practical minded

14. Confident

15. Attentive to detail

This exhibit is based on T.C. Krell, M.E. Mendenhall, and J. Sendry, "Doing Research in the Conceptual Morass of Organizational Politics," paper presented at the Western Academy of Management Conference, Hollywood, CA, April 1987.

comes are completely clear and objective. But that doesn't describe the organizational world that most of us live in!

## Factors Contributing to Political Behavior

Not all groups or organizations are equally political. In some organizations, for instance, politicking is overt and rampant, while in others, politics plays a small role in influencing outcomes. Why is there this variation? Recent research and observation have identified a number of factors that appear to encourage political behavior. Some are individual characteristics, derived from the unique qualities of the people the organization employs; others are a result of the organization's culture or internal environment. Exhibit 11-6 illustrates how both individual and organizational factors can increase political behavior and provide favorable outcomes (increased rewards and averted punishments) for both individuals and groups in the organization.

## Exhibit 11-6 Factors Influencing Political Behavior

### Individual factors

- High self-monitors
- Internal locus of control
- High mach
- Organizational investment
- Perceived job alternatives
- Expectations of success

### Organizational factors

- Reallocation of resources
- Promotion opportunities
- Low trust
- Role ambiguity
- Unclear performance evaluation system
- Zero-sum reward practices
- Democratic decision making
- High performance pressures
- Self-serving senior managers

Political behavior

Low → High

Favorable outcomes

- Rewards
- Averted punishments



**INDIVIDUAL FACTORS** At the individual level, researchers have identified certain personality traits, needs, and other factors that are likely to be related to political behavior. In terms of traits, we find that employees who are high self-monitors, possess an internal locus of control, and have a high need for power are more likely to engage in political behavior.<sup>28</sup>

The high self-monitor is more sensitive to social cues, exhibits higher levels of social conformity, and is more likely to be skilled in political behavior than the low self-monitor. Individuals with an internal locus of control, because they believe they can control their environment, are more prone to take a proactive stance and attempt to manipulate situations in their favor. And, not surprisingly, the Machiavellian personality—which is characterized by the will to manipulate and the desire for power—is comfortable using politics as a means to further his or her self-interest.

Additionally, an individual's investment in the organization, perceived alternatives, and expectations of success will influence the degree to which he or she will pursue illegitimate means of political action.<sup>29</sup> The more that a person has invested in the organization in terms of expectations of increased future benefits, the more a person has to lose if forced out and the less likely he or she is to use illegitimate means. The more alternative job opportunities an individual has—due to a favorable job market or the possession of scarce skills or knowledge, a prominent reputation, or influential contacts out-

side the organization—the more likely he or she is to risk illegitimate political actions. Finally, if an individual has a low expectation of success in using illegitimate means, it is unlikely that he or she will attempt to do so. High expectations of success in the use of illegitimate means are most likely to be the province of both experienced and powerful individuals with polished political skills and inexperienced and naive employees who misjudge their chances.

**ORGANIZATIONAL FACTORS** Political activity is probably more a function of the organization's characteristics than of individual difference variables. Why? Because many organizations have a large number of employees with the individual characteristics we listed, yet the extent of political behavior varies widely.

While we acknowledge the role that individual differences can play in fostering politicking, the evidence more strongly supports that certain situations and cultures promote politics. More specifically, when an organization's resources are declining, when the existing pattern of resources is changing, and when there is opportunity for promotions, politics is more likely to surface.<sup>30</sup> In addition, cultures characterized by low trust, role ambiguity, unclear performance evaluation systems, zero-sum reward allocation practices, democratic decision making, high pressures for performance, and self-serving senior managers will create breeding grounds for politicking.<sup>31</sup>

When organizations downsize to improve efficiency, reductions in resources have to be made. Threatened with the loss of resources, people may engage in political actions to safeguard what they have. But any changes, especially those that imply significant reallocation of resources within the organization, are likely to stimulate conflict and increase politicking.

Promotion decisions have consistently been found to be one of the most political in organizations. The opportunity for promotions or advancement encourages people to compete for a limited resource and to try to positively influence the decision outcome.

The less trust there is within the organization, the higher the level of political behavior and the more likely that the political behavior will be of the illegitimate kind. So high trust should suppress the level of political behavior in general and inhibit illegitimate actions in particular.

Role ambiguity means that the prescribed behaviors of the employee are not clear. There are fewer limits, therefore, to the scope and functions of the employee's political actions. Since political activities are defined as those not required as part of one's formal role, the greater the role ambiguity, the more one can engage in political activity with little chance of it being visible.

The practice of performance evaluation is far from a perfected science. The more that organizations use subjective criteria in the appraisal, emphasize a single outcome measure, or allow significant

time to pass between the time of an action and its appraisal, the greater the likelihood that an employee can get away with politicking. Subjective performance criteria create ambiguity. The use of a single outcome measure encourages individuals to do whatever is necessary to “look good” on that measure, but often at the expense of performing well on other important parts of the job that are not being appraised. The amount of time that elapses between an action and its appraisal is also a relevant factor. The longer the time period, the more unlikely that the employee will be held accountable for his or her political behaviors.

The more that an organization’s culture emphasizes the zero-sum or win-lose approach to reward allocations, the more employees will be motivated to engage in politicking. The zero-sum approach treats the reward “pie” as fixed so that any gain one person or group achieves has to come at the expense of another person or group. If I win, you must lose! If \$10,000 in annual raises is to be distributed among five employees, then any employee who gets more than \$2,000 takes money away from one or more of the others. Such a practice encourages making others look bad and increasing the visibility of what you do.

In the last 25 years, there has been a general move in North America and among most developed nations toward making organizations less autocratic. Managers in these organizations are being asked to behave more democratically. They’re told that they should



allow subordinates to advise them on decisions and that they should rely to a greater extent on group input into the decision process. Such moves toward democracy, however, are not necessarily embraced by all individual managers. Many managers sought their positions in order to have legitimate power so as to be able to make unilateral decisions. They fought hard and often paid high personal costs to achieve their influential positions. Sharing their power with others runs directly against their desires. The result is that managers—especially those who began their careers in the 1950s and 1960s—may use the required committees, conferences, and group meetings in a superficial way, as arenas for maneuvering and manipulating.

The more pressure that employees feel to perform well, the more likely they are to engage in politicking. When people are held strictly accountable for outcomes, this puts great pressure on them to “look good.” If a person perceives that his or her entire career is riding on next quarter’s sales figures or next month’s plant productivity report, there is motivation to do whatever is necessary to make sure the numbers come out favorably.

Finally, when employees see the people on top engaging in political behavior, especially when they do so successfully and are rewarded for it, a climate is created that supports politicking. Politicking by top management, in a sense, gives permission to those lower in the organization to play politics by implying that such behavior is acceptable.

## Impression Management

We know that people have an ongoing interest in how others perceive and evaluate them. For example, North Americans spend billions of dollars on diets, health club memberships, cosmetics, and plastic surgery—all intended to make them more attractive to others.<sup>32</sup> Being perceived positively by others should have benefits for people in organizations. It might, for instance, help them initially to get the jobs they want in an organization and, once hired, to get favorable evaluations, superior salary increases, and more rapid promotions. In a political context, it might help sway the distribution of advantages in their favor.

The process by which individuals attempt to control the impression others form of them is called **impression management**.<sup>34</sup> It's a subject that only quite recently has gained the attention of OB researchers.<sup>35</sup>

Is everyone concerned with impression management (IM)? No! Who, then, might we predict to engage in IM? No surprise here! It's our old friend, the high self-monitor.<sup>36</sup> Low self-monitors tend to present images of themselves that are consistent with their personalities, regardless of the beneficial or detrimental effects for them. In contrast, high self-monitors are good at reading situations and molding their appearances and behavior to fit each situation.

Given that you want to control the impression others form of you, what techniques could you use? Exhibit 11-7 summarizes

### **impression management**

The process by which individuals attempt to control the impression others form of them.



# From Concepts to Skills

## Politicking

Forget, for a moment, the ethics of politicking and any negative impressions you may have of people who engage in organizational politics. If you wanted to be more politically adept in your organization, what could you do? The following eight suggestions are likely to improve your political effectiveness.<sup>33</sup>

1. *Frame arguments in terms of organizational goals.* Effective politicking requires camouflaging your self-interest. No matter that your objective is self-serving; all the arguments you marshal in support of it must be framed in terms of the benefits that will accrue to the organization. People whose actions appear to blatantly further

their own interests at the expense of the organization's are almost universally denounced, are likely to lose influence, and often suffer the ultimate penalty of being expelled from the organization.

2. *Develop the right image.* If you know your organization's culture, you understand what the organization wants and values from its employees—in terms of dress, associates to cultivate and those to avoid; whether to appear risk taking or risk averse, the preferred leadership style, the importance placed on getting along well with others, and so forth. Then you are equipped to project the appropriate image. Because the assessment of your performance is not a fully objective

process, style as well as substance must be attended to.

- 3. Gain control of organizational resources.** The control of organizational resources that are scarce and important is a source of power. Knowledge and expertise are particularly effective resources to control. They make you more valuable to the organization and, therefore, more likely to gain security, advancement, and a receptive audience for your ideas.
- 4. Make yourself appear indispensable.** Since we're dealing with appearances rather than objective facts, you can enhance your power by appearing to be indispensable. That is, you don't have to really be indispensable as long as key people in the organization believe that you are. If the organization's prime decision makers believe there is no ready substitute for what you are giving the organization, they are likely to go to great

lengths to ensure that your desires are satisfied.

- 5. Be visible.** Since performance evaluation has a substantial subjective component, it's important that your boss and those in power in the organization be made aware of your contribution. If you are fortunate enough to have a job that brings your accomplishments to the attention of others, it may not be necessary to take direct measures to increase your visibility. But your job may require you to handle activities that are low in visibility, or your specific contribution may be indistinguishable because you're part of a team endeavor. In such cases—*without appearing to be tooting your own horn or creating the image of a braggart*—you'll want to call attention to yourself by highlighting your successes in routine reports, having satisfied customers relay their appreciation to senior executives in your organization,

being seen at social functions, being active in your professional associations, developing powerful allies who speak positively about your accomplishments, and similar tactics. Of course, the skilled politician actively and successfully lobbies to get those projects that will increase his or her visibility.

- 6. *Develop powerful allies.*** It helps to have powerful people in your camp. Cultivate contacts with potentially influential people above you, at your own level, and in the lower ranks. They can provide you with important information that may not be available through normal channels. Additionally, there will be times when decisions will be made in favor of those with the greatest support. Having powerful allies can provide you with a coalition of support if and when you need it.
- 7. *Avoid “tainted” members.*** In almost every organization, there are

fringe members whose status is questionable. Their performance and/or loyalty is suspect. Keep your distance from such individuals. Given the reality that effectiveness has a large subjective component, your own effectiveness might be called into question if you're perceived as being too closely associated with tainted members.

- 8. *Support your boss.*** Your immediate future is in the hands of your current boss. Since he or she evaluates your performance, you will typically want to do whatever is necessary to have your boss on your side. You should make every effort to help your boss succeed, make her look good, support her if she is under siege, and spend the time to find out what criteria she will be using to assess your effectiveness. Don't undermine your boss. And don't speak negatively of her to others.

some of the more popular IM techniques and provides an example of each.

Keep in mind that IM does not imply that the impressions people convey are necessarily false (although, of course, they sometimes are).<sup>37</sup> Excuses and acclaiming, for instance, may be offered with sincerity. Referring to the examples used in Exhibit 11-7, you can *actually* believe that ads contribute little to sales in your region or that you are the key to the tripling of your division's sales. But misrepresentation can have a high cost. If the image claimed is false, you may be discredited.<sup>38</sup> If you "cry wolf" once too often, no one is likely to believe you when the wolf really comes. So the impression manager must be cautious not to be perceived as insincere or manipulative.<sup>39</sup>

Are there *situations* where individuals are more likely to misrepresent themselves or more likely to get away with it? Yes—situations that are characterized by high uncertainty or ambiguity.<sup>40</sup> These situations provide relatively little information for challenging a fraudulent claim and reduce the risks associated with misrepresentation.

Only a limited number of studies have been undertaken to test the effectiveness of IM techniques, and these have been essentially limited to determining whether or not IM behavior is related to job interview success. This makes a particularly relevant area of study since applicants are clearly attempting to present positive images of



### **Conformity**

Agreeing with someone else's opinion in order to gain his or her approval.

*Example:* A manager tells his boss, "You're absolutely right on your reorganization plan for the western regional office. I couldn't agree with you more".

### **Excuses**

Explanations of a predicament-creating event aimed at minimizing the apparent severity of the predicament.

*Example:* Sales manager to boss, "We failed to get the ad in the paper on time, but no one responds to those ads anyway."

### **Apologies**

Admitting responsibility for an undesirable event and simultaneously seeking to get a pardon for the action.

*Example:* Employee to boss, "I'm sorry I made a mistake on the report. Please forgive me."

### **Acclaiming**

Explanation of favorable events to maximize the desirable implications for oneself.

*Example:* A salesperson informs a peer, "The sales in our division have nearly tripled since I was hired."

### **Flattery**

Complimenting others about their virtues in an effort to make oneself appear perceptive and likable.



*Example:* New sales trainee to peer, “You handled that client’s complaint so tactfully! I could never have handled that as well as you did.”

### **Favors**

Doing something nice for someone to gain that person’s approval.

*Example:* Salesperson to prospective client, “I’ve got two tickets to the theater tonight that I can’t use. Take them. Consider it a thank-you for taking the time to talk with me.”

### **Association**

Enhancing or protecting one’s image by managing information about people and things with which one is associated.

*Example:* A job applicant says to an interviewer, “What a coincidence. Your boss and I were roommates in college.”

Source: Based on B.R. Schlenker, *Impression Management* (Monterey, CA: Brooks/Cole, 1980); W.L. Gardner and M.J. Martinko, “Impression Management in Organizations,” *Journal of Management*, June 1988, p. 332; and R.B. Cialdini, “Indirect Tactics of Image Management: Beyond Basking,” in R.A. Giacalone and P. Rosenfeld (eds.), *Impression Management in the Organization* (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1989), pp. 45–71.

themselves and there are relatively objective outcome measures (written assessments and typically a hire–don’t hire recommendation).

The evidence is that IM behavior works.<sup>41</sup> In one study, for instance, interviewers felt that those applicants for a position as a customer service representative who used IM techniques performed better in the interview, and they seemed somewhat more inclined

to hire these people.<sup>42</sup> Moreover, when the researchers considered applicants' credentials, they concluded that it was the IM techniques alone that influenced the interviewers. That is, it didn't seem to matter if applicants were well or poorly qualified. If they used IM techniques, they did better in the interview.

Another employment interview study looked at whether certain IM techniques work better than others.<sup>43</sup> The researchers compared applicants who used IM techniques that focused the conversation on themselves (called a *controlling style*) to applicants who used techniques that focused on the interviewer (referred to as a *submissive style*). The researchers hypothesized that applicants who used the controlling style would be more effective because of the implicit expectations inherent in employment interviews. We tend to expect job applicants to use self-enhancement, self-promotion, and other active controlling techniques in an interview because they reflect self-confidence and initiative. The researchers predicted that these active controlling techniques would work better for applicants than submissive tactics like conforming their opinions to those of the interviewer and offering favors to the interviewer. The results confirmed the researchers' predictions. Those applicants who used the controlling style were rated higher by interviewers on factors such as motivation, enthusiasm, and even technical skills—and they received more job offers. A more recent

- ◆ Job applicants who used impression management techniques did better in interviews.

study confirmed the value of a controlling style over a submissive one.<sup>44</sup> Specifically, recent college graduates that used more self-promotion tactics got higher evaluations by interviewers and more follow-up job site visits, even after adjusting for grade point average, gender, and job type.

## Defensive Behaviors

Organizational politics includes protection of self-interest as well as promotion. Individuals often engage in reactive and protective “defensive” behaviors to avoid action, blame, or change.<sup>45</sup> This section discusses common varieties of **defensive behaviors**, classified by their objective.

**AVOIDING ACTION** Sometimes the best political strategy is to avoid action. That is, the best action is no action! However, role expectations typically dictate that one at least give the impression of doing something. Here are six popular ways to avoid action:

1. *Overconforming.* You strictly interpret your responsibility by saying things like, “The rules clearly state . . . ” or “This is the way we’ve always done it.” Rigid adherence to rules, policies, and precedents avoids the need to consider the nuances of a particular case.

### **defensive behaviors**

Reactive and protective behaviors to avoid action, blame, or change.

2. *Passing the buck.* You transfer responsibility for the execution of a task or decision to someone else.
3. *Playing dumb.* This is a form of strategic helplessness. You avoid an unwanted task by falsely pleading ignorance or inability.
4. *Depersonalization.* You treat other people as objects or numbers, distancing yourself from problems and avoiding having to consider the idiosyncrasies of particular people or the impact of events on them. Hospital physicians often refer to patients by their room number or disease in order to avoid becoming too personally involved with them.
5. *Stretching and smoothing.* Stretching refers to prolonging a task so that you appear to be occupied—for example, you turn a two-week task into a four-month job. Smoothing refers to covering up fluctuations in effort or output. Both these practices are designed to make you appear continually busy and productive.
6. *Stalling.* This “foot-dragging” tactic requires you to appear more or less supportive publicly while doing little or nothing privately.

**AVOIDING BLAME** What can you do to avoid blame for actual or anticipated negative outcomes? You can try one of the following six tactics:

1. *Buffing.* This is a nice way to refer to “covering your rear.” It describes the practice of rigorously documenting activity to project an image of competence and thoroughness. “I can’t provide

that information unless I get a formal written requisition from you,” is an example.

2. *Playing safe.* This encompasses tactics designed to evade situations that may reflect unfavorably on you. It includes taking on only projects with a high probability of success, having risky decisions approved by superiors, qualifying expressions of judgment, and taking neutral positions in conflicts.
3. *Justifying.* This tactic includes developing explanations that lessen your responsibility for a negative outcome and/or apologizing to demonstrate remorse.
4. *Scapegoating.* This is the classic effort to place the blame for a negative outcome on external factors that are not entirely blameworthy. “I would have had the paper in on time but my computer went down—and I lost everything—the day before the deadline.”
5. *Misrepresenting.* This tactic involves the manipulation of information by distortion, embellishment, deception, selective presentation, or obfuscation.
6. *Escalation of commitment.* One way to vindicate an initially poor decision and a failing course of action is to escalate support for the decision. By further increasing the commitment of resources to a previous course of action, you indicate that the previous decision was not wrong. When you “throw good money after bad,” you demonstrate confidence in past actions and consistency over time.

**AVOIDING CHANGE** Finally, there are two forms of defensiveness frequently used by people who feel personally threatened by change:

1. *Resisting change.* This is a catch-all name for a variety of behaviors, including some forms of overconforming, stalling, playing safe, and misrepresenting.
2. *Protecting turf.* This is defending your territory from encroachment by others. As one purchasing executive commented, “Tell the people in production that it’s our job to talk with vendors, not theirs.”

**EFFECTS OF DEFENSIVE BEHAVIOR** In the short run, extensive use of defensiveness may well promote an individual’s self-interest. But in the long run, it more often than not becomes a liability. This is because defensive behavior frequently becomes chronic or even pathological over time. People who constantly rely on defensiveness find that, eventually, it is the only way they know how to behave. At that point, they lose the trust and support of their peers, bosses, subordinates, and clients. In moderation, however, defensive behavior can be an effective device for surviving and flourishing in an organization because it is often deliberately or unwittingly encouraged by management.

In terms of the organization, defensive behavior tends to reduce effectiveness. In the short run, defensiveness delays decisions,

increases interpersonal and intergroup tensions, reduces risk taking, makes attributions and evaluations unreliable, and restricts change efforts. In the long term, defensiveness leads to organizational rigidity and stagnation, detachment from the organization's environment, an organizational culture that is highly politicized, and low employee morale.

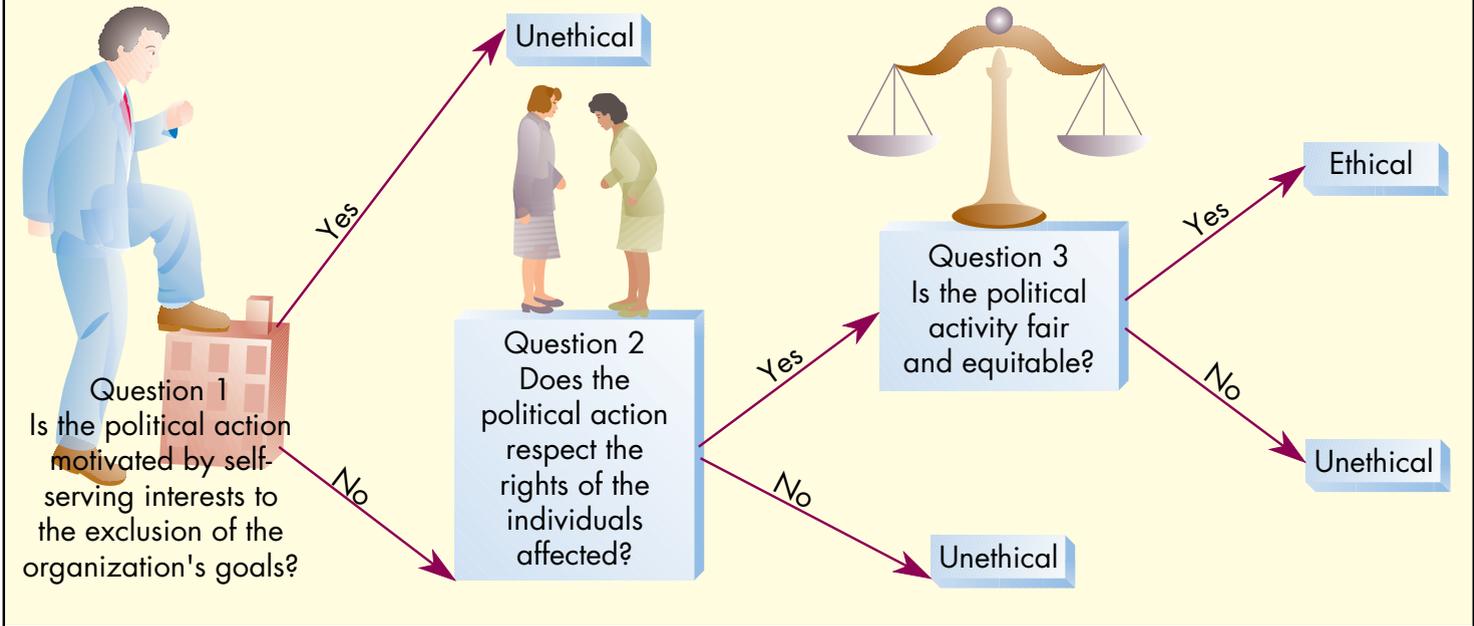
## The Ethics of Behaving Politically

We conclude our discussion of politics by providing some ethical guidelines for political behavior. While there are no clear-cut ways to differentiate ethical from unethical politicking, there are some questions you should consider.

Exhibit 11-8 illustrates a decision tree to guide ethical actions.<sup>46</sup> The first question you need to answer addresses self-interest versus organizational goals. Ethical actions are consistent with the organization's goals. Spreading untrue rumors about the safety of a new product introduced by your company, in order to make that product's design team look bad, is unethical. However, there may be nothing unethical if a department head exchanges favors with her division's purchasing manager in order to get a critical contract processed quickly.

The second question concerns the rights of other parties. If the department head described in the previous paragraph went down to

## Exhibit 11-8 Is a Political Action Ethical?



the mail room during her lunch hour and read through the mail directed to the purchasing manager—with the intent of “getting something on him” so he’ll expedite your contract—she would be acting unethically. She would have violated the purchasing manager’s right to privacy.

The final question that needs to be addressed relates to whether or not the political activity conforms to standards of equity and justice. The department head that inflates the performance evaluation of a favored employee and deflates the evaluation of a disfavored employee—then uses these evaluations to justify giving the former a big raise and nothing to the latter—has treated the disfavored employee unfairly.

Unfortunately, the answers to the questions in Exhibit 11-8 are often argued in ways to make unethical practices seem ethical. Powerful people, for example, can become very good at explaining self-serving behaviors in terms of the organization's best interests. Similarly, they can persuasively argue that unfair actions are really fair and just. Our point is that immoral people can justify almost any behavior. Those who are powerful, articulate, and persuasive are most vulnerable because they are likely to be able to get away with unethical practices successfully. When faced with an ethical dilemma regarding organizational politics, try to answer the questions in Exhibit 11-8 truthfully. And if you have a strong power base, recognize the ability of power to corrupt. Remember, it's a lot easier for the powerless to act ethically, if for no other reason than they typically have very little political discretion to exploit.

## Summary and Implications for Managers

If you want to get things done in a group or organization, it helps to have power. As a manager who wants to maximize your power, you will want to increase others' dependence on you. You can, for instance, increase your power in relation to your boss by developing knowledge or a skill that he needs and for which he perceives no ready substitute. But power is a two-way street. You will not be alone in attempting to build your power bases. Others, particularly subordinates, will be seeking to make you dependent on them. The result is a continual battle. While you seek to maximize others' dependence on you, you will be seeking to minimize your dependence on others. And, of course, others you work with will be trying to do the same.

Few employees relish being powerless in their job and organization. It's been argued, for instance, that when people in organizations are difficult, argumentative, and temperamental it may be because they are in positions of powerlessness, where the performance expectations placed on them exceed their resources and capabilities.<sup>47</sup>

There is evidence that people respond differently to the various power bases.<sup>48</sup> Expert and referent power are derived from an individual's personal qualities. In contrast, coercion, reward, and legitimate power are essentially organizationally derived. Since people



are more likely to enthusiastically accept and commit to an individual whom they admire or whose knowledge they respect (rather than someone who relies on his or her position to reward or coerce them), the effective use of expert and referent power should lead to higher employee performance, commitment, and satisfaction. Evidence indicates, for instance, that employees working under managers who use coercive power are unlikely to be committed to the organization and more likely to resist the managers' influence attempts.<sup>49</sup> In contrast, expert power has been found to be the most strongly and consistently related to effective employee performance.<sup>50</sup> For example, in a study of five organizations, knowledge was the most effective base for getting others to perform as desired.<sup>51</sup> Competence appears to offer wide appeal, and its use as a power base results in high performance by group members. The message here for managers seems to be: Develop and use your expert power base!

The power of your boss may also play a role in determining your job satisfaction. "One of the reasons many of us like to work for and with people who are powerful is that they are generally more pleasant—not because it is their native disposition, but because the reputation and reality of being powerful permits them more discretion and more ability to delegate to others."<sup>52</sup>

The effective manager accepts the political nature of organizations. By assessing behavior in a political framework, you can bet-

ter predict the actions of others and use this information to formulate political strategies that will gain advantages for you and your work unit.

We can only speculate at this time on whether or not organizational politics is positively related to *actual* performance. However, there seems to be ample evidence that good political skills are positively related to high performance evaluations and, hence, to salary increases and promotions. We can comment more confidently on the relationship between politics and employee satisfaction. The more political that employees perceive an organization to be, the lower their satisfaction.<sup>53</sup> However, this conclusion needs to be moderated to reflect the employees' level in the organization.<sup>54</sup> Lower-ranking employees, who lack the power base and the means of influence needed to benefit from the political game, perceive organizational politics as a source of frustration and indicate lower satisfaction. But higher-ranking employees, who are in a better position to handle political behavior and benefit from it, don't tend to exhibit this negative attitude.

A final thought on organizational politics: Regardless of level in the organization, some people are just significantly more "politically astute" than are others. While there is little evidence to support or negate the following conclusion, it seems reasonable that the politically naive or inept are likely to exhibit lower job satisfaction than their politically astute counterparts. The politically naive

and inept tend to feel continually powerless to influence those decisions that most affect them. They look at actions around them and are perplexed at why they are regularly “shafted” by colleagues, bosses, and “the system.”

## For Review

1. What is power? How do you get it?
2. Contrast power tactics with power bases. What are some of the key contingency variables that determine which tactic a powerholder is likely to use?
3. Which of the five power bases lie with the individual? Which are derived from the organization?
4. State the general dependency postulate. What does it mean?
5. What creates dependency? Give an applied example.
6. What is a coalition? When is it likely to develop?
7. How are power and politics related?
8. Define political behavior. Why is politics a fact of life in organizations?
9. What factors contribute to political activity?
10. Define sexual harassment. Who is most likely to harass a female employee: her boss, co-worker, or subordinate?

## For Discussion

1. Based on the information presented in this chapter, what would you do as a new college graduate entering a new job to maximize your power and accelerate your career progress?
2. “More powerful managers are good for an organization. It is the powerless, not the powerful, who are the ineffective managers.” Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Discuss.
3. You’re a sales representative for an international software company. After four excellent years, sales in your territory are off 30 percent this year. Describe three defensive responses you might use to reduce the potential negative consequences of this decline in sales.
4. “Sexual harassment should not be tolerated at the workplace.” “Workplace romances are a natural occurrence in organizations.” Are both of these statements true? Can they be reconciled?
5. Which impression management techniques have you used? What ethical implications are there, if any, in using impression management?



## It's a Political Jungle Out There!

Nick is a talented television camera operator. He has worked on a number of popular television shows, including *Designing Women*, *Murphy Brown*, and *NYPD Blue*, over a ten-year period. But he's had trouble keeping those jobs. While most other camera operators and production employees are rehired from one season to the next, Nick seems to never be called back for a second year. It isn't that Nick isn't competent. Quite the contrary. His technical knowledge and formal education are typically more impressive than the directors he works for. Nick's problem is that he frequently disagrees with the camera angles that directors want him to set up and he has no qualms about expressing his displeasure to those directors. He also feels some need to offer unsolicited suggestions to directors and producers on how camera placements and shots can be improved.

Roy is also a camera operator. Like Nick, Roy sees directors and producers regularly making decisions that he doesn't agree

with. But Roy holds his tongue and does what he's told. He recently finished his sixth straight year as the lead camera operator on one of television's most successful situation comedies.

Roy gets it. Nick doesn't. Nick has failed to recognize the reality that organizations are political systems. And while Roy is secure in his job, Nick's career continues to suffer because of his political naiveté.

It would be nice if all organizations or formal groups within organizations could be described as supportive, harmonious, objective, trusting, collaborative, or cooperative. A nonpolitical perspective can lead one to believe that employees will always behave in ways consistent with the interests of the organization, and that competence and high performance will always be rewarded. In contrast, a political view can explain much of what may seem to be irrational behavior in organizations. It can help to explain, for instance, why employees withhold information, restrict output, attempt to "build empires," publicize their successes, hide their failures, distort performance figures to make themselves look better, and engage in



similar activities that appear to be at odds with the organization's desire for effectiveness and efficiency.

For those who want tangible evidence that “it’s a political jungle out there” in the real world, let’s look at two studies. The first analyzed what it takes to get promoted fast in organizations. The second addressed the performance appraisal process.

As previously described in Chapter 1, Luthans and his associates\* studied more than 450 managers. They found that these managers engaged in four managerial activities: traditional management (decision making, planning, and controlling), communication (exchanging routine information and processing paperwork), human resource management (motivating, disciplining, managing conflict, staffing, and training), and networking (socializing, politicking, and interacting with outsiders). Those managers who got promoted fastest spent 48 percent of their time networking. The average managers spent most of their efforts on tradi-

tional management and communication activities and only 19 percent of their time networking. We suggest that this provides strong evidence of the importance that social and political skills play in getting ahead in organizations.

Longenecker and his associates\*\* held in-depth interviews with 60 upper-level executives to find out what went into performance ratings. What they found was that executives frankly admitted to deliberately manipulating formal appraisals for political purposes. Accuracy was not a primary concern of these executives. Rather, they manipulated the appraisal results in an intentional and systematic manner to get the outcomes they wanted.

\*F. Luthans, R.M. Hodgetts, and S.A. Rosenkrantz, *Real Managers* (Cambridge, MA: Ballinger, 1988).

\*\*C.O. Longenecker, D.A. Gioia, and H.P. Sims, Jr., “Behind the Mask: The Politics of Employee Appraisal,” *Academy of Management Executive*, August 1987, pp. 183–94.

## Corporate Politics: What You See Is What You Get!

Organizational behavior currently appears to be undergoing a period of fascination with workplace politics. Proponents argue that politics is inevitable in organizations—that power struggles, alliance formations, strategic maneuverings, and cut-throat actions are as endemic to organizational life as work schedules and meetings. But is organizational politics inevitable? Maybe not. The existence of politics may be a perceptual interpretation.\*

A recent study suggests that politics are more myth and interpretation than reality.\*\* In this study of 180 experienced managers, 92 men and 88 women completed questionnaires. They analyzed a series of decisions and indicated the degree to which they thought the decisions were influenced by politics. They also completed a measure that assessed political inevitability. This included items such as “Politics is a normal part of any decision-making process” and “Politics can have as many helpful outcomes for the organizations as harmful ones.” Additionally, the

questionnaire asked respondents their beliefs about power and control in the world at large. Finally, respondents provided data on their income, job responsibilities, and years of managerial experience.

The study found that beliefs about politics affected how respondents perceived organizational events. Those managers who held strong beliefs in the inevitability of politics tended to see their own organization and the decision situations in the questionnaire in highly political terms. Moreover, there was evidence suggesting that these beliefs encompass not only beliefs about politics but also about power and control in the world at large. Managers who viewed the world as posing difficult and complex problems and ruled by luck also tended to perceive events as highly politicized. That is, they perceived organizations as part of a disorderly and unpredictable world where politics is inevitable.

Interestingly, not *all* managers saw organizations as political jungles. It was typically the inexperienced managers, with lower incomes and more limited responsibilities, who held this view. The researchers con-



cluded that because junior managers often lack clear understandings of how organizations really work, they tend to interpret events as irrational. It's through their attempts to make sense of their situations that these junior managers may come to make political attributions.

This study attempted to determine whether the corporate political jungle is myth, reality, or a matter of interpretation. The popular press often presents the political jungle as the dominant corporate reality where gamesmanship and manipulation are key to survival. However, the findings of this study suggest that a manager's political reality is somewhat mythical in nature, partially constructed through his or her beliefs about politics' inevitability and about power and control in the world. More specifically, it's the inexperienced managers—those who are likely to hold the fewest and least accurate interpretations of organizational events—who perceive the extent of organizational politics to be greatest.

So if there is a corporate political jungle, it appears to be mostly in the eyes of the young and inexperienced. Because they tend to have less understanding of organizational processes and less power to influence outcomes, they are more likely to see organizations through a political lens. More experienced and higher-ranking managers, on the other hand, are more likely to see the corporate political jungle as a myth.

\*See, for instance, C.P. Parker, R.L. Dipboye, and S.L. Jackson, "Perceptions of Organizational Politics: An Investigation of Antecedents and Consequences," *Journal of Management*, Vol. 21, No. 5, 1995, pp. 891–912; and G.R. Ferris, D.D. Frink, M.C. Galang, J. Zhou, K.M. Kacmar, and J.L. Howard, "Perceptions of Organizational Politics: Prediction, Stress-Related Implications, and Outcomes," *Human Relations*, February 1996, pp. 233–66.

\*\*Cited in C. Kirchmeyer, "The Corporate Political Jungle: Myth, Reality, or a Matter of Interpretation," in C. Harris and C.C. Lundberg (eds.), *Proceedings of the 29th Annual Eastern Academy of Management* (Baltimore, 1992), pp. 161–64.



## Learning About Yourself Exercise

### How Political Are You?

To determine your political tendencies, please answer the following questions. Check the answer that best represents your behavior or belief, even if that particular behavior or belief is not present all the time.

- |  | True  | False |
|--|-------|-------|
| 1. You should make others feel important through an open appreciation of their ideas and work.   | _____ | _____ |
| 2. Because people tend to judge you when they first meet you, always try to make a good first impression.  | _____ | _____ |
| 3. Try to let others do most of the talking, be sympathetic to their problems, and resist telling people that they are totally wrong.                  | _____ | _____ |
| 4. Praise the good traits of the people you meet and always give people an opportunity to save face if they are wrong or make a mistake.               | _____ | _____ |
| 5. Spreading false rumors, planting misleading information, and backstabbing are necessary, if somewhat unpleasant, methods to deal with your enemies. | _____ | _____ |



True      False

6. Sometimes it is necessary to make promises that you know you will not or cannot keep.
7. It is important to get along with everybody, even with those who are generally recognized as windbags, abrasive, or constant complainers.
8. It is vital to do favors for others so that you can call in these IOUs at times when they will do you the most good.
9. Be willing to compromise, particularly on issues that are minor to you, but major to others.
10. On controversial issues, it is important to delay or avoid your involvement if possible.

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Turn to page 1483 for scoring directions and key.

Source: J.F. Byrnes, "The Political Behavior Inventory." With permission.

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## Damned If You Do; Damned If You Don't

Fran Gilson has spent 15 years with the Thompson Grocery Company.\* Starting out as a part-time cashier while attending college, Fran has risen up through the ranks of this 50-store grocery store chain. Today, at the age of 34, she is a regional manager, overseeing seven stores and earning nearly \$80,000 a year. Fran also

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thinks she's ready to take on more responsibility. About five weeks ago, she was contacted by an executive-search recruiter inquiring about her interest in the position of vice president and regional manager for a national drugstore chain. She would be responsible for more than 100 stores in five states. She agreed to meet with the recruiter. This led to two meetings with top executives at the drugstore chain. The recruiter called Fran two days ago to tell her she was one of the two finalists for the job.

The only person at Thompson who knows Fran is looking at this other job is her good friend and colleague, Ken Hamilton. Ken is director of finance for the grocery chain. "It's a dream job," Fran told Ken. "It's a lot more responsibility and it's a good company to work for. The regional office is just 20 miles from here so I wouldn't have to move. And the pay is first rate. With the performance bonus, I could make nearly \$200,000 a year. But best of all, the job provides terrific visibility. I'd be their only female vice president. The job would allow me to be a more visible role model for young women and give me a bigger voice in opening up doors for women and ethnic minorities in retailing management."

Since Fran considered Ken a close friend and wanted to keep the fact that she was looking at another job secret, she asked Ken last week if she could use his name as a reference. Said Ken, "Of course. I'll give you a great recommendation. We'd hate to lose you here, but you've got a lot of talent. They'd be lucky to get someone with your

experience and energy.” Fran passed Ken’s name on to the executive recruiter as her only reference at Thompson. She made it very clear to the recruiter that Ken was the only person at Thompson who knew she was considering another job. Thompson’s top management is old-fashioned and places a high value on loyalty. If anyone heard she was talking to another company, it might seriously jeopardize her chances for promotion. But she trusted Ken completely. It’s against this backdrop that this morning’s incident became more than just a question of sexual harrassment. It became a full-blown ethical and political dilemma for Fran.

Jennifer Chung has been a financial analyst in Ken’s department for five months. Fran met Jennifer through Ken. The three have chatted together on a number of occasions in the coffee room. Fran’s impression of Jennifer is quite positive. In many ways, Jennifer strikes Fran as a lot like she was ten years ago. This morning, Fran came to work around 6:30 a.m. as she usually does. It allows her to get a lot accomplished before “the troops” roll in at 8 a.m. At about 6:45, Jennifer came into Fran’s office. It was immediately evident that something was wrong. Jennifer was very nervous and uncomfortable, which was most unlike her. She asked Fran if they could talk. Fran sat her down and listened to her story.

What Fran heard was hard to believe, but she had no reason to think Jennifer was lying. Jennifer said that Ken began making off-color comments to her when they were alone within a month after Jennifer

joined Thompson. From there it got progressively worse. Ken would leer at her. He put his arm over her shoulder when they were reviewing reports. He patted her rear. Every time one of these occurrences happened, Jennifer would ask him to stop and not do it again, but it fell on deaf ears. Yesterday, Ken reminded Jennifer that her six-month probationary review was coming up. “He told me that if I didn’t sleep with him that I couldn’t expect a very favorable evaluation.” She told Fran that all she could do was go to the ladies’ room and cry.

Jennifer said that she had come to Fran because she didn’t know what to do or whom to turn to. “I came to you, Fran, because you’re a friend of Ken’s and the highest ranking woman here. Will you help me?” Fran had never heard anything like this about Ken before. About all she knew regarding his personal life was that he was in his late 30s, single, and involved in a long-term relationship.

## Questions

1. Analyze Fran’s situation in a purely legalistic sense. You might want to talk to friends or relatives who are in management or the legal profession for advice in this analysis.
2. Analyze Fran’s dilemma in political terms.
3. Analyze Fran’s situation in an ethical sense. What is the *ethically* right thing for her to do? Is that also the *politically* right thing to do?
4. If you were Fran, what would *you* do?

\*The identity of this organization and the people described are disguised for obvious reasons.



## Power, Sexual Harassment, and the CIA

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ABCNEWS

By the time “Janet” finished her training with the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency in Virginia, she looked like the perfect spy. Outgoing and affable, she slipped easily into foreign cultures—a legacy from having grown up overseas. In college, in Tokyo, Janet became fluent in Japanese. Now, skilled in picking locks and servicing film drops, the 26-year-old spy eagerly awaited her first assignment abroad. But the old boys of the CIA were not eager to have Janet among their ranks. Women spies have never been fully accepted in the hard-drinking, macho world of the agency’s clandestine service, known as the Directorate of Operations, or DO. Janet quit the agency in 1988 out of frustration.

Today, the women of the CIA refuse to quit. Angered by a male-dominated climate and inequality in promotions and assignments, the CIA’s female spies are demanding changes. Such reform is one of the many challenges facing newly appointed CIA director John Deutch.

To many, the issue goes beyond money and fairness. The agency’s old-boy mentality wastes some of its most talented people, many CIA women say, while it hampers the basic mission of the CIA. “They really protect their own,” says Lynne Larkin, a seven-year veteran who recently resigned over a job discrimination issue. The old-boy network, Larkin says, contributes to an atmosphere in

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which people feel they can break the rules without repercussion. “They have this idea that they’re not really held accountable,” says Larkin. “Abuse not only continues but tends to get worse.”

For Janet, the discrimination was blatant. Her first assignment in Tokyo became the joke of the CIA station. She was assigned as a “port caller,” an officer who recruits sailors, usually off of Third World ships, to photograph Chinese ports and North Korean vessels when they sail into “denied areas” — places U.S. spies cannot gain access to. Usually, the port caller job is reserved for swaggering jocks, not a 5-foot-6-inch, 125-pound female officer. For Janet, the station chief slapped on a special restriction: She was forbidden to go into bars or to drink while recruiting sailors. The job was a recipe for failure. “He clearly felt that if I was given a hard enough time, maybe they wouldn’t send in another woman for a while,” she says. Janet wouldn’t be outsmarted, however. With some ingenuity, she devised a scheme to phone a ship’s radio operator when a new vessel docked. Then, pretending to work for a publishing company, she invited the sailors ashore. Face to face, Janet persuaded them to take photos for pay. Within a year, Janet became the station’s top recruiter. But her bosses didn’t appreciate her efforts. After failing to win another overseas posting, Janet claimed that the station chief had altered her performance report, in violation of CIA policy. Today, some 300 women have threatened a class-action suit against the CIA, citing similar discriminatory practices.

Sexual harassment has been an even bigger problem at the CIA. Nearly 50 percent of all white women have reported being sexually harassed. Like a throwback to the 1950s, a fixation with nude photographs and crude sexual jokes is common among some male case officers. Women complain of a hostile work environment rife with insensitive or derogatory comments, jokes, signs, and posters.

Women who try to fight the old boys through official channels often encounter a fierce backlash. There is a strong perception within the DO that those who complained received no help or, worse, jeopardized their careers. “Jennifer,” who had an otherwise stellar career in the DO, found her promotion path blocked after she officially complained that a male boss, at a staff meeting, had referred to “minorities, women and other two-headed animals.” “If you complain, you are seen as betraying the system,” she says.

## Questions

1. Describe the hostile environment for women in the CIA.
2. How does this case demonstrate that sexual harassment is closely intertwined with power?
3. If you were John Deutch, what actions would you take to deal with the problems of discrimination and sexual harassment at the CIA?

Source: Based on “Women of the CIA Come Forward,” *ABC News Nightline*; aired June 7, 1995.