Session 9 - Power, Politics & OD

Power defined . . .

- The intentional influence over beliefs, emotions and behaviors of people.
  - Potential power is the capacity to do so
  - Kinetic power is the act of doing so
- One person exerts power over another to the degree that he is able to exact compliance as desired
- “A” has power over “B” to the extent that “A” can get “B” to do something that “B” would otherwise not do.
- The ability of those who possess power to bring about the outcomes they desire.
- The capacity to effect (or affect) organizational outcomes
- “Pouvoir” from the French stands for both the noun “power” and the verb “to be able”

Common elements of the definitions

- Reflectance—getting one’s way
- Necessity of social interaction among two or more parties
- The act or ability to influence others
- Outcomes favoring one part over the other
- Power is the ability to get one’s way in a social situation.

Power in Action

- Influence
  - Cooperation
  - Society
- Leadership
  - Technological, medical, political, financial, spiritual, organizational → standard of living
  - Warfare, confiscation, repression → misery

Faces of Power in Action

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Negative</th>
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<tr>
<td>Leading</td>
<td>Coercing</td>
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<td>Influencing</td>
<td>Forcing</td>
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<td>Selling</td>
<td>Hurting</td>
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<td>Persuading</td>
<td>Crushing</td>
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McClelland and The Two Faces of Power

- Positive power characterized by socialized needs to initiate, influence and lead
  - Seeks to empower self and others
- Negative power characterized by primitive, unsocialized need to dominate others
  - Seeks to dominate and control others

FRENCH AND RAVEN’S 5 BASES OF POWER
• **Coercive Power** depends on fear
  One reacts to this type of power out of fear of the negative results that might occur if one fails to comply
  It rests on the application (or the threat) of physical sanctions
• **Reward Power** is the opposite of coercive power
  People comply because doing so produces benefits
  anyone who can distribute rewards that others value will have power over them
• **Legitimate Power** represents the power a person receives as a result of his or her position in the formal hierarchy of an organization
  Legitimate power is broader than the power to coerce and reward
  it includes acceptance of a person’s authority by members of the organization
• **Expert Power** is influence wielded as a result of experience, special skill, or knowledge
  Expertise has become a strong source of influence as the world has become more technologically oriented
  As jobs become more specialized, we become more dependent on “experts”
• **Referent Power** is based on identification with a person who has desirable resources or admirable personal traits.
  It develops out of an admiration for someone and a desire to be like that person
  If person A admires person B enough to model behavior and attitudes after him or her, then person B has power over person A

**What Creates Dependency?**

- Importance of the Resource
- Scarcity of the Resource
- Number of Viable Substitutes

**Locating Power in Organizations**

- Departmental
  - Place on committees
  - Number of employees
  - Budget allocation
  - Location of offices
- Individual
  - Ability to intercede
  - Approval for spending
  - Items on the agenda
  - Access to top brass

Individual Factors Which Contribute to Political Behavior

- Level of self monitoring
- Need for power
- Internal locus of control
- Investment in the organization
- Perceived alternatives
- Expectations of success
Organizational Factors that Contribute to Political Behavior

- Low trust
- Democratic decision making
- High performance pressures
- Scarcity of resources
- Role ambiguity
- Self-serving senior managers
- Unclear evaluation systems
- Zero-sum allocations

Types of Organizational Politics

- *Legitimate* political behavior consists of normal, every-day politics:
  - forming coalitions
  - bypassing the chain of command
  - complaining to your supervisor
  - developing outside contacts through professional activities
- *Illegitimate* political behavior is so extreme that it violates the rules of the game
  - Sabotage
  - whistle-blowing
  - symbolic protests

Political Perspective Explains Organizational Behavior

Examples of political organizational behavior

- withholding information
- restricting output
- attempting to “build empires”
- publicizing their successes
- hiding their failures
- distorting performance figures
- engaging in similar activities at odds with organization’s goals, efficiency and effectiveness

**OD, POWER AND POLITICS**

- OD values consistent with positive face of power
  - Trust, openness, collaboration, individual dignity, promoting individual and organizational competence
- Emphasis on power equalization
  - Increases power among organizational members → the whole organization has more power

OD in Political Environments

1. Become a desired commodity personally and professionally
   - High interpersonal competence
   - Listening, communication, problem-solving, coaching, counseling skills; appreciating other
2. Make OD a desired commodity
   • OD allows individuals and organizations to reach their goals
3. Make OD a valued commodity for multiple powerful people in the organization
   • Creates value for OD
   • Increases power base and support
   • Endorsement, support and protection of OD interventions
4. Create win-win situations
   • Enhance stable, constructive social relationships
   • Different way to handle conflict
5. Mind your own business (help others solve their major problems)
   • Help upon request
   • Help the manager meet her/his goals
6. Mind your own business—be a process, not content, expert
7. Mind your own business and don’t invite political trouble
   • OD practitioner’s role is that of facilitator, catalyst, problem-solver, educator
   • Role is not power-broker or power activist