

CHAPTER 8: POWER AND POLITICS

ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOUR

5TH CANADIAN EDITION

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CANADA**

Chapter Outline

- A Definition of Power
- Bases of Power
- Dependency: The Key to Power
- Influence Tactics
- Empowerment: Giving Power to Employees
- The Abuse of Power: Harassment in the Workplace
- Politics: Power in Action

A vertical illustration on the left side of the slide. At the top is a yellow sun with rays. Below it is a person with brown skin, wearing a blue suit, holding a yellow megaphone. The background is light blue with a white cloud and green hills at the bottom. The entire slide has a light blue background with a thin blue border.

Power and Politics

1. What is power?
2. How does one get power?
3. How does dependency affect power?
4. What tactics can be used to increase power?
5. What does it mean to be empowered?
6. How are power and harassment related?
7. Why do people engage in politics?



Power and Politics

- **Power**

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

- **Dependency**

- B's relationship to A when A possesses something that B needs.

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Exhibit 8-1

Measuring Bases of Power

1. Coercive Power

- Power that is based on fear.

2. Reward Power

- Power based on the ability to provide benefits or rewards to people.

3. Legitimate Power

- Power based on relative position in the organizational hierarchy.

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Exhibit 8-1

Measuring Bases of Power

4. Expert Power

- Power based on a person's experience and knowledge.

5. Referent Power

- You like the person and enjoy doing things for him or her.

6. Information Power

- The person has data or knowledge that you need.

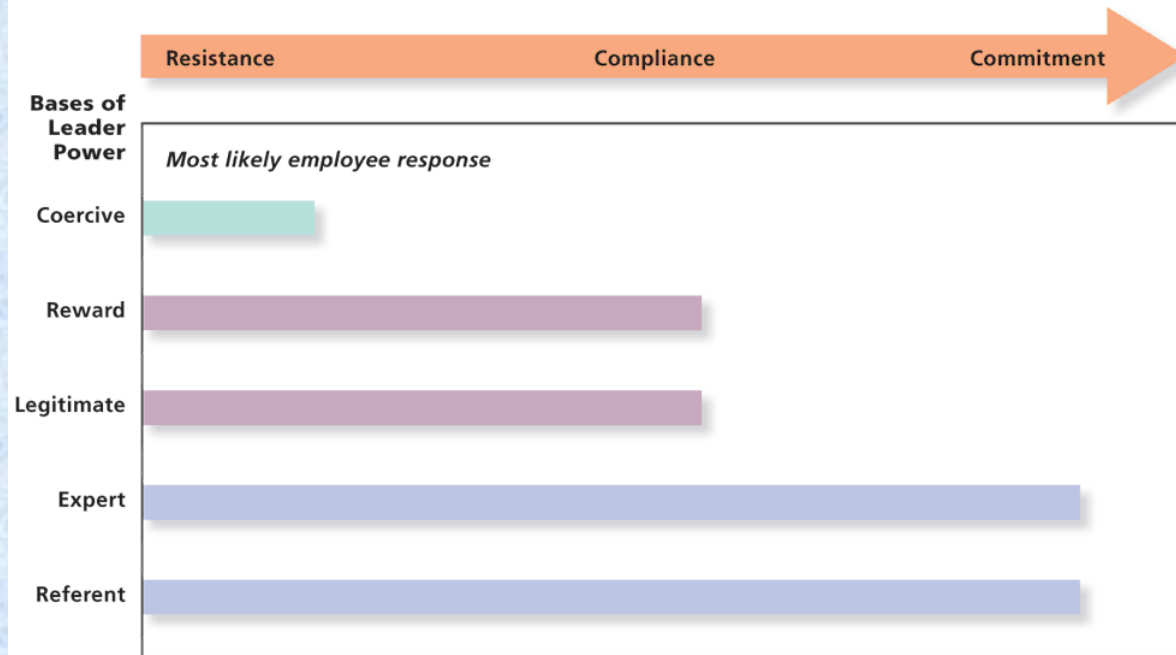
Evaluating the Bases of Power

People will respond in one of three ways:

1. **Commitment** – The person is enthusiastic about the request and carries the task out.
2. **Compliance** – The person goes along with the request grudgingly, putting in minimal effort.
3. **Resistance** – The person is opposed to the request and tries to avoid it.

Exhibit 8-3 Continuum of Responses to Power

EXHIBIT 8-3 Continuum of Responses to Power



Source: R. M. Steers and J. S. Black, *Organizational Behavior*, 5th ed. (New York: HarperCollins, 1994), p. 487. Reprinted by permission of Pearson Education Inc., Upper Saddle River, New Jersey.

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Leaders' Use of Power

- The least effective power bases are the ones most likely to be used by managers.
 - Coercive, legitimate, and reward
 - Easiest to implement
- Effective leaders use referent and/or expert power.
- Deadline pressures increase group member reliance on individuals with expert and information power.

Dependency: Key to Power

- **Importance**
 - The things you control must be important.
- **Scarcity**
 - A resource must be perceived as scarce.
- **Non-substitutability**
 - The resource cannot be substituted with something else.

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Increasing Dependency

- How to increase the dependency of others on you:
 - Control things viewed as important.
 - The resources must be viewed as scarce.
 - The resource must have few or no substitutes (non-substitutability).

Influence Tactics

- Rational persuasion
- Inspirational appeals
- Consultation
- Ingratiation
- Personal appeals
- Exchange
- Coalition tactics
- Pressure
- Legitimizing tactics

Political Skill

- The ability to influence others in such a way as to enhance their own objectives.
- Research indicates that:
 - Politically skilled individuals use influence tactics more effectively.
 - Political skills appear to be more effective when stakes are high.
 - Politically skilled people are able to exert influence without others detecting it.

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Empowerment: Giving Power to Employees

- The freedom and the ability of employees to make decisions and commitments.
- Managers disagree over definition of empowerment.
 - Empowerment as delegating decision making within a set of clear boundaries
 - Empowerment as “a process of risk taking and personal growth”

versus

Degrees of Empowerment

- **Job content**
 - Tasks and procedures necessary for carrying out a particular job.
- **Job context**
 - Reason for the job and the setting in which it is done.
 - Includes organization's structure, culture, and reward systems.

Stages of Empowerment

- **No Discretion (Point A)**
 - The employee is assigned the task, given no discretion, and most likely monitored by a supervisor.
 - Typical assembly-line job—highly routine and repetitive.
 - Can lead to lowered satisfaction and productivity.

- **Participatory Empowerment (Point B)**
 - Autonomous work groups that are given some decision-making authority over both job content and job context.
 - Some evidence of higher job satisfaction and productivity in such groups.

Stages of Empowerment

- **Self-Management (Point C)**

- Employees have total decision-making power for both job content and job context.
 - Generally reserved for those in top management, although it is also sometimes granted to high-level salespeople.
 - Very rewarding to those who hold it.

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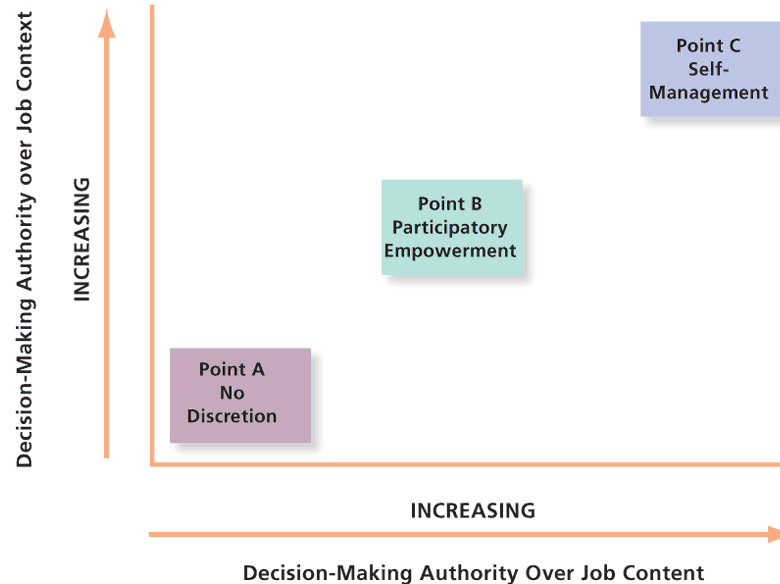
Conditions for True Empowerment

1. There must be a clear definition of the values and mission of the company.
2. Company must help employees acquire the relevant skills.
3. Employees need to be supported in their decision making, and not criticized when they try to do something extraordinary.
4. Employees need to be recognized for their efforts.

Exhibit 8-4

Employee Empowerment Grid

EXHIBIT 8-4 Employee Empowerment Grid



Source: Based on R. C. Ford and M. D. Fottler, "Empowerment: A Matter of Degree," *Academy of Management Executive*, August 1995, p. 24. Reprinted by permission.

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Exhibit 8-5 Characteristics of Empowered People

- **Sense of self-determination**
 - Employees are free to choose how to do their work; they are not micromanaged.
- **Sense of meaning**
 - Employees feel that their work is important to them; they care about what they are doing.
- **Sense of competence**
 - Employees are confident about their ability to do their work well; they know they can perform.
- **Sense of impact**
 - Employees believe they can have influence on their work unit; others listen to their ideas.

Source: R. E. Quinn and G. M. Spreitzer, "The Road to Empowerment: Seven Questions Every Leader Should Consider," *Organizational Dynamics*, Autumn 1997, p. 41.

The Abuse of Power: Workplace Bullying

- Bullying can happen across levels of the organization, or among co-workers.
- Recent research found that:
 - 40 percent of the respondents noted that they had experienced one or more forms of bullying weekly in the past six months.
 - 10 percent experienced bullying at a much greater level: five or more incidents a week.

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The Abuse of Power: Sexual Harassment

- The Supreme Court of Canada definition
 - Unwelcome behaviour of a sexual nature in the workplace that negatively affects the work environment or leads to adverse job-related consequences for the employee.
- There is disagreement as to what specifically constitutes sexual harassment.
 - Unwanted physical touching.
 - Recurring requests for dates when the person is clearly uninterested.
 - Coercive threats that a person will lose her or his job if she or he refuses a sexual proposition

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Additional Examples of Sexual Harassment

- More subtle forms (harder to interpret):
 - Unwanted looks or comments
 - Off-colour jokes
 - Sexual artifacts such as nude calendars in the workplace
 - Sexual innuendo
 - Misinterpretations of where the line between “being friendly” ends and “harassment” begins

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Sexual Harassment: How Managers Can Protect Themselves and their Employees.

- Make sure a policy is in place.
- Ensure employees that they will not face retaliation if a complaint is filed.
- Investigate every complaint.
- Make sure that offenders are disciplined or terminated.
- Set up in house seminars to raise employee awareness.

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Politics: Power in Action

- Political behaviour is those activities that influence, or attempt to influence, the distribution of advantages and disadvantages within the organization.
 - Legitimate: Normal, everyday behaviour.
 - Illegitimate: Extreme political behaviours that violate the implied rules of the game.

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Why Do Politics in an Organization Exist?

- Organizations are made up of groups and individuals who have differing values, goals and interests.
- Resources in organizations are limited.
- Performance outcomes are not completely clear and objective.

Exhibit 8-6 How Political Is Your Workplace?

EXHIBIT 8-6 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's how managers carry out the policies that is unfair and self-serving. _____
3. The performance ratings people receive from their managers reflect more of the managers' "own agenda" than the actual performance of the employee. _____
4. Although a lot of what my manager does around here appears to be directed at helping employees, it's actually intended to protect my manager. _____
5. There are cliques or "in-groups" that 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. Favouritism 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: manager behaviour; co-worker behaviour; 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 (that is, 1 point for Strongly agree, etc.). Sum up the total: The higher the total score, the greater the 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* 22, no. 1 (1996), pp. 32–33.

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Types of Political Activity

- Attacking or blaming others
- Using information
- Managing impressions
- Building support for ideas
- Praising others
- Building coalitions
- Associating with influential people
- Creating obligations

Impression Management

- The process by which individuals attempt to control the impression others form of them.
- Researchers have compared applicants who use two distinct approaches in job interviews
 - **Self promotion:** promoting one's accomplishments
 - **Ingratiation:** complimenting the interviewer and finding areas of agreement

Making Office Politics Work

- Nobody wins unless everybody wins.
- Don't just ask for opinions—change them.
- Everyone expects to be paid back.
- Success can create opposition.

Summary and Implications

1. What is power?

- The capacity that A has to influence the behaviour of B, so that B acts in accordance with A's wishes.

2. How does one get power?

- There are six bases for power: coercive, reward, legitimate, expert, referent, and information.

3. How does dependency affect power?

- To maximize your power, you will want to increase others' dependence on you.

4. What tactics can be used to increase power?

- One study identified nine strategies: rational persuasion, inspirational appeals, consultation, ingratiation, personal appeals, exchange, coalition tactics, pressure, and legitimating tactics.

Summary and Implications

5. What does it mean to be empowered?

- Empowerment refers to the freedom and the ability of employees to make decisions and commitments.

6. How are power and harassment related?

- People who engage in harassment in the workplace are typically abusing their power position.

7. Why do people engage in politics?

- People use politics to influence others to help them achieve their personal objectives