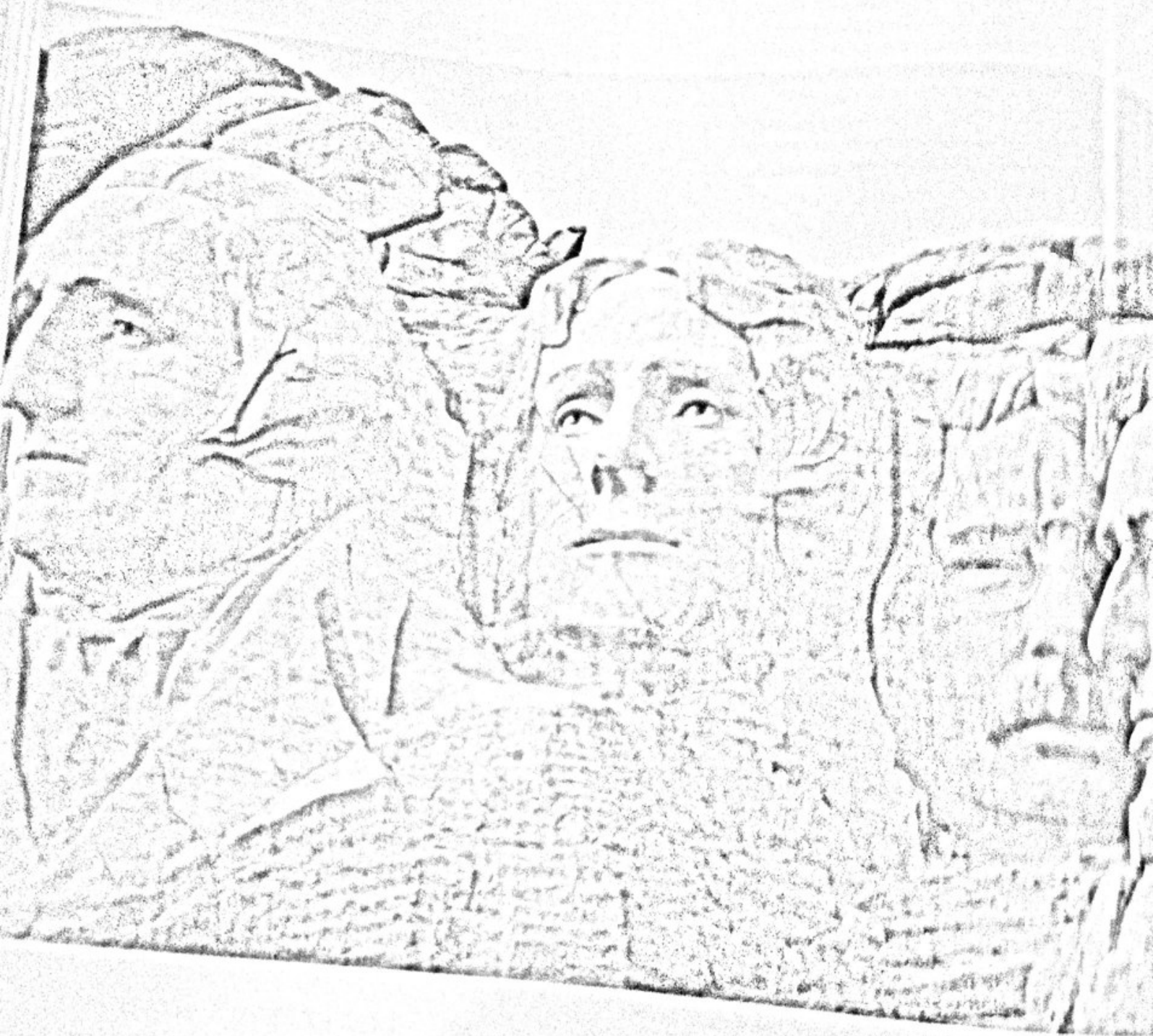


chapter

nine



power and influence in the workplace

Engineering and environmental consulting firm MWH Global reorganized its information technology (IT) operations into a single global division and located its main service center in New Zealand. Ken Loughridge was transferred from England to manage the new service center, but he didn't know who the key players were in his New Zealand team. "By and large, the staff I'd adopted were strangers," he says. Fortunately Loughridge was able to consult a report displaying the informal social network of relationships among his staff. MWH Global had surveyed its IT employees a few months earlier about whom they communicated with most often for information. These data produced a web-like diagram of nodes (people) connected by a maze of lines (relationships). From this picture Loughridge could identify the employees on whom others depend for

information. "It's as if you took the top off an ant hill and could see where there's a hive of activity," he says of the map. "It really helped me understand who the players were."¹

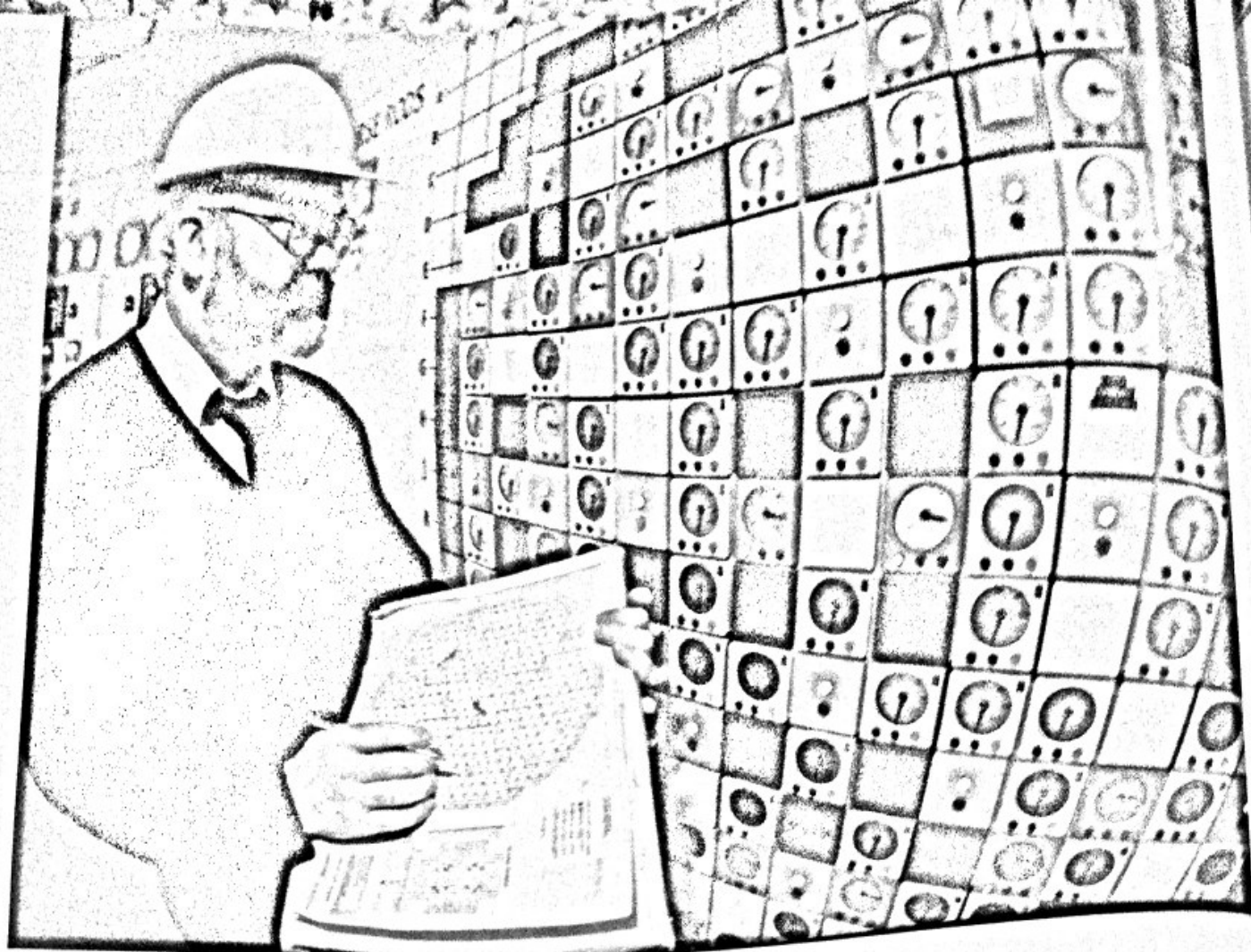
MWH Global and many other organizations recognize that an organizational chart does not tell the whole story about who has power in an organization. Much of a person's or team's power lies under the surface. Social network analysis can reveal that power to some extent, although some forms of power are more complex and subtle than any systematic study can fully detect. This chapter looks at the meaning and dynamics of power and influence in organizational settings. First we define *power* and present a model depicting the dynamics of power in organizational settings. The chapter then discusses the five sources of power, as well as information as a power

continued on p. 180

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter, you should be able to

- L01 Define power and describe the five sources of power in organizations as well as the two types of information-based power.
- L02 Discuss the four contingencies of power and explain how social networking increases a person's power.
- L03 Describe eight types of influence tactics, three consequences of influencing others, and three contingencies to consider when choosing an influence tactic.
- L04 Identify the organizational conditions and personal characteristics that support organizational politics, as well as ways to minimize organizational politics.



continued from p. 179

base. Next we look at the contingencies necessary to translate those sources into meaningful power. The latter part of this chapter examines the various types of influence in organizational settings as well as the contingencies of effective influence strategies. The final section of this chapter looks at situations in which influence becomes organizational politics, as well as ways of minimizing dysfunctional politics. ■

Learning Objectives

After reading the next three sections, you should be able to

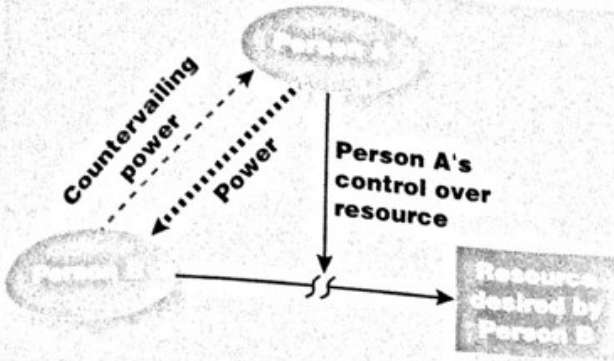
- L01 Define power and describe the five sources of power in organizations as well as the two types of information-based power.
- L02 Discuss the four contingencies of power and explain how social networking increases a person's power.

THE MEANING OF POWER

Power is the capacity of a person, team, or organization to influence others.² Power is not the act of changing someone's attitudes or behavior; it is only the potential to do so. People frequently have power they do not use; they might not even know they have power. Also power is not a personal feeling of power. You might feel powerful or think you have power over someone else, but this is not power unless you truly have the capacity to influence that person. The most basic prerequisite of power is that one person or group believes it is dependent on another person or group for a resource of value.³ This relationship, shown in Exhibit 9.1, occurs where Person A has power over Person B by controlling something that Person B wants. You might have power over others by controlling a desired job assignment, useful information, important resources, or even the privilege of being associated with you! However, power requires the *perception* of dependence, so people might gain power by convincing others that they have something of value, whether or not they actually control that resource. Thus power exists when others believe you control resources they want.

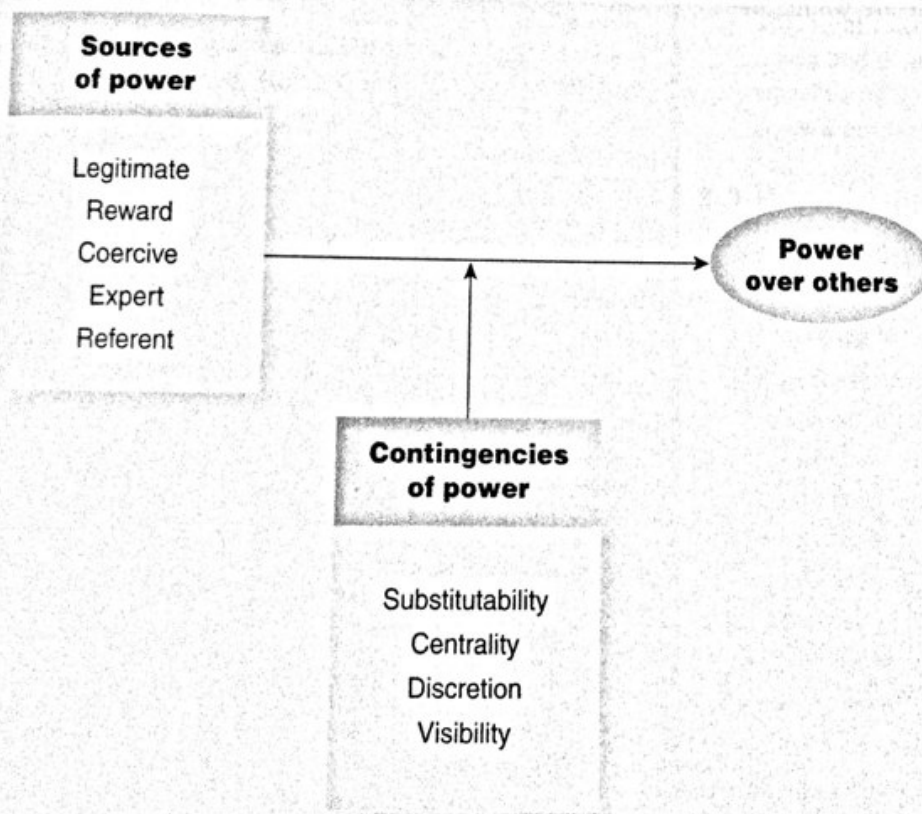
Although dependence is a key element of power relationships, it is really more accurate to say that the parties are *interdependent*.⁴

EXHIBIT 9.1 Dependence in the Power Relationship



In Exhibit 9.1, Person A dominates in the power relationship, but Person B also has some **countervailing power**—enough that he or she uses the dominant power judiciously. For example, executives have power over subordinates by controlling their job security and promotional opportunities. At the same time, employees have countervailing power by possessing skills and knowledge to keep production humming and customers happy, something that executives can't accomplish alone. Finally, the power relationship depends on some minimum level of trust. Trust indicates a level of expectation that the more powerful party will deliver the resource. For example, you trust your employer to give you a paycheck at the end of each pay

EXHIBIT 9.2 A Model of Power within Organizations



period. Even those in extremely dependent situations will usually walk away from a relationship if they lack a minimum level of trust in the more powerful party.

A Model of Power in Organizations

Power involves more than just dependence or interdependence. As Exhibit 9.2 illustrates, power is derived from five sources: legitimate, reward, coercive, expert, and referent. The model also indicates that these sources yield power only under certain conditions. The four contingencies of power include the employee's or department's substitutability, centrality, discretion, and visibility. Finally, as you will read later in this chapter, the type of power applied affects the type of influence the power holder has over the other person or work unit.

SOURCES OF POWER IN ORGANIZATIONS

Power derives from several sources and a few contingencies that determine the potential of those power sources.⁵ Three sources of power—legitimate, reward, and coercive—originate mostly from the power holder's formal position or informal role. In other words, the person is granted these sources of power formally by the organization or informally by coworkers. Two other sources of power—expert and referent—originate from the power holder's own characteristics; that is, he or she brings these power bases to the organization. Sources of power are resources that help the dependent person directly or indirectly achieve his or her goals. For example, your expertise is a source of power when others need that expertise to accomplish their objectives.

Legitimate Power

Legitimate power is an agreement among organizational members that people in certain roles can request certain behaviors of others. This perceived right originates from formal job descriptions as well as informal rules of

power The capacity of a person, team, or organization to influence others.

countervailing power The capacity of a person, team, or organization to keep a more powerful person or group in the exchange relationship.

legitimate power An agreement among organizational members that people in certain roles can request certain behaviors of others.



conduct. This legitimate power extends to employees, not just managers. For example, an organization might give employees the right to request customer files if this information is required for their jobs. Legitimate power depends on more than job descriptions. It also depends on mutual agreement from those expected to abide by this authority. Your boss's power to make you work overtime partly depends on your agreement to this authority. Legitimate power operates within a "zone of indifference"—the range within which people are willing to accept someone else's authority.⁶

FACT

Legitimate Power Takes People to the Extreme⁸

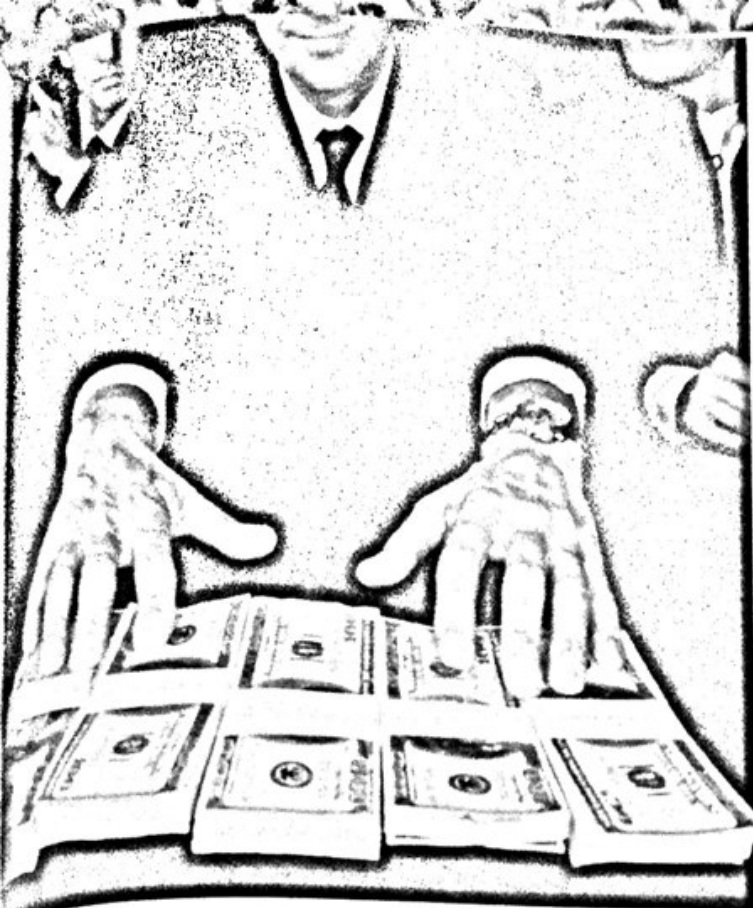
French reality television recently revealed how far people are willing to submit to authority. As a variation of the 1960s experiments conducted by Stanley Milgram, 80 contestants administered electric shocks whenever a volunteer (an actor who didn't receive the shocks at all) answered a question incorrectly. Shocks increased in 20-volt increments, from 20 volts for the first mistake to 460 volts, which is more than enough to kill a human being. Most contestants who hesitated to administer strong shocks (after hearing loud screams from the volunteer) continued the treatment after the host told them to continue. Audience support also encouraged contestants to continue giving shocks. Only 16 of the 80 contestants refused to administer the strongest shocks. Eighty percent followed orders . . . to the end.

The size of this zone of indifference (and consequently the magnitude of legitimate power) increases with the extent to which the power holder is trusted and makes fair decisions. Some people are also more obedient than others to authority, particularly those who value conformity and tradition. People in high power distance cultures (that is, those who accept an unequal distribution of power) also tend to have higher obedience to authority compared with people in low power distance cultures. The organization's culture represents a third factor. A 3M scientist might continue to work on a project after being told by superiors to stop working on it because the 3M culture supports an entrepreneurial spirit, which includes ignoring your boss's authority from time to time.⁷

Reward Power

Reward power is derived from the person's ability to control the allocation of rewards valued by others and to remove negative sanctions (i.e., negative reinforcement). Managers have formal authority that gives them power over the distribution of organizational rewards such as pay, promotions, time off, vacation schedules, and work assignments. Employees also have reward power over their bosses through their feedback and ratings in 360-degree feedback systems. These ratings affect supervisors' promotions and other rewards, so supervisors tend to behave differently toward employees after 360-degree feedback is introduced.





Coercive Power Coercive power is the ability to apply punishment. For many of us, the first thought is managers threatening employees with dismissal. Yet employees also have coercive power, such as being sarcastic toward coworkers or threatening to ostracize them if they fail to conform to team norms. Many firms rely on this coercive power to control coworker behavior in team settings. Nucor is one such example: "If you're not contributing with the team, they certainly will let you know about it," says Dan Krug, manager of HR and organizational development at the Charlotte, North Carolina, steelmaker. "The few poor players get weeded out by their peers." Similarly, when asked how AirAsia maintained attendance and productivity after the Malaysian discount airline removed the time clocks, chief executive Tony Fernandes replied, "Simple. Peer pressure sees to that. The fellow employees, who are putting their shoulders to the wheel, will see to that."⁹

Expert Power

For the most part, legitimate, reward, and coercive power originate from the position.¹⁰ In contrast, expert power originates within the person. It is an individual's or work unit's capacity to influence others by possessing knowledge or skills that they value. Employees are gaining expert power as our society moves from an industrial to a knowledge-based economy.¹¹ The reason is that employee knowledge becomes the means of production and is ultimately outside the control of those

who own the company. And without this control over production, owners are more dependent on employees to achieve their corporate objectives.

referent power
The capacity to influence others on the basis of an identification with and respect for the power holder.

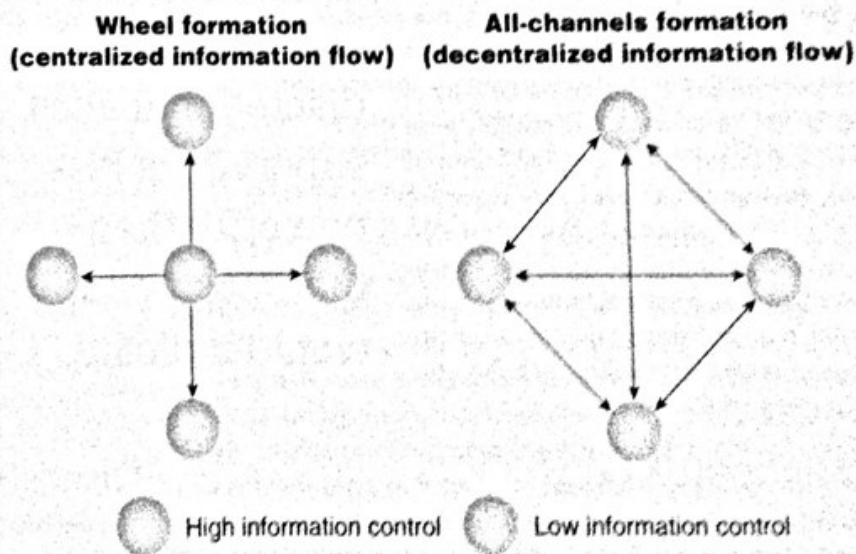
Referent Power

People have **referent power** when others identify with them, like them, or otherwise respect them. Like expert power, referent power comes from within the person. It is largely a function of the person's interpersonal skills and tends to develop slowly. Referent power is usually associated with charismatic leadership. Experts have difficulty agreeing on the meaning of *charisma*, but it is most often described as a form of interpersonal attraction whereby followers ascribe almost magical powers to the charismatic individual.¹² Some experts describe charisma as a special "gift" or trait within the charismatic person, whereas others say it exists mainly in the eyes of beholders. However, all agree that charisma produces a high degree of trust, respect, and devotion toward the charismatic individual.

Information and Power

Information is power.¹³ In one form, people gain information power when they control (through legitimate power) the flow of information to others. Employees are ultimately dependent on these information gatekeepers to release the information required to perform their jobs. Furthermore, by deciding what information is distributed to whom, those who control information flow also control perceptions of the situation by releasing information favoring one perspective more than another.¹⁴ This right to control information flow is a form of legitimate power and is most common in highly bureaucratic firms. The wheel formation in Exhibit 9.3 depicts this highly centralized control over information flow. The all-channels structure, on

▼ EXHIBIT 9.3 Power through the Control of Information



substitutability

A contingency of power referring to the availability of alternatives.

centrality

A contingency of power referring to the degree and nature of interdependence between the powerholder and others.

the other hand, depicts a situation where no one has control over the flow of information. The former would occur when information must flow through your boss to you, whereas the latter occurs when information is distributed to many people, such as coworkers in a self-directed team.

The other form of information power occurs when a person or work unit has the ability—or is believed to have the ability—to manage environmental uncertainties. This capability, which is a derivative of expert power, is valued because organizations are more effective when they can operate in predictable environments. A groundbreaking study of breweries and container companies identified three general strategies to help organizations cope with uncertainty. These coping strategies are arranged in a hierarchy of importance, with prevention being the most powerful.¹⁵

- **Prevention:** The most effective strategy is to prevent environmental changes from occurring. For example, financial experts acquire power by preventing the organization from experiencing a cash shortage or defaulting on loans.
- **Forecasting:** The next best strategy is to predict environmental changes or variations. In this respect, trend spotters and other marketing specialists gain power by predicting changes in consumer preferences.
- **Absorption:** People and work units also gain power by absorbing or neutralizing the impact of environmental shifts as they occur. An example is the ability of maintenance crews to come to the rescue when machines break down and the production process stops.

CONTINGENCIES OF POWER

Let's say you have expert power because of your ability to forecast and possibly even prevent dramatic changes in the organization's environment. Does this expertise mean you are influential? Not necessarily. As Exhibit 9.2 has illustrated, sources of power generate power only under certain conditions. Four important contingencies of power are substitutability, centrality, discretion, and visibility.¹⁶

Substitutability

Substitutability refers to the availability of alternatives. Power is strongest when someone has a monopoly over a valued resource. Conversely, power decreases as the number of

The lack of discretion makes supervisors less powerful than their positions would indicate.

Discretion

The freedom to exercise judgment—to make decisions without referring to a specific rule or receiving permission from someone else—is another important contingency of power in

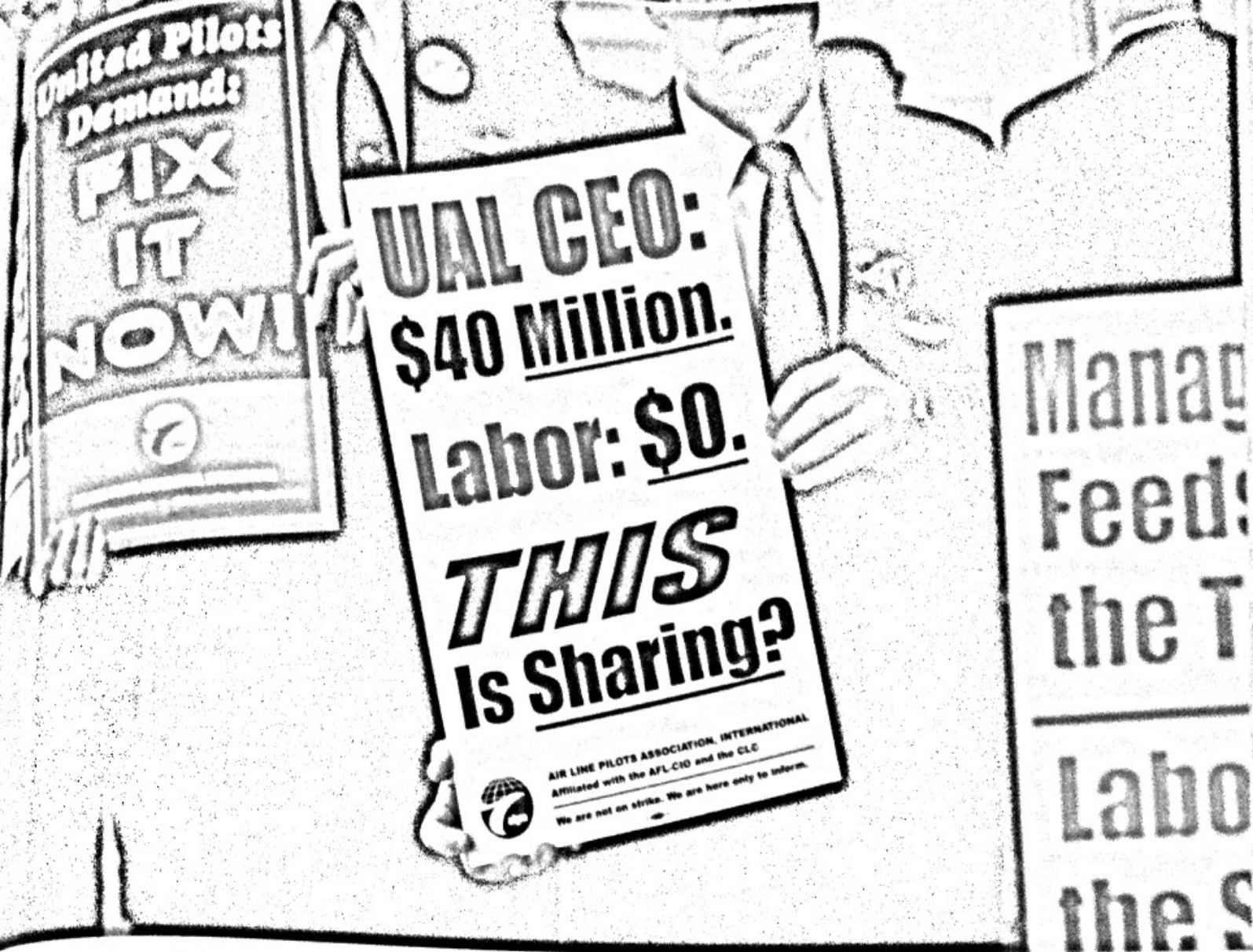
alternative sources of the critical resource increases. If you and no one else—have expertise across the organization on an important issue, you would be more powerful than if several people in your company possessed this valued knowledge. Substitutability refers not only to other sources that offer the resource, but also to substitutions for the resource itself. For instance, labor unions are weakened when companies introduce technologies that replace the need for their union members. Technology is a substitute for employees and consequently reduces union power.

Nonsubstitutability is strengthened by controlling access to the resource. Professions and labor unions gain power by controlling knowledge, tasks, or labor to perform important activities. For instance, the medical profession is powerful because it controls who can perform specific medical procedures. Labor unions that dominate an industry effectively control access to labor needed to perform key jobs. Employees become nonsubstitutable when they possess knowledge (such as operating equipment or serving clients) that is not documented or readily available to others. Nonsubstitutability also occurs when people differentiate their resource from the alternatives. Some people claim that consultants use this tactic. They take skills and knowledge that many other consulting firms can provide and wrap them into a package (with the latest buzzwords, of course) that looks like a service no one else can offer.

Centrality

Centrality refers to the degree and nature of interdependence between the power holder and others.¹⁷ Think about your own centrality for a moment. If you decided not to show up for work or school tomorrow, how many people would be affected, and how much time would pass before they were affected? If you have high centrality, most people in the organization would be adversely affected by your absence, and they would be affected quickly.

The extent to which centrality leverages power is apparent in well-timed labor union strikes, such as the New York City transit strike during the busy Christmas shopping season a few years ago. The illegal three-day work stoppage clogged roads and caused half the city's workers to miss or arrive very late for work. "[The Metropolitan Transit Authority] told us we got no power, but we got power," said one striking transit worker. "We got the power to stop the city."¹⁸



Airlines are almost completely shut down when their pilots go on strike. This occurs because pilots have expert power that is amplified by their high centrality in the organization.

organizations. Consider the plight of first-line supervisors. It may seem that they have legitimate, reward, and coercive power over employees, but this power is often curtailed by specific rules. The lack of discretion makes supervisors less powerful than their positions would indicate. "Middle managers are very much 'piggy-in-the-middle,'" complains a middle manager at Britain's National Health System. "They have little power, only what senior managers are allowed to give them."¹⁹ More generally, research indicates that managerial discretion varies considerably across industries, and that managers with an internal locus of control are viewed as more powerful because they don't act as though they lack discretion in their jobs.²⁰

Visibility

Power does not flow to unknown people in the organization. Those who control valued resources or knowledge will wield power only when others are aware of these sources of power—in

other words, when the power is visible. One way to increase visibility is to take people-oriented jobs and work on projects that require frequent interaction with senior executives. "You can take visibility in steps," advises an executive at a pharmaceutical firm. "You can start by making yourself visible in a small group, such as a staff meeting. Then when you're comfortable with that, seek out larger arenas."²¹

Employees also gain visibility by being, quite literally, visible. Some people strategically locate themselves in more visible offices, such as those closest to the elevator or staff coffee room. People often use public symbols as subtle (and not-so-subtle) cues to make their power sources known to others. Many professionals display their educational diplomas and awards on office walls to remind visitors of their expertise. Medical professionals wear white coats with stethoscopes around their necks to symbolize their legitimate and expert power in hospital settings. Other people play the game of "face time"—spending more time at work and showing that they are working productively.



Recession-Proofing Your Career through Power and Its Contingencies²²

- *Take on vital tasks that your boss doesn't like doing.* These responsibilities make you more valuable (nonsubstitutable), visible, and appreciated.
- *Becoming a spokesperson for the work unit or organization.* Increase your visibility and possibly centrality by seeking out opportunities where you publicly represent the company to stakeholders, such as attending industry events.
- *Continually develop your social capital.* Develop and maintain strong and diverse networks with people inside and outside your organization long before you need their assistance. Be sure to help and support them whenever you can without expecting anything in return.
- *Be a great team member.* People are perceived as more valuable when they get along with and support coworkers rather than being an irritant to the team.
- *Continually develop your intellectual capital.* Expert power is perishable. Keep up to date with knowledge, technology, and the latest trends in your field.
- *Maintain a positive can-do attitude.* When the economy tanks, those with fighting spirit who seek out new revenue or cost-saving ideas are appreciated more than ever. You also personally need positive self-talk and a can-do attitude to remain motivated when job security becomes less certain.
- *Be reliable.* Companies need reliable performers more than sporadic top performers. Be sure you can be counted on to get the job done.
- *Make your job substitutable.* Within some caution, earn income outside your job, such as a small online business that doesn't compete with your employer.
- *Document and carefully publicize your accomplishments.* Keep track of your achievements and, without boasting, make them known in subtle ways, such as mentioning them in a personal blog.

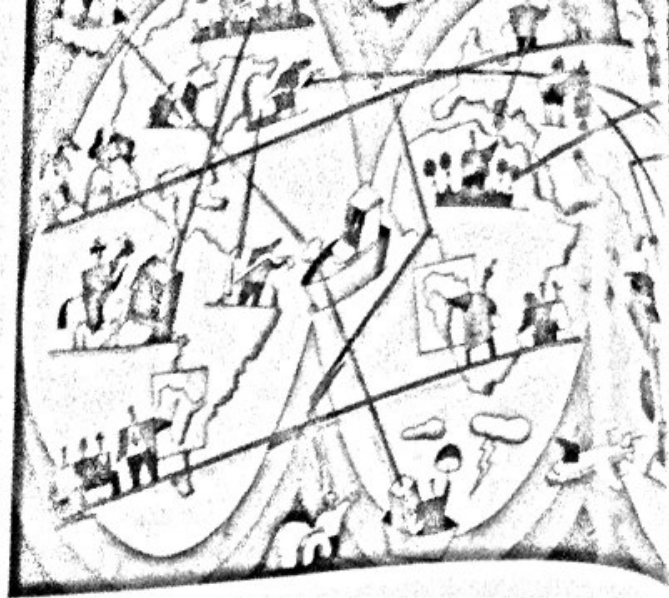
Social Networking and Power

"It's not what you know, but whom you know that counts!" This often-heard statement reflects the idea that employees get ahead not just by developing their competencies, but by *social networking*—cultivating social relationships with others to accomplish one's goals. Networking increases a person's power in three ways. First, networks represent a critical component of **social capital**—the knowledge and other resources available to people or social units (teams, organizations) due

Employees who found current job through networking

Managers who found current job through networking

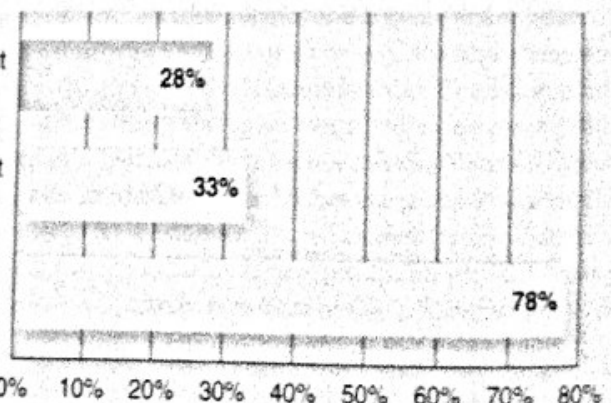
College graduates who say personal networks are the most useful for finding a job



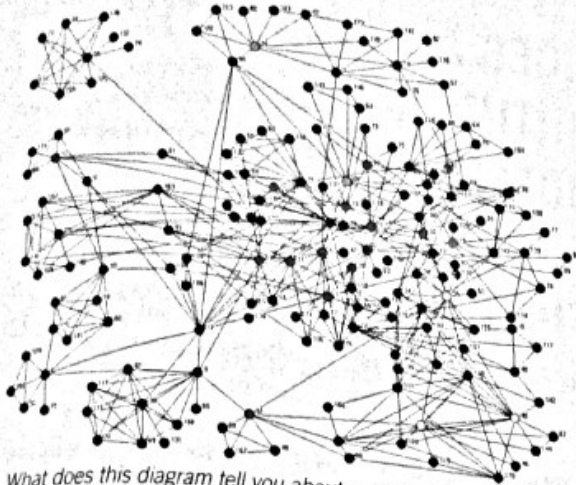
to a durable network that connects them to others. Networks consist of people who trust each other, which increases the flow of knowledge among those within the network. The more you network, the more likely you will receive valuable information that increases your expert power in the organization.²³ Second, people tend to identify more with partners within their own networks, which increases referent power among people within each network. This network-based referent power may lead to more favorable decisions by others in the network.

Third, effective networkers are better known by others in the organization, so their talents are more readily recognized. This power increases when networkers place themselves in strategic positions in the network, thereby gaining centrality.²⁴ For example, an individual might be regarded as the main person who distributes information in the network or who keeps the network connected through informal

The Power of Personal Networks for Job Hunting²⁵



Percentage of 2,024 American employees and managers surveyed who say they found their current jobs through personal networks, and percentage of 1,250 recent college students and graduates who say personal networks are the most useful means of finding jobs.



What does this diagram tell you about social networks at Raytheon's engineering center in Colorado? To Raytheon engineering director Karl Arunski, it reveals that some communication and power dynamics are functioning well, whereas others are not achieving the work unit's potential for innovation and performance.²⁹

gatherings. Social networks are important foundations of power for individuals, and companies are applying social network analysis tools to discover who has this power. By identifying who is the most connected, leaders know whom to approach for information, who might be the most influential over other employees, and who would be most costly if they leave the company.

Social networks are natural elements of all organizations, yet they can create a formidable barrier to those who are not actively connected to them.²⁶ Women are often excluded from informal management networks because they do not participate in golf games and other male-dominated social events. Nina Smith, who leads Sage Software's Business Management Division, has had several conversations with female executives about these power dynamics. "I'm still trying to knock down the Boys' Club, and I still have women at Sage coming to me and saying, 'Nina, that's the boys' network and I can't get in.'"²⁷ Several years ago executives at Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu discovered that inaccessibility to powerful social networks partly explained why many junior female employees left the accounting and consulting firm before reaching partnership level. The Swiss-based accounting firm now relies on mentoring, formal women's network groups, and measurement of career progress to ensure that

female staff members have the same career development opportunities as their male colleagues.²⁸

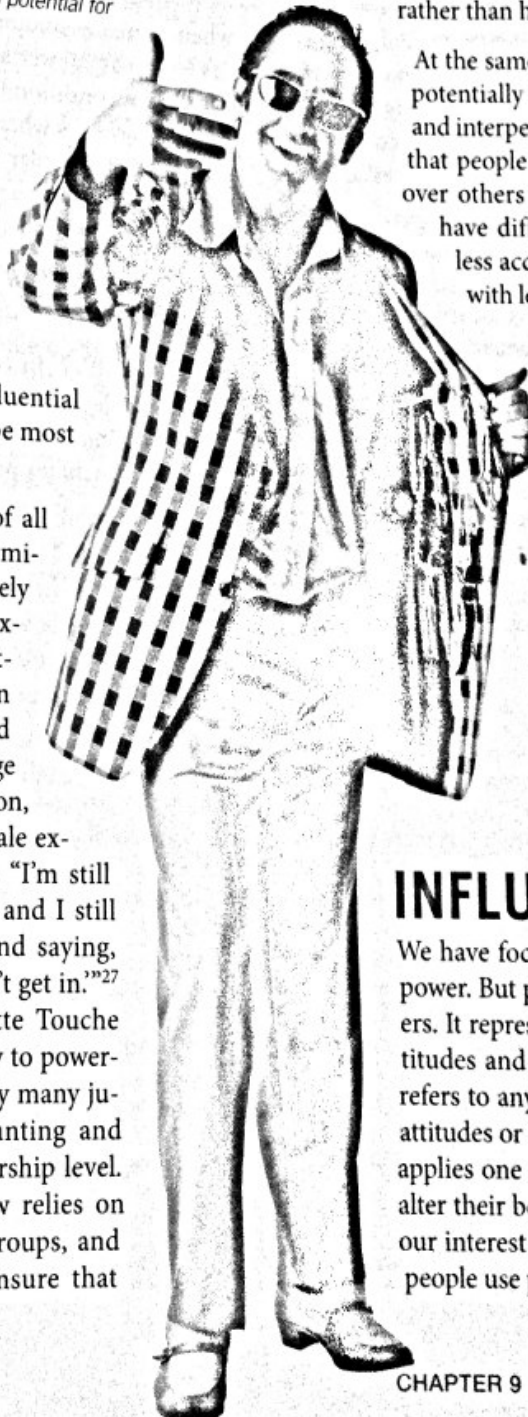
Consequences of Power

How does power affect the power holder? We partly answered this question earlier in this book when describing empowerment—an individual's feelings of self-determination, meaning, competence, and impact in the organization. Under the right conditions, employees who receive more power feel more empowered, which tends to increase their motivation, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and job performance. In addition, research suggests that as people become more powerful, they are more goal directed and tend to act on their environment rather than hide from it.

At the same time, increasing power over others can potentially undermine an individual's effectiveness and interpersonal relations. Some studies have found that people who have (or believe they have) power over others are more likely to cling to stereotypes, have difficulty empathizing, and generally have less accurate perceptions compared with people with less power. They also engage in more automatic rather than mindful thinking, possibly because powerful people are less concerned about the consequences of their actions.³⁰

social capital
The knowledge and other resources available to people or social units (teams, organizations) due to a durable network that connects them to others.

influence Any behavior that attempts to alter someone's attitudes or behavior.



Learning Objectives

After reading this section, you should be able to

- L03** Describe eight types of influence tactics, three consequences of influencing others, and three contingencies to consider when choosing an influence tactic.

INFLUENCING OTHERS

We have focused on the sources and contingencies of power. But power is only the *capacity* to influence others. It represents the potential to change someone's attitudes and behavior. **Influence**, on the other hand, refers to any behavior that attempts to alter someone's attitudes or behavior.³¹ Influence is power in motion. It applies one or more sources of power to get people to alter their beliefs, feelings, and activities. Consequently our interest in the remainder of this chapter is on how people use power to influence others.

NOTHING MORE ENHANCES AUTHORITY THAN
SILENCE. IT IS THE CROWNING VIRTUE OF THE STRONG,
THE REFUGE OF THE WEAK, THE MODESTY OF THE PROUD,
THE PRIDE OF THE HUMBLE, THE PRUDENCE OF THE WISE,
AND THE SENSE OF FOOLS.³⁵
—CHARLES DE GAULLE

Influence tactics are woven throughout the social fabric of all organizations. This is because influence is an essential process through which people coordinate their effort and act in concert to achieve organizational objectives. Indeed, influence is central to the definition of leadership. Influence operates down, across, and up the corporate hierarchy. Executives ensure that subordinates complete required tasks. Employees influence coworkers to help them with their job assignments. Subordinates engage in upward influence tactics so corporate leaders make decisions compatible with subordinates' needs and expectations.

Types of Influence Tactics

Organizational behavior researchers have devoted considerable attention to the various types of influence tactics found in organizational settings. They do not agree on a definitive list of influence tactics, but the most commonly identified are listed in Exhibit 9.4 and described over the next few pages.³² The first five are known as "hard" influence tactics because they force behavior change through position power (legitimate, reward, and coercion). The latter three—persuasion, ingratiation and impression management, and exchange—are

called "soft" tactics because they rely more on personal sources of power (referent, expert) and appeal to the target person's attitudes and needs.

Silent Authority The silent application of authority occurs when someone complies with a request because of the requester's legitimate power as well as the target person's role expectations. This condition is known as *deference to authority*.³³ This deference occurs when you comply with your boss's request to complete a particular task. If the task is within your job scope and your boss has the right to make this request, then this influence strategy operates without negotiation, threats, persuasion, or other tactics. Silent authority is the most common form of influence in high power distance cultures.³⁴

Assertiveness In contrast to silent authority, assertiveness might be called "vocal authority" because it involves actively applying legitimate and coercive power to influence others. Assertiveness includes persistently reminding the target of his or her obligations, frequently checking the target's work, confronting the target, and using threats of sanctions to force compliance. Assertiveness typically applies or threatens to apply

▼ EXHIBIT 9.4 Types of Influence Tactics in Organizations

Influence Tactic	Description
Silent authority	Influencing behavior through legitimate power without explicitly referring to that power base.
Assertiveness	Actively applying legitimate and coercive power by applying pressure or threats.
Information control	Explicitly manipulating someone else's access to information for the purpose of changing their attitudes and/or behavior.
Coalition formation	Forming a group that attempts to influence others by pooling the resources and power of its members.
Upward appeal	Gaining support from one or more people with higher authority or expertise.
Persuasion	Using logical arguments, factual evidence, and emotional appeals to convince people of the value of a request.
Ingratiation/impression management	Attempting to increase liking by, or perceived similarity to, some targeted person.
Exchange	Promising benefits or resources in exchange for the target person's compliance.

punishment if the target does not comply. Explicit or implicit threats range from job loss to losing face by letting down the team. Extreme forms of assertiveness include blackmailing colleagues, such as by threatening to reveal the other person's previously unknown failures unless he or she complies with your request.

Information Control Information control involves explicitly manipulating others' access to information for the purpose of changing their attitudes and/or behavior. With limited access to potentially valuable information, others are at a disadvantage. According to one major survey, almost half of employees believe coworkers keep others in the dark about work issues if it helps their own cause. Employees also influence executive decisions by screening out (filtering) information flowing up the hierarchy. One study found that CEOs influence their boards of directors by selectively feeding and withholding information.³⁶

Coalition Formation When people lack sufficient power alone to influence others in the organization, they might form a **coalition** of people who support the proposed change. A coalition is influential in three ways.³⁷ First, it pools the power and resources of many people, so the coalition potentially has more influence than any number of people operating alone. Second, the coalition's mere existence can be a source of power by symbolizing the legitimacy of the issue. In other words, a coalition creates a sense that the issue deserves attention because it has broad support. Third, coalitions tap into the power of the social identity process introduced in Chapter 2. A coalition is essentially an informal group that advocates a new set of norms and behaviors. If the coalition has a broad-based membership (that is, if its members come from various parts of the organization), other employees are more likely to identify with that group and consequently accept the ideas the coalition is proposing.

Upward Appeal **Upward appeal** involves calling upon higher authority or expertise, or symbolically relying on these sources to support the influencer's position. It occurs when someone says, "The boss likely agrees with me on this matter; let's find out!" Upward appeal also occurs when people rely on the authority of the firm's policies or values. By reminding others that your request is consistent with the organization's overarching goals, you are implying support from senior executives without formally involving them.

coalition A group that attempts to influence people outside the group by pooling the resources and power of its members.

upward appeal A type of influence in which someone with higher authority or expertise is called upon in reality or symbolically to support the influencer's position.

persuasion Presenting facts, logical arguments, and emotional appeals to change another person's attitudes and behavior.

Persuasion is one of the most effective influence strategies for career success.

Persuasion **Persuasion** is one of the most effective influence strategies for career success. The ability to present facts, logical arguments, and emotional appeals to change another person's attitudes and behavior is not just an acceptable way to influence others; in many societies, it is a noble art and a quality of effective leaders. The effectiveness of persuasion as an influence tactic depends on characteristics of the persuader, message content, communication medium, and the audience being persuaded (see Exhibit 9.5).³⁸ People are more persuasive when listeners believe they have expertise and credibility, as well as demonstrate impartiality, such as when persuaders acknowledge information that favors an opposing position.

The message is more important than the messenger when the issue is important to the audience. Persuasive message content acknowledges several points of view so the audience does

▼ EXHIBIT 9.5 Elements of Persuasion

Persuasion Element	Characteristics of Effective Persuasion
Persuader characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expertise. Credibility. No apparent personal gain. Appears somewhat neutral (acknowledges benefits of the opposing view).
Message content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multiple viewpoints (not exclusively supporting the supported option). Limited to a few strong arguments (not many arguments). Repeat arguments, but not excessively. Use emotional appeals in combination with logical arguments. Offers specific solutions to overcome the stated problems. Inoculation effect—warn audience about counterarguments that opposition will present.
Communication medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Media-rich channels are usually more persuasive.
Audience characteristics (that resist persuasion)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Self-esteem. Intelligence. Self-concept tied to the opposing view.

inoculation effect A persuasive communication strategy of warning listeners that others will try to influence them in the future and that they should be wary about the opponent's arguments.

Ingratiation Any attempt to increase liking by, or perceived similarity to, some targeted person.

impression management The practice of actively shaping our public images.

explanation for the contrasting evidence is that those who engage in too much ingratiation are viewed as insincere and self-serving. The terms "apple polishing" and "brown-nosing" are applied to those who ingratiate in excess or in ways that suggest selfish motives for the ingratiation.

not feel cornered by the speaker. The message should also be limited to a few strong arguments that are repeated a few times, but not too frequently. The message should use emotional appeals (such as graphically showing the unfortunate consequences of a bad decision), but only in combination with logical arguments and specific recommendations to overcome the threat. Finally, message content is more persuasive when the audience is warned about opposing arguments. This **inoculation effect** causes listeners to generate counterarguments to the anticipated persuasion attempts, which makes the opponent's subsequent persuasion attempts less effective.³⁹

Two other considerations when persuading people are the medium of communication and characteristics of the audience. Persuasion usually works best in face-to-face conversations and through other media-rich communication channels. The personal nature of face-to-face communication increases the persuader's credibility, and the richness of this channel provides faster feedback to show whether the influence strategy is working. With respect to audience characteristics, it is more difficult to persuade people who have high self-esteem and intelligence, as well as a self-concept that is strongly tied to the opposing viewpoint.⁴⁰

Ingratiation and Impression Management Silent authority, assertiveness, information control, coalitions, and upward appeals are somewhat (or very) forceful ways to influence other people. In contrast, a "soft" influence tactic is **ingratiation**—any attempt to increase liking by, or perceived similarity to, some targeted person.⁴¹ Ingratiation comes in several flavors. Employees might flatter their boss in front of others, demonstrate that they have similar attitudes as their boss (such as by agreeing with the boss's proposal), and ask their boss for advice. Ingratiation is one of the more effective influence tactics at boosting a person's career success (in terms of performance appraisal feedback, salaries, and promotions).⁴² However, people who engage in high levels of ingratiation are less (not more) influential and less likely to get promoted.⁴³ The

Ingratiation is part of a larger influence tactic known as impression management. **Impression management** is the practice of actively shaping our public images.⁴⁴ These public images might be crafted as being important, vulnerable, threatening, or pleasant. For the most part, employees routinely engage in pleasant impression management behaviors to satisfy the basic norms of social behavior, such as the way they dress and how they behave toward colleagues and customers. Impression management is a common strategy for people trying to get ahead in the workplace. In fact, career professionals encourage people to develop a personal "brand"—that is, to demonstrate and symbolize a distinctive competitive advantage.⁴⁵ Just as running shoes and soft drinks have brand images that represent an expectation, successful individuals build a personal brand in which they deliver valued knowledge or skills. Furthermore, people who are adept at personal branding rely on impression management through distinctive personal characteristics. You can more easily recall people who wear distinctive clothing or accoutrements.

Unfortunately a few individuals carry impression management beyond ethical boundaries by exaggerating their credentials and accomplishments on their résumés. For instance, a Lucent Technologies executive lied about having a PhD from Stanford University and hid his criminal past involving forgery and embezzlement. Ironically the executive was Lucent's director of recruiting!⁴⁷ One of the most elaborate misrepresentations occurred several years ago when a Singaporean entrepreneur sent out news releases claiming to be a renowned artificial intelligence researcher, the author of several books, and the recipient of numerous awards from MIT and Stanford University (one of the awards was illustrated on his Web site). These falsehoods were so convincing that the entrepreneur almost received a real award, the "Internet Visionary of the Year" at the Internet World Asia Industry Awards.⁴⁸

Exchange Exchange activities involve the promise of benefits or resources in exchange for the target person's compliance with

People who engage in high levels of ingratiation (such as 'apple polishing') are less influential because their actions are viewed as insincere and self-serving.



Impression Management in Job Interviews⁴⁶

Interviewer Question	Impression Management Principle	Do Say . . .	Don't Say . . .
What interests you about this job?	Demonstrate your interest in and respect for this company by seeking a specific job or career here.	"There are exciting things happening at this company, and this position would be a great way for me to grow my skills."	"Well, I just need a job, and this place looks as good as any to find one."
What are your greatest weaknesses?	Demonstrate honesty, self-awareness, and ability to develop yourself.	"Sometimes I take on more tasks than I should. I need to learn how to delegate more for better workload balance and to give others opportunities to develop their skills."	"Gee, I really don't have any weaknesses. I'm a model employee."
Why did you leave your last job?	Demonstrate that you are a positive forward thinker who values this company's career opportunities. Avoid dwelling on negative past events.	"I have a goal to become head of marketing someday. The experience and new skills I would gain here look like an excellent fit with that aspiration."	"Working in my last job was like being on the <i>Titanic</i> . Also, I didn't like my boss. He always wanted me to work late, and it caused me to miss my favorite TV show a few times."
Describe a situation in which you had to deal with a professional disagreement or conflict.	Demonstrate that you are a good team player, such as diplomatic conflict handling and problem solving.	"My coworker and I once disagreed on (describe situation). We discussed our different methods and came up with a better way that combined the best of each of our methods."	"I've never had a disagreement. Everyone tends to know I'm right."
How many times do a clock's hands overlap in a day?	These unusual problem-solving questions test more than your technical skills; they also test your motivation and "can-do" attitude to solve problems.	"Let's see, there are 24 hours in a day and every time on the clock happens twice, so . . ."	"Gosh, I have no idea. I'm not that good at math."

your request. This tactic also includes reminding the target of past benefits or favors with the expectation that the target will now make up for that debt. The *norm of reciprocity* is a central and explicit theme in exchange strategies. According to the norm of reciprocity, individuals are expected to help those who have helped them.⁴⁹ Negotiation is also an integral part of exchange influence activities. For instance, you might negotiate with your boss for a day off in return for working a less desirable shift at a future date.

Networking is another form of exchange as an influence strategy. Active networkers build up "exchange credits" by helping colleagues in the short term for reciprocal benefits in the long term. *Guanxi*, a Chinese term referring to special relationships and active interpersonal connectedness, is well-established in Confucian culture. *Guanxi* develops the norm of reciprocity, but some Asian governments are concerned that *guanxi* might lead to favoritism in decisions.⁵⁰

Consequences and Contingencies of Influence Tactics

Now that the main influence strategies have been described, you are probably wondering which ones are best. The best way to answer this question is to identify the three ways that people react when others try to influence them: resistance, compliance, or commitment.⁵¹ *Resistance* occurs when people or work units oppose the behavior desired by the influencer and consequently refuse, argue, or delay engaging in the behavior. *Compliance* occurs when people are motivated to implement the influencer's request at a minimal level of effort and for purely instrumental reasons. Compliance-based behavior occurs only when external sources motivate it. *Commitment* is the strongest form of influence, whereby people identify with the influencer's request and are highly motivated to implement it even when extrinsic sources of motivation are no longer present.

organizational politics Behaviors that others perceive as self-serving tactics for personal gain at the expense of other people and possibly the organization.

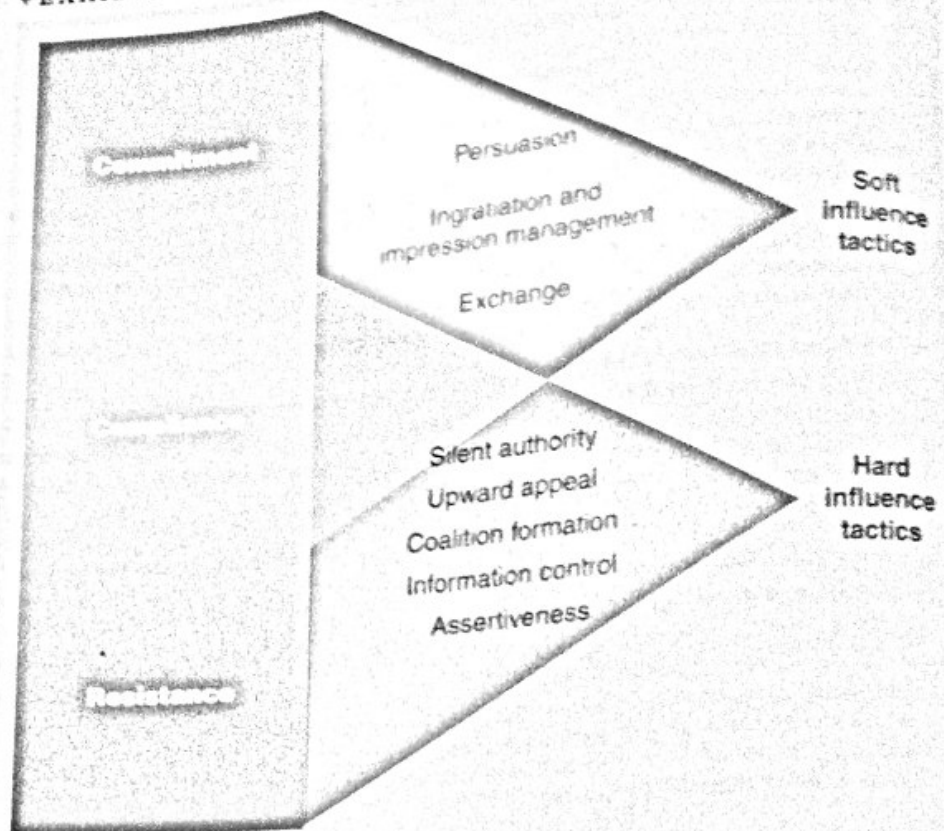
Generally people react more favorably to "soft" tactics than to "hard" tactics (see Exhibit 9.6). Soft influence tactics rely on personal sources of power (expert and referent power), which tend to build commitment to the influencer's request. In contrast, hard tactics rely on position power (legitimate, reward, and coercion), so they tend to produce compliance or, worse, resistance. Hard tactics also tend to undermine trust, which can hurt future relationships.

Apart from the general preference for soft rather than hard tactics, the most appropriate influence strategy depends on a few contingencies. One obvious contingency is which sources of power are strongest. Those with expertise tend to have more influence using persuasion, whereas those with a strong legitimate power base are usually more successful applying silent authority. A second contingency is whether the person being influenced is higher, lower, or at the same level in the organization. As an example, employees may face adverse career consequences by being too assertive with their boss. Meanwhile, supervisors who engage in ingratiation and impression management tend to lose the respect of their staff.

Finally, the most appropriate influence tactic depends on personal, organizational, and cultural values.⁵³ People with a strong power orientation might feel more comfortable using assertiveness, whereas those who value conformity might feel more comfortable with upward appeals. At an organizational level, firms with a competitive culture might sanction the use of information control and coalition formation, whereas companies with a learning orientation would likely encourage more influence through persuasion. The preferred influence tactics also vary across societal cultures. Research indicates that ingratiation is much more common among managers in the United States than in Hong Kong, possibly because this tactic disrupts the more distant roles that managers and employees expect in high power distance cultures.

Soft influence tactics tend to build commitment to the influencer's request, whereas hard tactics tend to produce compliance or, worse, resistance.

EXHIBIT 9.6 Consequences of Hard and Soft Influence Tactics



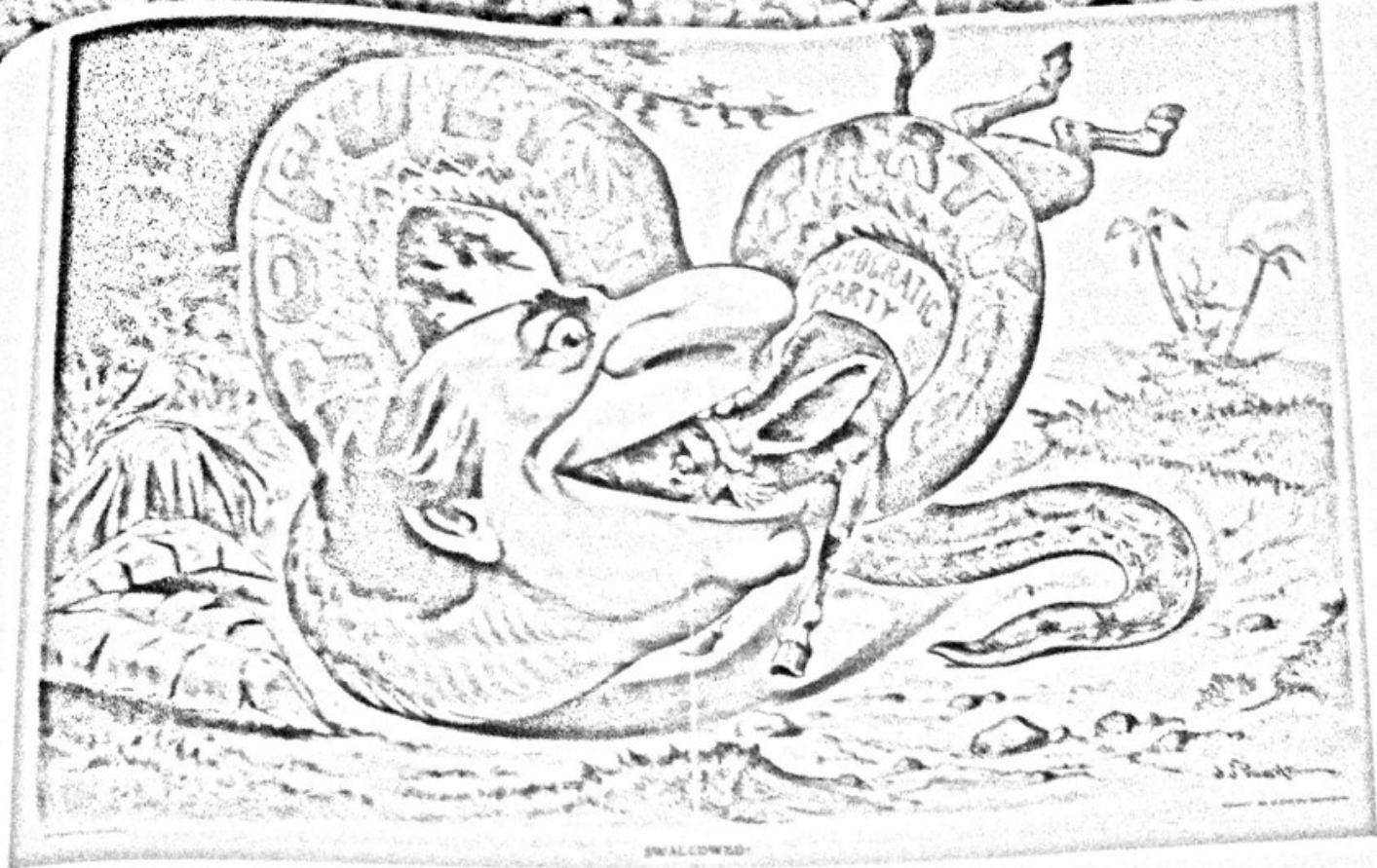
Learning Objectives

After reading this section, you should be able to

- L04** Identify the organizational conditions and personal characteristics that support organizational politics, as well as ways to minimize organizational politics.

INFLUENCE TACTICS AND ORGANIZATIONAL POLITICS

You might have noticed that organizational politics has not been mentioned yet, even though some of the practices and examples described over the past few pages are usually considered political tactics. The phrase was carefully avoided because, for the most part, organizational politics is in the eye of the beholder. You might perceive a coworker's attempt to influence the boss as acceptable behavior for the good of the organization,



whereas someone else might perceive the coworker's tactic as brazen organizational politics.

This perceptual issue explains why OB experts increasingly discuss influence tactics as behaviors and organizational politics as

perceptions.⁵⁵ The influence tactics described earlier are perceived as **organizational politics** when they seem to be self-serving behaviors at the expense of others and possibly contrary to the interests of the entire organization. Of course some tactics are so blatantly selfish and counterproductive that almost everyone correctly sees them as political. In other situations, however, a person's behavior might be viewed either as political or in the organization's best interest.

When employees perceive many incidents of organizational politics, the result is lower job satisfaction, organizational commitment, organizational citizenship, and task performance, as well as higher levels of work-related stress and motivation to leave the organization.⁵⁶ And because political tactics serve individuals rather than organizations, they potentially divert resources away from the organization's effective functioning and can threaten its survival.

Office Politics by the Numbers⁵⁴

53% of British managers polled who feel that organizational politics is a major cause of stress at work (top-ranked cause of stress.)

47% of American employees polled who say that office politics cuts into productive time (second highest cause, after fixing someone else's work).

36% of Canadian employees polled who say that office politics is one of the biggest roadblocks to productivity.

19% of Canadian employees polled 10 years ago who said that office politics is one of the biggest roadblocks to productivity.

29% of American employees polled who say a coworker has taken credit for one of their ideas.

58% of Canadian employees polled who say a coworker has taken credit for one of their ideas.



Conditions Supporting Organizational Politics

Employees are more likely to engage in organizational politics (that is, use influence tactics for personal gain) under certain conditions.⁵⁷ One of those conditions is scarce resources. When budgets are slashed, people rely on political tactics to safeguard their resources and maintain the status quo. Office politics also flourishes when resource allocation decisions are ambiguous, complex, or lack formal rules. This occurs because decision makers are given more

Machiavellian values The beliefs that deceit is a natural and acceptable way to influence others.

discretion over resource allocation, so potential recipients of those resources use political tactics to influence the factors that should be considered in the decision. Organizational change encourages political behaviors for this reason.

Change creates uncertainty and ambiguity as the company moves from an old set of rules and practices to a new set. During these times, employees apply political strategies to protect their valued resources, positions, and self-concepts.⁵⁸

Personal Characteristics of Organizational Politicians Several personal characteristics affect a person's motivation to engage in self-serving behavior.⁵⁹ This includes a strong need for personal as opposed to socialized power. Those with a need for personal power seek power for its own sake and try to acquire more power. Some individuals have strong **Machiavellian values**. Machiavellianism is named

after Niccolò Machiavelli, the 16th-century Italian philosopher who wrote *The Prince*, a famous treatise about political behavior. People with high Machiavellian values are comfortable with getting more than they deserve, and they believe that deceit is a natural and acceptable way to achieve this goal. They seldom trust coworkers and tend to use cruder influence tactics, such as bypassing one's boss or being assertive, to get their own way.⁶⁰

Minimizing Organizational Politics and Its Consequences The conditions that fuel organizational politics also give us some clues about how to control dysfunctional political activities.⁶² One strategy to keep organizational politics in check is to introduce clear rules and regulations to specify the use of scarce resources. Organizational politics can become a problem during times of organizational change, so politics can be minimized through effective organizational change practices. Leaders also need to actively manage group norms to

Keep your friends close and your enemies closer.⁶³

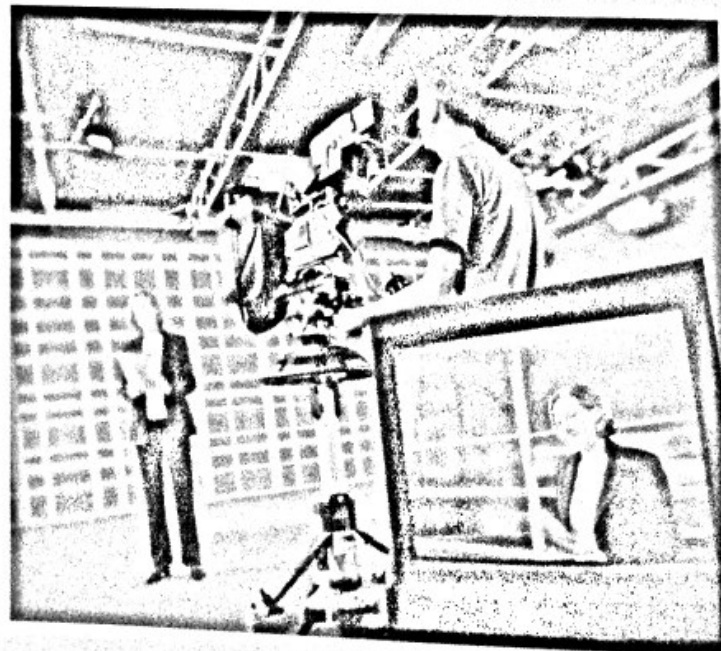
—Attributed to Sun Tzu

FACT

Coming up Next, Philadelphia's Top Political Story . . .⁶¹

Over a two-year period, Philadelphia news coanchor Alycia Lane was subject to malicious news stories from anonymous sources about her off-air behavior. Lane's coanchor, Larry Mendte, showed concern when these stories emerged; but, Lane claims, he suggested that the best solution would be for her to move to another city. Soon after she lost her job (partly due to the rumors), Lane discovered why Mendte offered this advice: he was likely the person who fed private information about Lane to the media. The FBI found that Mendte used keystroke software to gain access to Lane's e-mail, and that he looked at her e-mail at least 500 times. Lane's attorney claims that Mendte sent Lane's e-mail messages to newspapers because "[Alycia Lane's] star was climbing, while his was not climbing. . . . His conduct was designed to undermine her." Mendte's e-mail tampering surprised most people, but not everyone who knew him. One former colleague claims that "[Mendte] was great to my face and manipulative and destructive behind my back." Another TV insider suggests that "Larry worked hard to take Alycia down."

curtail self-serving influence activities. In particular, they can support organizational values that oppose political tactics, such as altruism and customer focus. One of the most important strategies is for leaders to become role models of organizational citizenship rather than symbols of successful organizational politicians.



Along with minimizing organizational politics, companies can limit the adverse effects of political perceptions by giving employees more control over their work and keeping them informed about organizational events. Research has found that employees who are kept informed about what is going on in the organization and who are involved in organizational decisions are less likely to experience organizational politics, which reduces stress, job dissatisfaction, and absenteeism. ■

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