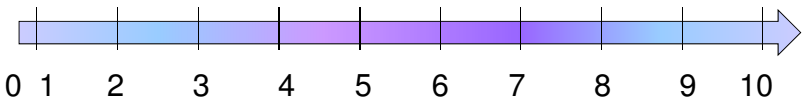
POWER AND POLITICS: HOW TO INCREASE OUR IMPACT

By
Dr L Mee-Yan Cheung-Judge
Director
Quality & Equality

Quality & Equality Ltd
Organisation Development,
Consultancy and Training Services
PO Box 256, Headington,
Oxford OX3 9FJ United Kingdom
Tel: +44 (0) 1865 744618 Fax: +44 (0)1865 744776
E-Mail: info@quality-equality.com
Website: http://www.quality-equality.com

Power Continuum

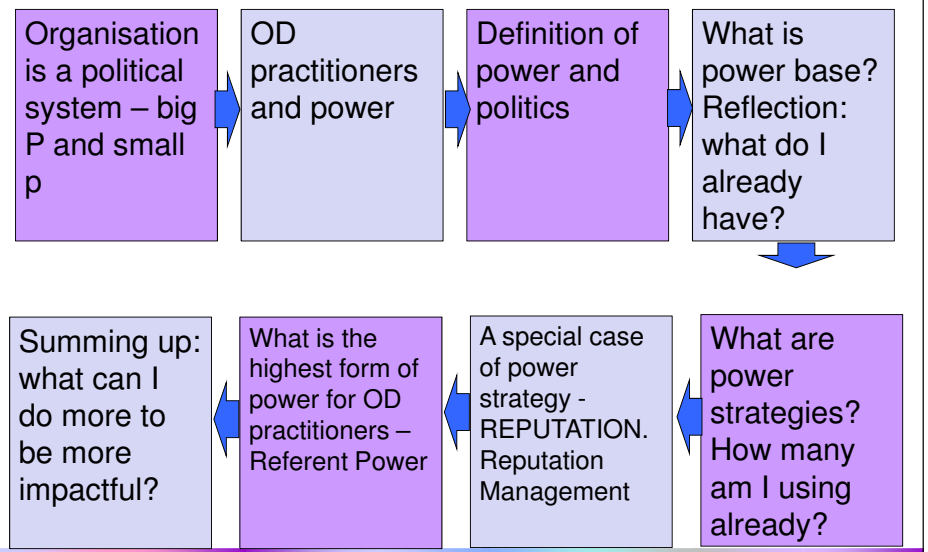


Where are you on the continuum?

Most OD practitioners are uncomfortable with the deliberate and intentional use of power because:

- Our perception about the incongruence between OD Value and use of personal power
- The political and cultural context in which we grew up
- Personal history all of us have different “drivers” and “blockers” of our use of power
- We have eyewitnessed the dominant use of “the low road of use of power”.

Areas to cover



Organisation as a political system

Two perspectives on organizations

Rational Instruments

- Decisions should be made by those given prescribed duties and authorities
- Use technical knowledge, sound management principles, and reasoned logic
- Advance the best interests of the organization as a whole and its stakeholders

Political Collectives

- Use of power and political processes by organizational actors is to be expected.
- Organizational change is a political event/political campaign involving various constituencies
- The interests of some constituencies will end up being advanced over those of others

Seven dimensions of organizational political systems

1. Access to information
2. Degree of participation
3. Decision arenas & decision rounds
4. Required degree of agreement
5. Expected styles
6. Reciprocity
7. Types of sanctions

How does power work? - power direction

Downward power **-** The influence of a superior over a subordinate.

Upward power **-** refers to attempts by subordinates to influence their superiors (e.g. persistence, logical presentation of ideas, coalition formation, ingratiation).

Sideways power - refers to influence attempts directed at those people in one's immediate reporting chain of authority, but whom one depends on to achieve key results.

Sees organisations as composed of different interest groups each pursuing its own goals (often for well intended reasons).

Conflict is an inevitable and normal part of the way things get done.

Political behaviour is part and parcel of those organisations - it is the result when an attempt at influence is countered by another interested party/ gro[illegible].

Pluralistic / Political Model

Bargaining and formation of coalitions is a must to deliver goals.

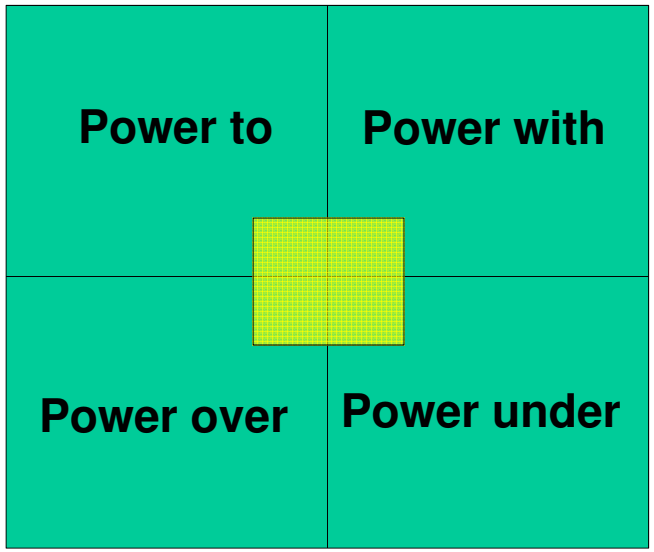
Power becomes the intervening variable between desired outcomes and actual results.

Sideways power is recognised as a necessary and frequently exercised components of managerial effectiveness.

Therefore in the pluralistic context

Talent is not enough	Effort is not enough	Good intention is not enough

High performance comes through the conscious application of the talent, effort, good intention plus specific use of positive power within the organisation political context / domain.



OD Practitioners and Power

OD practitioners and power

"Power and politics, indisputable facts of organisational life, must be understood if one is to be effective in organisation...the OD practitioner needs both knowledge and skill in the arenas of organisational power and politics."

- French and Bell, 1999:282

OD practitioners and power

"Organisation development signifies change, and for change to occur in an organisation, power must be exercised. For the purpose of OD, therefore, the consultant must understand the nature of power, both from a personal and an organisation perspective, and be able to determine, within an organisation, who has the power, how power is exercised, and where the leverages for change (exercising power) are likely to be."

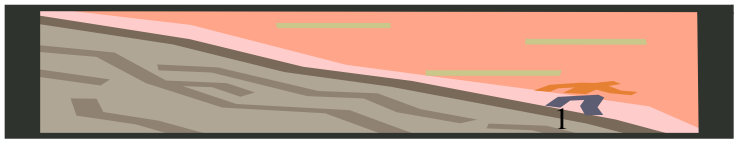
- Burke, 1982: 127

High road of power to organisation improvement

1) Build its own power base so that it has access to those in power,
2) Utilize power strategies that are open and above-board for influencing key power-holders to address critical substantive issues that proves more creative and efficient than political bargaining
3) Assist the power structure to confront and transform itself so that change can be more lasting, and
4) Uphold the concerns and interests of those with less power who are affected by these changes

Core use of Power: To encourage people to collaborate in making decisions that affect their destiny in work and community - Greiner and Schein, 1988

Low road of power



The low road represents vested political interest groups, who, if left only power and deception without OD, can destroy organisations by failing to tap human potential. Ironically, the low road also includes not only traditional champions of power who think that manipulation and political games are essence of success, but those OD chameleons who sell out to power.

- Greiner and Schein, 1988

McClelland's two faces of power

Negative face of power:

- An "unsocialised way of using power – to dominate and control others often to benefit a single party – that is the power user"
- An extreme pursuit of self-interest
- Tend to see power plays in win-lose terms rather than win-win
- Negative power tactics revolve around secrecy, deception, hidden agendas, withholding information and dishonesty

McClelland's two faces of power

Positive face of power:

- A **"socialised" way** of using power – to empower multiple others, and to facilitate others to reach their goals
- A balanced pursuit of self-interest, and the interests of others
- Tend to see power plays in win-win term as much as possible
- Positive power tactics revolve around open problem solving, collaboration, overt trading favours, building alliances, promoting joint work, etc

Definition of Power and Politics

Definition

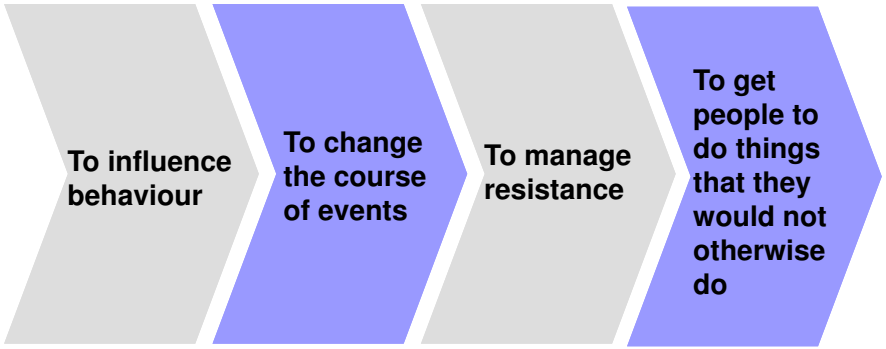
Pfeffer 1977 and Salancik		Power is the ability of those who possess power to bring about the outcomes they desire…
Mintzberg 1983	-	Power is defined simply as the capacity to effect (or affect) organisational outcomes. The French word "pouvoir" stands for both the noun "power" and the verb "to be able to...
Siu 1979	-	Power is the intentional influence over the beliefs, emotions, and behaviours of people...

Definition

Dahl 1957	-	The ability to get others to do something they otherwise would not do
Weber 1978	-	The ability to get others to do what you want them to do, if necessary against their will
Mowday 1978	-	The generalized ability to change the actions of others in some intended fashion

Power

Is the potential ability:



Politics:

The processes, the actions,

and the behaviour through

which this potential power

is utilised and realised.

Power, politics & influence

- Power is about creating the outcome one wants or what the situation requires
- The exercise of power happens within the social arena, between two or more parties (***potentiality of power***)
- The effectiveness of power use is dependent on how we channel what we have (***power base***) through the choice of appropriate activities/behaviours (***power strategies***)
- Influence and impact is the desired outcome

(1) Key results exercise

1. List three key results that you are personally responsible for achieving

2. For each key result, write out the name of the individual/ teams/groups that you are dependent upon for the achievement of this key result. Check which direction (*up, down or sideways)* they are in.

4. What benefits do you think may result if you work a bit more on managing these relationships?

3. Look at the people on your list and ask yourself:
   - *Do I know anything about them on a personal level?*
   - *Do I know what matters to them?*
   - *When was the last time I networked with them?*

Key results

	Who do I depend on?		What relationship do I have with them?	
Key result 1				
Key result 2				

Power Bases

Developing power bases

Power bases **- are composed of unique resources over which we have control.**

Power bases **- determine our available *power strategies* for influencing others.**

Power bases - are dynamic, can be developed, expanded or eroded.

Five distinct bases of power

Coercive Power	the person can mediate punishment
Legitimate Power	the person has the authority to proscribe behaviour
Reward Power	the person mediates rewards
Referent Power	identification and attraction to the person
Expert Power	the person possesses unique and rare knowledge/ skill

*"You always have power, if you know where to find it. There is power of **inclusion**, and the power of **language**, and the power of **shared interests**, and the power of **coalition**. Power is all around you to draw upon, but it is rarely raw, rarely visible."*

Frances Hesselbein
CEO of Girl Scouts of the USA

Individual power bases

Knowledge	- **Expertise** - **Information** - **Tradition**
Personality	- **Charisma** - **Reputation** - **Professional credibility** - **Empathy**
Others' support	- **Political access** - **Staff support**

(2) Please consider which of the following statements is true of you

Resource power

- *People do as I require because I control resources which they value*

Yes ❑ No ❑

Information power

- *I can influence the behaviour of others because I have access to information which they need or desire*

Yes ❑ No ❑

Position (or legitimate) power

- *I have power over others because I hold a powerful position in the social or business hierarchy. I bear an invisible label which says "I'm in charge"*

Yes ❑ No ❑

Proxy power

- *People do as I require because I have friends in high places*

Yes ❑ No ❑

Reward power

- *People do as I want because I can reward those who comply with my wishes*

Yes ❑ No ❑

Sanctions power

- *People do as I require because I can punish those who don't*

Yes ❑ No ❑

Expert power

- *People do as I wish because they respect my knowledge and expertise*

Yes ❑ No ❑

Personal (or referent) power

- *People do as I wish because they like me and want to model their behaviour on mine*

Yes ❑ No ❑

Status power

- *People do as I wish because I have status in the group. I may be the oldest, the longest serving, the only one with a special expertise or whatever*

Yes ❑ No ❑

Charisma power

- *People do as I wish because they are bowled over by my personality, vision, enthusiasm and / or charm*

Yes ❑ No ❑

Favour power

- *People do as I wish because I build a bank balance of favours and call them in when I need compliance*

Yes ❑ No ❑

Technical power

- *People do as I wish because I know how to influence behaviour and apply my knowledge with skill*

Yes ❑ No ❑

Power Strategies

Virginia Schein (1987)

- **300 Managers in USA and UK**
- **Interview and questionnaire**
- **Research Question:**

  What power strategies do managers actually use to achieve work related objectives?

Power strategies in use

- Form alliances and coalitions
- Present a persuasive viewpoint
- Deal directly with key decision makers
- Use data to convince others
- Focus on needs of the target group
- Work around road blocks
- Use contacts for information
- Surround self with competent others
- Deal with others socially
- Be persistent
- Trade favours
- Use threats
- Use organisational rules
- Give guarantees

Examples of specific strategies in use

- ***Deal directly with key decision makers***
  - **Identify influential individuals and direct proposals toward them**
  - **Gain access to key decision makers**
  - **Have formal review meeting with senior management**
  - **Present idea to key decision maker**
  - **Arrange meetings with influential decision maker**
- ***Use data to convince others***
  - **Collect data supporting idea**
  - **Rely on empirical observations**
  - **Demonstrate estimated savings**
  - **Demonstrate the 'benefit case' for the organisation**

Examples of specific strategies in use *(cont.)*

- ***Focus on needs of target group***
  - **Research client's needs**
  - **Give personal service to each client**
  - **Write proposal in terms of client group**
  - **Meet the needs of the decision makers**
  - **Arrange for clients to meet directly with the decision makers**
- ***Work around roadblocks***
  - **Obtain assistance of key decision maker's peers**
  - **Work around the boss**
  - **Negotiate a compromise**
  - **Strike bargain**

Power bases and power strategy connection

Individual Power Bases	Strategies for Success
Knowledge	***Playing it straight***
- Expertise	- Use data to convince
- Information	- focus on target group
- Tradition	- Be persistent
Others' support	***Using social networks***
- Political access	- Alliances and coalitions
- Staff support	- Deal with decision maker
	- Contacts for information
Personality	***Going around formal systems***
- Charisma	- Work around road blocks
- Reputation	- (Don't) use organisation rules
- Professional credibility	

Reputation Management

A Key Power Strategy at Work

Reputation management facts

- Whether we know it or want it, we all have a reputation
- Most of us think others' perception of us is congruent with our view of ourselves
- Most of us seldom engage in any activities to find out what others actually think of us
- Our reputation affects our network access, our ability to influence and steer and our career progression prospects (often without us knowing)
- Unearthing our reputation, no matter how hard it is, will give us back the control – we can begin to do something about it

Reflection

- Write down the reputation you want to have in your workplace or think you have already.
- What deliberate behavioural strategies have you used to build that reputation?

Reputation

I want to be known for at work:

_____

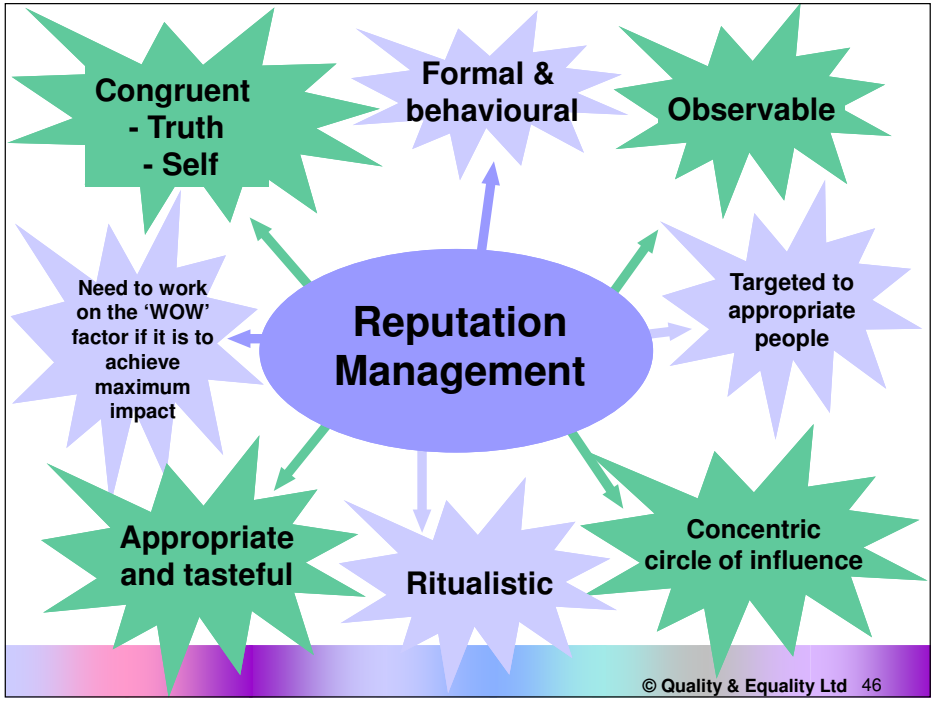
Behavioural strategies which will help me to attain the reputation:

-
-
-
-

Reputation management
Example of behavioural indicators

Results Driven

- Consult others on key results expected of you
- Document discussion and circulate to line managers and other partners about your key results for approval
- Three months later, file a report on what you have achieved against target list
- In your team meeting, have a regular agenda item on 'results achieved since last meeting'



CULTIVATING MY PERSONAL REFERENT POWER

Referent power

Definition:

Because of who we are, people want to identify with us and make reference to us

By being who we are, we use our "self" to:

- Intervene intentionally
- Shape and influence outcomes
- Provide a force not presently operating in the system
- Put our "self" on the line in service of others

Areas to increase my referent power

1. Congruence
2. Presence
3. Boundary Management
4. Centring
5. Choicefulness
6. Self-care

Characteristics that increase my referent power

1. Interested in people
2. Non-judgmental
3. Developmental orientation
4. Empathetic
5. 'Global citizenship'
6. Community bias – greater good

Conclusion - How to increase my influence and impact

Summary

Power exists in all organisations; ignore it at your peril

There is a normative direction of work for OD practitioners – to help organisation to shift from negative power use to positive power use

OD practitioners need to pay attention to how their own need for power is played out with clients. There is evidence that OD practitioners, are likely to have higher needs for power than that of the general population. Burke (1982:149)

OD practitioners have to be politically savvy, first by cumulating sufficient power base, second by learning a variety of power strategies. The minimum power base OD practitioners should start with is:

a) Knowledge from behavioural sciences and organisational theory
b) Ability to know how and when to apply such knowledge
c) Interpersonal competence

The most effective source of power in the OD world is your personal referent power; aim to become the type of person that your client will want to 'refer' to.

Value Checklist For Use of Personal Power

- ❑ Does my use of power align with my value?
- ❑ Do my targeted power activities add real value to the organisation?
- ❑ Do I build and use networks within the organisation effectively? Do those whom I network with benefit from me?
- ❑ Do I build collaborative partners, create and trade favours?
- ❑ Do I role model collaborative relationships?
- ❑ Do I own up my power in a consistent way? Value and action congruence?
- ❑ Do I use power in an ethical way?

Power used well

(to have results that have added value to the organisation)

will lead to gaining more power -

"Credibility as power base"

Simple goals to increase your power

Become a "desired commodity" both as a person and as a professional

Make your work output itself a desired commodity for multiple parties

Get involved in strategic management issue

Create good will, favour, and win-win solutions among key leaders and other colleagues

Simple goals to increase your power

- Get involved in projects that give high value to business success
- Just stay empathetic and practice good organisational citizenship
- Kindness, empathy and warmth go a long way

Just imagine...

...What a high road of power use would achieve for your organisation, your community – take back and practice