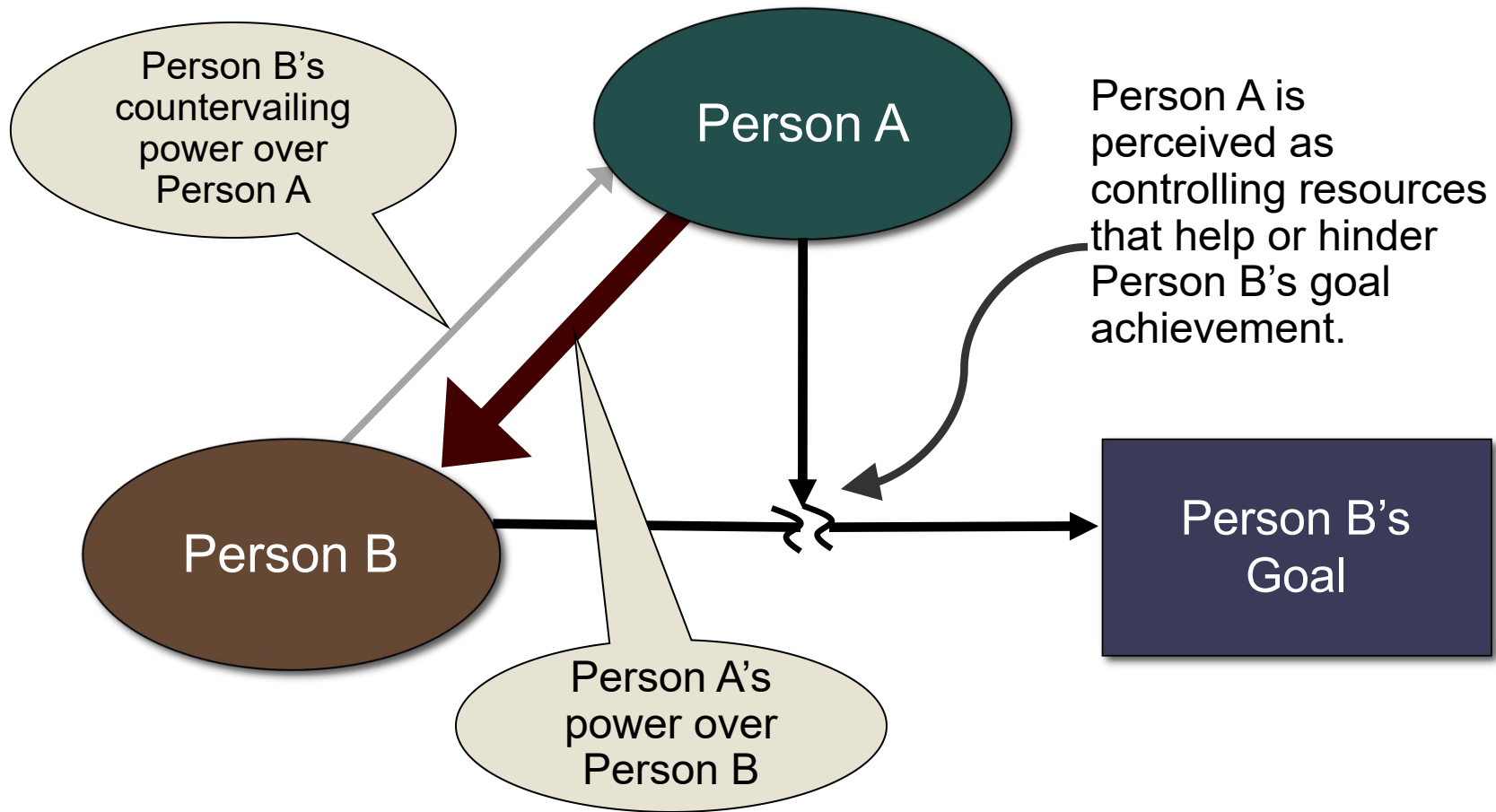# 8

Power and Influence in the Workplace
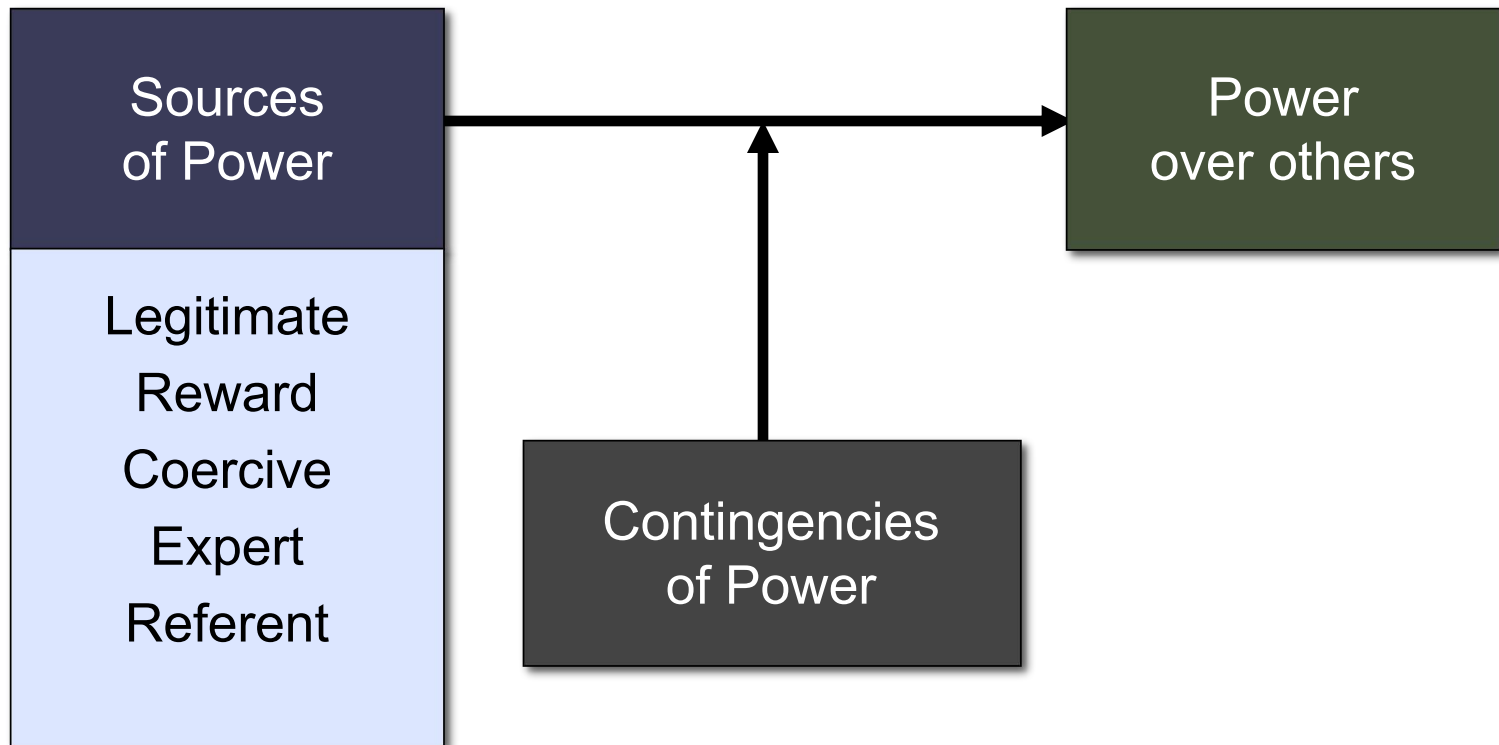
The Meaning of Power

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

- Potential to change attitudes and behavior (not actual change)

- People may be unaware of their power

- Perception –target perceives powerholder controls a valuable resource

- Power involves unequal dependence

Power and Dependence

Model of Power in Organizations

Legitimate Power

- Agreement that people in certain roles can request certain behaviors of others
- Zone of indifference -- range of behaviors for deference to authority
- Norm of reciprocity -- felt obligation to help someone who has helped you
- Information control -- right to distribute information to others
  - Creates dependence
 - Frames situation
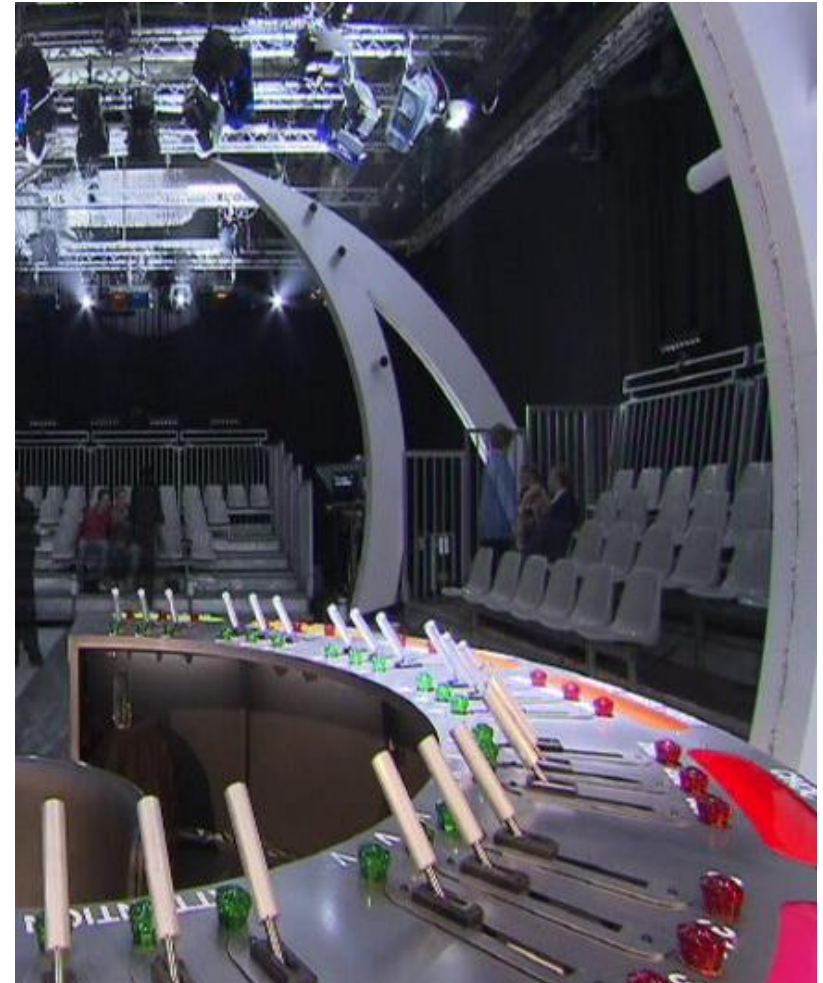
Expert Power

- Capacity to influence others by possessing knowledge or skills that they value

- Coping with uncertainty
  - Organizations operate better in predictable environments
  - People gain power by using their expertise to:
    - Prevent environmental changes
    - Forecast environmental changes
    - Absorb environmental changes

Other Sources of Power

- Reward power
  - Control rewards valued by others, remove negative sanctions

- Coercive power
  - Ability to apply punishment

- Referent power
  - Capacity to influence others through identification with and respect for the power holder
  - Associated with charisma

Contingencies of Power
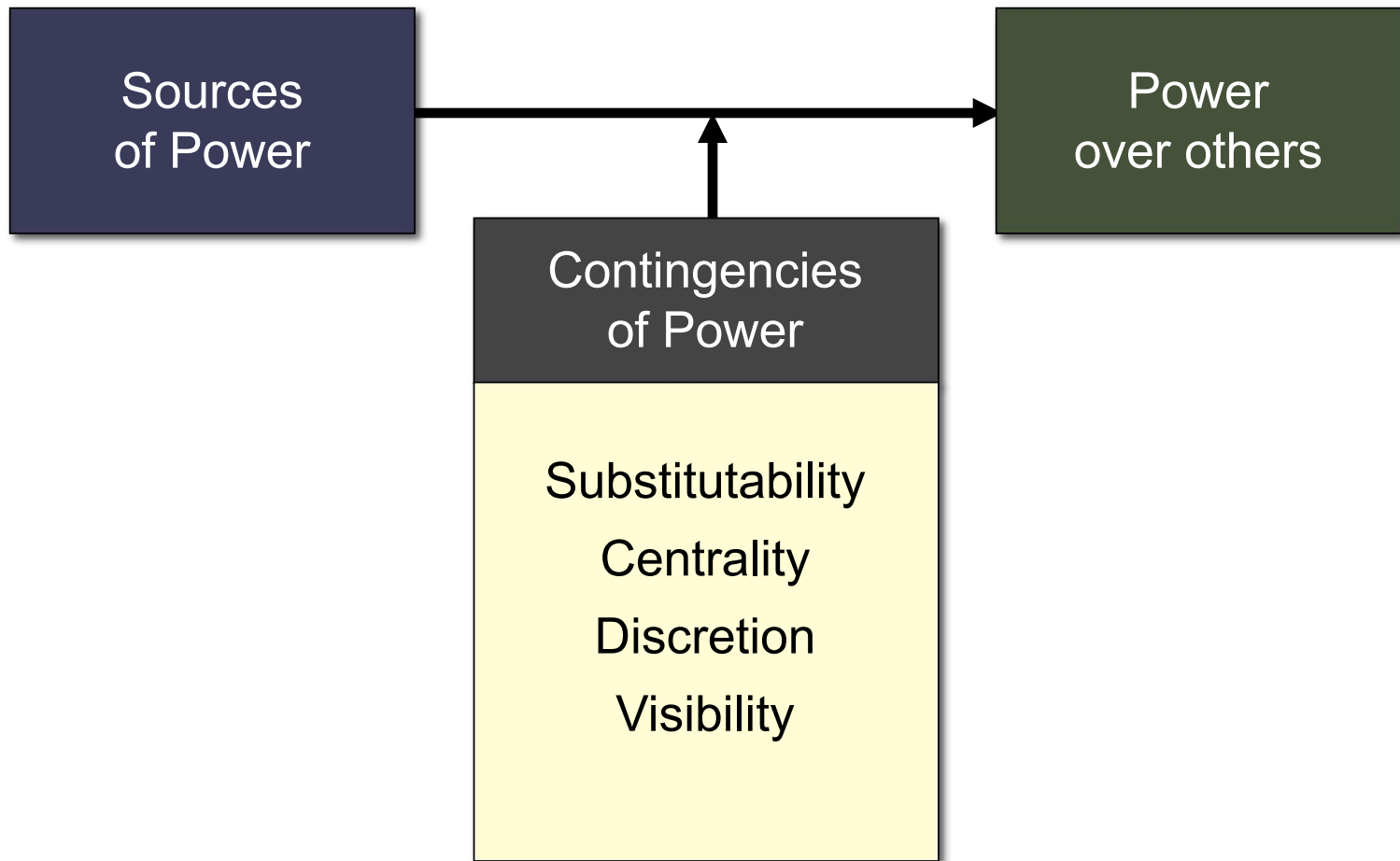
Increasing Nonsubstitutability

- Substitutability – availability of alternatives
  - More power when few/no alternatives

- Reduce substitutability through:
  - Monopoly over resource
  - Controlling access to the resource
  - Differentiating the resource

Other Contingencies of Power

- Centrality
  - Degree and nature of interdependence with powerholder
  - Higher centrality when (a) many people affected and (b) quickly affected

- Visibility
  - You are known as holder of valued resource
  - Increases with face time, display of power symbols

- Discretion
  - The freedom to exercise judgment
  - Rules limit discretion
  - Discretion is perceived by others

Power Through Social Networks

- Social networks – people connected to each other through forms of interdependence

- Generate power through social capital -- goodwill and resulting resources shared among members in a social network

- Three power resources through networks
  - Information
  - Visibility
 - Referent power

Social Network Ties

- Strong ties:
  - Close-knit relationships (frequent interaction, high sharing, multiple roles)
  - Offer resources more quickly/plentifully, but less unique

- Weak ties
  - Acquaintances
  - Offer unique resources not held by us or people in other networks

- Many ties
  - Resources increase with number of ties
  - Limited capacity to form weak/strong ties
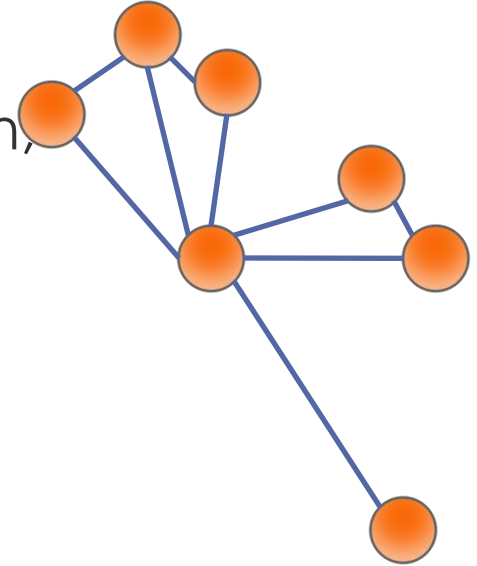
Social Network Centrality

- Person's importance in a network

- Three factors in centrality:
  - Betweenness – extent you are located between others in the network
  - Degree centrality -- Number of people connected to you
  - Closeness – stronger relationships

- Example: "A" has highest centrality due to all three factors; "B" has lowest centrality
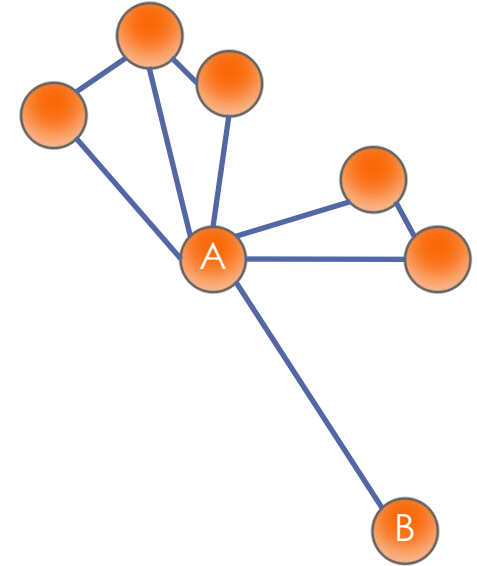
Influencing Others

- Influence is any behavior that attempts to alter someone's attitudes or behavior

- Applies one or more power bases

- Essential activity in organizations
  - Coordinate with others
  - Part of leadership definition
  - Everyone engages in influence

Types of Influence

Silent Authority

- Following requests without overt influence
- Based on legitimate power, role modeling
- Common in high power distance cultures

Assertiveness

- Actively applying legitimate and coercive power ("vocal authority")
- Reminding, confronting, checking, threatening

more ➡

Types of Influence (con't)

Information Control	• Manipulating others' access to information • Withholding, filtering, re-arranging information

Coalition Formation	• Group forms to gain more power than individuals alone
	  1. Pools resources/power
	  2. Legitimizes the issue
	  3. Power through social identity

more ➡

Types of Influence (con't)

Upward Appeal	• Appealing to higher authority
	• Includes appealing to firm's goals
	• Alliance or perceived alliance with higher status person

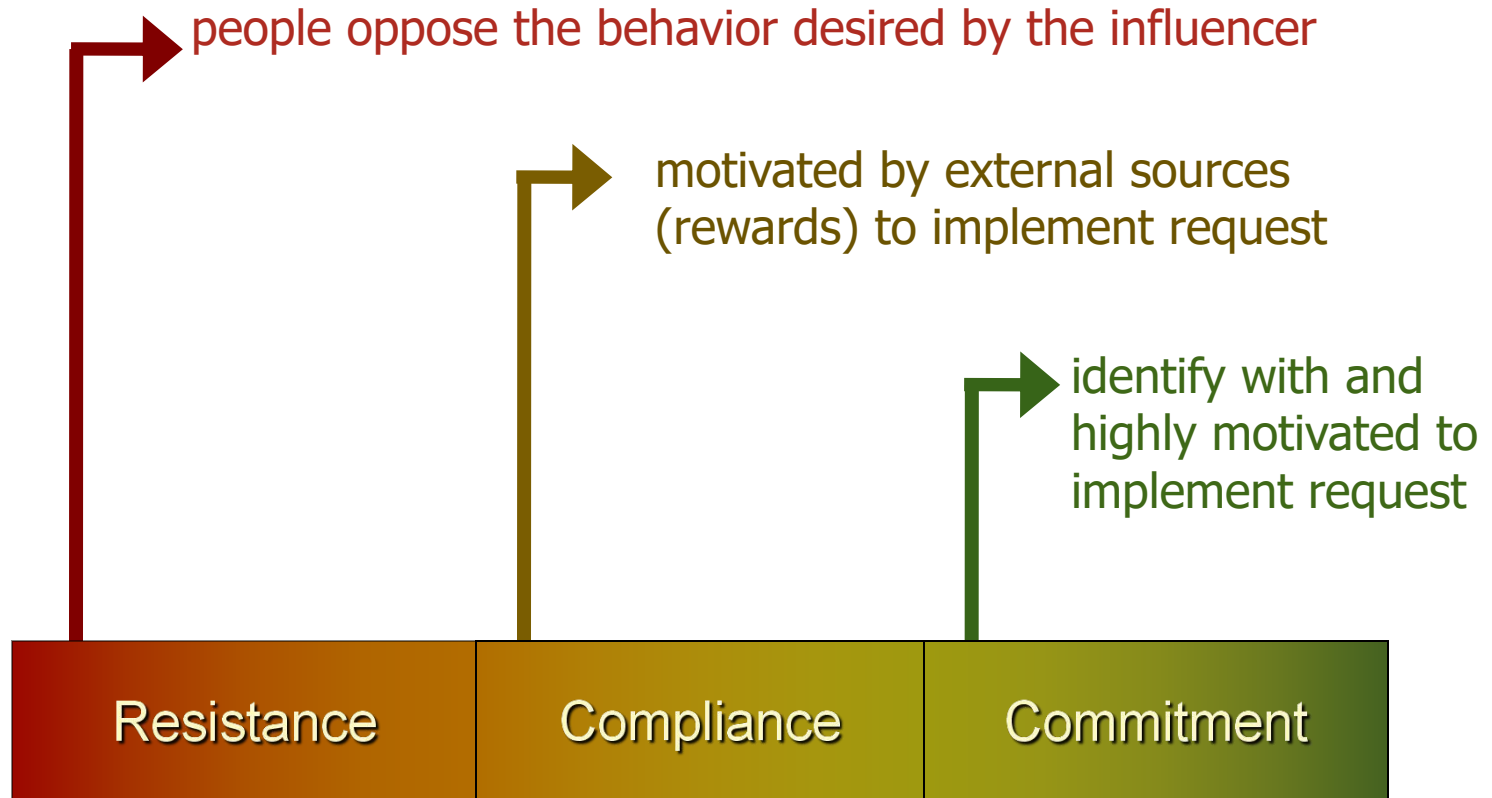| Persuasion	• Logic, facts, emotional appeals
	• Depends on persuader, message content, message medium, audience

more ➡

Types of Influence (con't)

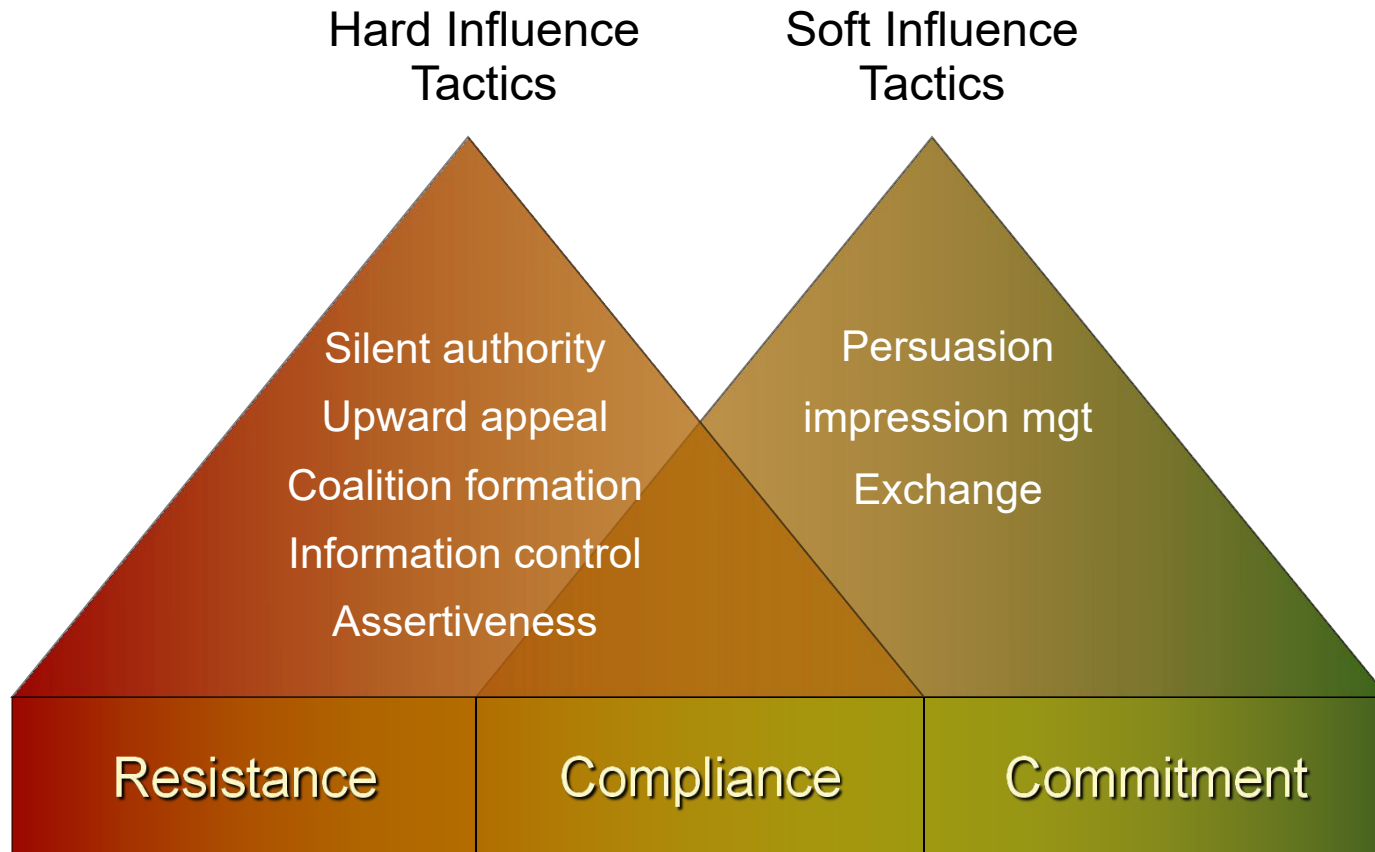| Impression Management	• Actively shaping or public image • Self-presentation • Ingratiation

Exchange	• Promising or reminding of past benefits in exchange for compliance • Negotiation, reciprocity, networking

Consequences of Influence

people oppose the behavior desired by the influencer

motivated by external sources (rewards) to implement request

identify with and highly motivated to implement request

| Resistance | Compliance | Commitment |

Consequences of Influence

Hard Influence Tactics

Soft Influence Tactics

Silent authority
Upward appeal
Coalition formation
Information control
Assertiveness

Persuasion
impression mgt
Exchange

Resistance | Compliance | Commitment

Contingencies of Influence

- "Soft" tactics generally more acceptable than "hard" tactics

- Appropriate influence tactic depends on:
  - Influencer's power base
  - Organizational position
  - Cultural values and expectations

Organizational Politics

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

Need to minimize scarce resources, ambiguity, reinforced political behavior