Power Final Assignment- Jerzy Ciecierski

1) Review/synthesis of your first three self-reflection assignments

From my previous assignments I have noticed that there are a numerous things that I have been doing so far in my career naturally without much greater thought that have allowed me to build a position of power naturally. These have included:

* Taking on additionally task which would normally not be required of me. So far I used to do this as I considered them as things from which I could learn more from. I always wanted to do more as I believed that I have that time currently to do them (no family) which in the future would not necessarily be possible and that I still have a lot to learn.
* Speaking my mind in meetings as I wanted my opinion to be heard as I dislike doing tasks if I don’t agree with them or their format. To avoid this is always spoke my mind so for my comments to be included.
* I frequently befriended my colleagues as it made going to work more pleasant if you had people around you that you like and enjoy spending time with as after all you do spend more of your time with these people and not your family or your friends from outside work.
* I would help out my colleagues mainly for those people who I considered friends and if I considered people my friends its natural you want to help them out. Additionally it normally meant doing something that wasn’t part of my job description hence exposed me to new things and again as a learning point.
* I would normally sort out issues on a one on one basis as I tried to avoid confrontations around other colleagues as I did not want the rumour mill to start and always believed that ‘washing your laundry’ was better without witnesses.
* At IESE I have also had a natural way of befriending professors I considered the best professors I had as I enjoyed the conversations which I could have with them outside of the classroom. This has allowed me now to have a network of professors with whom I can bounce ideas off with while I am preparing to launch my start up.

This class has now given me the tools to allow me to do these this more consciously towards achieving my goals. Being conscious of these this will allow me to be more selective and better at controlling what I do and allowing me to think about how to behave to achieve my aimed goals.

2) A one-page executive summary with an action plan

As I am going to be doing a start-up an action plan will be a lot different to the one I would have if I decided to join a company at a lower level. Being at the top of the ‘pyramid’ will naturally give me a lot of positional power due to the role I will be playing. However, having learnt about all these ways of influencing people to gain power and influence will allow me as a leader of an organisation to be able to notice these sorts of behaviours done by my employees. This will allow me to take more conscious decisions in the future knowing why certain employees are doing certain things and hence I hope to not be manipulated by these behaviours myself.

My start-up will be aiming at helping other start-ups sell their products on the market by my company having a salesforce which will sell other start-ups products on a commission basis. I will try to use these techniques to have a certain power over my potential customers. I.e. make sure I keep the certain knowledge of how we sell our customers products, train our employees and the sort of feedback my employees receive to ourselves. To do this I will make sure that none of our employees will have direct contact with our customers (the start-ups). This will make sure that the start-ups do not steal our techniques and are reliant on our know-how and hence remain our customers for as long as possible.

I will also try to help our customers if they have additionally tasks for us if they match our profile and allow my employees or us to learn from them as well. For example if they need a consultancy task done or feedback on the product we are selling for them.

Lastly I intend to use the last 2 months of the MBA to more consciously choose the people I socialise with to be people I believe in the long run to be people who I want to stay in touch with not just on a social basis but also people I hope will be of use from a mentorship or job offering perspective if I ever need it in the future. For example if I ever end up looking for a job if I fail in my start up.

However if the start-up fails and I do end up working for a company again after this class I will do a lot of things a lot more consciously.

When I start a job I will observe interactions between employees to see who has power not just from a hieratical perspective but also who the staff listen to as e.g. an expert or authority. I will then make sure I target these people as the first people to try and have positive opinion of me through some of techniques I have already used and learnt to do well but in a more conscious manner i.e. take on additional tasks for these people or offer my help to these individuals if they need it. I will consciously prepare more for meetings with these people as well something I have not been particularly good at till now. I have usually gone in less prepared counting on the fact that I knew my area well and if necessary I would get back to them post the meeting. This will allow me to be more vocal in the meetings.

Additionally, I will try to think of extra tasks which would allow me to have exposure not only to my department but also other department and that have a lot of spot lights on them so as to be exposed to the people higher up in my organisation. E.g. taking on ownership of drawing up an action plan post annual employee engagement surveys. Most big corporations hold such survey now a days and the task is frequently slightly wishy washy and frequently annoying hence I have avoided participating in them. However, they are also normally task which allow you to have exposure to senior executives as they are seen as important hence in the future I will try to engage more in them.

Lastly, when looking for job opportunities I will also try to select jobs in areas which have higher exposure to top management. I.e. Look out for opportunities in things which I seen as high priority or are ‘trending’ in the industry. For example in banking roles in Operational Risk are high importance now post all the scandals recently with data leaks of customer information or in Regulatory Implementation as again post-crisis these have gained a lot of importance as they were greatly under-serviced in the past as they were not roles that were seen as bring in profit but now they are important to prevent losses e.g. due to regulatory fines and new regulations being implemented.

3) Interviews with contacts that can help you

I interview two of my ex-boss who I considered to have had the most important contribution to my success so far and I believe if necessary will help me fain a job back at my old company again if required. The two were both management board members of the bank I used to work. I choose these two as they both exhibited very different styles in their approach to internal politics and hence I wanted to see both side of the coin but also shared certain common traits like looking after their staff and being fair.

Both of my interviews were conducted more as a freidnly catch up call as I haven’t been in touch in a long time and I didn’t want to be seen as calling only due to this reason. Not staying in touch was the first mistake I have done over the course of my MBA but this was a good opportunity to do so. As a result I did not record them as I did not want to have to ask for the permission as I thought it would be seen poorly. I tried to gear my questions on advice they would give me and from there add some follow up questions on example how they did it in the past themselves.

First interview with the board member that hired me when I joined the bank back in 2007.

He told me that when he started working for many years he did not pay attention to politics and always tried to follow jobs and responsibilities that he found interesting without thinking about what would be a better career move for him. He also frequently picked roles based on the family situation hence avoiding moving much internationally and at certain stages picking job that would allow him to have more free time to spend with his family. Partly he mentioned he regretted this as he realised that always speaking his mind in a very honest fashion held him back for a lot of years as it did not cause him a lot of allies at certain stages and he ended up trending on a certain influential people’s toes. His main point of advice was to think twice before you open your mouth when commenting on certain points and to sometimes before reacting giving yourself sometime to think through the consequences and how best to raise certain points if they could be seen as controversial or entering into someone else’s area of responsibility.

He also highlighted not to be so worried about moving internationally with a family as it turned out to be easier than he had anticipated and the company now takes a lot of care to make sure these moves are as easy and painless as possible. He said that as I do not have family this is the perfect time to do it and that to continue doing it once I have kids especially when they are infants and young as then it’s a lot easier. Once they become teenagers might be a time to select the country where I would be happy to stay for longer due to the friendships and education stage the kids are at then. He mention with time he had learnt to take appreciate the important of international exposure and also the importance of picking the right country to be in at the right time. I.e. try to go to growing markets although sometimes they might not be the most desirable countries to be in.

The second interview was with my last boss I had.

My second interviewee mentioned that for many years he had taken roles exclusively thinking about what this role would allow him to do later. He mentioned that even now he took on his newest role as he did not necessarily see it as very exciting but he realised that it gave him a lot of exposure as it is in the regulatory area of banking and as a result a lot of eyes are turned on him and he frequently is in a situation where more senior managers have to do what he requires them to do.

He mentioned the importance of e.g. the employee satisfaction survey as this frequently is seen by senior management.

Again internationality was mentioned as key in today’s world. He mentioned he had been very fortunate as his wife’s job (an international executive job head hunter) had been a job she could do from home anywhere in the world hence allowing him to pick jobs where he wanted without his wife’s job needing to be a consideration.

His most important take away was to make sure you create allies before going up against someone if you know this will not be what some people (especially senior management) may support. He said to think twice before responding and having and knowing you will have backing in when hard decisions need to be made. To make sure that you know things will go your way if you’re going to hurt someone else’s interests. If you do not know what other people opinion is make sure you find out before the meeting as otherwise you might end up being burnt as people may agree with you but take the side of someone who is their allies as they will want to keep this favour for themselves if they need it in the future. He said that he had done exactly the same thing a few times but only in matters he had not considered to have a very a detrimental effect on the organisation as a whole.