Principles of Influence: Apply Authority to manipulate Employees into bypassing Technical Security

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Authority is one sophisticated way to gain trust and the most powerful weapon of influence. According to (1), if an individual perceives that someone making a request has power over him, he or she will be much more likely to accommodate the request, even if it seems unreasonable or counters policies and beliefs. There are three main types of authority in any given situation: legal authority, organizational authority, and social authority. Three major symbols of power are titles, clothes, and trappings of power.

For example, a study took place in a Midwestern hospital, researchers call to nurses’ stations on 22 different hospital wards and identified themselves as a doctor (unknown to the nurses). Then, they gave an order to administer a patient with 20 milligrams of the drug Astrogen. The nurses who are highly skilled should be able to identify a couple of problems with this request: the hospital forbade the use of telephone prescription orders. The drug Astrogen was not approved for use in the hospital, and the dose is double the maximum dose. Despite all the warning signs, the nurse hangs up the phone and headed straight for the medicine cabinet.

Another example of authority is when new soldiers see some people in military uniforms with high ranks (officer or NCO). New soldiers (low ranking) will most likely do what the military personnel tell them to do. Even though, these military personnel may not have direct power over them. They should only follow their chain of command (their squad leader, team leader, platoon sergeant, first sergeant, and company commander) instead listen to whoever!

References

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