

Mike Phipps

21 Sources of Power at Work

MIKE PHIPPS

21 SOURCES OF POWER AT WORK

21 Sources of Power at Work

1st edition

© 2017 Mike Phipps & bookboon.com

ISBN 978-87-403-1640-7

CONTENTS

1	Technical Power	8
2	Network Power	11
3	Resource Power	14
4	Image Power	17
5	Interpersonal Power	20
6	Intrapersonal Power	23
7	Coercion Power	27
8	Status Power	30
9	Impact Power	33
10	Physical Power	37



Discover our eBooks on
Time Management Skills
 and hundreds more

[Download now](#)

bookboon

11	Integrity Power	40
12	Access Power	43
13	Silence Power	46
14	Charisma Power	48
15	Questioning Power	51
16	2nd and 3rd Person Power	53
17	Escape Power	56
18	Political Power	59
19	Assertive Power	62
20	Stakeholder Power	65
21	Maven Power	68
	About the Author	71
	Acknowledgements	72

To be effective at work and to maximise career potential, you need to develop your personal power. But do you know what makes you powerful? Would you like to find new sources of power and build on your existing strengths? Or perhaps you are just curious about how power works in organisations? The good news is that we are all powerful (even if you don't feel that right now). The bad news is that this is a confusing and controversial area.

Personal Power can be created in ways you might never have considered. This book is here to bring some clarity and to help you develop your personal power but in ways that will work for you. Both Hitler and Ghandi had highly developed personal power but made very different choices about what to do with it. This book gives you the options. The choice will still be yours.

The Research Study

This is not an academic book but a practical one. However, it does have some original research to draw on. Before I started this research, the most renowned study about power at work was completed by French and Raven in 1960. And that was a time when organisational structures were very different from the complex, matrix structures many of us now work in. It badly needed updating. So, I started asking one very simple question over and over again and the results were surprising.

The research question was: "As a professional, going about your day to day work, where does your personal power and influence come from?"

When I began in 2000, some people told me that they didn't want to be powerful. For them power had either a negative connotation (power corrupts; absolute power corrupts absolutely) or they were wary of the responsibility that being powerful carried. Someone even told me that my modest research study was a dangerous activity. But most people were curious and enthusiastic, and it seemed that everyone had a story to tell. In fact, I gathered over 6,000 responses.

Instead of the six sources of power that French and Raven identified; coercive, reward, legitimate, referent, expert and information, it quickly became apparent that, in the modern world, power was much more complex and varied than first thought.

This book pulls together the results of this study and presents you with 21 Sources of Power at Work. An uncomfortable truth is that some of these sources just won't work for you e.g. Coercion Power, a kind of bullying. Now there are people who use this very successfully so we need to know it and understand it but if your personal values are all about harmony, collaboration, honesty and teamwork then this idea will not appeal to you and it would probably be wrong for you to try. But that still leaves you 20 other choices and lots of potential.

You are already powerful but if you want to, you could be more powerful. Darth Vader or Obi-Wan Kenobi? You choose.

1 TECHNICAL POWER

Personal power that comes from our technical knowledge, skills, expertise and experience. It is the power we have that comes from simply being good at our job. But this alone will never be enough.

This book starts with Technical Power simply because it is essential. It is the bedrock for everything else. Your workplace is probably a meritocracy, meaning that people should get promoted because they are good at their job. I readily accept that this is not always the case and that we look at some promotions and wonder how that person got dressed unaided. The organisation might say that it is a meritocracy but that does not mean it is always fair, rational or right. But that's life and it doesn't make the pursuit of Technical Power wrong or a waste of time.

Despite this unfairness, having Technical Power is still very important for our career success. Indeed, in a competitive workplace, being bad at a job normally has very bad career implications.

We see Technical Power at work when the debate is either won or at least influenced because people are persuaded by expertise and experience. We are not normally seconded to projects because of our good looks, sense of humour or because we support the same sports team as the project leader. No, we are usually recruited for the skills, expertise and experience we can bring. This is our Technical Power at its simplest.

Technical Power is not about age. I recently met a delegate on one of my Politics at Work workshops who worked as a special advisor to the global board at an insurance business. He specialised in complexity theory and systems thinking and it was his job to make future sense of the insurance market for them. He was central to decision making at the highest level. And he was 25! At dinner, he tried to explain to us why the Scottish Independence Referendum that night would finish 55%/45%. The following morning, we saw that he was exactly right.

Technical Power can also be abused. In the first Jurassic Park film, you might remember how a disgruntled IT employee shuts down the safety systems and locks everyone out of the computer network, ostensibly for personal gain. Remember, the choices we make about power and what we do with it is personal.

Having Technical Power is clearly an enabler to career success. I encourage you with your Continuous Professional Development (CPD) and pursuit of development opportunities but the downside is that organisations are often full of talented people with Technical Power. At a promotion board with three candidates, all with roughly equal levels of skills, expertise and experience, the decision will often be influenced by other factors. Perhaps the other sources of power lie elsewhere in this book.

This book starts with Technical Power simply because your acquisition of it probably got you in the door. For upward career movement, Technical Power is more of a hygiene factor and a source that almost everyone has. So from here on, this will not be the only answer.

Positive Use of Technical Power

When it is used to influence decisions that are right for the business.

Abuse of Technical Power

When the intention is to use it for personal gain at the expense of another e.g. locking someone out of the computer network.

The Psychology

Psychologist Abraham Maslow identified in his hierarchy of needs that there is a human motivation towards growth and development. Unhelpfully, he called this self-actualisation. And the Greeks have Physis (fie-sis) which means the natural energy for growth, change and development that is found in all living things and is used to describe the drive within us towards full realisation of our potential.

Most of us want to do a good job even if we find ourselves in work that we don't love. It seems intrinsically linked to our self-esteem. And if we are in a job that we hate then much of that feeling probably comes from the frustration with not moving forward with our careers. There is a natural desire in human beings to develop and get better at whatever we do. For most of us, the development of Technical Power in any field comes naturally. But I repeat, on its own, it will never be enough.

The Hint

Keep your CPD up to date. Keep looking for new projects, experiences and qualifications to increase your Technical Power. If you are seconded to project teams or given specialist work, this will be the biggest validation about what your Technical Power might be and also how much it is visible or valued.

Coaching Session

1. What Technical Power do you notice in your colleagues?
2. How much influence does Technical Power have in your workplace?
3. What has greater influence than Technical Power where you work?
4. What do you need to do to increase your Technical Power?
5. When is your next opportunity to explicitly use your Technical Power?

2 NETWORK POWER

Personal Power that comes from our network of contacts, associates, friends and useful people.

An uncomfortable cliché is: “It’s not what you know, it’s who you know.” In a survey for the Daily Telegraph, July 2016, 65% agreed that fundamentally: “Who you know matters more than what you know.” Perhaps this has always been so.

What we know is still vital, as we explored in the first chapter on Technical Power. It’s just that organisations, however they are structured, are still networks of connections between human beings and this is what makes Network Power so important.

Of course, natural extroverts have an advantage here. If you are at the more introverted end of the personality spectrum, any importance attached to Network Power appears to be very bad news indeed. If this is you, then there is a good chance that the choice of work you do requires more technical skill than interpersonal. You won’t feel the need to be with people to have a satisfying day at work. And the better news is that in this technological age of LinkedIn, email and with so much communication happening virtually, things are easier. But the need for Network Power is still essential, even for us introverts.

Regardless of our introvert or extrovert bias, the hard work required to build Network Power is the same and it is not about simply collecting people, it is about connecting them. If you have ever been to an event where time was set aside for networking, you will know how depressing it can be to have multiple business cards thrust at you indiscriminately. Networks need to be fed with mutual interest or it simply becomes a numbers game.

Developing Network Power is also about thinking tactically about people and strategically about relationships, a thought that you might feel uncomfortable with. What makes this approach justified is what you hope to achieve from it. If you are building your Network Power to make things happen for mutual gain then is there any harm? If you are creating Network Power to build an empire, to create an “in crowd” (and by its very nature, a corresponding “out crowd”) then this might not be in the best interests of your business. You are likely to get a reputation as a political animal and not in a good way.

A network is not necessarily about knowing lots of people but it is about having an on-going relationship with people who can help you and who you in turn can help. Furthermore, it is not always about connecting with people who you find easy agreement with. Sure, that helps and feels comfortable and natural but have the courage and curiosity to also connect with those who you can argue with in a constructive manner. Their opposition to your views will provide you with a different and sometimes valuable perspective.

All this takes time and investment and in a world of work filled with multiple priorities, it is easy for this to slip down our “to do” list. Remember, 65% agreed that fundamentally: “Who you know matters more than what you know.”

Positive Use of Network Power

When you build a network of mutually beneficial relationships.

Abuse of Network Power

When people are collected for personal gain and no investment in the relationship is created, and the longer-term plan is to exploit the network, not nurture it.

The Psychology

Malcolm Gladwell, in his best-selling book, “The Tipping Point”, identified a vital group of people he called The Connectors. He claimed that these professionals have a social network of approximately four times the size of regular people. No one expects you to operate at that level but it shows what can be achieved. And if you need to make a big improvement in your Network Power, finding a Connector is a great place to start. The fact is that some of us are better equipped socially and psychologically for this work but however you feel about it, it is worthwhile.

If you don't know it already then search for Stanley Milgram's Small World Experiment, or if you are feeling more playful try “Six degrees of Kevin Bacon.” The hypothesis with all these is that any two strangers in the world are in fact connected by just six other connections. All you have to do is reach out to your first connection to begin your Network Power. Remember, all organisations are networks of connections between human beings, which makes Network Power so important.

The Hint

Being introverted is no excuse for not creating your Network Power. I know plenty of extroverts who dislike networking as much anyone. It is hard work for most of us but it is relationship work that makes our technical work so much easier in the long run.

Coaching Session

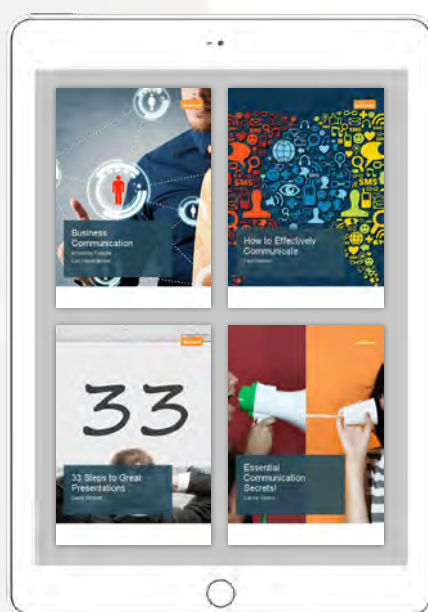
1. Who are the best Connectors in your workplace?
2. How can you connect with them for mutual gain?
3. Once connected to a Connector, who can they in turn connect you with?
4. How up to date is your LinkedIn profile?
5. How useful might some formal learning about networking be for you?

3 RESOURCE POWER

Personal Power that comes from resources we control e.g. budgets, information, favours, projects, promotions or even access to the stationery cupboard.

If we want a quick insight into our Resource Power then we focus on what it is that people ask us for. Not the rubbish assignments that some people try to dump on us, but the things they actually ask us for. The reason they are asking is because they need us. If they didn't, they probably wouldn't, so take note of what they ask for. As indicated above, this could be information about sales, project status reports or even access to the stationery cupboard, which I acknowledge is an awesome power in itself.

I deliberately include access to the stationery cupboard to make a point. Not all of us have budgets to allocate, promotions to award or access to business critical data that we can share or trade. But that is not the point of Resource Power. It can also be the smaller stuff that people need. And this can be just as powerful.



Discover our eBooks on
Communication Skills
and hundreds more

[Download now](#)

bookboon

In my time at Virgin, I noticed that even the most junior product managers would have fantastic resource power. As a result of their industry contacts, they could get anyone into just about any show or concert. And they knew it. It was quite common to see Directors fawning and charming these juniors to get tickets. And the product managers would often take the opportunity to get something small in return, even if it was just the opportunity to build the relationship, create some indebtedness or raise their profile.

And this is partly the problem with Resource Power; it is transactional. Once the tickets are handed over the transaction is finished and the power is gone – or at least until the next time. So those few moments between the request and the transaction is the place where this power source can be used or abused.

This transactional dynamic applies to every interaction where Resource Power is used. As someone using Resource Power, you have a choice about how you want to use this. Do you want to simply act in a highly collaborative way and comply with every request for information or permission? Or do you see each transaction as an opportunity to trade rather than share? Your choice will probably be determined by your personal values and influenced by the corporate culture that you work in, but remember that you and your fellow managers will make a personal choice with Resource Power transactions. Some will share while others will choose to trade.

I appreciate that this might sound political, and for some of you perhaps even an abuse of power, but that is what makes power such a fascinating subject. We all have power but our motivations for using it can be very different.

Positive Use of Resource Power

When resources are shared or traded fairly for the benefit of all stakeholders and this benefits the business. Or at least, no harm is done.

Abuse of Resource Power

When resources are deliberately and unfairly withheld to make another's work fail and this is to the detriment of the business.

The Psychology

As children, we learn very quickly that our parents hold the Resource Power within the family unit and we need to charm, manipulate or perhaps even throw a tantrum to get them to trade. We want to go to the park? Well, we have to tidy our room first. We want ice cream for dessert? Well, first we have to eat our greens. As a teenager, in order to get permission to stay out late at the party, what concessions did we have to agree to?

For most of us, we grow up in a family culture of Resource Power and this proved an ideal training ground in how to use or abuse it. So as we move into the world of work, we encounter the same dynamics. What we need to decide is not if we have Resource Power – we all do – but what is it we have and how do we want to use it?

The Hint

The next time someone rocks up at your desk and asks you for something, remember this is an insight into your resource power.

Coaching Session

1. What Resource Power do you notice that colleagues around you have?
2. What Resource Power do you control?
3. When was the last time you used your Resource Power?
4. Do you naturally share or trade when your Resource Power is engaged?
5. How comfortable might you feel if you traded instead of shared?

4 IMAGE POWER

Personal Power that comes from the image we project.

We now live in a world that is ever more image conscious. Famous people spend a fortune, not just cultivating the right image, but also protecting it with image rights that are legally defended. None of this would happen if Image Power were not important.

You may not be as famous as Beyoncé, Beckham or Brangelina so hopefully you will not have to spend too much time and money defending your image rights. But that does not mean that our Image Power at work should be underestimated.

Yes, I agree that in the world of work, what we deliver should always be more important than the image we project around it and that is broadly true. (See Technical Power if you skipped that bit.) But the right image, and by that I mean an image that is congruent to the work we do, is no less vital to career success.

Clothes are not the only important part of Image Power but a good place to start and the easiest to change. This does not mean spending a fortune on a new wardrobe of designer clothes, but if you are the sort of person who needs only the slightest excuse for shopping then go ahead. What congruence means is wearing the right clothes in the right context.

I suggest it is unlikely that you would put on beachwear for a funeral or dress as a bride at a wedding (unless, of course, it is your wedding day). So dressing congruently is more important than having the best clothes.

Yes, if you work in marketing or the creative industries you will need to appear perhaps more individual, even quirky, but that is still to be congruent to that context.

It used to be that the corporate world was conformist, where for men a dark suit, lighter shirt and the tie of the month was required but this is increasingly loosening up. Women have always enjoyed a wider image range to choose from although, in many ways, just as restrictive. And then there is dress down Friday where the rules are supposedly relaxed but this just means more choice, not less conformity. The rules might be relaxing but congruence still applies. Lycra cycle shorts are still not acceptable under any circumstances.

The right hair cut, well-kept nails, excellent personal hygiene and the right choice of bag and shoes are all equally important regardless of gender.

Image Power is not about being part of the beautiful, elite top 5% of society. There are plenty of unattractive people in business, politics and the media who nevertheless have strong Image Power regardless of their looks. If you are curious about the power of beautiful people, this is explored in more detail in Physical Power later.

Positive Use of Image Power

When we dress congruently because we regard our image as a reflection of our personal standards and skills. And this helps us feel good and perform better.

Abuse of Image Power

When we deliberately use our Image Power to upstage another or to embarrass our boss or business.

The Psychology

The famous UCLA researcher, Albert Mehrabian, claims that only 7% of our impact comes from what we say and 38% of our impact comes from how we say the words we say. That leaves a massive 55% of impact coming from what we look like, our Image Power.

If you have ever been to an event and have misunderstood the dress code, then you will know the psychological impact and how much this can affect your confidence and self-esteem. Wearing the same dress as the hostess can be embarrassing and wearing the wrong team colours at a sporting event can have serious consequences for how we feel and, in turn, how others react to us.

My Image Power involves a daily shave before going to work with a client. Some of my friends have been kind enough to suggest I look good in a “rugged” sort of way with a day or two of Beckham-like stubble but for me it does not work. I feel unclean, unready and it affects how confident I feel about myself. Image Power is about congruence but it is also about what works for us personally.

It is worth getting some help if like me you are style blind because, for most of us, getting our image right is connected to our self-confidence and self-esteem.

Except for my friend Naz. Naz is a British born Asian who works for an American bank in London. He is 6'4" tall, stick thin, has wild hair, only one suit that not only does not fit but it also looks as if he sleeps in it. His shoes are always scuffed, his shirts never ironed and food spillages are in evidence in random places. Naz argues that this is his image and that it is carefully cultivated. Naz is, however, simply awesome at his job and in his organisation nearly indispensable. I suspect that his Technical Power and Resource Power are helping him out. But can you risk being Naz?

The Hint

There is plenty of help out there to get our image right, regardless of gender. And there is no excuse for poor personal hygiene or grooming. We can get our colours done, get properly measured and even have personal shoppers and style consultants to help.

Coaching Session

1. What cultural clues do you notice in your workplace about image?
2. For congruence, do you need your image to blend in or stand out?
3. What feedback can you get about how your image is perceived?
4. What are the clothes that help you feel powerful, confident and professional?
5. What are the formal appearance guidelines in your organisation and how can you interpret these to your advantage?

5 INTERPERSONAL POWER

Personal Power that comes from our people skills such as rapport, listening, building trust and having people like us.

In chapter two, we discussed Network Power and how important who you know is as well as what you know. Interpersonal Power is an important complimentary source that works to enhance Network Power. In fact, there is little point having a lot of people in a network if when we meet with them we do not have the required interpersonal skills to deepen and enhance the relationship or influence them.

In my work as a consultant, Interpersonal Power is that collection of finely tuned behaviours that I use to create rapport, build trust and invite people to like me. And I do mean invite. None of this guarantees success and my experience is that I cannot force people to like me (more's the pity) but I can do a lot to invite them to like me.

Interpersonal Power comprises the behaviours that we use to sell, diffuse conflict, get an upgrade on a flight or invite someone out on a hot date. It is a life skill and as a source of power it has a very wide application, not just in our work.

And there is a huge sub-set of skills to Interpersonal Power that broadly involves; making eye contact, listening as an active participant in conversation, using our body language to best effect, using our voice skilfully, choosing the right words, being diplomatic, having a good handshake and asking good questions.

Successful estate agents or realtors have finely tuned Interpersonal Power at the core of what they do. They smile when you smile, they may deliberately touch you empathically on the shoulder, mirror and match your body language, use the same words and figures of speech that you use. They work right on the edge between building rapport and manipulation. I do not believe that all estate agents are evil, indeed if you are in that line of work then I apologise, but I do notice that the best scammers, conmen and confidence tricksters also have strongly developed Interpersonal Power. Again, this source of power is neither inherently good nor evil but what we do with it might be.

Interpersonal Power comes easier to some of us than others. The good news is that this is an area where plenty of support is available. Indeed, it is one of the few sources of power that most employers support through training and coaching programmes so help is probably available should you need it. Attached somewhere to your job description, there is probably a competency framework or set of behaviours that you are required to demonstrate. And whatever form that behaviour framework takes, it is unlikely to include shouting, swearing, “talking to the hand”, interrupting, talking over others and what most of us consider rudeness.

Yes, it is also possible that you have met senior people who have somehow managed to be successful despite an apparent absence of Interpersonal Power. They seem to have completely missed the 101 interpersonal skills for beginners course that was available to them. And furthermore, no one seems to be able to modify their behaviour despite the competency framework mentioned above. But we notice that this has not been a major impediment to their success, perhaps because they have used other sources of power that suit them better. And so could we.

That is not to say that Interpersonal Power is not worth developing. It most certainly is, and to some extent we have been developing this source of power our whole life starting with the “training” that our parents provided. If you are a parent, you will know just how charming small children can be when they want something. My point is just that; if Interpersonal Power does not come easily and we can get away without it, then time is probably better spent focusing our development on building our strengths and not compensating for weaknesses.

Positive use of Interpersonal Power

When we are using these skills in an authentic way to enhance our job performance and the net result is that we are more effective at our work.

Abuse of Interpersonal Power

If we are using Interpersonal Power to deceive, manipulate and influence people for selfish gain.

The Psychology

In a crowded restaurant, we can tell at a distance the couples who are in rapport and those who are not. At the bar, we notice when two people are strongly attracted to each other as well as that group of lads where a fight is brewing. Regardless of your age on reading this, you have already spent a lifetime noticing what good rapport and the execution of fine Interpersonal Power looks like, sounds like and feels like.

When we are in rapport with someone, it feels natural, comfortable and it requires no effort. At the psychological level, we unconsciously mirror and match body language and word patterns, even down to rate of breathing and we seldom notice that we are doing so. And when we are not in rapport the opposite physical patterns are present. If we notice this lack of rapport and our intention is good, then making small shifts to engineer rapport is possible and appropriate. When we make that conscious shift then we are engaging our Interpersonal Power.

The Hint

Regardless of our levels of self-awareness, getting feedback from trusted colleagues about our interpersonal skills is a valuable insight we can use to develop our Interpersonal Power to greater effect.

Coaching Session

1. What messages about professional behaviour does your employer attach to your job e.g. Competency Framework?
2. How can you use these messages to develop your Interpersonal Power?
3. With every conversation you have today, notice the small shifts in your approach from person to person. What might that indicate about your levels of skill, flexibility and Interpersonal Power?
4. Who are the people you find it hardest to build rapport with? How can you subtly mirror and match what they do in conversation to improve rapport and the relationship?
5. As a fun experiment, can you find someone to deliberately and overtly mirror and match everything you do in a conversation? How did that feel? What learning can you draw from that experiment?

6 INTRAPERSONAL POWER

Personal Power that comes from our emotional intelligence that in turn builds self-confidence, self-esteem and self-knowledge.

This is one of the more unusual sources of power in this book. Whereas the other sources are often to do with what we do, who we know, what we have and how we behave, Intrapersonal Power is less obvious and harder to pin down because it is all about the inner self confidence and esteem. But while this is hidden from others, it drives much of what others experience about us. It is the larger part of the iceberg that is hidden beneath the surface.

One of the curious theories about humans is that we are (probably) the only creatures on earth that can think about how we think. This means that we can actively change the way we think and how we feel but only if we choose to. For example, have you ever decided in a particular situation not to be upset? Perhaps you inwardly said to yourself, “I’m just not going to let that bother me.” You know that you could be upset if you wanted to but to choose not to be is a decision that you made internally, and it therefore drives our behaviour and consequently what other people experience. And when we do this well, this is the manifestation of our Intrapersonal Power.

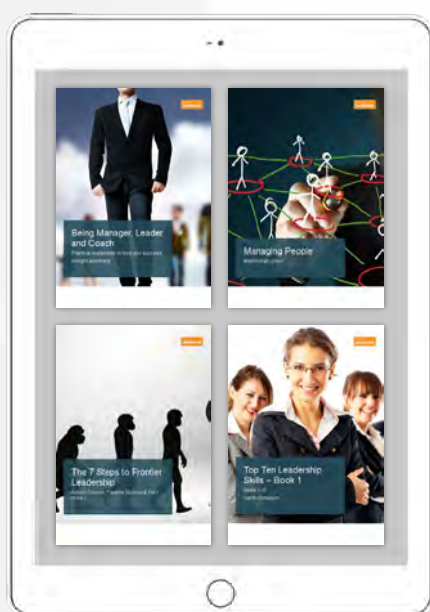
Some of you might argue: “But I am highly-strung, passionate and of Italian extraction so I can’t do anything but act on my feelings.” But think, who is in control of your emotions, your thinking and feelings? Is it you or are you at the mercy of others and your cultural upbringing? Do you really want others controlling your emotions? Others might attempt to manipulate your emotions but the decisions about how to feel will still be yours, unless you decide to give away your Intrapersonal Power.

This ability to choose our response is often referred to as Emotional Intelligence and when applied skilfully it becomes our Intrapersonal Power.

And it takes time to develop. We notice how children experiencing the “terrible two’s” have a very short gap between something they don’t like happening and their reaction to it. If you have ever seen a small child in a supermarket having a tantrum, you will notice that they have not yet developed sufficient emotional intelligence and enough self-awareness to know that they can choose their response. This only happens as we develop our Emotional Intelligence.

This does not mean leading a bland, passionless, emotionless existence where every emotion is a logical decision. I immediately cried when holding my new born son for the first time. I still celebrate wildly when my football team scores an important goal and I laugh spontaneously at good jokes at the comedy club. Intrapersonal Power still means experiencing the full range of human emotions but it is to know when to engage our Emotional Intelligence. To witness Intrapersonal Power is to experience someone decide to take control of their thinking, feeling and behaving and consciously make the best choices because, in that vital moment, it is the best thing to do.

At work, it is the admiration we have for the team member who shows calmness under pressure or who reacts well in an emergency. It is the manager who motivates us and knows how to build confidence and self-esteem in others. It is the team member who knows how to lighten a tense debate or the airplane cabin crewmember who reacts politely to the unreasonable behaviour of a passenger. All these are examples of high levels of emotional intelligence driving what we experience as Intrapersonal Power.



Discover our eBooks
on **Leadership Skills**
and hundreds more

Download now

bookboon

Yet this is not always so easy. I will freely admit that there have been times in my life where I have failed. When my son was experiencing a particularly difficult time at school with bullying, after a year of complaining and still nothing happening, we met with the school heads. At that meeting, their starting position was to suggest that he had forged and sent abusive letters to himself as a cry for help. I will admit that in that moment I was so enraged at the unfairness and their determination to cover it up to protect the school's reputation that I was unable to stop myself from shouting at them. It was not the best choice of reaction in the moment. It made a difficult situation worse and badly affected my self-esteem. I am supposedly a trained professional at this sort of thing but my Emotional Intelligence failed and in that vital meeting, I lost my Intrapersonal Power.

Positive use of Intrapersonal Power

When we make the best choice about how to react to events and this benefits everyone involved.

Abuse of Intrapersonal Power

When we allow our emotions to overrule our behaviour and this causes damage to others and our own self-confidence or esteem.

The Psychology

The roots of Intrapersonal Power lie in our self-knowledge and how wisely we react to differing stimulus and situations. Knowing that “she always winds me up” is a useful insight and should act as a warning. If I still allow myself to be wound up by her then that is to blame someone else for my lack of Emotional Intelligence. And it is to diminish my Intrapersonal Power.

This source of power might be one of the more complex ideas in this book but the good news is that it is a well-researched area. For a greater psychological insight, Steve Peters is an author and an Olympic standard coach. In his best selling book, “The Chimp Paradox”, he expands on these ideas in an approachable and informative way. Daniel Goleman wrote the best selling book, “Emotional Intelligence”, and he is widely acknowledged by many as the originator of these ideas. He also suggests that it is not our IQ but our EQ (Emotional Quotient) that is more important to career success.

The Hint

With Intrapersonal Power, we tend not to immediately notice those who have it and instead we more easily notice those who do not. As an experiment, start to listen more closely to your own inner dialogue, the conversations you have with yourself about people and situations. What do you need to change about the way you think and what would give you more Intrapersonal Power?

Coaching Session

1. Who are the people with whom you consistently end up with a bad result when you interact with them?
2. Instead of blaming them for the outcomes, what can you learn about yourself and usefully change?
3. If you listen to your inner dialogue (the way you talk to yourself), what does that tell you about how your thinking is currently programmed?
4. What are the situations that affect your Intrapersonal Power and how can you use this awareness to programme a different, more positive outcome?
5. What are the situations where your Intrapersonal Power is at its most potent? How might you transfer this success to other situations?

7 COERCION POWER

Personal Power that comes from aggressive behaviour, intimidation, threats and even violence.

In a work context, the use of Coercive Power is normally not only unacceptable but it is also mostly illegal. Most organisations legislate against Coercive Power through their stated values and other mechanisms that guide and control our behaviour at work. But Coercive Power still exists. And the bad news is that, regardless of the legislation, it still gets used even though we can get fired for using it.

Coercive Power is not the long-suffering employee who just can't take it anymore and suddenly lashes out at a bad manager in a moment of weakness. That would be to lack the Emotional Intelligence and Intrapersonal Power we discussed earlier.

Neither is it the manager who, having failed by every other means to get a vital message across to the team, decides to bang the table, shout and use more colourful language. That is a one off, perhaps a deliberate choice, out of character and designed to underline the seriousness of the situation. That would be to use Emotional Intelligence and demonstrate Intrapersonal Power.

Coercive Power is different. It is to use threats, intimidation and perhaps even violence knowingly, deliberately and with intent to damage or intimidate others. It is bullying in the workplace and it is one of the darker sources of power up for discussion in this book. And the really bad news is that it works. And worse, some people are just fine with that.

While consulting in a supermarket chain I heard of something called "Chiller Chat". Upon enquiring further, the supervisors told me that when there were performance issues they would regularly take employees into one of the huge, meat freezers in the store. They would lock the door and in that cold, alien, sound-proofed environment, they could get away with whatever behaviour they wanted to. They gleefully pointed out to me that there were no witnesses and that it would be "their word against mine."

As a young employee, I once dared to disagree with a more senior manager with a reputation for aggression. He glared at me and said: "Go ahead, report it but then go think about how you will pay your rent next month." At least my landlord was happy with my choice.

My Google searches for this book threw up countless examples of Employment Tribunal case studies that were full of acts or threats of sexual violence, perpetrated mostly by men against women.

But they also contained examples of women using sexuality to intimidate men. It would seem that both genders have ways of harnessing Coercive Power. Coercive Power is not about gender, it is about our values as human beings and how we decide to view and treat others.

A major shock happened when, in 2015, two directors on the global board of a famous financial services company both committed suicide. They did not blame the long hours and demands of a high-performance culture. No, they explicitly blamed bullying. Notice that at all levels in the organisation, no one is immune from the impact of Coercive Power.

Positive Use of Coercive Power

When it is a life and death situation and there really is no other alternative.

Abuse of Coercive Power

When it is a deliberate act designed to intimidate others and gain an unfair advantage.

The Psychology

One set of interlocking psychological ideas is called Neuro-Linguistic Programming (N.L.P.). N.L.P. makes the bold claim that “every act of human behaviour has a positive intent.” I challenged this by asking what the positive intent might have been when Hitler persecuted the Jews? From a historical perspective, and my own, it was an illegal act of genocide with nothing positive about it. However, Hitler’s positive intent was to rescue the German nation from recession and depression by declaring war and creating an enemy within.

So Coercive Power might do damage but the individual who initiates it has a motivation that is nonetheless positive to them. That still does not make it right but it does help us to partly understand why it still happens.

In the theory of Transactional Analysis (T.A.), there are four “life positions” one of which is “I’m ok, you’re not ok.” And humans who hold this view of others believe that they are superior and have the right to treat people as inferiors. Again, that does not make their use of Coercive Power right but it helps us to understand why some managers feel that this is acceptable.

The Hint

Despite all these theories about positive intent, I cannot recommend the use of Coercive Power. Not only is it illegal in many of its forms, it simply does not align with my personal values about how I want to treat people. In this book I work mostly to offer a choice, not my opinion. However, Coercive Power is not for me (unless you threaten my family) but you might hold a different “life position” and feel otherwise.

Coaching Session

1. Who do you know that uses Coercive Power at work?
2. What do you notice about the impact of their choice? Both the good and the bad?
3. How might you feel if you were to use Coercive Power?
4. What might be the consequences for you of using Coercive Power?
5. Before using Coercive Power, what other options could you consider that might have the same impact but a more positive outcome for everyone?

8 STATUS POWER

Personal Power we get from the mandate that comes with our job. A Chief Financial Officer will always have more perceived status power than Baldrick in the Mail Room but looks can be deceptive.

“Do you know who I am?” raged the executive to the airline check in staff. The woman remained cool, picked up her microphone and over the loudspeaker asked the entire airport: “I have a gentleman here, black suit, light blue shirt, yellow tie, approximately 5’10”, maybe 45 years old. Can anyone on the concourse help? He does not know who he is.”

It seems that using status to get what we want might be legitimate but it can go badly wrong. I notice in my work that there is a stigma about using Status Power, especially in western organisations that claim to be non-hierarchical, values driven and with a flatter structure.

But that does not mean Status Power is not there. In the drop-dead coolness of the Virgin business culture, no one gave the work experience kid in the mailroom any attention for the first few days until it was leaked that he was the nephew of Sir Richard Branson. Suddenly everything changed.

In my workshops, delegates are invited to select from the 100 word cards in my research that they think best describes where their power comes from. In the hundreds of workshops I have run using this exercise, the Status card is rarely selected by anyone, except by those in the Far East.

When this happens, I pick up the rejected Status Card and ask the delegates why they ignored this obvious possibility. I point out that Status has been central to organisational design, decision-making and psychology since we lived in caves and sat around campfires. Why not pick Status Power? And usually their thinking is that explicitly using status is simply not a cool way to make things happen.

So I ask them what their job titles are. They say: “vice president of international sales” or “EMEA operations director” or “chief underwriting officer, Asia Pac.” Then they smile and immediately get where I am going with this. Overtly using status power might be uncool but it is certainly there and it is not so hard to see. Everyone in the organisation knows who the high-status folks are, they just don’t need to go around shouting about it like the unhappy executive in the airport. People naturally recognise status and navigate accordingly.

Of course, I do meet people who have high status and don't consider using it uncool at all. And the ones who do it well are enlightened folks who know that intervening as the boss is the right thing to do at the right time and the team welcome the fact that someone has made the decision, even if it comes down to ruefully conceding that "you're the boss."

And when working with young, ambitious graduates, the status card is noticeably more desirable because their thinking is that, if you have it, you have power and can make things happen. But they don't always appreciate that having high status does not always mean that you can get what you want. Ask Barack Obama how his reform of USA gun law went. At one time, he was not only the most powerful, high status man in the USA but probably in the world. But even he was powerless to make this reform happen.

Positive Use of Status Power

When you need to "be the boss" and it is your call to make.

Abuse of Status Power

When you are using status to exploit people unfairly or because your ego is out of control.

The Psychology

The pursuit of status is a fundamental human motivator so we should not be ashamed of any desire to acquire it but we do need to be wise about how we use it. In 1943, in his Hierarchy of Needs, Abraham Maslow sub-divided his category of Esteem (the second highest) to include what he described as a "lower" set of esteem needs that included; status, recognition, fame, prestige and attention. Status is second only to Self-Actualisation. However uncool it may feel, let us not kid ourselves that it is not important.

The Hint

If you have high status, it is ok to use it when the time is right. Do this and your team will probably respect you, even if they disagree with you. However, having high status does not give you the right to be late for everything, avoid eye contact, be supercilious, jump the queue or look down on those of lower status. Doing that just makes you look like an idiot. And when that happens, people will conspire against you behind your back.

A P.A. once confessed to me that her boss (whom I was about to meet as a potential client) was always lording his high status over the team and specifically her. It was not her job but everyday she was ordered to the cafeteria to bring him his tuna sandwich (light mayo, no sweet corn, rye bread, just a little salt, no pepper, crusts trimmed). And everyday, as she ascended in the elevator to deliver it to him, she would open up the sandwich, spit in it and reseal it before presenting it to him with a beaming smile. High status is a privilege not a right, so use it wisely.

If you are yet to achieve high status, always remember it does not necessarily mean power but pursuing it is natural and still worthwhile.

Coaching Session

1. What explicit messages about status does your organisation make?
2. What more subtle cultural clues do you notice?
3. To what extent do you notice the explicit use of high status in your organisation?
4. What do you need to do to acquire more Status Power?
5. What examples can you find of the skilful use of Status Power?

9 IMPACT POWER

Personal Power that comes from our personal impact, our ability to create a strong first impression and to sustain it.

Melanie and I were late, 47 minutes late, not good. We stood outside the imposing double doors to the conference room and could just hear the Director of Learning and Development (our bosses, bosses boss) leading a group of twenty other trainers through a discussion. Melanie wanted to sneak in at the next break but I really wanted to hear this section of the mini-conference. After a brief but strongly whispered argument, we decided to go in. At impact level 7 out of 10.

(Impact level 1 would be someone like the film character Mr Bean, whereas impact level 10 is Queen singer Freddy Mercury on stage.)

We pushed open the double doors, walked in side by side for a few paces and stopped. Everyone looked across and stared. We looked around, smiled, made eye contact, said “good morning”, apologised for being late and sat down. The director continued. Nothing else happened. Later that day, in a discussion about personal impact, someone was kind enough to say that they wished they had the sort of personal impact we had displayed earlier in the day.

Personal impact is what we do to create the judgement others form about us within the first seven seconds of meeting. It is that combination of handshake, eye contact, poise, body language, facial expression, external confidence, assertiveness and clothing that sends a message about who and what we are before we do almost anything else. And the really great news is that we alone control it.

Notice that Melanie and I decided to enter the conference room at impact level 7. Level 10 might have appeared disrespectful especially as we were late. Level 3 would have been to creep in and cower at the back mumbling an apology. Level 7 felt about right. It felt achievable and appropriate. And it worked.

So personal impact is something that we have control over. We can make a conscious decision about what level of impact we want to have in any situation. And when we do it well and at the appropriate level for the situation, we generate Impact Power.

In my Internet searches for this chapter, I came across the same two clichés again and again: “You never get a second chance to make a first impression” and “The first 7 seconds are vital.” I acknowledge that the story with Melanie and me goes a long way to supporting this view however, in this digital age, this is worth challenging.

I have a website for my business, a Facebook page, an Amazon Author Page, a Twitter account and I am on LinkedIn. I write articles, am quoted in newspapers and have made You Tube video shorts to promote my books. I have even recorded two albums of original songs and made a few TV appearances. I am not exactly invisible on the Internet.

And so it is rare that I meet someone who has not checked me out online before meeting me in person. That first seven seconds might have been (and still are) of critical importance, but for the most part people I meet for the first time have usually formed a strong impression about me and have probably made up their minds. And so the moment of truth when they meet me is no less vital.



Discover our eBooks on
Time Management Skills
and hundreds more

[Download now](#)

bookboon

I have a teenage niece who was job hunting without success for a long time. My wife and I pleaded with her to clean up her Facebook page and her online presence and to think more carefully about the pictures she posts. She is a bright, fun, attractive teenage girl but a potential employer will have received a strong first impression before meeting her at that job interview.

Get your first impression right and it can positively validate you. Get it wrong and you damage your Impact Power.

Positive Use of Impact Power

When we get all those little things aligned to create a positive and powerful first impression that is congruent to the situation.

Abuse of Impact Power

When we use it to undermine the confidence or status of another e.g. using an impact level 10 when a 6 is required.

The Psychology

In chapter 4, Image Power, I quoted the controversial research of UCLA psychologist Albert Mehrabian. His claim that 55% of our impact comes from what we look like and 38% what we sound like is worth repeating here because, if he is right, it underlines how important these things are in that first seven seconds.

And in chapter 6, Intrapersonal Power, we discussed how our internal levels of self-confidence and esteem drive so much of our surface behaviour. Impact Power is about harnessing together the most positive aspects from those two chapters to project the right level of impact. Get it right and people are impressed and hold a positive first impression. Getting it wrong can be career limiting.

The Hint

Hold a review of your online life; how you present yourself, what impression you create and the impact this is likely to have. Remember we frequently meet people virtually before we meet them physically these days. Make the changes that create the right level of impact.

Practice the idea of variable levels of Impact Power that we discussed in this chapter. Remember that you control this, not other people, and you can consciously decide to vary it as appropriate. If you get to meet the Queen of England, level 10 will not be your optimum choice. Choose wisely.

Coaching Session

1. What is your natural level of personal impact?
2. Who might be able to provide you with feedback about the levels of personal impact that you present?
3. What one or two changes could you make that would create a better first impression?
4. Think of a time when you had to give yourself a talking to before taking the stage, entering a room or even getting on a videoconference. What did you say to yourself? What did you coach yourself into doing differently?
5. What might the outcome from that self-coaching above say about your levels of flexibility with personal impact?

10 PHYSICAL POWER

Personal Power that comes from our physical characteristics be it tall, small, beautiful, young, old etc.

This source of power is one of the few that we can't do so much about because it is all about our physical characteristics. Not what we wear or our hair style or make up (see Image Power, which is very much in our control) but our physique and the way that genetics have been kind to us or otherwise.

If we are short but wish to be tall, other than wearing very high heels, our ambition to be tall will always exceed our ability to be so. And if you are a man reading this then the high heels idea is not something I can especially recommend.

It is true that we can change our body shape and I certainly know people who have gone to great lengths to lose weight and others who have become what is disrespectfully known as "gym bunnies" in order to look and indeed be fitter and healthier. And they tell me that, as a result, they do feel better and have more confidence and self-esteem, which is fantastic. And this is perhaps to suggest that their Intrapersonal Power (discussed in chapter 6) has also increased. But later in this chapter I will demonstrate how their Physical Power has also benefitted.

But does any of this matter? I know short people who are very successful. I know many others who would not have the looks to be sought after as models to endorse men's shaving products or women's perfume but that has not been any apparent barrier to their success in other fields. I notice both the relatively young and old operating effectively at all levels of the hierarchy. I am someone who is lucky to be working in a country with equal opportunities legislation so it doesn't matter if I am black or white, male or female, tall or short. Does it? So why bother?

The uncomfortable truth is that the majority of CEO's in Fortune 500 companies are 3" taller than the average man. And yes, they are mostly men (shockingly, only 4% are women) and they are predominantly white. (Source: Gladwell 2016.)

Furthermore, according to research by David Hamermesh at the University of Texas and author of, "Beauty Pays", people with better than average looks earn approximately 4% more than regular looking folks like me. They also get hired sooner and are promoted more quickly.

And it gets worse. In a UK study of 2,000 Human Resources professionals for Personnel Today Magazine, a massive 93% said that they would favour a job applicant with normal weight over an obese applicant. 15% said that they would be less likely to promote someone who was overweight and 10% wrongly believed that they could dismiss someone for their weight. The people unkindly labelled “gym bunnies” earlier have good reason to hit the treadmills.

Regardless of the legislation, there is lots of unconscious bias operating in the workplace. It is wrong and it is unfair, especially as there seems little that we can do about it. But Physical Power is very real.

Positive Use of Physical Power

When our physique is a good match for the work that we choose to do.

Abuse of Physical Power

When people use physical size and strength to unfairly dominate. Or if attractiveness is used to unfairly influence another.

The Psychology

In my own research, a few people readily confessed, even boasted, about using their Physical Power to get what they wanted. One client said that he could easily win a debate with his peers by simply standing up to make his point. He was by any measure a physically massive human being. And a younger man said to me: “Truth is, Mike, the fact that I am a young, good-looking bloke who still has his own teeth and hair is something I am conscious of using. Is that so wrong?”

But these people were in the minority. The people who wanted or preferred the use of Technical Power, Network Power and Interpersonal Power dominated my research. It seems that most of us want a fairer workplace where our physique has nothing to do with our opportunity but we have to acknowledge that the unconscious bias is real.

The Hint

I notice that gym membership increases year on year, cosmetic surgery (for both genders) has never been more popular and health spas flourish. Unhealthy foods are now classed as “guilty pleasures” and in some countries even legislated against with sugar, salt and fat taxes. In the internet age, there has never been so much information readily available about the things we can do to change our physique.

True, we can't (easily) change gender or skin colour, and high heels only work for some of us but there are still things we can do.

There are twenty other sources of power in this book and this is one where our options are limited, so you might want to invest your development time in other sources.

Coaching Session

1. What Physical Power might you have?
2. How can you use it in a way that is ethical or at least effective?
3. If you have Physical Power and you are ambivalent about using it, that's fair enough but what impact is it having regardless?
4. Have you done all you can to militate against diminishing your Physical Power?
Have you checked the list in The Hint?
5. What other sources of power might work better for you?

11 INTEGRITY POWER

Personal Power that comes from the integrity we demonstrate; being loyal, honest and trustworthy.

In chapter 10, we discussed Physical Power and I suggested that it was one of the few sources of power that we had less control over and was harder to develop or use. But Integrity Power is entirely within our control and no less easy to nurture and sustain. Indeed, it can take years of behaving with integrity to achieve a reputation for it but only seconds to destroy it.

Richard Nixon famously claiming: “I am not a crook” or Bill Clinton adamantly defending that he did not have sex with Monica Lewinski, CEO Jeff Skilling denying that he knew anything was wrong at Enron and even that most trusted of British institutions, the BBC, having to admit that they rigged a children’s competition. All are examples of where the loss of integrity was a defining moment and led to reputation damage that was, in some cases, impossible to rebuild.

It is of course possible to be powerful and successful without integrity. Sepp Blatter, the notorious head of FIFA (and at the time of writing, facing criminal charges) allegedly operated without integrity and it was no barrier to his personal success or that of his organisation. Donald Trump boasted about his business prowess despite an obvious trail of bankruptcies and disasters, a claim that undermined his integrity but one from which he still managed to emerge as the President of the United States in 2016. For years, successive popes covered up the Catholic child abuse scandals and yet that organisation is still the single most successful religious organisation on our planet.

So perhaps we don’t need integrity? But in the world of work, most of us find it a desirable quality in others and want to achieve it for ourselves because the big advantage of having Integrity Power is that we are sought after for our views and our support.

The more Integrity Power we build, the more people trust what we say and do. In our presence, others will want to confide in us because they know that they can trust us with their vulnerability. When we speak, others listen and take note and when we make a commitment, people know we will deliver. Those without integrity fear us, and those who see it in us respond positively towards us. And all of this is entirely within our personal control to build and develop. Indeed, no one else can do this for us.

If we are given to high executive office like Clinton or Nixon, we demonstrate integrity (or not) in the big decisions and actions we take. But for most of us, we have to build it up in the small, everyday stuff.

We build it every time we tell the truth under difficult circumstances or we speak out against unfairness. Our integrity is tested every time we need to give honest and difficult feedback to a co-worker. It is tested if we have to report a manager for unethical or illegal acts when it would be easier to look away. We add to it when we do not collaborate in a conversation where an absent person is being unfairly betrayed.

Author MH McKee suggested: “Wisdom is knowing the right path to take. Integrity is taking it.” And on the same theme author CS Lewis noted: “Integrity is doing the right thing, even when no one is watching.”

Positive Use of Integrity Power

When Integrity Power is used appropriately, there really is no downside.

Abuse of Integrity Power

When it is traded cheaply for personal gain, at which point integrity is cashed in like poker chips.

The Psychology

In my own research, as the responses flooded in, I noticed that the immediate trend was for people to vote for Technical Power, Network Power and Interpersonal Power. Very few suggested integrity and that was of great curiosity and concern to me. I had already noticed that the trend in society was that trust is in ever decreasing supply but could integrity really be going the same way? Were people no longer interested in leading lives or working with integrity?

Not wishing to contaminate the research study, I left it alone to do its thing. However, as soon as I started to explore the ideas in this book with workshop groups, I got a very different response. It seemed that when asked to provide feedback to others about where their personal power comes from, the integrity card was hugely popular and offered around to many but very few people picked it for themselves. A bizarre type of natural modesty kicked in.

In the workshop discussions that followed, many suggested that Integrity Power was something that they were aspiring to, building or seeking but did not consider that they possessed or had achieved. Suddenly the mystery in my research study made more sense. As humans we know only too well our weaknesses, inconsistencies and occasions when we have damaged our inner integrity but that is not always detected by others who might experience us very differently.

The Hint

Sally Bibb, author of “Trust Matters”, compares trust to an ornate cut glass vase, beautiful and fragile. If broken, with skill, time and courage, it can be repaired, just. But when held up to the light, the cracks are still visible. I notice that trust is a major part of integrity and has the same fragility. And unless you damage it yourself, there really is no downside to Integrity Power.

Coaching Session

1. When was the last time you survived a test of your integrity?
2. What impact did that have on you?
3. What are the situations when your integrity is most tested?
4. To what extent is success possible without integrity?
5. To what extent is your personal happiness and fulfilment possible without integrity?

12 ACCESS POWER

Personal Power that comes from our ability to either allow or deny access to important people or meetings.

In most organisations there is usually an inner circle of decision makers, the real movers and shakers that decide what is actually going to happen. True, this group is usually made up of the higher status people like directors or members of a senior management team but not always. Frequently this inner circle contains people with specialist expertise or inside knowledge that makes them valuable but it might even include those who are politically important or just popular.

If we are to be influential, gaining access to this powerful inner circle will be important to our success but those who control who gets in have Access Power.

In a world of networked calendars and meeting invitations, getting on the invite list is now an important political activity/influencing challenge if we want access. Indeed, in my other books I have referenced political games that get played around access to meetings and I call these games “No Invitation” games.

Sometimes, regardless of status or suitability, some people are granted access while others are excluded. If we don't have access, it is hard to influence the inner circle while those invited in have a significant advantage. And if you have ever attempted to gain access to a fashionable nightclub or concert where there is an exclusive guest list, you may well have been confronted with the words: “If your name is not on the list, you can't come in.” And the world of work is not so different. Access Power is not to be underestimated.

In my own work, I spend lots of time as a guest in organisations where I wait to be granted access into meetings, usually with people who might want to hire me. I am keenly aware that the PA or person behind the reception desk has Access Power and if I am not at my polite and influential best then access might be denied. And these people know this.

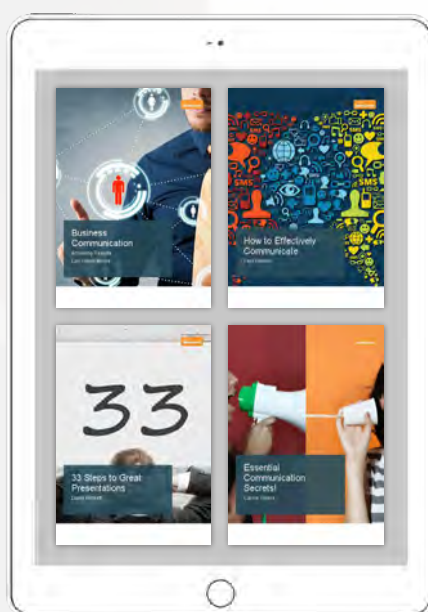
This means that people who have Access Power might not have high status or expertise but their Access Power is still significant. Where this is the case, they are often briefed by those in the inner circle about who should be allowed entry and who should not. But that does not mean that they won't flex this power and use it to punish those they do not like. Or indeed, help those they do. Like all our sources of power, a moral dimension about how Access Power gets used is open to the holder. And if you are someone who has Access Power, you will know the choices that you make can have a huge impact, both for those of the in-group and the out-group.

Positive Use of Access Power

When it is used to ensure that those gaining access are appropriate and can contribute to the work of the group.

Abuse of Access Power

When it is abused as a personal favour to include or as a punishment to exclude.



Discover our eBooks on
Communication Skills
and hundreds more

[Download now](#)

bookboon

The Psychology

1968, and in a famous experiment, Jane Elliot, a teacher in Iowa City USA, divided her class between those with blue eyes and those with brown. She informed the blue eyed children that they were superior and within a short period of time they began to scapegoat and punish their classmates with brown eyes, even though some of them had been good friends just the day before.

This shows the power of belonging to the in-group and how powerless those in the out-group can feel. The psychology of Access Power means that for anyone who controls this dynamic in the world of work, they will have power over those not in the inner circle. Furthermore, because of our need to gain access to the inner circle, we will treat those who have Access Power differently, perhaps with a deference, favour and politeness that we otherwise might not.

The Hint

The manager of the pop singer, Adele, claims he has the easiest job in the world. He says that his phone constantly rings with requests for access to Adele and that all he has to do is to consistently say “no.”

Those with Access Power have an important role to play in being the gatekeeper to the inner circle. But those with Access Power need to be aware that, like Resource Power, it is transactional in that once access is gained, the power is expended. Who gives the nightclub doorman a second thought once inside?

Coaching Session

1. Who are the folks you notice that have Access Power?
2. How would you assess the quality of relationship you have with them?
3. What could you do to improve your relationship with them before you need to ask them for access?
4. If you have Access Power, to what extent do you execute it ethically?
5. And if you do, what might be the strategic impact of this?

13 SILENCE POWER

Personal Power that simply comes from remaining silent.

It was a prestigious gala awards dinner at the Savoy Hotel in London. Everyone invited had made a significant contribution to making Britain Great. Sat on a round table of nine other people, Pete Townsend from the rock band The Who and Eric Clapton, renowned “God” of the blues guitar, ran through their entire repertoire of outrageous stories from the ’60s and ’70s. They held the table in rapt awe so no one paid much attention to the old guy who quietly ate his meal and listened. At one point he politely asked for more bread for his soup.

Eventually Townsend became aware of this silent, elderly man in his crumpled Sunday suit that was well past its best before date. Townsend asked him why he was here and what he had done to make Britain Great. All attention was suddenly focused on the elderly gent who shifted uncomfortably.

He spoke directly to Townsend but everyone listened while in modest, matter of fact tones he told of how he had been a Spitfire pilot during WW2. He had been shot down over France, captured, escaped back to England and then joined Bomber Command for whom he flew over 50 missions and collected a Victoria Cross when he crashed and burned over Germany, but still managed to get the crew back home. He said all this with a humility and complete absence of the hubris that Townsend and Clapton had displayed. He had waited and earned the respect that he deserved by skilfully demonstrating Silence Power.

Meanwhile, in our workplace, we can do the same. If we are in a forum where we are known to have something to contribute, some expertise or perhaps a strong view, the longer we remain silent just listening to the debate, the more curious and unsettled some people get about our silence.

If we watch, listen and wait, we can take in the positions and arguments of our opponents. Our silence can make them uncomfortable and perhaps begin to fluster. We gather information and wait, just like the Spitfire pilot, for the moment when speaking will have the most impact after exercising our Silence Power.

Positive Use of Silence Power

When we act with positive intent and are waiting for exactly the right moment to contribute.

Abuse of Silence Power

When we remain silent when we should come to the aid of a colleague in need but we deny them our support, leaving them to flounder and to fail.

The Psychology

Humans are social creatures and mostly find it uncomfortable to sit together in silence. And if you are at the more extrovert end of the personality profile then you probably experience social silence as torture. In my own work, I am constantly fascinated at how, by simply remaining silent, someone will inevitably speak to fill the void. Of course, I think that this is my skilful use of silence but others might experience this as me being deliberately aloof. But the point remains; silence is powerful.

Authors Greene and Elffers in their book, “48 Laws of Power”, note: “Powerful people impress and intimidate by saying less. The more you say, the more likely you are to say something foolish.” Their advice is to always say less than is necessary. And while I dislike this negative and manipulative outlook on power, I do take the above point. The question will always be the moral choice we make, our intent and the agenda we are pursuing by using Silence Power.

In the best seller, “Getting to Yes!”, Authors Fisher, Ury and Patton have a list of good negotiation behaviours. One is: “Don’t dilute your argument.” While they do not advocate silence, they too notice that the more we say the less powerful we are perceived to be and the more likely we are to make a mistake and hand the advantage to our opponent.

The Hint

Abraham Lincoln, 16th President of the United States said that it could be: “Better to remain silent and be thought of as a fool, than to speak out and remove all doubt.” But I would equally argue that to have something profound and influential to contribute but to wait in silence for exactly the right moment to speak is to skilfully use Silence Power.

Coaching Session

1. To what extent are you comfortable using silence?
2. How quickly do you feel the need to fill a silence?
3. What opportunities can you find to practice your Silence Power?
4. Who do you know who models this well?
5. What can you notice about their technique that you could copy or adapt into your own style?

14 CHARISMA POWER

Personal Power that comes from the charismatic quality we project.

The company had organised a social event to mark the 10th anniversary of expansion into Europe. At the head office, 200 employees mingled and chatted informally, each holding a glass of champagne in one hand and balancing a small morsel of food awkwardly in the other. Extroverts enjoyed while introverts endured as everyone waited for the speeches and the “entertainment” to begin.

Naturally, there was a lot of fawning and smiling around the Directors and the other high status folks, those perceived to have power or to be in the inner circle of power. People gravitated toward them like courtiers in a 17th Century royal palace, keen to be acknowledged or to seek grace and favour. Yes, there was some shameless sucking up going on.

But Susan stood out. She was a young manager but not one with high status or apparent influence. Looking at her she appeared almost completely unremarkable; average height, average appearance, not especially well dressed. Susan, even her name was unremarkable. (I offer my apologies to any Susans reading this.) But people were drawn to her. Even more curiously, she was someone those in the inner circle made a point of actively seeking out and connecting with. Those of high status were drawn to Susan in the same way that regular employees were drawn to them. But there was no need to fawn around her. Susan did not have high status or influence. But she did have charisma.

Until this moment, my own research (and seemingly much of the internet) mostly associates charisma as a leadership characteristic. Charisma is mostly presented as a quality that those in power might have and arguably something not real, something projected onto them by other people. Charisma is often portrayed as a mysterious X Factor quality that unhelpfully defies description. I remember informally meeting Sir Richard Branson, someone frequently associated with having charisma, and I personally found him to be lacking in this regard. Sorry Richard. But back to the unremarkable Susan, someone I needed to meet.

My first impression was of a woman with good interpersonal and social skills, a woman who projected self-confidence. But there was something else. She seemed genuinely pleased to meet me and interested in my work and, although she was initially focused on me, she continued to remain aware and connected to those around her. And as time passed I became impressed at her ability to be able to hold conversations on a wide range of subjects, knowing a little about a lot, she sustained involvement with us all. Her curiosity was endless, she asked the questions that we seemed to enjoy responding to and proved to be an excellent listener, paying attention to some of the finer details of what we said and picking up on what was implied but unspoken.

And she was so much more than a kind facilitator or curious networker. She had strong views and felt free to express them but she did this without putting anyone else down. She had a way of communicating what she thought about a subject and at the same time how she felt about it.

She would debate as if to test her understanding of a subject, not as if it were a battle to be won.

And in that moment I realised that I was completely under her spell, and subject to legal and moral constraints, would have done anything for her. The unremarkable Susan was in fact remarkable in every way and a most compelling, real life example of Charisma Power.

Positive Use of Charisma Power

When the application of our charisma is well intentioned. Remember, I confess that I would have done (almost) anything for Susan.

Abuse of Charisma Power

When it is used to seduce or manipulate someone into doing something that, were we not charismatic, they would reasonably refuse.

The Psychology

In my workshops, the Charisma card, like Integrity, is one that is seldom selected by a delegate when the question applies to them. Modesty seems to inhibit this. However, I notice that when asked to pick cards for other people about where their power comes from, the Charisma card is often in heavy demand.

It would seem that Charisma is viewed as a highly desirable source of power and I notice that the delegates are equally pleased and fascinated to be given it as part of a feedback process from their peers.

What is more remarkable to me is that, when the Charisma Card is offered to another and I listen in to what these delegates have to say, it is at best enigmatic, sometimes fluffy and always apparently unquantifiable. It seems that most people know Charisma Power when they experience it but find it an intangible power source to define or explain.

For me, meeting the woman previously known in this chapter as the unremarkable Susan and after a short time being completely captivated by her, I admit it took me a lot of thinking to understand what Charisma might be and many attempts at writing the description above containing all the elements I could identify. And I confess that I doubt I got them all.

But this is very good news for us all. Charisma Power is complex but it is not something enigmatic or mysterious and neither is it something that only those of high status possess. If you read again my description of Susan in action, it contains all the active elements for Charisma and – the best news of all – we can learn how to do this. For sure, some of us will find this easier and more natural than others but the woman, henceforth to be known as the remarkable Susan, proves that we can develop Charisma Power.

The Hint

Unhook from any association or belief you have that only high status folks can have charisma. Yes, many do have or are reported to have it, but high status does not always equal charisma. For every Steve Jobs there is a Bill Gates and for every Bill Clinton there is a George Bush.

While researching this book, I checked with a friend of mine who had been lucky enough to meet Bill Clinton while he was still the President of the United States. She said he was very charismatic and when we compared notes with what I had written about Susan, we noticed we were in agreement.

Coaching Session

1. Who do you know in your workplace that you experience as being charismatic?
2. If you had to break that down and analyse it, what is it that they do to be charismatic?
3. When they actively use their charisma as Charisma Power, what happens?
4. What impact do you notice the exercise of Charisma Power has on others when your role model applies it?
5. What small steps can you immediately take to develop your Charisma Power now that you know that anyone can have it if they want to?

15 QUESTIONING POWER

Personal Power that comes from our ability to know the right question to ask and how to ask it.

Asking questions gives us the opportunity to take control of a conversation, gain information and perhaps most importantly, change people's minds.

So much of our day to day conversation is comprised of questions that we barely notice and yet this is a significant source of power. If we take a step back for a moment, we notice how small children naturally evolve their questioning ability, even if it is mostly their insistence on repeatedly asking "why."

What is more relevant to our discussion though is how a detective uses the power of questions to uncover evidence and pressurise a suspect, and the power of the barrister who uses sophisticated questioning to cross examine a witness and influence a jury. And if you have ever been professionally coached or counselled then you will know how questions help you think more clearly and change your thinking, hopefully for the better.

If you are involved in sales, you will also be keenly aware that asking questions is the key to unblocking resistance from a buyer. Anyone involved in market research will know that the questions you ask in a survey have a huge impact on the type of information obtained. And this dynamic is not lost on some more devious organisations who design research questions specifically to get the result that they require. Questions are so powerful that we notice how politicians, when cornered in an interview, sometimes go to extreme lengths not to answer the question that would be damaging to their position but instead change it and answer their own question.

Perhaps the best news of all though, regardless of whether you are using questioning positively or otherwise, is that Questioning Power is available to us all and all it takes is a little practice and skill to become effective at it.

In my book, "21 Dirty Tricks at Work (Again!)", I outlined a simple four step process for dealing with manipulation. Step two of that process was all about asking questions and as I said at the top of this chapter, we do this to take control of a conversation, gain information and perhaps most importantly change people's minds.

Positive Use of Questions Power

When our intent is to have a positive influence on what other people are thinking as a defence from manipulation.

Abuse of Questions Power

When the intent is to unfairly intimidate someone or to manipulate a data sample to the “right” answer.

The Psychology

When we make statements in an attempt to influence others, the mental filters the other person has are automatically set to block incoming information that conflicts with their agenda or world-view. However, using Questioning Power, we can penetrate a person’s mental filters and defence mechanisms because questions cause people to think.

Everyone has a personal set of filters through which we see the world and filter incoming information but questions sneak past these filters and cause mental processing. Using PET scans researchers have proved that questions stimulate the neocortex, the place where new thinking is processed in the brain. And the only way we can access this is through Questioning Power.

The Hint

If you have done any learning about questioning technique then you will already know that questions can be broken down into specific style groups, frequently labelled; open, closed, leading, limiting, Socratic, reflective, hypothetical and rhetorical. And while they all do different things, all these categories of questions have a role to play in changing minds. This is useful to aid our understanding and improve our technique but there is nothing better than practice to master Questioning Power.

Coaching Session

1. The next time you go to a meeting, spend more time listening out for questions. What is the balance between advocacy and enquiry (telling and asking)?
2. What impact do the questions have?
3. What style of questions predominate and to what effect?
4. What questions help or hinder the process of group work?
5. Who can you observe with excellent Questioning Power that you could learn from?

16 2ND AND 3RD PERSON POWER

Personal Power that comes from our ability to put ourselves in the shoes of others to more deeply understand their thinking and feeling.

The easiest way to understand this source of power is to think about it as seeing something from another's point of view but why that should be a source of power is harder to understand. To many people, this power source simply seems a bit too empathic or to condemn it with the ultimate derogatory expression, a bit too “touchy feely.”

The predominant theme in this book is about how we tap into our sources of power and exercise them to make the things we want happen and how we use our power over other people. But here is a source of power that starts with what other people want and it does appear to be counter intuitive. But if I don't understand their viewpoint, their motivations, their needs, ambitions or fears then my choice of power is likely to be either wrong or less than optimal.

Imagine if we are in manufacturing together and that we love what we make and we get very enthusiastic about it. But also imagine if we created our expensive marketing campaign and only considered the product from our own passionate perspective. We might be successful but there is a bigger chance of spectacular failure. However, if we build our campaign around the known hopes, fears, desires and motivations of our potential customers then there is a much better chance of us using the marketing budget wisely. And when we do this understanding of others in our day to day work, then we are using our 2nd and 3rd Person Power.

If I am in an art class, drawing a sketch of a statue in the middle of the room and you are doing the same but from the other side of the room, then we are drawing the same thing but our perspectives will be different. And if I could imagine and understand your view and incorporate that thinking into my drawing, my finished artwork might have more depth of understanding and should be a better work – if only I had the smallest grain of artistic talent.

So in the world of work, the person with the awareness and insight to clearly understand the differing views of others is the one who sees the bigger picture. This might seem “touchy feely” but it is also to see the situation with the awareness of 2nd and 3rd Person Power.

Positive Use of 2nd and 3rd Person Power.

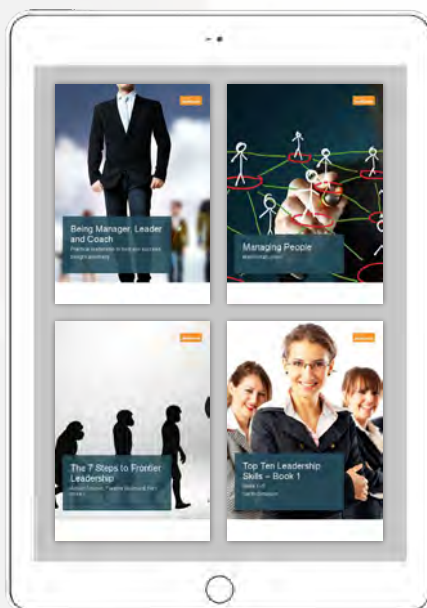
When we use our new awareness to promote a shared understanding of multiple perspectives and this enables people to do better work.

Abuse of 2nd and 3rd Person Power.

When someone uses their understanding of multiple viewpoints for gain at the expense of others.

The Psychology

One of the greatest management writers of all time is American author Stephen Covey. In his most successful work, “The Seven Habits of Highly Successful People”, he explains how powerful it is to: “Seek first to understand and then be understood.” When trying to influence others we have an innate need to be understood and that is just fine. But in our rush to be understood, it is too easy to fail to understand the views of others.



Discover our eBooks
on **Leadership Skills**
and hundreds more

Download now

bookboon

Jean-Francois Mertens (Belgian Mathematician and Theorist) is famous for his Hierarchy of Beliefs and this in turn led to the creation of the famous Prisoners in Hats puzzle. The only way to safely solve the puzzle (because a single wrong answer will lead to the immediate execution of all prisoners) is to reason about the actions of the other prisoners and only by putting yourself in the position of others can you survive.

The Hint

I was once involved in an unpleasant negotiation where carpets were wrongly fitted my house while I was away. There were angry phone calls and emails flying around. I picked up the phone and listened to an angry woman at the carpet company raging down the phone at me. I was, of course, entirely in the right but that was not to my advantage at that stage. A few days later I was seated in her office and she was still raging. When I was able to, I started by asking her to explain the situation again, but exclusively from her point of view. Over the next few minutes she not only calmed down but she also gave me information that previously I was not aware of and the dispute was soon settled. At the end of the negotiation she thanked me for “being so reasonable about it all.” As I mentioned above, I was in the right but I was not in position to influence her until I used 2nd and 3rd Person Power.

Coaching Session

1. Can you think back to the last difficult conversation you had?
2. When you look at the conversation from their perspective, how were they feeling?
3. What did they most care about and want to achieve?
4. What new options can you now see?
5. Search on line and see if you can solve the Prisoners in Hats dilemma?

17 ESCAPE POWER

Personal Power that comes from our ability to offer ways out or ways forward to opponents, helping them to save face.

In a negotiation or conflict, there are frequently winners and losers. Yes, I know that we should be aiming for a win-win outcome but often that is simply not possible.

If my boss hands me an impossible assignment, asks me to forego all my holiday allowance and demands that I paint their house at the weekend then I need to win. But while I need to win (and by default I need them to lose), finding a way to ensure that they do not look bad as an outcome is important, simply because to damage the relationship with my boss could be career limiting. Gloating over such a victory, dancing around my boss' office and shouting "in your face, loser" is unlikely to be a career-enhancing strategy. That is how to lose at the same time as winning and not what this chapter is about.

Even if my boss is being totally unreasonable and I still find a way to win, helping them to find a way out or a way to save face is the best option for future cooperation between us. And it is this ability to offer ways forward, ways out or ways to save face that is at the heart of our Escape Power.

Yes, if people use Coercive Power (see chapter 7) and are out to exploit me, trick me or be unfair in other ways and I realise that is what they are doing then, of course, my natural reaction is to want to win and to punish them for their unreasonable behaviour. But if the relationship is important to me then a good outcome is to find the best way to use my Escape Power.

As my father used to warn me, if I discover a huge rat in the garden shed and I threaten it, it is most likely to get defensive, rear up on its hind legs and attack me. However, if I stand aside, leave the shed door wide open and show it the daylight and an escape route, the rat will always take it. And so it is with those who are trying to manipulate us but get found out. If we resist the urge to punish and instead offer a face saving, safe way out, they will usually take it.

Yes, using Escape Power is not nearly as satisfying in the short term as revenge. However, offering escape limits the damage we might do to relationships and curiously this invites our opponents to feel indebted and perhaps even to respect us.

Positive Use of Escape Power

When we win but at the same time resist the urge to punish and instead allow our defeated opponent to save face.

Abuse of Escape Power

When allowing an opponent to escape will afford them the opportunity to get back at us. We need to be savvy enough to know when not to offer an escape. See The Hint that follows shortly.

The Psychology

In a March issue of Open Forum, a noted Professor of Psychology observed: “Never take a person’s dignity: It’s worth everything to them, and nothing to you.”

And famous Neuroscientist David Rock states: “Many everyday conversations devolve into arguments driven by a status threat, a desire not to be perceived as less than another. When you win an argument, let the other person exit with grace. In victory, being magnanimous shows generosity of spirit.”

Organisations are, for the most part, competitive meritocracies so winning and losing is a natural part of our daily interactions with others. It is what we do after winning that is important. It is unlikely that we can afford to crash and burn too many relationships and the person we win against today is likely to be someone we might need cooperation from tomorrow. So when winning, offering a way out or way forward is how we can gain respect and promote our reputation for diplomacy, integrity and maturity.

The Hint

In their book, “The 48 Laws of Power”, Robert Greene and Joost Elffers dedicate an entire chapter to what they call: “Law 15: Crush Your Enemy Totally” and even acclaimed historical writers such as Sun-tzu in “The Art of War” suggests again that you: “Crush Your Enemy.” And while in Chapter 7 of this book I made the case that there might always be a place for Coercive Power, we must be aware that there might be a time when it is not appropriate to allow someone a way out or a way to save face. As an HR consultant, I once investigated a manager for sexual assault allegations. He was guilty and admitted his guilt but I was not going to allow any “way out” in that case. But in a social structure like a modern organisation, occasions to deny a way out are likely to be rare indeed.

Coaching Session

1. When “winning”, what motivations and feelings are you aware of?
2. How might these help or hinder your ability to use Escape Power?
3. Can you identify an example in your work where it might not be appropriate to use Escape Power?
4. When winning, have you ever crushed your enemy totally?
5. If so, to what long-term effect?

18 POLITICAL POWER

Personal Power that comes from our political instinct and skill.

Having a reputation for being a political animal is not normally a compliment and is more usually regarded as an insult. It is far easier to hold up our hands in innocence and claim: “I don’t do politics” than to be bold enough to admit that we do. But is such innocence appropriate or even honest? Is there a place for Political Power?

Have you ever been to a pre-meeting with an important stakeholder to ask for their support? Have you ever sat looking at an email and realised that you needed to word your response very carefully? Have you ever avoided a public confrontation and decided to take the conversation “off line”? Might you have reluctantly supported a motion in the face of overwhelming opposition, knowing that you could not win this battle but could influence it again at a later stage?

All of these are simple acts of political common sense and none of them were so bad really, were they? No one died. Indeed, a professor at the University of Warwick once suggested to me: “Politics is just the way that the organisation negotiates with itself without having to resort to war, bloodshed or murder.” Put like that, organisational politics suddenly seems like a pretty neat idea to me.

So why is building effective Political Power regarded so negatively? Perhaps it is more about perception than reality? If you and I both have great ideas we want implemented but there is only enough resource for one to go ahead, if I then see you in a pre-meeting with some of my stakeholders, it is all too easy for me to view you as a political animal. This is unfair of me but understandable. You are my rival, the organisation is a meritocracy and as I shall explain in a moment, the need to get ahead is fundamental to humans.

Of course politics can be used negatively for blame, one-upmanship, revenge or competing unfairly but to only view it in the negative is to deny how useful positive politics might be to us. And to insist that we “Don’t do politics” is not only naïve but it is to hand the advantage to those who do.

At a recent session on Organisational Politics for nearly 300 executives at the London Business School, I started with a simple question: “If earlier in your career there had been a workshop on office politics, would you have attended?” Almost every hand in the room went up. I followed this with another question: “But would you have told your boss?” All hands (bar one) were quickly withdrawn and there was nervous laughter around the room. I asked the one woman who kept her hand up why she would have told her boss. She tells the group: “My boss is politically hopeless and everyone in the team wishes he would get a bit savvier. I would have taken him with me to the workshop.” More laughter.

To be successful at or near the top of an organisation, our Technical Power (discussed in chapter one) becomes increasingly irrelevant and an ability to navigate the political landscape becomes ever more essential. And if we start to recognise that all organisations are political and that being political can be both necessary and a positive thing, then we can give ourselves permission to develop our Political Power.

Positive Use of Political Power

When Political Power is used to resolve conflict, gain agreement, do the right thing and to benefit a wider population.

Abuse of Political Power

When it is used for personal gain at the expense of another or the organisation.

The Psychology

The famous psychologist Sigmund Freud suggested that, although humans are social animals, when they come together in organisations they behave a lot like hedgehogs in the winter. There is a need for closeness to achieve warmth, however the same need for closeness creates discomfort from the prickly spines as they come together. And in a 2014 article in the Harvard Business Review, Thomas Chamorro-Premuzic suggested that this is analogous to office politics: “We can’t do it alone, but working with others means enduring some discomfort.”

Furthermore, and as I hinted earlier, psychologist Robert Horgan noted what he called three universal dynamics that humans crave in the world of work. 1. The need to get along. 2. The need to get ahead. 3. The need to find meaning. While I know nothing about the need for meaning in hedgehogs, it seems clear to me that the first two align easily with Freud’s observations and go a long way towards explaining the inevitability of organisational politics.

The Hint

There is no such thing as a non-political organisation, so stop looking for one and concentrate on building your Political Power. Political tensions are inevitable so developing Political Power is not an option that can be ignored. What is for us to decide however is how we use Political Power. Do we want to use it to exploit others for personal gain or to use our Political Power to moderate, facilitate and be the diplomat that helps people achieve something they cannot do alone? You choose.

Coaching Session

1. What beliefs and assumptions might you be making about organisational politics?
2. To what extent does that help or hinder you?
3. Who is a good role model for positive politics that you could learn from?
4. What success can you have by being non-political?
5. How long are you going to search for a non-political organisation in which to build your career?

19 ASSERTIVE POWER

Personal Power that comes from our ability to avoid “fight” or “flight” responses but instead to be assertive in challenging situations.

Four people are having a meal in an upscale restaurant. The food is terrible. Inevitably, the waiter comes across and asks: “How is everything?”

The first person smiles meekly and says that everything is: “Wonderful”, and as if to prove a point, they shovel in another reluctant mouthful.

The second person loudly berates the waiter, the chef and the entire establishment claiming that they are: “Hopeless, probably trying to poison us all and need to sort out some better meals and do it damn quickly.”

The third person keeps their head down, says nothing at all and just keeps eating. Knowing the food is terrible they feel somehow that they deserve bad food because they are unworthy and that is just how life is, but they silently vow to write up a scathing review on TripAdvisor when they get home.

The fourth person puts down the knife and fork, makes eye contact with the waiter and simply says, in a calm, clear and controlled voice: “My food is cold and I ordered my steak well done, whereas this is rare. Would you ask chef to change it please?”

Who do you think might get the better deal in this scenario? Customers 1 and 2 are typical “fight” and “flight” responses and customer 3 could be classed as behaving in a passive/aggressive style. True, customer 2 who goes on the attack and creates so much noise might also get a better meal but they damage the relationship with the waiter and might even regret their own behaviour later. Only customer 4 behaves assertively.

We behave assertively when we stand up for our rights and at the same time respect the rights of others. We have the right to eat the food we ordered and the waiter has the right to be spoken to with respect. In all the other customer interactions above, someone’s rights are violated and relationships or self-esteem are damaged. And so it is at work if we do not use our Assertive Power correctly.

This is not a complete list but we all have the right; to express an opinion, to be listened to, to be consulted about decisions that effect us, to say “no” to an unreasonable request, to give and receive feedback, to be ourselves, to have feelings and express them assertively, to hold our employer to the terms and conditions of our contract of employment and even to chose not to be assertive if we decide so.

So when defending our rights and respecting the rights of others, we speak in a clear, confident voice. Our voice tone is sincere and friendly and the pace steady. Our body language is calm, confident and open and the words we use are non-accusatory, fair and respectful. And when we put all this together, we demonstrate our Assertive Power.

Of course, behaving assertively does not guarantee success but it does increase our chances of a successful outcome and minimises any relationship damage we might otherwise do. Someone might behave aggressively towards me and I might chose an assertive response but they still have the right to their own thinking, feeling and behaving. By being assertive, I can only invite them into responding positively. I am not a hypnotist. And neither, I suspect, are you. Yes, there are limited times and opportunities when fight or flight might be the best choices but when it comes to building personal power in the workplace, the most consistent benefits come from our Assertive Power.

Positive Use of Assertive Power

When any conflict situation invites a fight or flight response, but we are able to override this basic programming and chose instead Assertive Power.

Abuse of Assertive Power

There really is no down side.

The Psychology

As early humans, when we sat around the campfire outside our cave dwelling, our instincts taught us that, should a tiger approach, the instant decision to either fight it or flight it (run away) was vital to survival.

In the 21st Century world of work, there are few tigers to threaten us, unless we have gainful employment in a zoo, but other forms of conflict are still plentiful. And when conflict happens, deep down in our cerebral cortex, our primitive programming still responds to conflict by initially triggering our fight or flight reflex. And this is not helpful. The down side is that Assertive Power is not a natural state for us but the good news is that it can be learned, practiced and developed like any other skill.

A recent article in Psychology Today (author unaccredited) reveals the importance of Assertive Power: “Demonstrating assertiveness means there’s no question where you stand, no matter the topic. Assertiveness is all about asking for what you want in a manner that respects others. Assertive people don’t shy away from defending their points of view or goals or from trying to influence others. In terms of affect, assertiveness means reacting to positive and negative emotions without aggression or resorting to passivity.”

The Hint

While Assertive Power is not natural to most humans, we nevertheless have lots of opportunities to develop it both inside and outside of the workplace. We can develop it when returning a faulty item to a store, or when complaining over the phone about a service we are paying for but not receiving. For me, the best development opportunity was dealing with my teenage boys and the Sisyphean struggle to get them to tidy their bedrooms. Look around you, opportunities to develop your Assertive Power are plentiful.

Coaching Session

1. What situations most frequently trigger your fight or flight response?
2. Instead of fight or flight, what assertive choices might you otherwise make?
3. In conflict situations, who do you know that demonstrates Assertive Power effectively?
4. What can you copy from them about their behaviour?
5. Where are the best non-workplace opportunities you can use to practice your Assertive Power?



Discover our eBooks on
Time Management Skills
and hundreds more

[Download now](#)

bookboon

20 STAKEHOLDER POWER

Personal Power that comes from our ability to make things happen by aligning the right people at the right time.

Oliver, my youngest son, was just four years old at the time. He came into the kitchen as I was chopping carrots for Sunday dinner and in a voice that suggests he loves his dad very much, he asks for a biscuit. With 20 minutes to go before I serve the food, the answer is “no”. He tells me he might die of hunger, so I offer a chunk of carrot to keep him going. He flounces off and it takes him three attempts to slam the kitchen door. Having read lots of books about being a good parent, I feel happy about this outcome and pleased that I exercised my Assertive Power (see chapter 19).

Two minutes later, Oliver is back and his body language is changed. Hands on hips and head raised, he radiates confidence and his facial expression is one of smug satisfaction. With a gloating voice he proclaims: “Mum says I can have a biscuit!” But you probably guessed that this was how this story was going to end. Yes, at the tender age of 4 years old, Oliver has mastered Stakeholder Power.

My workshops frequently feature sections on stakeholder management and along with some well-chosen theories and models, my intent is always to give people the tools and techniques to manage their stakeholders effectively. However, the story about Oliver is important because, what he might lack in technique, he more than makes up for in natural intuition. Stakeholder Power is something that we humans manage to do naturally. A typical 4-box model and other stakeholder tools just bring a little structure and process to it. The formal process is stakeholder management and the action that we take flowing out from that thinking (just like Oliver) is our Stakeholder Power.

I confess that the story about Oliver is a favourite of mine and I tell it often. This is because so many people tell me that, when confronted with a four-box model and a list of people, they feel uncomfortable putting people in boxes. And I do understand this. Putting people in boxes is to think about relationships politically and to categorise our colleagues in terms of their usefulness to our cause.

So the story about Oliver is to demonstrate that we do this naturally all the time but provided our intent is good and people are only put in a box temporarily then a little stakeholder management does not harm. It is the action that we take as a result and our intent behind it that determines the appropriate use of our Stakeholder Power.

Positive Use of Stakeholder Power

When our intent is to serve our team, organisation, society or customers better.

Abuse of Stakeholder Power

When our intent is to serve our own selfish interests.

The Psychology

Aubrey Mendelow (Kent State University, Ohio) is the creator of arguably the most famous stakeholder mapping process. He suggests categorising people by how much power they have and how much interest they take in what we are asking for. This in turn determines whom we should speak with first and where we should invest our time. Correctly, my son Oliver decided that his mum would have the most power and a lot of interest in what he was demanding. And he was right.

But Mendelow is not our only option, just a very popular starting place. American author Peter Block suggests categorising people by how much trust we have between us and how much agreement we have. Mapping like this takes us to a very different action plan so the choice of map has a big outcome on where we begin our campaign and where we first activate our Stakeholder Power. There are lots of maps out there so choose carefully. Remember, it is not the mapping that you do, it is your intent and how you use your Stakeholder Power that is more important.

The Hint

The maps are useful but none are as useful as combining the other sources of power in this book if we wish to use Stakeholder Power. If we develop our Network Power (chapter two), our Interpersonal Power (chapter six) and our Integrity Power (chapter eleven) then our Stakeholder Power is potent indeed. I suggest that there is no point having a huge network of contacts if when we need them we don't have a strong enough relationship with them and no clue how to align them. And if we lack Interpersonal Power, then when we meet with them we will again be less effective. And if we don't have Integrity Power then we are starting from a long way back.

It is only when we bring these things together that we maximise our Stakeholder Power.

Coaching Session

1. When aligning stakeholders, is your intent positive?
2. Have you spent time researching a suitable stakeholder map to shape your thinking and organise your plan of action?
3. To what extent can you push aside any misgivings you might have about putting people in boxes?
4. Have you invested in developing the complimentary power sources (mentioned above) that you are going to need to enhance your Stakeholder Power?
5. Who is your most trusted ally that you can use to provide feedback about your stakeholder plan and your Stakeholder Power?

21 MAVEN POWER

Personal Power that comes from knowing what is really going on in our organisation. A maven is one who knows what is on trend and what's happening and, while that might not be you, you need to know one.

A Maven is a term taken from American slang and usually refers to a stereotypical Jewish mother. Sitting at the centre of the enormous family network, she is the one who knows everything that everyone in the wider family is up to. She is the trusted confidant that everyone goes to for information. She is generous with both her time and her advice and in her heart has the best interests of the family at all times. And while everyone in the family has a unique personal perspective, the Maven is the only one who sees the bigger picture and who knows in a holistic sense what is really going on when the pieces are put together. When we don't know what we don't know, the Maven most probably will.

And in the world of work the Maven is the person that everyone (regardless of status) goes to for advice simply because they have a depth of understanding and a wisdom that we do not. Yes, they will be well connected and probably have some status but it is their knowledge and their intuition that we most value. They are the wise elder in the tribe who has a finger on the pulse of the organisation and while they seldom command us to do anything, their insight and knowledge is where their power comes from.

If we want to know if the board will support our idea for new investment, the Maven will know which way the current political wind is blowing and how they will probably react. If we want to go for a promotion but we are unsure if it is the right move at the right time for us, the Maven will be able to share with us what we can never know from our own network. If we suspect a project is heading for political complications, the Maven can tell us about the back stage manoeuvring that is otherwise invisible to us.

You might be a Maven and if you recognise yourself from the above description, you will know that this is a powerful role that comes with high levels of responsibility. But the fact is that Mavens are relatively rare in organisations. Indeed, not all organisations even have one but when they do, a Maven is always in high demand for their on-trend and on-mode insight.

This book concerns itself with our personal power and how we can build it and use it with greater impact. The Maven Power is cheating slightly in so much as that, if you are not a Maven already, then you are unlikely to become one or develop that source of power for yourself easily. Mavens have a natural disposition to the role. Asking someone to become a Maven is like asking a right-handed person to be equally effective with their left. Okay, it might be possible over time and with great effort but this is not the natural state.

So, the work for us is more likely to search for the Maven and build our relationship with them, rather than aspiring to that role. Perhaps I am doing you a disservice. Perhaps you are at the start of your career and can easily see yourself developing into a Maven. I apologise if this is the case. It is just that my knowledge of Mavens is that they are rare beasts indeed and highly sought after hence my advice is to find them and woo them as the easier option for the development of our Maven Power.

Positive Use of Maven Power

When we need to know what we can never know and need to know for a positive intent.

Abuse of Maven Power

When our intent is to exploit the insight from a Maven to do damage or for our own self-interest.

The Psychology

I am indebted to author Malcolm Gladwell and his book, “The Tipping Point”, for first alerting me to the concept of a Maven. Gladwell notes that a Maven has an insatiable appetite for information and that: “Mavens are really information brokers, sharing and trading what they know.”

Since learning about these rare beasts, in my client work I have been using this concept to enhance people’s development of their Network Power and their Stakeholder Power. If we know a Maven, then we work with more awareness, feel more confidence and become more powerful.

The Hint

Mavens are relatively rare so seeking them out is not easy. The best clue is to notice whose information is trusted in a debate and which name keeps coming up again and again when trends, knowledge or insight are being discussed.

These are clues, no more, but worth investigating. Remember that a Maven has an insatiable hunger for information as well as a desire to share information. Mavens do not appreciate one-way flows of information. Remember that information is their oxygen so when you meet with one that you wish to recruit as an ally, ensure that you have information to trade.

Coaching Session

1. Is there an obvious Maven in your organisation?
2. How do you know this? What evidence do you have to validate this feeling?
3. How can you use your Network Power to be more aware of Mavens?
4. How can you use your network to be introduced to the Maven?
5. What information can you trade with the Maven when you meet with them?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Mike is a professionally qualified facilitator, consultant and trainer with over 20 years' global experience in delivering high quality learning and development interventions to organisations.

He is one of Europe's leading experts in power, influence, negotiation and organisational politics. He helps leaders and managers identify their personal power and influence and to navigate organisational politics more effectively.

Mike is co-author of **21 Dirty Tricks at Work (2006)**, **Political Dilemmas at Work (2008)** and sole author of **21 Dirty Tricks at Work (Again!) (2016)**. His latest book is **21 Dirty Tricks in Negotiation (2017)** and is co written with Spoken Word Ltd consultant Frances Tipper. All these titles are available from Amazon and other booksellers. He has also been published in various trade magazines including a front cover article for Training Journal that featured the power research quoted in the title.

Mike is married with two teenage boys who have taught him more about power, influence (and manipulation) than any other learning opportunity. He is also a songwriter for the UK based band The Reform Club.

His Amazon Author page is here:

https://www.amazon.co.uk/-/e/B00NUAHXES/ref=dp_byline_sr_ebooks_1?ie=UTF8&text=Mike+Phipps&search-alias=digital-text&field-author=Mike+Phipps&sort=relevancerank

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Tim Stockil at Creative Intelligence for inspiration.

Mark Trezona at BridgeBuilders for inviting me to share the initial research at the CIPD conference, London.

Training Journal for the front cover article and for research support.

Diane Bartley and Charlotte Moss for proof reading and pressure testing.

Everyone who contributed to the research base or helped my learning by attending a workshop.

Sophie Tergeist at Bookboon for support and enthusiasm.