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Change Management

Organisational Culture and Change
Power, Politics and Change



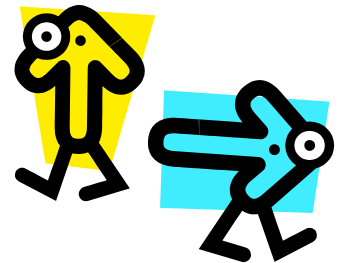


Power, Politics and Change

Power, politics and change

- Re: managing change, some assume organisations are well integrated within which everybody works harmoniously together.
- Decisions are made logically and rationally, people share similar views of the world, they act to promote the interests of the organisation as a whole.

This is rarely the case.



Points of view.....

- <https://youtu.be/3n-c6iAKFgg>
- https://youtu.be/9U_XDin5tjl



Organisations are political arenas



- Organisations can be conceptualised as a collection of individuals, groups and communities of practice, each pursuing their own objectives.
- When there is a conflict of interests it is the power and influence of those involved that determines the outcome rather than logic and rational argument.
- Consequently, those responsible for managing change cannot afford to ignore issues of power and influence.

Political behaviour is most intense in times of change



- Change upsets the balance of power

Some will defend the status quo and others will seek change to improve their position

- People will resist change because of:

Threat from anticipated future state

Threat from process used to secure change

Implications for change managers

- In order to manage change successfully change managers need to be alert to the identity of important stakeholders and to their predisposition to either support or resist the change.



Power and politics



It is difficult to think of situations in which goals are so congruent, or the facts so clear-cut that judgment and compromise are not involved.

What is rational from one point of view is irrational from another.

Organisations are political systems, coalitions of interests, and rationality is defined only with respect to unitary and consistent ordering of preferences.

What is power?



... we defined authority as the right to act, or command others to act, toward the attainment of organisational goals. Its unique characteristic, we said, was that this right had legitimacy based on the authority figure's position in the organisation.

Authority goes with the job.... When we use the term power we mean an individual's capacity to influence decisions.. .the ability to influence based on an individual's legitimate position can affect decisions, but one does not require authority to have such influence.

(Robbins, 1987 :
186)

What is politics?

[Politics is the] ... efforts of organisational members to mobilise support for or against policies, rules, goals, or other decisions in which the outcome will have some effect on them. Politics, therefore, is essentially the exercise of power.

(Robbins, 1987 : 194)



Some definitions

- **Authority:**
 - The right to act.
- **Power:**
 - The capacity to influence decisions.
- **Politics:**
 - The exercise of power.



- **Politics:**
 - The exercise of power.
- **Legitimate use of politics:**
 - The exercise of power by those entitled to in the interests of the organisation.
- **Illegitimate use of politics:**
 - The exercise of power in pursuit of personal interests or by those not entitled to.



The political view of organisations

... a political view can explain much of, what may seem to be, irrational behaviour in organisations. It can help to explain, for instance, why employees withhold information, restrict output, attempt to 'build empires' ...

(Robbins, 1986: 283)

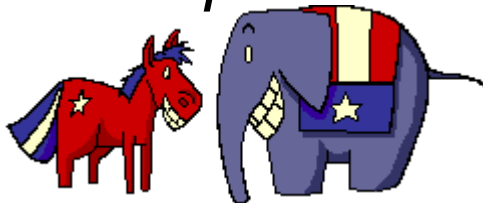


The conditions for political behaviour

...virtually all [writers] agree that for politics to occur, certain conditions must exist.

There must be two or more parties (individuals, groups or large entities), some form of interdependence between the parties, and a perception on the part of at least one of the parties that divergent interests exist between them such that there is, or may potentially arise, conflict between the parties.

Once these conditions exist, the subsequent actions of the parties involved will be deemed 'political.'



(Bradshaw-Camball and Murray, 1991: 380)

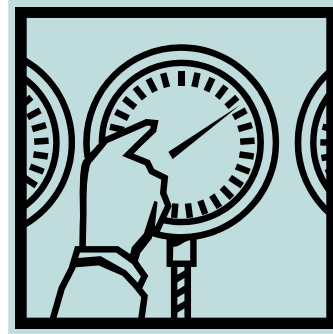
Political plays



- **Reason** – facts and information are used selectively to mount seemingly logical or rational arguments.
- **Friendliness** – the use of flattery, creation of goodwill, etc., prior to making a request.
- **Coalition** – joining forces with others so as to increase one's own influence.
- **Bargaining** – exchanging benefits and favours in order to achieve a particular outcome.
- **Assertiveness** – being forceful in making requests and demanding compliance.
- **Higher authority** – gaining the support of superiors for a particular course of action.
- **Sanctions** – using the promise of rewards or the threat of punishment to force compliance.

Kipnis *et al* (1980, 1984), Schilit and Locke (1982)

Using power and politics



- Decide what your goals are, what you are trying to accomplish.
- Diagnose patterns of dependence and interdependence; what individuals are influential and important in your achieving your goal?
- What are their points of view likely to be? How will they feel about what you are trying to do?
- What are their power bases? Which of them is more influential in the decision?
- What are your bases of power and influence? What bases of influence can you develop to gain more control over the situation?
- Which of the various strategies and tactics for exercising power seem most appropriate and are likely to be effective, given the situation you confront?
- Based on the above, choose a course of action to get something done.

(Pfeffer, 1992: 29)

The four main types of power



1. **Coercive power** – the threat of negative consequences (including physical sanctions or force) should compliance not be forthcoming.
2. **Remunerative power** – the promise of material rewards as inducements to cooperate.
3. **Normative power** – the allocation and manipulation of symbolic rewards, such as status symbols, as inducements to obey.
4. **Knowledge power** – the control of information.

Etzioni (1975), Robbins (1986)

Favourite influencing strategies



- **For influencing up** (managers) – the use of reason.
- **For influencing across** (co-workers) – the use of friendliness.
- **For influencing down** (subordinates) – the use of reason.

Huczynski and Buchanan (2013)

Power tactics



- **Image building** – action that enhances a person's standing, such as backing the 'right' causes.
- **Selective information** – withhold unfavourable information from superiors.
- **Scapegoating** – blame someone else.
- **Formal alliances** – form or join a coalition of the strong.
- **Networking** – make friends with those in power.
- **Compromise** – be prepared to give in on unimportant issues in order to win on the important ones.
- **Rule manipulation** – interpret rules selectively to favour friends and thwart opponents.
- **Other tactics** – if all else fails, use dirty tricks such as coercion, undermining the expertise of others, playing one group off against another, and get others to 'fire the bullet'.

(Buchanan and Badham, 1999: 27–29)

Political behaviour

- **Minimised** when there is:
 - Stability
 - Agreement about goals
 - Openness.
- **Maximised** when there is:
 - Uncertainty
 - Conflict over goals
 - Secrecy.



Behavioural factors in control systems



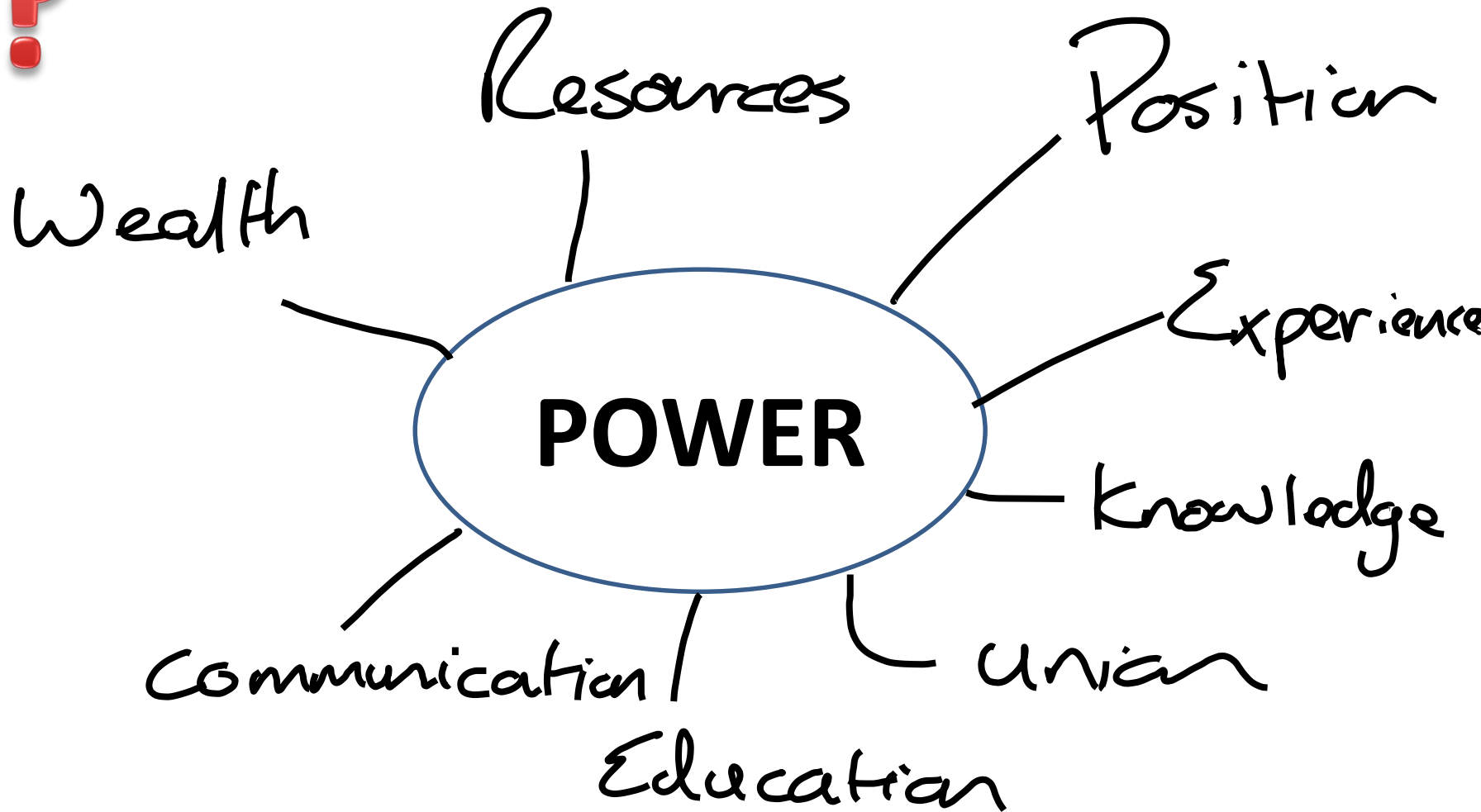
- Control systems provide an interface between human behaviour and the process of management.
- Control often provokes a negative emotional response from those affected.
- The effectiveness of control systems is dependent on their design and operation.
- And also the way staff respond to them.

Overcoming resistance to managerial control



Paying attention to the following factors can help reduce resistance to control:

- Consultation and participation
- Motivation
- Organisation structure
- Groups and informal organisation
- Leadership style and systems of management



The constituencies or stakeholder groups that are **most powerful** are those that:

- In a position to deal with important problems
- Have control over significant resources valued by others
- Are lucky or skilled (Problems & Resources)
- Centrally connected in the work flow (Social Capital)
- Not easily replaced
- Successfully used power in the past.

Power and authority

- Some stakeholders are more powerful than others and they are able to act in ways that will either support or block a change.
- This power is not confined to those who have been given the authority to determine how certain things will be done.
- Sometimes individuals and groups who do not have any legitimate authority have more power than legitimately appointed managers.



Who are the most powerful individuals or groups in your case study organisation?

Conclusion:

Organisational change

- **Can:**
 - Create instability
 - Challenge culture
 - Threaten existing power relations
 - Promote political behaviour.
- **But it can also:**
 - Restore stability
 - Recreate or support culture
 - Maintain existing power relations
 - Reduce conflict.
- **It depends on the context.**



Next – The role of the change agent

