

People and Organizations

Political Perspective on
Organizations

Session 6

Basic Concepts & Tools of a Political Perspective

- Interests—substantive and relationship
 - Stakeholder Mapping---supporters & blockers
- Power—building it & using it wisely
- Coalitions—aka Networks
- Negotiations & Conflict Resolution

Interests in Organizations

- Vertical Divisions of Interests
 - Management “suits” vs workers (labor..)
 - Top executives vs middle mgrs (squeezed)
 - Senior-long tenure vs newcomers
 - Full time employees vs contractors
- Horizontal Divisions of Interests
 - Depts. or other subunits
 - Informal Cliches—Networks, Social Links...

Sources of Power in Organizations

- What is power?

The ability to get someone to do what you want that they don't want to do on their own!

- Positional---yes for sure...but not the full story—
- You have lots of sources of power to draw on!

Multiple Sources of Power

- Positional
- Personal
- Resource Control
- Social-Relational
- Tactical
- Reputation
- Legitimate authority; or “I’m the boss”
- Expertise, information
- Rewards, sanctions (e.g. legal, budgets, compensation....)
- Networks, collective action, coalitions
- BATNA*, coercion, commitment, deadlines, reframing, face saving, integrative solutions
- Trustworthy, effective, networked, or...Feared; Difficult Person...

***Best Alternative To Negotiated Agreement**

Coalitions & Networks

- Coalition—temporary, unstable, instrumental, task or situation specific
- Networks—likely to be based on social relationships as well as tasks—friendship ties, past interactions, mentors, peers....

Tools

- Interests: Do a stakeholder map—allies, adversaries, neutrals
- Power:
 - What sources of power can I mobilize in dealing with others?
 - How can I empower others to do what I want done?
- Coalitions-Networks: Who else can I draw on for support?

Back to Dynacorp: Political Issues to Address

Lots of new “*Liaisons*” Well, we already have problems getting people to come to meetings. How will these new liaisons get them to come to more linking meetings???? What power will they have to get people to cooperate if they come?????

- You recommend **more *Training!*** So did we hire a bunch of stupid people? Is that the problem? Or is there something deeper going on here—what are their interests? Who is telling them to ignore these meetings??? Who’s calling the shots?
- We are supposed to ***Lay Off 25%*** of our workforce! That will clearly make lots of people happy to be working here. And just who is going to go and how are we going to deal with all the protest memos in my inbox already from the managers who say they can’t possibly do their jobs if we cut their staff???? What if these managers leave???? How are we going to handle this?
- So tell me how we are going to get the powerful people in this organization on board with the changes you recommend!! That’s what it’s going to take to make things happen here!

Team Challenge: Solving your Political Problem @ Dynacorp

- I need an executive volunteer from each table—to take on the role of the resister for another table
- Each team meets first to formulate response
- Then hold your meeting with the Executive
 - See if you can reach an agreement on what to do
 - Report your follow-up recommendation—and be prepared to report to the class

Summing Up: Politics

- The *P* Word: Politics is not a Bad Word!
- Multiple Interests, Power, Conflict
 - Universal features of organizational life
 - Needed to get things done
- Learn to map stakeholders
- Respect power but don't give up—find options and use alternative sources of power
- Use power respectfully—stay true to your values or:

“live by the sword, die by the sword

Next Class—Live B School Case Discussion

So be prepared for:

“Cold Calls”

If called on and you are not prepared or don't have a good answer to a question: ask for a pass—don't try to fake it!

Next Tuesday's Assignment for Organizational Culture

- Bring to class a physical (or a picture or some representation) artifact that tells us something important about the *MIT Culture*.
- Be prepared to tell a newcomer to MIT what values and assumptions about MIT that this artifact suggests (again see p. M2-70).

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