Learning Outcomes

After reading this chapter, you should be able to answer these questions:

1. How do power bases work in organizational life?
2. How do you recognize and account for the exercise of counterpower and make appropriate use of strategic contingencies in interunit or interorganizational relations?
3. How do managers cope effectively with organizational politics?
4. How do you recognize and limit inappropriate or unethical political behavior where it occurs?

Power Play at General Electric

For years, General Electric has been the pillar of manufacturing standards and stood as an icon for the American economy. Despite its strong history, CEO woes and a power struggle from within during the past few years have started to unravel the company’s control.

Jeff Immelt, long-time CEO, was respected and revered for his discipline. However, this mentality took its toll and led to declines and complacency. The struggling company wanted change and desperately needed growth; it appointed John Flannery. Shortly after the appointment of Flannery, the new CEO pulled a change of his own as well—firing half of the company’s board.

This type of move was almost unheard of, and the purge as presented was planning to cut dividends and slash less profitable business lines. The pressure from investors was felt immediately by Flannery, and
Although the circumstances of the changes in leadership at GE may be unique, the exercise of power and political behavior in organizations is certainly not. Power and politics are the lifeblood of most organizations, and, as a result, informed managers need to understand power dynamics. In fact, organizations are composed of coalitions and alliances of different parties that continually compete for available resources. As such, a major influence on how decisions are made is the distribution of power among the decision makers. Unequal distribution of power in organizations can have a critical impact on many aspects of work life, including employee motivation, job satisfaction, absenteeism and turnover, and stress. Hence, an awareness of the nature and pervasiveness of power and politics is essential for a better understanding of these other behavioral processes.

The concept of power is closely related to the concepts of authority and leadership. It is important to understand when one method of influence ceases and another begins. For example, when does a manager stop using legitimate authority in a work situation and start using unauthorized power?

Finally, on an individual level, many people attempt to exercise influence in organizations by using power tactics. An awareness of such tactics helps managers to recognize them and to take appropriate actions. Keep in mind that attempts by others to exercise power do not have to be successful. A number of mechanisms are available to countermand or neutralize influence attempts. Knowledge of these strategies gives a manager greater latitude in his response to power plays by others.

In short, power and political processes in organizations represent a topic of central importance to students of organizational behavior. Along with other group processes, such as communication and decision-making, power and politics can considerably influence both the behavior and the attitudes of employees at various levels of the organization.

levels of the organization. In addition, they can further influence the extent to which various units within the organization secure the necessary resources for task accomplishment and ultimate organizational success. In short, General Electric is not alone.

13.1 Power in Interpersonal Relations

1. How do power bases work in organizational life?

In this chapter, we will examine various aspects of power and politics in organizations, beginning with the topic of power in interpersonal relations. Here, power is defined and distinguished from the related concepts of authority and leadership, and several bases of power and aspects of power dependency are discussed. Although these aspects of power also relate to group situations, they are more germane to interpersonal relations.

What Is Power?

Numerous definitions of power abound in the literature on organizations. One of the earliest was suggested by Max Weber, the noted German sociologist, who defined power as “the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance.” Similarly, Emerson wrote, “The power of actor A over actor B is the amount of resistance on the part of B which can be potentially overcome by A.” Following these and other definitions, we will define power for our purposes as an interpersonal relationship in which one individual (or group) has the ability to cause another individual (or group) to take an action that would not be taken otherwise.

In other words, power involves one person changing the behavior of another. It is important to note that in most organizational situations, we are talking about implied force to comply, not necessarily actual force. That is, person A has power over person B if person B believes that person A can, in fact, force person B to comply.

Power, Authority, and Leadership

Clearly, the concept of power is closely related to the concepts of authority and leadership (see Exhibit 13.2). In fact, power has been referred to by some as “informal authority,” whereas authority has been called “legitimate power.” However, these three concepts are not the same, and important differences among the three should be noted.  

As stated previously, power represents the capacity of one person or group to secure compliance from
another person or group. Nothing is said here about the right to secure compliance—only the ability. In contrast, **authority** represents the right to seek compliance by others; the exercise of authority is backed by legitimacy. If a manager instructs a secretary to type certain letters, he presumably has the authority to make such a request. However, if the same manager asked the secretary to run personal errands, this would be outside the bounds of the legitimate exercise of authority. Although the secretary may still act on this request, the secretary’s compliance would be based on power or influence considerations, not authority.

Hence, the exercise of authority is based on group acceptance of someone’s right to exercise legitimate control. As Grimes notes, “What legitimates authority is the promotion or pursuit of collective goals that are associated with group consensus. The polar opposite, power, is the pursuit of individual or particularistic goals associated with group compliance.”

Finally, **leadership** is the ability of one individual to elicit responses from another person that go beyond required or mechanical compliance. It is this voluntary aspect of leadership that sets it apart from power and authority. Hence, we often differentiate between headship and leadership. A department head may have the right to require certain actions, whereas a leader has the ability to inspire certain actions. Although both functions may be served by the same individual, such is clearly not always the case.

### Types of Power

If power is the ability to secure compliance by others, how is such power exercised? On what is it based? At least two efforts have been made to identify the bases of power. One model has been proposed by Etzioni, identifying three types of power. In fact, it is argued that organizations can be classified according to which of the three types of power is most prevalent. **Coercive power** involves forcing someone to comply with one’s wishes. A prison organization is an example of a coercive organization. **Utilitarian power** is power based on performance-reward contingencies; for example, a person will comply with a supervisor in order to receive a pay raise or promotion. Business organizations are thought to be essentially utilitarian organizations. Finally, **normative power** rests on the beliefs of the members in the right of the organization to govern their behavior. An example here would be a religious organization.

### Bases of Power

Although useful for comparative analysis of divergent organizations, this model may have limited applicability, because most business and public organizations rest largely on utilitarian power. Instead, a second model, developed by French and Raven, of the **bases of power** may be more helpful. French and Raven identified five primary ways in which power can be exerted in social situations.

**Referent Power.** In some cases, person B looks up to or admires person A, and, as a result, B follows A largely because of A’s personal qualities, characteristics, or reputation. In this case, A can use referent power to influence B. Referent power has also been called charismatic power, because allegiance is based on interpersonal attraction of one individual for another. Examples of referent power can be seen in advertising, where companies use celebrities to recommend their products; it is hoped that the star appeal of the person will rub off on the products. In work environments, junior managers often emulate senior managers and assume unnecessarily subservient roles more because of personal admiration than because of respect for authority.

**Expert Power.** Expert power is demonstrated when person A gains power because A has knowledge or expertise relevant to B. For instance, professors presumably have power in the classroom because of their
mastery of a particular subject matter. Other examples of expert power can be seen in staff specialists in organizations (e.g., accountants, labor relations managers, management consultants, and corporate attorneys). In each case, the individual has credibility in a particular—and narrow—area as a result of experience and expertise, and this gives the individual power in that domain.

**Legitimate Power.** Legitimate power exists when person B submits to person A because B feels that A has a right to exert power in a certain domain.\(^7\) Legitimate power is really another name for authority, as explained earlier. A supervisor has a right, for instance, to assign work. Legitimate power differs from reward and coercive power in that it depends on the official position a person holds, and not on his or her relationship with others.

Legitimate power derives from three sources. First, prevailing cultural values can assign power to some group. In Japan and Korea, for instance, older employees derive power simply because of their age. Second, legitimate power can be attained as a result of the accepted social structure. For example, many Western European countries, as well as Japan, have royal families that serve as a cornerstone to their societies. Third, legitimate power may be designated, as in the case of a board of directors choosing a new company president or a person being promoted into a managerial position. Whatever the reason, people exercise legitimate power because subordinates assume they have a right to exercise it. A principal reason given for the downfall of the shah of Iran is that the people came to first question and then denounce his right to legitimate power.

**Reward Power.** Reward power exists when person A has power over person B because A controls rewards that B wants. These rewards can cover a wide array of possibilities, including pay raises, promotions, desirable job assignments, more responsibility, new equipment, and so forth. Research has indicated that reward power often leads to increased job performance as employees see a strong performance-reward contingency.\(^8\) However, in many organizations, supervisors and managers really do not control very many rewards. For example, salary and promotion among most blue-collar workers is based on a labor contract, not a performance appraisal.

**Coercive Power.** Coercive power is based primarily on fear. Here, person A has power over person B because A can administer some form of punishment to B. Thus, this kind of power is also referred to as punishment power. As Kipnis points out, coercive power does not have to rest on the threat of violence. “Individuals exercise coercive power through a reliance upon physical strength, verbal facility, or the ability to grant or withhold emotional support from others. These bases provide the individual with the means to physically harm, bully, humiliate, or deny love to others.”\(^9\) Examples of coercive power in organizations include the ability (actual or implied) to fire or demote people, transfer them to undesirable jobs or locations, or strip them of valued perquisites. Indeed, it has been suggested that a good deal of organizational behavior (such as prompt attendance, looking busy, avoiding whistle-blowing) can be attributed to coercive, not reward, power. As Kipnis explains, “Of all the bases of power available to man, the power to hurt others is possibly the most often used, most often condemned and most difficult to control.”\(^10\)

**Behavioral Consequences of Power**

We have seen, then, that at least five bases of power can be identified. In each case, the power of the individual rests on a particular attribute of the power holder, the follower, or their relationship. In some cases (e.g., reward power), power rests in the superior; in others (e.g., referent power), power is given to the superior by the subordinate. In all cases, the exercise of power involves subtle and sometimes threatening interpersonal consequences for the parties involved. In fact, when power is exercised, employees have several ways in which to respond. These are shown in Exhibit 13.3.
If the subordinate accepts and identifies with the leader, his behavioral response will probably be one of commitment. That is, the subordinate will be motivated to follow the wishes of the leader. This is most likely to happen when the person in charge uses referent or expert power. Under these circumstances, the follower believes in the leader’s cause and will exert considerable energies to help the leader succeed.

A second possible response is compliance. This occurs most frequently when the subordinate feels the leader has either legitimate power or reward power. Under such circumstances, the follower will comply, either because it is perceived as a duty or because a reward is expected; but commitment or enthusiasm for the project is lacking. Finally, under conditions of coercive power, subordinates will more than likely use resistance. Here, the subordinate sees little reason—either altruistic or material—for cooperating and will often engage in a series of tactics to defeat the leader’s efforts.

Power Dependencies

In any situation involving power, at least two persons (or groups) can be identified: the person attempting to influence others and the target or targets of that influence. Until recently, attention focused almost exclusively on how people tried to influence others. Only recently has attention been given to how people try to nullify or moderate such influence attempts. In particular, we now recognize that the extent to which influence attempts are successful is determined in large part by the power dependencies of those on the receiving end of the influence attempts. In other words, all people are not subject to (or dependent upon) the same bases of power. What causes some people to be more submissive or vulnerable to power attempts? At least three factors have been identified.¹¹

Subordinate’s Values. To begin, person B’s values can influence his susceptibility to influence. For example, if the outcomes that A can influence are important to B, then B is more likely to be open to influence than if the outcomes were unimportant. Hence, if an employee places a high value on money and believes the supervisor actually controls pay raises, we would expect the employee to be highly susceptible to the supervisor’s influence. We hear comments about how young people don’t really want to work hard anymore. Perhaps a reason for this phenomenon is that some young people don’t place a high value on those things (for example,
money) that traditionally have been used to influence behavior. In other words, such complaints may really be saying that young people are more difficult to influence than they used to be.

**Nature of Relationship Between A and B.** In addition, the nature of the relationship between A and B can be a factor in power dependence. Are A and B peers or superior and subordinate? Is the job permanent or temporary? A person on a temporary job, for example, may feel less need to acquiesce, because he won’t be holding the position for long. Moreover, if A and B are peers or good friends, the influence process is likely to be more delicate than if they are superior and subordinate.

**Counterpower.** Finally, a third factor to consider in power dependences is counterpower. The concept of counterpower focuses on the extent to which B has other sources of power to buffer the effects of A’s power. For example, if B is unionized, the union’s power may serve to negate A’s influence attempts. The use of counterpower can be clearly seen in a variety of situations where various coalitions attempt to bargain with one another and check the power of their opponents.

**Exhibit 13.4** presents a rudimentary model that combines the concepts of bases of power with the notion of power dependencies. As can be seen, A’s bases of power interact with B’s extent of power dependency to determine B’s response to A’s influence attempt. If A has significant power and B is highly dependent, we would expect B to comply with A’s wishes.

[Exhibit 13.4 Typical Response Patterns in Dyadic Power Relationships](Attribution: Copyright Rice University, OpenStax, under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 license)

If A has more modest power over B, but B is still largely power dependent, B may try to bargain with A. Despite the fact that B would be bargaining from a point of weakness, this strategy may serve to protect B’s interests better than outright compliance. For instance, if your boss asked you to work overtime, you might attempt to strike a deal whereby you would get compensatory time off at a later date. If successful, although you would not have decreased your working hours, at least you would not have increased them. Where power distribution is more evenly divided, B may attempt to develop a cooperative working relationship with A in which both parties gain from the exchange. An example of this position is a labor contract negotiation where labor-management relations are characterized by a balance of power and a good working relationship.

If B has more power than A, B will more than likely reject A’s influence attempt. B may even become the aggressor and attempt to influence A. Finally, when B is not certain of the power relationships, he may simply
try to ignore A’s efforts. In doing so, B will discover either that A does indeed have more power or that A cannot muster the power to be successful. A good illustration of this last strategy can be seen in some companies’ responses to early governmental efforts to secure equal opportunities for minorities and women. These companies simply ignored governmental efforts until new regulations forced compliance.

**MANAGERIAL LEADERSHIP**

**Administrative Assistants: The Power Behind the Throne**

It is relatively easy to see the power of managers. They often have the ability to hire and fire, make important decisions, sign contracts, spend money, and so forth. They are, in fact, powerful entities within a corporation. What may be less apparent, however, is the power that managers’ executive or administrative assistants (EA) often have. In fact, if you want to discover just how powerful secretaries are, think of what would happen if they were not there. Most paperwork would not get done, many important decisions would not be made, and the organization would eventually grind to a halt.

The EA is intertwined with a very important piece of privileged information and requires the person to be highly detail oriented and have incredible soft skills and to be more than just technologically savvy. Many tech companies are paying top dollar to procure the right person for the job. Base salaries for executive assistants in the Bay area have been reportedly starting at $80–100K base.

Highly skilled EAs have become increasingly hard to recruit and retain, causing their power to increase. Despite the salary, there is often a negative connotation with the role of “assistant.” “There’s definitely a stigma” about the title, says 32-year-old Shana Larson, one of four EAs at Pinterest, the San Francisco visual discovery company. But for Shana, who holds a master’s degree from the University of Southern California, after the initial transition period, she felt that it was the best career decision to make—a long-term career with growth opportunities.

EAs represent a true example of counterpower within the organization. Yes, their bosses have power over them; but at the same time, they have considerable power over their bosses. Secretaries—the word is derived from the Latin word meaning “keeper of secrets”—are often privy to considerable confidential information. They routinely handle private calls, correspondence, and reports. They often serve as the manager’s sounding board for new ideas, and they more than likely know how the boss feels about coworkers and superiors. This knowledge, along with stereotypes, stigmas, and increased scarcity, gives high-quality EAs considerable leverage in dealing with their bosses and their organizations.

**Questions:**

1. As a new manager who receives an assistant, what are important considerations to consider when starting in the role?
2. What other stigmas or stereotypes can occur with support roles in the workplace? How does this affect your personal feelings about taking a support role for a company in the future?
3. Why is it important for CEOs and other organizational powers to understand the innate power of an administrative assistant as part of the holistic picture to understand the company environment as a whole?

Uses of Power

2. How do you recognize and account for the exercise of counterpower and make appropriate use of strategic contingencies in interunit or interorganizational relations?

As we look around organizations, it is easy to see the manifestations of power almost anywhere. In fact, there are a wide variety of power-based methods used to influence others. Here, we will examine three aspects of the use of power: commonly used power tactics in organizations, symbols of managerial power, and the ethical use of power.

Common Power Tactics in Organizations

As noted above, many power tactics are available for use by managers. However, as we will see, some are more ethical than others. Here, we look at some of the more commonly used power tactics found in both business and public organizations.

Controlling Access to Information. Most decisions rest on the availability of relevant information, so persons controlling access to information play a major role in decisions made. A good example of this is the common corporate practice of pay secrecy. Only the personnel department and senior managers typically have salary information—and power—for personnel decisions.

Controlling Access to Persons. Another related power tactic is the practice of controlling access to persons. A well-known factor contributing to President Nixon’s downfall was his isolation from others. His two senior advisers had complete control over who saw the president. Similar criticisms were leveled against President Reagan.

Selective Use of Objective Criteria. Very few organizational questions have one correct answer; instead, decisions must be made concerning the most appropriate criteria for evaluating results. As such, significant power can be exercised by those who can practice selective use of objective criteria that will lead to a decision favorable to themselves. According to Herbert Simon, if an individual is permitted to select decision criteria, he needn’t care who actually makes the decision. Attempts to control objective decision criteria can be seen in
faculty debates in a university or college over who gets hired or promoted. One group tends to emphasize teaching and will attempt to set criteria for employment dealing with teacher competence, subject area, interpersonal relations, and so on. Another group may emphasize research and will try to set criteria related to number of publications, reputation in the field, and so on.

**Controlling the Agenda.** One of the simplest ways to influence a decision is to ensure that it never comes up for consideration in the first place. There are a variety of strategies used for controlling the agenda. Efforts may be made to order the topics at a meeting in such a way that the undesired topic is last on the list. Failing this, opponents may raise a number of objections or points of information concerning the topic that cannot be easily answered, thereby tabling the topic until another day.

**Using Outside Experts.** Still another means to gain an advantage is using outside experts. The unit wishing to exercise power may take the initiative and bring in experts from the field or experts known to be in sympathy with their cause. Hence, when a dispute arises over spending more money on research versus actual production, we would expect differing answers from outside research consultants and outside production consultants. Most consultants have experienced situations in which their clients fed them information and biases they hoped the consultant would repeat in a meeting.

**Bureaucratic Gamesmanship.** In some situations, the organizations own policies and procedures provide ammunition for power plays, or bureaucratic gamesmanship. For instance, a group may drag its feet on making changes in the workplace by creating red tape, work slowdowns, or “work to rule.” (Working to rule occurs when employees diligently follow every work rule and policy statement to the letter; this typically results in the organization’s grinding to a halt as a result of the many and often conflicting rules and policy statements.) In this way, the group lets it be known that the workflow will continue to slow down until they get their way.

**Coalitions and Alliances.** The final power tactic to be discussed here is that of coalitions and alliances. One unit can effectively increase its power by forming an alliance with other groups that share similar interests. This technique is often used when multiple labor unions in the same corporation join forces to gain contract concessions for their workers. It can also be seen in the tendency of corporations within one industry to form trade associations to lobby for their position. Although the various members of a coalition need not agree on everything—indeed, they may be competitors—sufficient agreement on the problem under consideration is necessary as a basis for action.

Although other power tactics could be discussed, these examples serve to illustrate the diversity of techniques available to those interested in acquiring and exercising power in organizational situations. In reviewing the major research carried out on the topic of power, Pfeffer states:

If there is one concluding message, it is that it is probably effective, and it is certainly normal that these managers do behave as politicians. It is even better that some of them are quite effective at it. In situations in which technologies are uncertain, preferences are conflicting, perceptions are selective and biased, and information processing capacities are constrained, the model of an effective politician may be an appropriate one for both the individual and for the organization in the long run.13

**Symbols of Managerial Power**

How do we know when a manager has power in an organizational setting? Harvard professor Rosabeth Moss Kanter has identified several of the more common symbols of managerial power.14 For example, managers have power to the extent that they can intercede favorably on behalf of someone in trouble with the
organization. Have you ever noticed that when several people commit the same mistake, some don’t get punished? Perhaps someone is watching over them.

Moreover, managers have power when they can get a desirable placement for a talented subordinate or get approval for expenditures beyond their budget. Other manifestations of power include the ability to secure above-average salary increases for subordinates and the ability to get items on the agenda at policy meetings.

And we can see the extent of managerial power when someone can gain quick access to top decision makers or can get early information about decisions and policy shifts. In other words, who can get through to the boss, and who cannot? Who is “connected,” and who is not?

Finally, power is evident when top decision makers seek out the opinions of a particular manager on important questions. Who gets invited to important meetings, and who does not? Who does the boss say “hello” to when he enters the room? Through such actions, the organization sends clear signals concerning who has power and who does not. In this way, the organization reinforces or at least condones the power structure in existence.

The Ethical Use of Power

People are often uncomfortable discussing the topic of power, which implies that somehow they see the exercise of power as unseemly. On the contrary, the question is not whether power tactics are or are not ethical; rather, the question is which tactics are appropriate and which are not. The use of power in groups and companies is a fact of organizational life that all employees must accept. In doing so, however, all employees have a right to know that the exercise of power within the organization will be governed by ethical standards that prevent abuse or exploitation.

Several guidelines for the ethical use of power can be identified. These can be arranged according to our previous discussion of the five bases of power, as shown in Table 13.1. As will be noted, several techniques are available that accomplish their aims without compromising ethical standards. For example, a manager using reward power can verify subordinate compliance with work directives, ensure that all requests are both feasible and reasonable, make only ethical or proper requests, offer rewards that are valued by employees, and ensure that all rewards for good performance are credible and reasonably attainable.

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<th>The Ethical Use of Power</th>
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<td><strong>Basis of Power</strong></td>
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Table 13.1 (Attribution: Copyright Rice University, OpenStax, under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 license)
### The Ethical Use of Power

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<tr>
<th>Basis of Power</th>
<th>Guidelines for Use</th>
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| Expert power       | • Promote image of expertise  
                     • Maintain credibility  
                     • Act confident and decisive  
                     • Keep informed  
                     • Recognize employee concerns  
                     • Avoid threatening subordinates’ self-esteem |
| Legitimate power   | • Be cordial and polite  
                     • Be confident  
                     • Be clear and follow up to verify understanding  
                     • Make sure request is appropriate  
                     • Explain reasons for request  
                     • Follow proper channels  
                     • Exercise power regularly  
                     • Enforce compliance  
                     • Be sensitive to subordinates’ concerns |
| Reward power       | • Verify compliance  
                     • Make feasible, reasonable requests  
                     • Make only ethical, proper requests  
                     • Offer rewards desired by subordinates  
                     • Offer only credible rewards |
| Coercive power     | • Inform subordinates of rules and penalties  
                     • Warn before punishing  
                     • Administer punishment consistently and uniformly  
                     • Understand the situation before acting  
                     • Maintain credibility  
                     • Fit punishment to the infraction  
                     • Punish in private |


### Table 13.1 (Attribution: Copyright Rice University, OpenStax, under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 license)

Even coercive power can be used without jeopardizing personal integrity. For example, a manager can make sure that all employees know the rules and penalties for rule infractions, provide warnings before punishing, administer punishments fairly and uniformly, and so forth. The point here is that managers have at their disposal numerous tactics that they can employ without crossing over into questionable managerial behavior. In view of the increasing number of lawsuits filed by employees for harmful practices, it seems wise for a manager to consider his behaviors before acting; this will help ensure the highest ethical standards.
Political Behavior in Organizations

Closely related to the concept of power is the equally important topic of politics. In any discussion of the exercise of power—particularly in intergroup situations—a knowledge of basic political processes is essential. We will begin our discussion with this in mind. Next, on the basis of this analysis, we will consider political strategies for acquiring, maintaining, and using power in intergroup relations. Finally, we look at ways to limit the impact of political behavior in organizations.
What Is Politics?

Perhaps the earliest definition of politics was offered by Lasswell, who described it as who gets what, when, and how. Even from this simple definition, one can see that politics involves the resolution of differing preferences in conflicts over the allocation of scarce and valued resources. Politics represents one mechanism to solve allocation problems when other mechanisms, such as the introduction of new information or the use of a simple majority rule, fail to apply. For our purposes here, we will adopt Pfeffer’s definition of politics as involving “those activities taken within organizations to acquire, develop, and use power and other resources to obtain one’s preferred outcomes in a situation in which there is uncertainty or dissensus about choices.”

In comparing the concept of politics with the related concept of power, Pfeffer notes:

If power is a force, a store of potential influence through which events can be affected, politics involves those activities or behaviors through which power is developed and used in organizational settings. Power is a property of the system at rest; politics is the study of power in action. An individual, subunit or department may have power within an organizational context at some period of time; politics involves the exercise of power to get something accomplished, as well as those activities which are undertaken to expand the power already possessed or the scope over which it can be exercised.

In other words, from this definition it is clear that political behavior is activity that is initiated for the purpose of overcoming opposition or resistance. In the absence of opposition, there is no need for political activity. Moreover, it should be remembered that political activity need not necessarily be dysfunctional for organization-wide effectiveness. In fact, many managers often believe that their political actions on behalf of their own departments are actually in the best interests of the organization as a whole. Finally, we should note that politics, like power, is not inherently bad. In many instances, the survival of the organization depends on the success of a department or coalition of departments challenging a traditional but outdated policy or objective. That is why an understanding of organizational politics, as well as power, is so essential for managers.

Intensity of Political Behavior

Contemporary organizations are highly political entities. Indeed, much of the goal-related effort produced by an organization is directly attributable to political processes. However, the intensity of political behavior varies, depending upon many factors. For example, in one study, managers were asked to rank several organizational decisions on the basis of the extent to which politics were involved. Results showed that the most political decisions (in rank order) were those involving interdepartmental coordination, promotions and transfers, and the delegation of authority. Such decisions are typically characterized by an absence of established rules and procedures and a reliance on ambiguous and subjective criteria.

On the other hand, the managers in the study ranked as least political such decisions as personnel policies, hiring, and disciplinary procedures. These decisions are typically characterized by clearly established policies, procedures, and objective criteria.

On the basis of findings such as these, it is possible to develop a typology of when political behavior would generally be greatest and least. This model is shown in Exhibit 13.5. As can be seen, we would expect the greatest amount of political activity in situations characterized by high uncertainty and complexity and high competition among employees or groups for scarce resources. The least politics would be expected under conditions of low uncertainty and complexity and little competition among employees over resources.
Reasons for Political Behavior

Following from the above model, we can identify at least five conditions conducive to political behavior in organizations. These are shown in Table 13.2, along with possible resulting behaviors. The conditions include the following:

1. **Ambiguous goals.** When the goals of a department or organization are ambiguous, more room is available for politics. As a result, members may pursue personal gain under the guise of pursuing organizational goals.

2. **Limited resources.** Politics surfaces when resources are scarce and allocation decisions must be made. If resources were ample, there would be no need to use politics to claim one’s “share.”

3. **Changing technology and environment.** In general, political behavior is increased when the nature of the internal technology is nonroutine and when the external environment is dynamic and complex. Under these conditions, ambiguity and uncertainty are increased, thereby triggering political behavior by groups interested in pursuing certain courses of action.

4. **Nonprogrammed decisions.** A distinction is made between programmed and nonprogrammed decisions. When decisions are not programmed, conditions surrounding the decision problem and the decision process are usually more ambiguous, which leaves room for political maneuvering. Programmed decisions, on the other hand, are typically specified in such detail that little room for maneuvering exists. Hence, we are likely to see more political behavior on major questions, such as long-range strategic planning decisions.

5. **Organizational change.** Periods of organizational change also present opportunities for political rather than rational behavior. Efforts to restructure a particular department, open a new division, introduce a new product line, and so forth, are invitations to all to join the political process as different factions and coalitions fight over territory.

Because most organizations today have scarce resources, ambiguous goals, complex technologies, and sophisticated and unstable external environments, it seems reasonable to conclude that a large proportion of contemporary organizations are highly political in nature. As a result, contemporary managers must be
sensitive to political processes as they relate to the acquisition and maintenance of power in organizations. This brings up the question of why we have policies and standard operating procedures (SOPs) in organizations. Actually, such policies are frequently aimed at reducing the extent to which politics influence a particular decision. This effort to encourage more “rational” decisions in organizations was a primary reason behind Max Weber’s development of the bureaucratic model. That is, increases in the specification of policy statements often are inversely related to political efforts, as shown in Exhibit 13.6. This is true primarily because such actions reduce the uncertainties surrounding a decision and hence the opportunity for political efforts.

### Table 13.2

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<th>Prevailing Conditions</th>
<th>Resulting Political Behaviors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ambiguous goals</td>
<td>Attempts to define goals to one’s advantage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited resources</td>
<td>Fight to maximize one’s share of resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dynamic technology and environment</td>
<td>Attempts to exploit uncertainty for personal gain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonprogrammed decisions</td>
<td>Attempts to make suboptimal decisions that favor personal ends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational change</td>
<td>Attempts to use reorganization as a chance to pursue own interests and goals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Exhibit 13.6  Relationship Between Company Standard Operating Procedures and Political Behavior  (Attribution: Copyright Rice University, OpenStax, under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 license)
Exhibit 13.7  Open Office Corner Office  Corner offices are considered desirable because they have windows on two exterior walls, as opposed to a typical office with only one window or none at all. They are usually assigned to the head of the organization or division. The open office concept has been around for some time and has evolved as technology has reduced the need to have access to stored paper records of a fixed phone or office computer. Having no walls, no doors, and shared workspaces is designed to achieve increased communication and flow of ideas amongst employees, but there is concern that an open concept decreases employees’ job satisfaction and decreases privacy, which also affects productivity. (Attribution: Nic Bastian (Corner office) Loozerboy (Open Concept)/ flickr/ Attribution 2.0 Generic (CC BY 2.0))

MANAGERIAL LEADERSHIP

Technology, Innovation, and Politics in Performance Appraisals

Developing a strategy for a performance appraisal is an important step for any company, and keeping out political bias is a main concern as well. Unfortunately, many times there is no way around bringing some bias into a performance appraisal situation. Managers often think of the impact that their review will have on the employee, how it will affect their relationship, and what it means for their career in the future. There are a lot of games played in the rating process and whether managers admit it or not, they may be guilty of playing them. Many companies, such as Adobe, are looking at ways that they can revamp the process to eliminate potential biases and make evaluations fairer.

In 2012, Adobe transformed its business, changing its product cycle; while undergoing process changes, Adobe understood that there needed to be a cultural shift as well. It announced the “Check-in” review process to allow for faster feedback, as well as an end to their outdated annual review process. With the faster-paced reality of their product cycles and subscription-based model in technology, this made complete sense.

This process established a new way of thinking, allowing for two-way communication to become the norm between managers and employees. They were able to have frequent candid conversations, approaching the tough subjects in order make improvements rather than waiting until an annual review and letting bad performance go unchecked or good performance go unnoticed. Eliminating a once-a-year cycle of review also eliminates the issue of politics creeping into the process. Managers are able to think critically about the performance, working alongside their employees to better the outcome rather than worrying about having a tough conversation and the bad result that may follow—and having to live with the fallout. Employees also are given chances to provide feedback and their own personal evaluation, which then is discussed with the manager. They review the items together, and what is formally submitted is agreed upon, rather than set in stone. The addition of the employee feedback is another great way to reduce the insertion of politics or bias in the review.

In result of this change, Adobe’s employees showed higher engagement and satisfaction with their work,
Political Strategies in Intergroup Relations

Up to this point, we have explained the related concepts of power and politics primarily as they relate to interpersonal behavior. When we shift our focus from the individual or interpersonal to the *intergroup* level of analysis, the picture becomes somewhat more complicated. In developing a portrait of how political strategies are used to attain and maintain power in intergroup relations, we will highlight two major aspects of the topic. The first is the relationship between power and the control of critical resources. The second is the relationship between power and the control of strategic activities. Both will illustrate how subunit control leads to the acquisition of power in organizational settings.

Power and the Control of Critical Resources

On the basis of what has been called the *resource dependence* model, we can analyze intergroup political behavior by examining how critical resources are controlled and shared. That is, when one subunit of an organization (perhaps the purchasing department) controls a scarce resource that is needed by another subunit (for example, the power to decide what to buy and what not to buy), that subunit acquires power. This power may be over other subunits within the same organization or over subunits in other organizations (for example, the marketing units of other companies that are trying to sell to the first company). As such, this unit is in a better position to bargain for the critical resources it needs from its own or other organizations. Hence, although all subunits may contribute something to the organization as a whole, power allocation within the organization will be influenced by the relative importance of the resources contributed by each unit. To quote Salancik and Pfeffer,

Subunit power accrues to those departments that are most instrumental in bringing in or providing resources which are highly valued by the total organization. In turn, this power enables these subunits to obtain more of those scarce and critical resources allocated within the organization.

Stated succinctly, power derived from acquiring resources is used to obtain more resources, which in turn can consistently improving. They no longer had negative surprises in their annual review and were able to adjust priorities and behaviors to become more effective workers.

Questions:
1. What are important considerations to eliminate potential political bias in a performance review?
2. Why was Adobe successful in the changes that they implemented in their performance review process?
3. What other positive outcomes could be achieved from an ongoing feedback model versus annual performance review?

be employed to produce more power—“the rich get richer.”  

To document their case, Salancik and Pfeffer carried out a major study of university budget decisions. The results were clear. The more clout a department had (measured in terms of the department’s ability to secure outside grants and first-rate graduate students, plus its national standing among comparable departments), the easier it was for the department to secure additional university resources. In other words, resources were acquired through political processes, not rational ones.

Power and the Control of Strategic Activities

In addition to the control of critical resources, subunits can also attain power by gaining control over activities that are needed by others to complete their tasks. These critical activities have been called strategic contingencies. A contingency is defined by Miles as “a requirement of the activities of one subunit that is affected by the activities of other subunits.”

For example, the business office of most universities represents a strategic contingency for the various colleges within the university because it has veto or approval power over financial expenditures of the schools. Its approval of a request to spend money is far from certain. Thus, a contingency represents a source of uncertainty in the decision-making process. A contingency becomes strategic when it has the potential to alter the balance of interunit or interdepartmental power in such a way that interdependencies among the various units are changed.

Perhaps the best way to illustrate this is to consider the example of power distribution in various organizations attempting to deal with a major source of uncertainty—the external environment. In a classic study by Lawrence and Lorsch, influence patterns were examined for companies in three divergent industries: container manufacturing, food processing, and plastics. It was found that in successful firms, power distribution conformed to the firm’s strategic contingencies. For example, in the container-manufacturing companies, where the critical contingencies were customer delivery and product quality, the major share of power in decision-making resided in the sales and production staffs. In contrast, in the food-processing firms, where the strategic contingencies focused on expertise in marketing and food sciences, major power rested in the sales and research units. In other words, those who held power in the successful organizations were in areas that were of central concern to the firm and its survival at a particular time. The functional areas that were most important for organizational success were under the control of the decision makers. For less-successful firms, this congruence was not found.

The changing nature of strategic contingencies can be seen in the evolution of power distribution in major public utilities. Many years ago, when electric companies were developing and growing, most of the senior officers of the companies were engineers. Technical development was the central issue. More recently, however, as utilities face greater litigation, government regulation, and controversy over nuclear power, lawyers are predominant in the leadership of most companies. This example serves to emphasize that “subunits could inherit and lose power, not necessarily by their own actions, but by the shifting contingencies in the environment confronting the organization.”

To better understand how this process works, consider the model shown in Exhibit 13.8. This diagram suggests that three factors influence the ability of one subunit (called A) over another (called B). Basically, it is argued that subunit power is influenced by (1) A’s ability to help B cope with uncertainty, (2) the degree to which A offers the only source of the required resource for B, and (3) the extent to which A’s contributions are central to organizational success. Let us consider each of these separately.
Ability to Cope with Uncertainty. According to advocates of the strategic contingencies model of power, the primary source of subunit power is the unit’s ability to help other units cope with uncertainty. In other words, if our group can help your group reduce the uncertainties associated with your job, then our group has power over your group. As Hickson and his colleagues put it:

Uncertainty itself does not give power; coping gives power. If organizations allocate to their various subunits task areas that vary in uncertainty, then those subunits that cope most effectively with the most uncertainty should have most power within the organization, since coping by a subunit reduces the impact of uncertainty on other activities in the organization, a shock absorber function.26

As shown in Exhibit 13.8 above, three primary types of coping activity relating to uncertainty reduction can be identified. To begin, some uncertainty can be reduced through steps by one subunit to prevent or forestall uncertainty for the other subunit. For example, if the purchasing group can guarantee a continued source of parts for the manufacturing group, it gains some power over manufacturing by forestalling possible uncertainty surrounding production schedules. Second, a subunit’s ability to cope with uncertainty is influenced by its capacity to provide or collect information. Such information can forewarn of probable disruptions or problems, so corrective action can be taken promptly. Many business firms use various forecasting techniques to predict sales, economic conditions, and so forth. The third mechanism for coping with uncertainty is the unit’s ability to absorb pressures that actually impact the organization. For instance, if one manufacturing facility runs low on raw materials and a second facility can supply it with needed materials, this second facility effectively reduces some of the uncertainty of the first facility—and in the process gains influence over it.

In short, subunit A gains power over B subunit if it can help B cope with the contingencies and uncertainties facing it. The more dependent B is upon A to ensure the smooth functioning of the unit, the more power A has over B.

Nonsubstitutability of Coping Activities. Substitutability is the capacity for one subunit to seek needed resources from alternate sources. Two factors influence the extent to which substitutability is available to a
subunit. First, the availability of alternatives must be considered. If a subunit can get the job done using different products or processes, it is less susceptible to influence. In the IBM-compatible personal computer market, for example, there are so many vendors that no one can control the market. On the other hand, if a company is committed to a Macintosh and iPad computing environment, only one vendor (Apple Computer) is available, which increases Apple’s control over the marketplace.

Second, the replaceability of personnel is important. A major reason for the power of staff specialists (personnel managers, purchasing agents, etc.) is that they possess expertise in a specialized area of value to the organization. Consider also a reason for closed-shop union contracts: they effectively reduce the replaceability of workers.

Thus, a second influence on the extent of subunit power is the extent to which subunit \( A \) provides goods or services to \( B \) for which there are no (or only a few) substitutes. In this way, \( B \) needs \( A \) in order to accomplish subunit objectives.

**Centrality of Coping Activities.** Finally, one must consider the extent to which a subunit is of central importance to the operations of the enterprise. This is called the subunit’s work centrality. The more interconnected subunit \( A \) is with other subunits in the organization, the more “central” it is. This centrality, in turn, is influenced by two factors. The first is workflow pervasiveness—the degree to which the actual work of one subunit is connected with the work of the subunits. If subunit \( B \) cannot complete its own tasks without the help of the work activities of subunit \( A \), then \( A \) has power over \( B \). An example of this is an assembly line, where units toward the end of the line are highly dependent upon units at the beginning of the line for inputs.

The second factor, workflow immediacy, relates to the speed and severity with which the work of one subunit affects the final outputs of the organization. For instance, companies that prefer to keep low inventories of raw materials (perhaps for tax purposes) are, in effect, giving their outside suppliers greater power than those companies that keep large reserves of raw materials.

When taken as a whole, then, the strategic contingency model of intergroup power suggests that subunit power is influenced when one subunit can help another unit reduce or cope with its uncertainty, the subunit is difficult to replace, or the subunit is central to continued operations. The more these three conditions prevail, the more power will become vested in the subunit. Even so, it should be recognized that the power of one subunit or group can shift over time. As noted by Hickson and his colleagues, “As the goals, outputs, technologies, and markets of organizations change, so, for each subunit, the values of the independent variables [such as coping with uncertainty, nonsubstitutability, and centrality] change, and the patterns of power change.”

In other words, the strategic contingency model suggested here is a dynamic one that is subject to change over time as various subunits and groups negotiate, bargain, and compromise with one another in an effort to secure a more favorable position in the organizational power structure.

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**MANAGERIAL LEADERSHIP**

**The Politics of Innovation**

A good example of the strategic contingencies approach to the study of power and politics can be seen in a consideration of organizational innovation. It has long been recognized that it is easier to invent something new from outside an organization than to innovate within an existing company. As a result, a disproportionate share of new products originates from small businesses and entrepreneurs, not the
Limiting the Influence of Political Behavior

4. How do you recognize and limit inappropriate or unethical political behavior where it occurs?

The final topic we will examine concerns ways in which people and groups can attempt to lessen the impact of political behavior. Clearly, politics in organizations cannot be eliminated. Yet to some extent, the negative aspects of it can be neutralized if managers carefully monitor the work environment and take remedial action where necessary. Part of this issue was discussed above, in the section on counterpower. Beyond this, however, several strategies can be identified that can help manage organizational politics. As shown in Table 13.3, four basic strategies can be used.

First, efforts can be made to reduce the uncertainty in the organization through clarifying job responsibilities, bases for evaluations and rewards, and so forth. The less ambiguity in the system, the less room there is for dysfunctional political behavior. Second, managers can try to reduce interpersonal or intergroup competition by using impartial standards for resource allocation and by emphasizing the superordinate goals of the entire organization—toward which all members of the organization should be working. Third, managers can attempt to break up existing political fiefdoms through personnel reassignment or transfer or by changing the reward system to encourage interunit cooperation. Finally, managers can work to prevent the development of future fiefdoms through training programs, selection and promotion, and reward distribution.

To the extent that employees see the organization as a fair place to work and to the extent that clear goals and
resource allocation procedures are present, office politics should subside, though not disappear. In
organizations where politics prosper, in fact, you are likely to find a reward system that encourages and
promotes such behavior. The choice is up to the organization.

### Limiting the Effects of Political Behavior

#### To Reduce System Uncertainty
- Make clear what are the bases and processes for evaluation.
- Differentiate rewards among high and low performers.
- Make sure the rewards are as immediately and directly related to performance as possible.

#### To Reduce Competition
- Try to minimize resource competition among managers.
- Replace resource competition with externally oriented goals and objectives.

#### To Break Existing Political Fiefdoms
- Where highly cohesive political empires exist, break them apart by removing or splitting the most
dysfunctional subgroups.
- If you are an executive, be keenly sensitive to managers whose mode of operation is the
personalization of political patronage. First, approach these persons with a directive to “stop the
political maneuvering.” If it continues, remove them from the positions and preferably from the
company.

#### To Prevent Future Fiefdoms
- Make one of the most important criteria for promotion an apolitical attitude that puts organizational
ends ahead of personal power ends.

*Source: Adapted from “The Use and Abuse of Corporate Politics,” by Don R. Beeman and Thomas W.
Sharkey. Reprinted from Business Horizons, March–April 1987 by the Foundation for the School of Business
at Indiana University.*

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**Table 13.3** (Attribution: Copyright Rice University, OpenStax, under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 license)

### Concept Check

1. How can managers limit inappropriate and unethical behavior in the organization?
Key Terms

**Authority** Represents the right to seek compliance by others.

**Bases of power** The five bases of power are referent, expert, legitimate, reward, and coercive power.

**Bureaucratic gamesmanship** A situation where the organization’s own policies and procedures provide ammunition for power plays.

**Coalition** A situation where one unit can effectively increase its power by forming an alliance with other groups that share similar interests.

**Coercive power** Involves forcing someone to comply with one’s wishes.

**Counterpower** Focuses on the extent to which person B has other sources of power to buffer the effects of person A’s power.

**Expert power** Occurs when person A gains power because A has knowledge or expertise relevant to person B.

**Leadership** The ability of one individual to elicit responses from another person that go beyond required or mechanical compliance.

**Legitimate power** Exists when person B submits to person A because B feels that A has a right to exert power in a certain domain.

**Normative power** Rests on the beliefs of the members in the right of the organization to govern their behavior.

**Politics** Involves those activities taken within an organization to acquire, develop, and use power and other resources to attain preferred outcomes in a situation in which there is uncertainty and disagreement over choices.

**Power** The probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance.

**Power dependencies** A state where all people are not subject to (or dependent upon) the same bases of power.

**Referent power** A state where allegiance is based on interpersonal attraction of one individual for another.

**Resource dependence** When one subunit of an organization controls a scarce resource that is needed by another subunit, that subunit acquires power.

**Reward power** Exists when person A has power over person B because A controls rewards that B wants. These rewards can cover a wide array of possibilities, including pay raises, promotions, desirable job assignments, more responsibility, new equipment, and so forth.

**Strategic contingencies** A requirement of the activities of one subunit that is affected by the activities of other subunits.

**Utilitarian power** Power based on performance-reward contingencies; for example, a person will comply with a supervisor in order to receive a pay raise or promotion.

**Work centrality** The more interconnected subunit A is with other subunits in the organization, the more central it is.

**Work to rule** Occurs when employees diligently follow every work rule and policy statement to the letter; this typically results in the organization’s grinding to a halt as a result of the many and often conflicting rules and policy statements.

**Workflow immediacy** Relates to the speed and severity with which the work of one subunit affects the final outputs of the organization.

**Workflow pervasiveness** The degree to which the actual work of one subunit is connected with the work of the subunits.
Summary of Learning Outcomes

13.1 Power in Interpersonal Relations
1. How do power bases work in organizational life?

We might think of power like a car battery and influence as the current that actually gets the starter motor to turn over. There are many potential sources of power such as knowledge, information, and money. But just as the car battery unconnected cannot start an engine, these sources of power do not by themselves cause others to do anything. Actually, influencing others is achieved by possessing, or having others believe you possess, resources that they desire and depend upon and for which substitutes are not easily obtained and then establishing behavioral contingencies in the direction of the behaviors you desire to evoke.

Power is an interpersonal relationship in which one person or group has the ability to cause another person or group to take an action that it would not have taken otherwise.

There are five basic kinds of power: (1) referent, (2) expert, (3) legitimate, (4) reward, and (5) coercive.

Depending upon which kind of power is employed, the recipient of a power effort can respond with commitment, compliance, or resistance.

13.2 Uses of Power
2. How do you recognize and account for the exercise of counterpower and make appropriate use of strategic contingencies in interunit or interorganizational relations?

Power dependency is the extent to which a person or group is susceptible to an influence attempt. Included here is the notion of counterpower, or the ability of the subordinate to exercise some power and buffer the influence attempt of another.

Common power tactics include controlling access to information, controlling access to persons, the selective use of objective criteria, controlling the agenda, using outside experts, bureaucratic gamesmanship, and forming coalitions and alliances.

The resource dependence model suggests that one unit within an organization has power over another unit when the first unit controls scarce and valued resources needed by the second unit.

The strategic contingencies model asserts that one unit has power over another when the first group has the ability to block the second group's goal attainment—that is, when it controls some strategic contingency needed by the second group to complete its task.

13.3 Political Behavior in Organizations
3. How do managers cope effectively with organizational politics?

Politics involves those activities taken within an organization to acquire, develop, and use power and other resources to attain preferred outcomes in a situation in which there is uncertainty and disagreement over choices.

Political behavior is more likely to occur when (1) there are ambiguous goals, (2) there is a scarcity of resources, (3) nonroutine technology and a complex external environment are involved, (4) nonprogrammed decisions are being considered, and (5) organizational change is occurring.

13.4 Limiting the Influence of Political Behavior
4. How do you recognize and limit inappropriate or unethical political behavior where it occurs?

Political behavior can be reduced or minimized in organizations through four techniques: (1) reducing
organization uncertainty, (2) reducing interunit competition, (3) breaking up political fiefdoms, and (4) preventing the development of future fiefdoms.

**Chapter Review Questions**

1. Compare and contrast power, authority, and leadership.
2. Identify five bases of power, and provide an example of each. Which base (or bases) of power do you feel would be most commonly found in organizations?
3. Discuss the concept of power dependencies. What is the relationship between power dependencies and bases of power?
4. What is counterpower? Provide an example of counterpower from your own experience.
5. Why is it important to understand political behavior in organizations?
6. Define politics. How does politics differ from power?
7. Compare and contrast the resource dependence model of power and politics with the strategic contingency model.
8. Identify several specific power tactics in organizations, and provide an example of each.
9. Why is it important that the exercise of power and politics be handled in an ethical fashion? What might happen if employees felt that managers were using power in an unethical fashion?

**Management Skills Application Exercises**

1. You might find it interesting to look at your own bases of power in an organization you have worked with. To do this, simply think of your present or past job, and complete this self-assessment. When you have finished, refer to Appendix B for scoring procedures.
What Are Your Bases of Power?

*Instructions:* Using a current or former job, answer each of the following items by circling the response that most suits your answer.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I always try to set a good example for other employees.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. My coworkers seem to respect me on the job.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Many employees view me as their informal leader at work.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I know my job very well.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. My skills and abilities help me a lot on this job.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I continually try to improve the way I do my job.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. I have considerable authority in my job.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Decisions made at my level are critical to organizational success.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Employees frequently ask me for guidance.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. I am able to reward people at lower levels in the organization.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. I am responsible for evaluating those below me.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. I have a say in who gets a bonus or pay raise.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. I can punish employees at lower levels.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. I check the work of lower-level employees.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. My diligence helps to reduce the errors of others on the job.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. It might be interesting for you to evaluate your own level of political behavior. To do this, complete this self-assessment. When you have finished, score your questionnaire according to the procedure outlined in Appendix B.

How Political Are You?

*Instructions:* To determine your political appreciation and tendencies, please answer the following questions. Select the answer that better represents your behavior or belief, even if that particular behavior or belief is not present all the time.

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. You should make others feel important through an open appreciation of their ideas and work.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. Because people tend to judge you when they first meet you, always try to make a good first impression.  
   ___ True  
   ___ False  

3. Try to let others do most of the talking, be sympathetic to their problems, and resist telling people that they are totally wrong.  
   ___ True  
   ___ False  

4. Praise the good traits of the people you meet and always give people an opportunity to save face if they are wrong or make a mistake.  
   ___ True  
   ___ False  

5. Spreading false rumors, planting misleading information, and backstabbing are necessary, if somewhat unpleasant, methods to deal with your enemies.  
   ___ True  
   ___ False  

6. Sometimes it is necessary to make promises that you know you will not or cannot keep.  
   ___ True  
   ___ False  

7. It is important to get along with everybody, even with those who are generally recognized as windbags, abrasive, or constant complainers.  
   ___ True  
   ___ False  

8. It is vital to do favors for others so that you can call in these IOUs at times when they will do you the most good.  
   ___ True  
   ___ False  

9. Be willing to compromise, particularly on issues that are minor to you but important to others.  
   ___ True  
   ___ False  

10. On controversial issues, it is important to delay or avoid your involvement if possible.  
    ___ True  
    ___ False  


Managerial Decision Exercises

1. You have recently been promoted to the position of president of the division from your current role as VP of accounting and finance. Many people thought that the VP of sales and marketing would get the position, but you and he had always been friendly, and you thought that things would go smoothly. After about six months in the new position, you notice that he has been fighting you in small and subtle ways. You recognize his value, so you decide to let things play out and even mention other possibilities for promotion within the organization that he could apply for and that you would be supportive. After 11 months, things have not improved, and you are considering letting your colleague go. You are hesitant, however, because your organization needs a strong sales and marketing department. What should you do? If this power struggle continues, how do you think it will affect the larger organization?

Critical Thinking Case
The Ohio Connection

Janey worked as an executive assistant to a product manager at her company: Ohio Connection. Overall, she loved her job; she was happy to work with a company that provided great benefits, and she and found enjoyment in her day-to-day work. She had the same product manager boss for years, but last year, her manager left Ohio Connection and retired. Recently her new manager has been treating her unfairly and showcasing bullying behavior.

Yesterday, Janey came into work, and her boss decided to use their power as her manager and her “superior” to demand that she stay late to cover for him, correct reports that he had made mistakes on, and would not pay her overtime. She was going to be late to pick up her son from soccer practice if she stayed late; she told him this, and he was not happy.

Over subsequent days, her boss consistently would make comments about her performance, even though she had always had good remarks on reviews, and created a very negative work environment. The next time she was asked to stay late, she complied for fear of losing her job or having other negative impacts on her job. Janey’s situation was not ideal, but she didn’t feel she had a choice.

Questions:
1. What type of power did Janey’s boss employ to get her to do the things that he wanted her to do?
2. What negative consequences are apparent in this situation and other situations where power is not balanced in the workplace?
3. What steps should Janey take to counteract the power struggle that is occurring with her new manager?
