Strategic Persuasion and Influence*

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* Copyrighted material – Shell and Moussa

“Some of my most difficult negotiations are internal.”

The market rewards strong influence and persuasion skills.

- A contractor who can work with customers, design kitchens, and organize jobs may earn five times as much as one of his workers who has identical cabinetry skills.
- An office worker who is creative, charismatic, and really good in fast-changing interactive settings now gets paid much more than a disciplined middle manager who excels at routine tasks.


The “internal” market also rewards political skills.

- 95% of all organizations are political to “some” extent. Nearly half are political to a “very great” or “fair” extent.
- Political skills are the strongest predictor of performance ratings, outstripping by far both intelligence and personality traits.

* Sources: “How Frequent is Organizational Political Behavior,” Wickenberg & Kylen; “Political Skill at Work”
Culture or Cultures? The GUMBA problem.

- Organizations have multiple "occupational cultures."
- Different functions/specialists "occupy different thought worlds."

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function</th>
<th>What is the sense of the task?</th>
<th>What is the sense of the product?</th>
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<tr>
<td>Technical</td>
<td>Hands on, Tactile</td>
<td>A solution</td>
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<td>Field</td>
<td>Relationship-based</td>
<td>Possibility</td>
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<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>Operational</td>
<td>A well-built thing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Planning</td>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>A business</td>
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Source: Deborah Dougherty

Authority has limits.

- "When you run General Electric, there are 7 to 12 times a year when you have to say, ‘you’re doing it my way.’ If you do it 18 times, the good people will leave. If you do it three times, the company falls apart."
- Big decisions require, on average, consultation with 20 people. Little decisions require consultation with 8.

Source: Jeff Immelt quoted in Joe Nocera, "Running G.E., Comfortable In His Skin," NYT, C1, 6/9/07

Corporate Culture: What is it?

- Behaviors: How the company is organized, how people do their work, what norms govern behavior
- Language: Strategies, goals, vision and mission statements
- Beliefs: Taken-for-granted beliefs, perceptions, thoughts and feelings about how to run a successful business

Culture is based on habitual ways of doing business.


Your toolbox.
Wooing is a four-step process.

1. **Survey your situation**: What is my idea, and how is it better than the alternatives? Who are the decision makers and influencers? What is my “stepping stone” strategy?

2. **Remove the BRICCs**: Beliefs, Relationships, Interests, Credibility, Channels.

3. **Make your pitch**: Use PCAN (because meaning matters). Make your pitch memorable.

4. **Secure your commitments**: Target key individuals. Manage the politics. Create a “snowball effect.”
The Five Barriers: Remove the BRICCs!

You → Relationships → Interests → Credibility → Channels and Language → The Other

Relationships

Beliefs and Values

Interests

Credibility

Channels and Language

Which barriers did Lincoln confront? What would you do?

How do you remove the relationship barrier?

The Ladder of Working Relationships

Trust level: Will I extend myself for you? Will I give you the benefit of the doubt? (reliability, character, consistency)

Reciprocity level: Are you reliable? (chits, favors, helpfulness, sacrifices)

Rapport level: Do I know you? (liking, similarity, familiarity)

Trust = Delivering again and again.

L. Richard Shell and Mario Moussa, The Art of Woo, 2007
**Relationship Strategies**

- Build trust
  - Apologize if you break it
- Ask for favors – reciprocity
  - Trump and his lawyer
- Match styles – similarity
- Make an effort to be friendly
  - “Slight attentions often bring back reward as great as it is unlooked for.”
- Meet face to face when the stakes are high
  - Parsons and Icahn

**How do you remove the credibility barrier?**

**How do you remove the belief barrier?**

**Strategies for managing belief bias**

- Persistence
- Shift audiences
- Fly under the radar screen
- One small step
- Position your idea around a deeper core value
How do you remove the interests barrier?

You should ask three key questions about interests:

1. Why might it be in the other party’s interests to support my idea?
   • Action: When you can, avoid conflicting interests and build on shared interests.
2. What do other parties want that I can give them to gain their support?
   • Action: Look for low-cost ways to give others what they want.
3. Why might they say no?
   • Action: Try to find shared interests that outweigh conflicting interests.

Communication Mismatches: Influence Channels

A. Authority (emphasis on using formal position or rules)
B. Rationality (emphasis on using reasons)
C. Vision (emphasis on organizational goals, purposes, and aspirations)
D. Relationship (emphasis on liking, similarity, and reciprocity)
E. Interests/Incentives (emphasis on using trades and compromises)
F. Politics (emphasis on managing perceptions and building consensus)

How do you remove the communication barrier?
### Persuasion Styles

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Volume</th>
<th>More Self-Oriented</th>
<th>More Other-Oriented</th>
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<tr>
<td>Higher</td>
<td>DRIVER</td>
<td>PROMOTER</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ADVOCATE</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower</td>
<td>COMMANDER</td>
<td>CHESS PLAYER</td>
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#### How does each style work?
"There is a right answer, the one that can give you the best delivery time and product quality at the lowest cost."

"It will all be over by 3 P.M."

He had the "ability to associate his own interests with those of his employees and the larger public."

"I really want to break it up."
Culture and politics: three key findings.

1. Human beings are “tribal,” turf-conscious creatures, who tend to create “granfallos”—associations without content or feeling, based only on a label.
   - “If you wish to study a granfalloon, just remove the skin of a toy balloon.”—Bokonon
2. People love the status quo, and they tend to suffer from “decision inertia.”
3. Losers are louder, because of the “scarcity” principle.

Source: Ch. 9, The Art of Woo

Six Degrees of Separation

But not all intermediaries are created equal.

Social Networks: Quality and Quantity

- Actually it does matter whom you know.
- You generate social capital by getting to know people who bridge across different groups.
  Or by working with people who forge tighter connections within groups.
- Not all connections, then, are equal. Seek out people with key roles:
  - Central Connectors – Know nearly everyone in a particular group (Legal, HR, IT, Marketing, Security, etc.).
  - Boundary Spanners – Know people in many different groups.
  - Peripheral Specialists – Have highly technical knowledge.

Give some thought to the kind of people with whom you build relationships.

Five Key Social Network Questions:

1. Who are the key players?
2. How powerful are they?
3. To what extent are they using their power?
4. What relationships exist among the key players?
5. Who are the influencers of the key players?
6. How can you gain credibility using relationships with key players (e.g., Heartfelt President needs the VP of Sales)?

Who should the two players in the case ultimately try to reach?

What are your options in crossing cultural barriers?

- Beliefs: Bring core beliefs to the surface and reframe.
- Relationships: Emphasize similarities.
- Interests: Focus on creating pull rather than pushing.
- Credibility: Piggyback on the credibility of “insiders.”
- Communication: Pay attention to telltale phrases and words.

What options did you use at Heartfelt?
Obtaining political commitment

- Secure commitments (by asking for concrete actions observed by others).
- Uncover hidden agendas and deal with rumors (e.g., the "email problem").
- Find a simple theme (so people can rally around it).
- Form alliances (to bridge the gap between "us" and "them").
- Look for ways to achieve "small wins," build momentum, and create the "snowball effect" (since nobody likes to be a loner).
- "Lock in" agreements (so that an idea becomes "policy").

What agreements did you reach at Heartfelt?

A core skill in influence and persuasion: perspective-taking

- "If there is any secret to success, it lies in the ability to get the other person’s point of view and see things from that person’s angle as well as your own." —Henry Ford

What are techniques for gaining perspective (role reversals, etc.)?

Most important fact: People persuade themselves.

"People make their decisions based on what the facts mean to them, not on the facts themselves."

Core challenge: Focus on the other.
Making Your Case

Two interesting facts.

- 30 million PowerPoint presentations are delivered daily.
- 78% of all executives have slept through a presentation in the past month.

What is this person trying to say?

Here’s how a well-known executive answered a question about his plans for a potential merger:

“Forgetting the business logic and the price, there will be options down the road there, I would answer your question about capable and that we weren't really quite capable yet because our army was doing all the other stuff we had to do, particularly the systems conversions. The army will be capable to do other stuff sometime next year, which is reasonable. Doesn't mean we will.”

Are you tapping?

Source: Made to Stick—Why Some Ideas Survive and Others Die
PCAN

- **Problem** – A short, concise statement that defines the problem your idea solves (or the need it addresses)
- **Cause** – An explanation of the cause of this problem or need
- **Answer** – Your solution (or answer) for the situation
- **Net benefits** – A summary of why your answer is the best available, all options considered

Presentation Problem: The typical strategic plan

- **Vision:**
  - Become the service provider of choice in our region.
- **Strategic Goal:**
  - Build the leading organization serving our region distinguished by the quality of its services and by its market coverage and financial strength.
- **Strategies:**
  - Optimize performance of core businesses through a concentrated focus on developing market leadership and broadened geographic market coverage.
  - Strengthen business portfolio and aggressively manage financial position.
  - Develop expert and experienced staff within organization.
  - Maximize value of fundraising through regional strategies.
  - Advance quality of services through initiatives that apply standardized approaches.
  - Advance regional market position through strategic partnerships.

Answer: Make your message memorable.

- **Make it vivid** – Use physical and mental pictures.
- **Use demonstrations** and symbolic actions.
- **Put your heart** into it.
- **Tell a story**.
- **Personalize** it – Use your own experience.
- **Make it a puzzle**.
- **Build bridges** with analogies and **metaphors**.
- **Force your audience to think** – Use **reversals**, “pretend,” and re-conceptualizations.
A demonstration: Will it work?

Metaphor: Employees or cast members?

Make it a puzzle: How is a baseball like a whale?

Maybe influence and persuasion really are rocket science.

“One of the most important [attributes among successful Bell Lab engineers] turned out to be a rapport with a network of key people. Things go more smoothly for the standouts because they put time into cultivating good relationships with people whose services might be needed in a crunch as part of an instant ad hoc team to solve a problem or handle a crisis.”

From a HBR research study quoted by Daniel Goldman and discussed by Harvey Mackay