

CHAPTER 10. THE MANAGER AS POLITICIAN

CHAPTER 10 OVERVIEW

Chapter 10 Summary

In Chapter 10, the authors offer a positive slant on politics and discuss skills of constructive politicians:

1. *Setting agendas* (providing direction—a vision *and* a workable strategy—that addresses the concerns of all major stakeholders).
2. *Mapping the political terrain* (developing a map that identifies major players, their interests, and their power resources).
3. *Networking and building coalitions* (identifying whose support you need, assessing resistance, and creating relationships to facilitate communication, influence and negotiations to deal with resistance).
4. *Bargaining and negotiating* (“horse trading”—offering promises of payoffs in exchange for resources and support to get needed approvals and mandates from people in power, and assessing the consequences of a “win-win” versus a threatening and competitive approach).
5. *Making choices that are both effective and ethical.*

Because managers never have all the power they need to get the job done, they have no choice but to attend to political issues in organizations. Productive leaders are smart but constructive, “benevolent politicians.”

Chapter 10 Key Terms

Creating value: A style of negotiation that focuses on problem solving and is aimed at devising agreements that yield considerable gain to both parties.

Claiming value: A style of negotiation that focuses on hard bargaining and is aimed at winning.

Positional bargaining: Bargaining in which each party stakes out a position and then reluctantly makes concessions in order to reach agreement.

Principled bargaining: Fisher and Ury’s alternative to positional bargaining; built around four principles: (1) separating the people from the problem; (2) focusing on
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interests, not positions; (3) inventing options for mutual gain; and (4) insisting on objective criteria.

Chapter 10 Major Case Examples _____

- Microsoft—Paul Maritz and Dave Cutler
- The space shuttle *Challenger* revisited
- The Reagan presidency
- The government agency in Belgium
- Thomas Wyman lobbying in Washington, D.C.
- 1978 Camp David treaty
- Scandals at Enron and WorldCom

SUGGESTIONS FOR TEACHING CHAPTER 10

The ideas in Chapter 10 revolve around positive political skills. Instructors can focus on:

1. Identifying political skills for management.
2. Opportunities for skills acquisition and practice.

Teaching methods appropriate for each approach are described in the sections that follow. Student exercises keyed to the approaches appear in “Student Exercises for Chapter 10,” beginning on page 9.

Chapter 10: A Focus on Identifying Political Skills for Management _____

Cases and films or videos provide many sources of material for exploring political skills and strategies. In addition, instructors can process any of the simulations described in the teaching notes for Chapter 9 (“Chapter 9: Activities Focusing on Experiencing Power and Politics”) to focus on individual skills and strategies.

Chapter 10: Cases Focusing on Identifying Political Skills

A number of cases examine political skills and strategies.

- Donna Dubinsky at Apple Computer ([A] [HBS 0-486-083], [B] [HBS 0-486-084], and [C] [HBS 0-486-085]) can be used with a videotaped interview of Dubinsky (HBS 5-887-521). The case points to the need for successful managers to adjust their strategies when political forces change. Students can be asked why Dubinsky was initially successful, what went wrong, and what she should have done about it. They can also diagnose Dubinsky’s bases of power and influence strategies and then explore the implications for her continued effectiveness at Apple. After working through the case, poll students on the question, “Given where Dubinsky found herself

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at the end of the case, was the ultimatum a good idea?” A majority usually vote no, but in most groups there will be at least a few individuals who will argue the other side. A follow-up question can be, “If you really believe your boss might be taking the organization over a cliff, what should you do?” In studying the case, students often conclude that Dubinsky brought skills in the structural and human resource frames and got into trouble only when changes within Apple made the environment much more political. Although the case dates to the 1980s—ancient history in the personal computer industry—the issues are still very current. To update the story, you can ask, “Where is Donna Dubinsky now?” At least some students may be aware that she was a cofounder of Palm (the PDA company) and later of Handspring.

- Jonah Creighton ([A] [HBS 9-490-090] and [B] [HBS 9-490-091]) presents a powerful story of a young manager whose attempts to fight racism in a large consumer products company run aground. What went wrong? Was Creighton fighting an unwinnable war? Was he a hero? Or simply naive? Did his lack of political skill and sophistication do him in? Could he have done better? Some students will conclude that Jonah Creighton’s experience proves that you have to go along to get along. Others will argue that it’s better to stand up for what you believe, even if it means personal sacrifice. Some will see beyond this polarity to a third possibility: neither the right values nor political sophistication is enough, but together the two make a potent combination.
- Acton-Burnett ([A] [HBS 9-484-005], [B] [HBS 9-484-006], and [C] [HBS 9-484-007]) documents the challenges facing the leader of a multidepartmental task force in which intergroup rivalries played a significant role.
- Roger Smith, General Motors, and Ross Perot (HBS 9-391-060) describes the highly publicized fallout between Smith, GM’s CEO at the time, and Perot, who was highly critical of management from his perch on the GM board.
- The following cases all deal with newcomers trying to negotiate a successful entry into an organization:
 - Susan Mills ([A] [HBS 9-486-063], [B] [HBS 9-486-064], and [C] [HBS 9-486-065]).
 - Mike Miller ([A] [HBS 9-482-061]).
 - Elizabeth Best ([A] [HBS 9-675-123] and [B] [HBS 9-675-124]).
 - Smithfield Instrument Corp. ([A] [HBS 9-481-081], [B] [HBS 9-481-082], [C] [HBS 9-481-083], [D] [HBS 9-481-084], [E] [HBS 9-481-085], [F] [HBS 9-481-086], and [G] [HBS 9-481-087]). The Smithfield cases require students to prepare their own plans for being influential in a new position as assistant to the president of a large high-tech company, as well as evaluating a series of other entry possibilities.

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- Excellent cases for examining political dynamics in schools include the following:
 - Bobbie D'Alessandro and the Redesign of the Cambridge Rindge and Latin School ([A] [HBS 9-402-003]) and Paula Evans and the Redesign of the Cambridge Rindge and Latin School (HBS 9-402-002) deal with a complicated effort to reform an urban high school in a politically complex, multi-constituent environment. The first case deals with the perspective of the superintendent of schools; the second, with the perspective of the high school principal.
 - The Prince and The Principal (A, B, C) (on-line at http://bloch.umkc.edu/classes/bolman/prince_and_principal.htm) is a very interesting case involving a leader's frame shift. A new principal's friendly, collaborative approach is getting her nowhere with a resistant faculty. Told by her boss to read Machiavelli, she does and develops a much more explicitly political approach to her situation—with considerable success.
 - The Allen School, Anchorage School District (A, B, and C); Boston School Bus Drivers' Strike, The Boston Superintendency (A, B); Caronia, Illinois School System (A, B); and Sowell—A Neighborhood School (A, B), all from HGSE.
 - The University of Missouri (on the Web at http://bloch.umkc.edu/classes/bolman/university_of_missouri.htm) is perfect for examining how well the provost followed the guidelines for effective politics as outlined in the chapter.
 - University of Geneva (HGSE) explores the university's use of “a little bit of gentle blackmail” in negotiating with the Swiss Postal and Telephone Authority; and the University of Pennsylvania (HBS 9-375-211), which deals with campus battles over affirmative action.
 - Strike at Yale ([A] [HBS 9-489-079] and [B] [HBS 9-489-080]) describes the events leading up to a strike by clerical and technical workers at Yale University.

- The Michael Jones (HBS unnumbered) and classic Bob Knowlton cases provide opportunities to look at managerial strategies essential for managing assertive individuals and uncomfortable interpersonal interactions. Racial issues in the Jones case enrich discussion possibilities, and the classroom setting lends itself to explorations of appropriate student and instructor roles, as well as power dynamics. A possible supplementary reading to use when exploring here-and-now classroom power dynamics is *Note to Discussion Teachers: Power in the Classroom: Who Has It? Who Needs It? Some Suggestions Courtesy of Chaucer's Wife of Bath* (HBS 9-382-174).

- Chemical Bank: Payments Automation Project ([B] [HBS 9-485-029]) describes the efforts of Barbara Capsalis, the project manager, and is particularly good for exploring the skills needed to influence people outside one's realm of authority. Instructors will want to use case A (HBS 9-485-028) for background.

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- Elizabeth Best ([C] [HBS 9-675-125] and [D] [HBS 9-675-126]) can be used with cases A and B to explore Best's strategies over time or alone to explore skills for managing political dynamics between and within groups. Gender issues in the Best cases raise questions about whether political skills are gender-linked. The politically sensitive nature of Best's task and the reality that her job is a political appointment offer opportunities for instructors to introduce the additional complexities that public managers face.
- West Point: The Cheating Incident ([A] [HBS 9-481-117]) can be used to examine the political skills needed by the various key actors in the case (General Berry, the secretary of the army, the implicated cadets, the cadets' lawyers, West Point alumni, the senior and junior faculty, various members of Congress, the president, and so on) to manage multiple, diverse, and conflicting constituencies.

Chapter 10: Films or Videos Focusing on Identifying Political Skills

- The Hedrick Smith PBS series *The Power Game* (PBS), based on Smith's book by the same name, is rich in vivid examples about the political skills and savvy required of any influential player in big-league government and organizational power games. (The series includes a unit on Congress, one on nonelected officials, and a very interesting one on the presidency.) Instructors can assign chapters from Smith's book for additional discussion of many of the political skills discussed in Chapter 10. They can use powerful film clips from the series to stimulate class discussion. Segments on agenda setting in the Reagan administration, for example, are perfect for discussion of the skills needed to build and marshal an agenda and illustrate the distinction between offering a vision and having a workable strategy to achieve it. A review of Jimmy Carter's handling of the energy crisis and other key events in his presidency highlights the importance of diagnosing political realities and knowing how to build networks of support. The sophisticated behind-the-scenes image building and "myth making" by the Reagan White House staff guarantees spirited discussion of the connections among political skills, managerial effectiveness, and ethical standards. (The same segment also provides good opportunities for discussing overlaps between the political and symbolic perspectives.) Peggy Noonan's *What I Saw at the Revolution: A Political Life in the Reagan Era* (New York: Ivy Books, 1990) provides another perspective on the sound-byte focus at the Reagan White House.
- Two interviews with Hyman Rickover in Marx, Jick, and Frost's *Management Live* video complement Hedrick Smith materials. The interviews show how Rickover's political savvy helped him outlast many of his Washington opponents.

Many feature films contain rich political material.

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- *Schindler's List* is so overpowering that students may at first have trouble seeing beyond the horrors of the Holocaust. It is, however, also an extraordinary film about power and politics—both at their worst and at their best. Power appears in every form from brute violence to sophisticated negotiation. Much of Schindler's success in protecting "his Jews" was based on adroit use of political skills. At the film's opening, Schindler is a good Nazi and pragmatic businessman who hopes to exploit captive Jews as a source of funds and cheap labor. As the film progresses, he evolves into a principled and sophisticated politician willing to risk his career, his resources—even his life—on behalf of his workers.
- *Glory*, another powerful film, provides a variation on a similar theme. Colonel Shaw, the commander of the Union's first black infantry unit in the civil war, begins as an idealist and a political naif. His political sophistication develops across several scenes in which he tries to secure supplies and respect for his troops. In an early attempt at an officers' dinner, his approach was polite but futile. In a later attempt, he brings troops and uses physical force to support his request. Still later, he calmly presents information that could damage the career and reputation of the officer who controlled the resources. Shaw's political evolution can also be examined in the context of his struggle to build his authority and credibility internally with the men in own regiment.
- *The Pirates of Silicon Valley* (a 1999 made-for-television film) sacrifices some historical accuracy for a good story in turning the rivalry between Apple and Microsoft into a personal battle between Steve Jobs and Bill Gates. Even if some of the details are greatly exaggerated, it still makes for a very good story about organizational politics. (It can be found on the web at a number of sites, including <http://www.half.com/>.)
- The classic *Citizen Kane* and Wajda's *Man of Marble*, described as its Polish equivalent, both explore one man's expression of power and ambition. The films can be used alone or together to examine power across time and cultural boundaries.
- *Working Girl* depicts darker sides of organizational politics that leave Tess frustrated and seemingly with no option but to "bend the political rules." Students who feel powerless identify easily with the film. The first meeting (as well as most of the subsequent exchanges) between Tess and her new boss, Katharine Parker, is rich with implicit power messages. Near the end of the film, Parker bursts onto the scene to wrestle power from Tess in the final stages of a merger in a segment ripe with discussion possibilities. (Don't miss Jack Trainer's almost direct quotation from *Bolman and Deal* in this scene: "Gentleman, the players may have changed but the game remains the same. Let's get on with it.")
- Other films that provide opportunities for exploring corporate political dynamics include *Disclosure*, *Philadelphia*, *The Player*, and *Wall Street*.

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- Finally, many of the training and development films listed in the teaching notes for Chapter 9 (“Chapter 9: Films or Videos Focusing on the Content of the Political Frame”) can be also used to explore political skills.

Chapter 10: A Focus on Skills Practice and Acquisition _____

Instructors can also use Chapter 10 to help students develop their own political skills through exercises and readings.

Chapter 10: Activities Focusing on Skills Practice and Acquisition

- Role plays in large or small groups can be based on many of the cases suggested for Chapters 9 and 10 (see “Chapter 9: Cases Focusing on the Content of the Political Frame” and “Chapter 10: Cases Focusing on Identifying Political Skills”). Role playing encourages students to see multiple approaches in action, compare alternative political strategies, diagnose their own skill strengths and weaknesses, and work again with consistency between intention (espoused theory) and behavior (theory-in-use).
- Simulations suggested for Chapter 9 (see “Chapter 9: Activities Focusing on Experiencing Power and Politics”) can be used and interrupted periodically so that students can explore (in small groups or with the total class) the effectiveness of their choices and strategies, and alternatives that might work better. Instructors might want to designate observers who can provide feedback to participants to augment mid-course diagnosis and action planning. Instructors can be roving analysts and offer their own political commentary.
- Focusing on a particular skill—such as agenda setting, conflict management, advocacy, bargaining and negotiation, coalition building, managing competition, or political diagnosis and mapping—can help students develop and fine-tune their political capacities.
 - In classes with ongoing task or project groups, for example, instructors can ask students to use agenda setting in preparing for a group meeting—develop an agenda, propose a plan for implementation, explore strategies to test its usefulness, present it clearly, and marshal its acceptance.
 - The negotiation cases suggested in the teaching notes for Chapter 9 can be used with student pairs who represent the opposing parties for practice in bargaining, managing competition, or developing skills for effective collaboration. Alternatively, instructors can use the Simplified, Highly Structured, Union-Management Strike Game (HBS 9-177-112) and the One Stage Distributive Bargaining Game (HBS 9-178-032) to practice these skills.

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- A number of other experiential activities provide opportunities for skills practice:
 - Whetten and Cameron's *Developing Managerial Skills*, "Gaining Power and Influence" and "Managing Conflict."
 - Mainiero and Tromley's *Developing Managerial Skills in Organizational Behavior*, "Interpersonal Relationships, Communications, and Conflict" and "Power and Politics").
 - Pfeiffer and Jones's *Structured Experiences* series, #217—Negotiating Differences: Avoiding Polarization (vol. 6); #218—Escalation: An Assertion Activity (vol. 6); #260—Submission/Aggression/Assertion: Nonverbal Components (vol. 6); and #265—Monetary Investment: Negotiation (vol. 7).

Chapter 10: Reading Focusing on Skills Practice and Acquisition

Instructors may assign additional reading in anticipation of skill-building sessions. Options include the following:

- Negotiation Analysis: A Synthesis (HBS 9-800-316) summarizes four key elements in negotiations: diagnosing the situation, shaping the structure, managing the process, and judging success. Key concepts are illustrated through the use of an entrepreneurial negotiation example.
- Bargaining Strategies: Collaborative vs. Competitive Approaches (HBS 9-480-055)
- Some Aspects of Problem Solving and Conflict Resolution in Management Groups (HBS 9-479-003).
- Managing Interpersonal Conflict (HBS 9-479-004).
- Note on the Resolution of Conflict Involving Business, Government and Special Interest Groups (HBS 9-381-202).
- Note on Building an Argument (HBS 9-484-064).
- Note on Corporate Strategy and Politics (HBS 9-382-151).
- Note on Social Motives (HBS 9-477-053).
- Note on Sources of Social Power (HBS 9-477-057).

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▪ STUDENT EXERCISES FOR CHAPTER 10

EXERCISE 10.1

Focus: Experiencing Power and Politics

Lee Bolman's *Management Resources Corporation: An Organizational Simulation* (mentioned earlier and available on-line at http://bloch.umkc.edu/classes/bolman/organization_simulation.htm) can be used in the context of Chapter 10 to focus on the skills of the manager as politician. Tell students in advance that the simulation will give them an opportunity to test their skill in diagnosing and shaping political dynamics in organizations. Call a time-out midway through the simulation, and ask people to talk about the political map and about political skills or initiatives that seem to be working or not working.

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