



Organizational Power: Bases¹

Just as it is important to know how to influence others interpersonally, it is also important to understand the bases of organizational power. The things you need to be aware of are the following:

1. **Organizational culture.**
 - Be aware of the informal rules and norms that govern an organization.
 - Be aware of the current philosophy of those in power and be willing to frame your arguments and desires within that philosophy.
2. **Position.**
 - Remember, the line (money making positions) is more powerful than staff (support positions).
 - Get access to important others (when you have connections to decision makers you can know what is going on and influence decisions by sharing what is going on for you).
 - Go for a position that has upward mobility.
 - Notice shifts in the organization that make different units more powerful (shifting from research and development of a product to marketing the same product might cause the company to shift power from R+D to Marketing).
3. **Alliances.**
 - Get access to influential others through projects, your position, offering help, brokering other relationships, socializing with those above you.
 - Develop mentors and sponsors.
 - Build peer relationships by sharing success, creating connections, exchanging favors, sharing information, creating special task forces.
 - Build subordinate relationships by focusing on powerful subordinates who will support you.
4. **Activities.**
 - Plan extraordinary activities, ones that are first of a kind, make organizational changes, are risky and successful.
 - Plan visible activities preferably that occur between organizational units or between organization and the environment. Try to be visible on your own terms, at what you do best.
5. **Alternatives.**
 - Develop alternatives to your job and to the kinds of recognition you need and want.
 - Keep an eye out for alternative positions, diversified finances and bases of support.

¹From work by Rosabeth Moss-Kanter.