

Effective Application of Consciousness/Presence and Power by Managers to Influence Stakeholders

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Abstract

Managers must be acutely aware of how to influence those with whom they work to support their ideas and accomplish work targets. Maximizing how to influence others requires managers to be engaged consciously with stakeholders so they can take in, process, and understand all that is being communicated. This requires managers to concentrate on, and consciously process, all of the verbal and non-verbal information being generated. The sense of presence a manager brings to a situation (e.g., meetings) in which he/she is attempting to influence stakeholders has a significant impact on the manager's desired outcomes. Power-personal and positional-is an additional source available for a manager to influence stakeholders to support her/his ideas and efforts to achieve job targets and accomplish organizational goals.

Keywords: consciousness, presence, power, managers' influence

Managers need to be astutely aware of how to impact others in the work setting to: (1) maximize the productivity of both parties, (2) enhance their image, and (3) maximize the potential for those with whom they work. The skills for effectively applying consciousness/presence and power greatly aid managers in achieving the three previously listed outcomes. Managers should always strive to put forth the effort to build positive relations with other stakeholders and gain their support. Competent use of consciousness/presence and skills related to power will assist managers in gaining that essential support.

Consciousness/Presence

Engaged consciousness and an acute sense of presence go hand-in-hand for managers to

effectively influence stakeholders and achieve desired results from interacting with them. Hence, while consciousness and presence are presented separately to clearly delineate attributes of each, they are applied by managers in concert with each other.

Consciousness

Consciousness is a manager *knowing* what is going on verbally and non-verbally, for example, in a meeting with several people. Linking this information to *what is known*--the knowledge the manager brings to the meeting--adds context for better understanding the situation (Siegal, 2018). The astutely conscious manager strives to know all that is being communicated in the meeting through heightened *focal attention* that “focuses energy flow into awareness” and causes continuous processing of information with previous reference points, general background knowledge, and work context experiences (Siegal, 2018, p. 51). Regarding the crucial role of effective focus, Shores (2017) notes: “What we focus on really does grow. From a perspective that honors the science behind changing our life from inside out, this means that when you focus on something your ability to identify and accurately hone in becomes sharper” (p. 20).

As managers acutely adept at engaging consciousness realize,

Intention is the way you set your motivation to engage in a certain activity in a certain way. Having the intention to be aware of what is going on, for example, can make guided focal attention more likely to be engaged. (Siegal, 2018, p. 56)

Managers that effectively engage consciousness are often viewed as being insightful and seem to have a sixth sense of knowing, as time advances, what the outcomes will be in situations such as meetings. Managers who are acutely aware of consciousness pick up on even the smallest nuances of others through interactions, observations, and intense listening.

Siegal (2018) advocates the importance of managers being adept at applying *mindsight* that utilizes insight, empathy, and integration of information to enhance consciousness. He states that:

To sense the flow of energy and information, we can use a mindsight monitoring skill that is like a *perpetual lens* focusing the flow into our awareness, enabling us to achieve a clear focus in sensing the mind within the mind of others. (pp. 32-33)

This perpetual lens emphasizes the use of three key skills:

1. *Openness*--Accepting what is occurring and not being influenced by preconceived notions and expectations. This means starting from a non-judgmental point.
2. *Observation*--Avoiding being on automatic pilot and taking in all that unfolds systematically, while guarding against being negatively impacted by “information overload.”
3. *Objectivity*--Not being overly influenced by previous knowledge, while meshing it with what is observed to maximize the meaning of what is taking place (Siegal, 2018).

Dalio (2017) reminds managers their subconscious minds are the origins of emotions.

Managers need to guard against letting their conscious minds wander so that unconscious thoughts can enter which may cause inappropriate emotional reactions from what they are trying to accomplish in interactions with others. An individual seemingly making an errant comment that makes no sense in the context of a discussion is an instance of a subconscious thought emerging.

An enemy of managers accurately engaging consciousness is technology-driven interruptions. It is crucial for managers to make technology their servant--not their master (Kogan, Merrill, & Rinne, 2015). Many managers are too often lured away from effectively engaging consciousness by the “dings and pings” of electronic devices. A manager must resist the temptation to try to multitask in the context of effectively engaging consciousness. “Research consistently demonstrates that managers cannot, in reality, multitask” (Grenny, 2017, p. 106).

Optimism is a skill set that compliments effectively engaging consciousness (Bartz, 2018). Optimism is future-oriented and means that managers have positive attitudes that events (e.g., meetings) will turn out well, even to the extent of being confident that such will be the case (Charney & Southwick, 2018). Managers effectively utilizing optimism in concert with engaged consciousness means that past happenings do not deter them in the pursuit of positive outcomes for a future event.

Presence

Presence will allow you to approach stressful situations without anxiety, fear, and dread, and leave them without regret, doubt, and frustration. Instead, you will go forth with the knowledge that you did everything you could do. That you accurately and fully represented yourself and your abilities. That you showed them who you really are. That you showed yourself who you really are. (Cuddy, 2015, p. 26)

Presence is managers being open to interpreting, and acutely aware through focused attention, what is happening *as it is happening* (Siegal, 2018). “Presence is the state of being attuned to and able to comfortably express our true thoughts, feelings, values, and potential. It comes and goes. It is a moment to moment phenomenon” (Cuddy, 2015, p. 4). Presence is a manager having confidence without arrogance, and reflecting self-assurance. A manager establishing trustworthiness with others is the backbone of positively impacting his/her presence (Cuddy, 2015). A manager making an emotional connection when interacting with others enhances presence (Edinger, 2017).

Presence emanates from believing in and trusting yourself—your honest feelings, values, and abilities. Effective presence convinces others of a manager’s authenticity and trustworthiness. Confidence, comfort level, and passionate enthusiasm are attributes indicative of presence (Cuddy, 2015).

Hedges’ (2012) model for managers effectively establishing and utilizing presence has three components: (1) Intentional, (2) Individual, and (3) Inspirational.

Intentional. Managers’ beliefs shape every aspect of their presence, from body language to the action chosen to undertake. It is critical for managers to understand what type of presence they want to demonstrate, the values to be conveyed, and how the aforementioned matches up (or doesn’t) with how others currently perceive them (Hedges, 2012).

Individual. Managers connect with stakeholders because of effective interpersonal skills, consciousness, and presence and not because of hierarchical concepts such as a leader or a manager (Hedges, 2012). These connections drive a manager's success. Establishing connections that forms "deep connections with others, and builds relationships that foster trust flow from effective application of presence by a manager" (Hedges, 2012, p. 6).

Inspirational. Managers can use their unique presence to influence others. This is represented by managers being effective communicators through powerful language, motivating through change, gaining eminence, and having high impact presentation skills. Effective inspiration by managers causes *followership* (Hedges, 2012).

In summary, managers effectively demonstrating presence are:

1. Removing judgment and masks to create a deep connection with others' experiences.
2. Being positive, upbeat, and reflecting enjoyment.
3. Maintaining confidence regardless of what happens--good or bad.
4. Feeling personally powerful and acutely attuned to one's sincerity.
5. Having perfect alignment of speech, facial expressions, posture, and movement.
6. About honesty and the powerful connections created internally with ourselves.
7. A state of psychological positivity experienced through challenging situations.
8. Positive physiological body reactions in harmony with positive psychological feelings.
9. Approaching and dealing with stressful situations without anxiety, fear, or dreading the experience.
10. A feeling you accurately and fully represented yourself and your abilities, with no regrets.
11. Displaying confidence without arrogance.
12. "Comfortable" enthusiasm.
13. Believing and trusting "your stories," feelings, beliefs, values, and abilities.
14. Exuding authenticity, believability, and genuineness.
15. Captivating the situation and others.
16. All of one's senses agreeing on one thing at the same time.
17. Physical appearance complimenting the context of the situation.
18. Having a sincere desire to understand what is heard through effective listening.
19. Excellent non-verbal skills, especially eye contact and open body language (Siegal, 2018; Cuddy, 2015; Hedges, 2012).

Power

Managers must influence stakeholders to meet their job responsibilities and produce high-quality work for which they are held accountable. McKee (2017) states that "to influence others, we [managers] must have power, the real currency in workplaces. Most people want it, all of us need it" (p. 12). Power is defined as the manager's potential to influence other stakeholders in the work environment. Hersey, Blanchard, and Johnson (2013) summarize power in the context of use by managers as:

Power is, then, a resource that may or may not be used. The use of power resulting in a change in the probability that a person or group will adopt the desired behavioral change is defined as ‘influence.’ Therefore, leadership is any attempt to influence, and power is a leader’s *influence potential*. It is the resource that enables a leader to influence. (p. 141)

The seven types of power are listed in Figure 1 and are aligned with either *personal* or *position* power (also referred to as formal authority).

P E R S O N A L	<u>Referent Power</u>
	Others respond to what a manager wants them to do because they like the manager and want to do things that will please her/him.
	<u>Information Power</u>
P O S I T I O N	Others respond to what a manager wants them to do because the manager possesses or has access to information that is valuable.
	<u>Expert Power</u>
	Others respond to what a manager wants them to do because they respect his/her understanding, knowledge, judgment, and experience.
P O S I T I O N	<u>Coercive Power</u>
	Others respond to what a manager wants them to do because the manager can administer sanctions and punishment to those who do not cooperate with her/him.
	<u>Connection Power</u>
P O S I T I O N	Others respond to what a manager wants them to do because they realize that the manager has connections with influential and important people.
	<u>Reward Power</u>
	Others respond to what a manager wants them to do because the manager can provide rewards and support to those who cooperate with the manager.
P O S I T I O N	<u>Legitimate Power</u>
	Others respond to what a manager wants them to do because the manager’s position in the organization provides him/her with authority to direct their work activities (Hersey et al., 2013).

Figure 1. Descriptions of the seven types of power.

A manager's personal power is a function of her/his attributes, skills, and knowledge as a unique person. It is the extent to which other stakeholders respect, feel good about, and are committed to supporting and following the manager (Hersey et al., 2013). A manager's personal power can increase, decrease, or remain the same depending on his/her actions (e.g., trustworthiness and credibility) and the extent to which stakeholders are willing to grant the use of this power base to influence their behaviors.

Personal power is earned by managers proving to stakeholders that their advice and desired actions are worthy of support. It is sometimes referred to as soft power. Personal power can also be viewed as political capital, meaning that it can furnish a manager with a means to influence key people in the organization on issues embroiled in office politics (Garvin & Margolis, 2017).

Managers who seek and give advice effectively are more likely to use personal or soft power (Garvin & Margolis, 2017). The key to the concept of soft power is the term *advice* rather than dictates and ultimatums. Authenticity and building trust are essential for managers to use soft power in influencing stakeholders effectively. Again, the use of soft power by the manager is in the context of *seeking and giving advice effectively*. As the adage goes, though, "be careful what you (the manager) ask for" when it comes to seeking advice. If others perceive that a manager's efforts to seek advice are merely a façade for misleading people to believe she/he has an open mind--when all along the manager has a predetermined course of action--the result will be disastrous to trust and credibility.

Managers also build soft power through persuasion that requires establishing positive relationships with stakeholders through interpersonal skills *over an ongoing time period*. In a collaborative work environment, power is granted as compared to being imposed. As Bernstein, Bell, and Cliffe (2017) observe, "In today's collaborative work environment, you [the manager] need a range of interpersonal skills to persuade people to help you get things accomplished" (p. 4). A manager needs to avoid being the "know-it-all boss" which Lubin (2019) describes as "excluding others from decisions, cutting off opportunities for collaboration, and dominating meetings" (p. B5).

A manager's *position power* flows or is delegated down from the organizational hierarchy. It represents the right--and responsibility--to make decisions affecting stakeholders without their approval. Position power also carries with it consequences--rewards, punishment, or both--the manager can bring to bear on the stakeholder within the manager's span of control. Position power can increase, decrease, or remain the same based on the extent of the manager's support from superordinates. The use of position power by managers is sometimes needed when decision-making time is limited and the results of no decision--or the time necessitated to collaborate with stakeholders regarding a decision--would have extreme negative consequences.

Concluding Thoughts

Managers are dependent on other stakeholders to significantly aid them in meeting job responsibilities and producing high quality outcomes for the work unit. Effective engagement of consciousness and the presence a manager brings to interactions with stakeholders are crucial to his/her success in influencing others to support ideas, efforts, and work unit targets. How managers use power--both personal and position--also determines the extent to which they can garner support by influencing stakeholders. In the context of the expectation for a collaborative

work environment in many organizations, managers must be adept at using their personal power (sometimes referred to as soft power) through sharing information, establishing trust, and having credibility with stakeholders.

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