

# SELL TO POWER

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We may be equal in the eyes of the Lord and the law, but not when it comes to buying decisions of major purchases. Not all votes are equal in a complex sale. Large organizations are not democracies, and some votes are bigger than others. The impact of politics on business decision making has been recognized by business writers since the early 1960s; it's been around much longer than that.

Often committees can't reach a consensus and don't have a clear process for how to resolve the impasse. If political activity hasn't already been at work, it erupts now.

Some people don't like politics and think it's not fair. And politics does have its negative aspect. All you need to do is read the paper each day to see political tactics being used for personal gain. That's the dark side of power and the negative definition most people give to politics. But politics does have a positive dimension - it is the way people with different points of view resolve their differences without fighting. The U.S. Constitution has stood the test of time for more than two hundred years (and only broke down into fighting once).

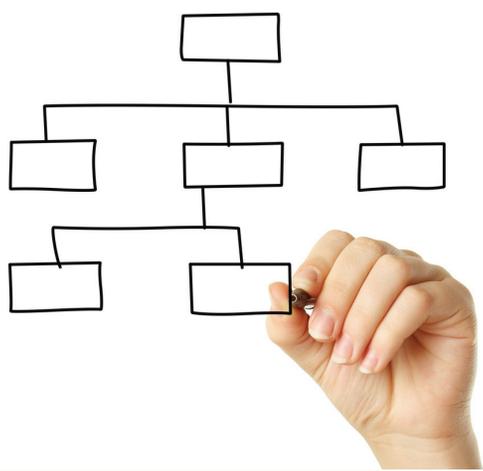
Political activity in business decisions is there and it's real. You can either ignore it and whine about it, or learn to recognize it and manage it. People who don't know what power is, how to recognize it, how to build it, and how to use it will be perpetual victims rather than victors in the complex sale.

### THE SHADOW ORGANIZATION CHART

Power is invisible. You can see the titles on the door, but as Henry Mintzberg described, within every organization is an invisible power structure that has little to do with organizational lines.

Not only is power invisible, it's dynamic. It changes daily. People gain and lose power on a regular basis. And it is not a universal halo; it is vectored between individuals. We may have power with one person, no power with another, and negative power with another.

Negative power comes from ethical or performance problems, cultural misalignment, or poor people skills. It's hard to believe, but there are actually some votes you may not want because if they are for you, others will automatically be against you.



## WHY DO YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT POWER?

1. You need to know how to *identify* power and *who has it* inside your prospect account. Your strategy should then allocate time to those people and *secure their support* early in the process. They will lead others and leverage your time.
2. You need to use these same tools to *build influence* with them and preference for you.
3. If you don't have power, *you can borrow it*. You can borrow it from one person to gain access to or information about another, or to have them influence someone else.
4. You need influence *to build your own personal network* inside your own companies to get things done for the client and inside your own industry to develop your own personal network.

The problem a salesperson faces is that you come into an account, and it's as if you have a freeze frame or snapshot of a motion picture that has been going on for two to five years. You have to figure out quickly who the powerful people are, what the plot is, and what's happened so far so you can project what might happen in the future. From the very first meeting, you need to start asking not only needs and process questions, but questions about political power so you can inventory who has power and discover where to invest your time.

The traditional source of power for many years was formal or positional authority, which comes from someone's title and place on the organization chart. But as power was studied more closely, and as management techniques began to change, more attention was paid to personal power or influence.

## POWER TOOLS - SOURCES OF INFLUENCE

Influence means getting things done through other people *without the use of authority*. Queen Elizabeth has titles; Princess Diana had influence.

Stephen Covey, in *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, said it well: "We build emotional bank accounts with each other." Other business writers have called it "social capital." How do people influence others without authority? How do people earn other people's trust? In our workshops, clients often come up with more than fifty different sources of influence and the power that flows from them.

## RECIPROCITY - FAVORS AND GRATITUDE

Effective sales leaders constantly make deposits and build networks of people inside their organizations and industry who help them get things done for the client (as well as themselves).

You don't actually keep score, but you must make deposits before you can make withdrawals. But some people never seem to figure this out.

The everyday give-and-take of little exchanges is known as *reciprocity*. It is the currency of social capital. As Harvey Mackay says in the title of his book, *Dig Your Well Before You're Thirsty*.

## PERFORMANCE

Nothing promotes success like success. People who perform tend to build influence. Their ideas get listened to a little bit better. But if salespeople point to the numbers and say, "Look at my numbers, this makes my ideas right," when the numbers aren't there, nobody listens to them anymore. Powerful people build on multiple sources of power.

Jack Nicklaus was the most competent golfer on the tour early in his career. But many disliked him, not only because he was beating a charismatic hero, Arnold Palmer, but because Jack was inelegant and ineloquent. That is, until Mark McCormack, the famous sports management figure, encouraged him to get a charisma transplant. Now he still makes more money than anyone on the tour even though his playing has waned with age. Michael Jordan, on the other hand, mastered task and personality, charisma and competence, early in his career and can sell ten-dollar sneakers for 110 dollars.

## COMMON GOALS, COMMON ENEMY

Common goals or common ideology - these are the things that unite different groups into alliances. A contemporary example is Netscape, America Online, and Sun collaborating against the common enemy of Microsoft. Americans teamed with the Russians against Germany, and then later with Germany against the Russians.

People can be influenced to do what you want if you can show how it gets them what they want. Common goals, enemies, and ideology can unite religious groups, political parties, companies, and even countries.

## IDEAS AND INNOVATION

When you want to think outside the box, there are some people we always want because they are always creative thinkers. One of our principals, Joe Terry, used to work for me as a sales rep in Texas as part of our government business unit. There was also a vice president of that business unit. But if a meeting was scheduled, everybody would want Joe there; we didn't care whether the vice president of the business unit could make it because Joe had all the ideas.

And he built influence. He knew this marketplace was different and why. He had performed well - he had sold more than anybody else. He had developed a group of supporters within the company. He had executive presence and a good sense of humor. When meetings were scheduled, he had what's known as "calendar dominance." People would schedule the meeting around his calendar because he had the best ideas.



## MONEY

There are benign uses of money for influence, there are dark uses, and there are gray uses. Benign uses of money for influence include the biggest donor to a charity, the biggest stockholder, the banker who's toting the note, and biggest customer.

The dark sources of influence include bribes and kickbacks, unethical, immoral, and illegal in some parts of the world, and a way of life in others. The gray area is perhaps the most insidious - political contributions, expediting fees, phony consulting arrangements, hiring consultants and law firms for access to government officials, and hiring ex-government officials to sell back into their own agencies.

## LEADERSHIP, SALESMANSHIP

Sometimes power belongs to those who seize it, who take the initiative, and who get out in front and lead until someone stops them. When our company was acquired by our major competitor's parent company, *our* chairman John Imlay was given control of the combined company instead of the chairman of our competitor. Why? Because John had built more influence with the competitor's management based on his leadership and sales ability.

## SOCIAL

Other factors notwithstanding, people buy from people they like. Getting to know someone away from the office helps build those special relationships and can be very useful when the issue turns to business. Social influence includes activities like tennis and golf, clubs, schools, spouses, and friends. Professional associations and other executives in the same industry can be extremely influential. Some chairmen are more influenced by CEOs of other companies in the industry than by their own vice presidents.

If you don't think spouses can be influential, read *Barbarians at the Gate*. The person behind the largest leverage buyout in history is Linda Robinson, wife of Jim Robinson, chairman of American Express, who was funding the management team's attempt to take over R.J. Reynolds. She is a New York businessperson and socialite who knows everybody. She was the catalyst that made the deal happen - seeing people at dinners and social gatherings and calling people on ski slopes. She got the right people together with the right messages but had no formal part in the process.

## CHARISMA, STYLE, PRESENCE

**If all you've got  
is style but no  
substance, you  
can linger but  
you won't last.**

Personality, oratory, and persuasiveness are classic sources of influence. There are some people whose presence simply fills the room.

Some people are more fun to be around than others, and fun is a high-level personal value on Maslow's hierarchy. My brother Rusty has made his living that way. One of the funniest people around, he is half Johnny Carson, half Robin Williams. And he is competent at his job. He was vice president of stockholder relations for a major bank with a fire-breathing CEO in an environment where one word could cost a billion dollars. Had he not been good at his job, he couldn't have survived.

If all you've got is style but no substance, you can linger but you won't last.

## INTEGRITY, DEPENDABILITY

If influence is social currency, then integrity is gold. People can move beyond influence and rapport to trust by knowing that you won't do anything to serve yourself at my expense. Sir Thomas More, Chancellor of England, was one of the most highly-respected people in medieval Europe. Henry VIII, who wanted another wife, was stuck for many years simply by More's silence because he would not approve the marriage to Anne Boleyn. More's respect came from the knowledge that he was the most principled man in the realm. This was a man who would die for his principles, and indeed he did.

## LOYALTY

Corporate loyalty has taken a beating in the last few years. With the scale of downsizings, reorganization, and mergers recently, it's hard to have loyalty to a company. Perhaps it never was possible. But you can be loyal to people, and they can be loyal to you wherever you are - as long as they have the power.

Some other sources of influence, both positive and negative, legal and illegal, include:

- Tenure, seniority
- Mentors
- Persuasiveness, oratory
- Shared experiences
- Threats, intimidation, blackmail
- Control of resources
- Common friends
- Ethics, fairness
- Teams
- Previous work
- Experience
- Who hired whom
- Family
- Expertise, competence
- Dependability
- Fame, fun, humor
- Vision
- Tradition, culture
- Connections
- Information
- Credentials

## AUTHORITY AND INFLUENCE

We've defined influence as the ability to get things done without the use of authority. There can be people with authority and no influence, people who have influence and no authority, people with both, and people with neither.

People who have authority without influence have plenty of them to see salespeople (probably because no one else is talking to them). This scenario can be caused by poor performance, the Peter Principle (people rise to their level of incompetence), changes in corporate culture, mergers and acquisitions, or integrity problems.



There are many titles for this type of person, such as vice president of special projects or vice chairman. In Germany they call them “breakfast dictators.” In Japan, they are known as “the people at the window” because people with the influence are actually on the inside of the building and lifetime employees who have lost influence are on the outside. This has confused many American salespeople as to where the real power lies. In Texas, these people are called “big hat, no cattle.”

People with influence and no authority, however, can be extremely powerful agents and important to unlocking the complex sale. These include rising stars, executive assistants, secretaries, and technical experts, especially those who can link technical issues to the strategic issues of upper executives of their organization.

Many of these influential people lie outside the buying organization altogether, such as consultants, lawyers, friends, professional associates, and - yes - salespeople. These influencers are essential to leveraging strategy in the complex sale for four reasons:

1. They provide access to top-level executives.
2. They link technical or operational issues to strategic and political benefits.
3. They provide information that is needed to win.
4. They lead other people who have neither influence nor authority but may be involved in the decision.



## POWER MAPS

You need to begin mapping out the zones of influence from the first visit. In one-on-one conversations, slip in questions such as, “How long have you worked here? Where did you work before? What do you look for from this project? Who influences whom? Who else’s opinions are important to this decision? Who has whose ear? To whom do people listen in this organization? Who else might become involved in this decision?”

Obviously, political information is best handled discretely in one-on-one conversations out of earshot. Sometimes you need to cut someone out of the pack, or isolate them, so there are no witnesses to the conversation. This is why we entertain - so we can discuss politics and personal agendas in private.

# SELL TO POWER

## FREE SALES ASSESSMENT

The Complex Sale has created a comprehensive sales assessment from its proven Create, Win, Grow revenue model that asks two questions: How important is each best practice to the success of your organization and how well is it currently being implemented?

The goal of the Sales Effectiveness Assessment is to uncover the most critical challenges facing your sales organization today. By identifying key processes which your management and sales team categorize as critical in importance and poor in execution, The Complex Sale can help you pinpoint operational issues which are preventing you from hitting revenue targets and recommend areas to invest in for immediate impact.

[Sign up](#) for our FREE Sales Assessment to see how your sales organization stacks up!

This eBook, based on excerpts from Rick Page's acclaimed best-selling book, *Hope Is Not A Strategy: The 6 Keys to Winning the Complex Sale*, provides you with valuable insights on how to sell smarter than ever before and win the sales you can't afford to lose. Rick is the founder and CEO of The Complex Sale, Inc. in Atlanta, Georgia.

The Complex Sale, Inc. is a sales methodology and consulting company that helps you win the sales you can't afford to lose - from speeches and tools to training and coaching to total sales force transformation. We help leading companies create pipeline, win opportunities, and dominate accounts in the complex selling environment. Founded in 1994 by Rick Page, author of the sales bestseller *Hope Is Not A Strategy - The 6 Keys To Winning The Complex Sale* and *Make Winning A Habit - 20 Best Practices Of The World's Greatest Sale Forces*, The Complex Sale delivers programs taught by executives who know the environment firsthand. We provide the skills and processes you need to make winning a habit in your organization.

For more information on how The Complex Sale, Inc. can help you and your organization, contact us today at [info@complexsale.com](mailto:info@complexsale.com) or call us at 770-360-9299.

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