



HARPER
BUSINESS

POWER

Why Some People Have It—And Others Don't

By Jeffrey Pfeffer

Power. We all want it. But how do we achieve it? And how do we keep it once we do? In this groundbreaking guide, one of the greatest minds in management reveals the strategies and tactics that separate the winners from the losers, and teaches us how to wield power in the real world.

Dos and Don'ts

Welcome to the real world—not necessarily the world we want, but the world that exists. With more well-qualified people competing for each step on the organizational ladder all the time, rivalry is intense and only getting more so. But if you understand the principles of power and are willing to use them, you can acquire the organizational survival skills to prevail in any political battles you face. Jeffrey Pfeffer of the Stanford Graduate School of Business, drawing on years of observation, teaching, and research, offers these practical and surprising insights.

DON'T wish the world were different.

Some individuals competing for advancement bend the rules of fair play or ignore them completely. Complain or whine if you want. Better yet, be thoughtful and strategic, resilient, alert, and willing to fight when necessary.

DON'T Self-handicap.

One of the main obstacles to acquiring power is . . . *you*. People are often their own worst enemies, in part because people like to feel good about themselves and maintain a positive self-image. This tendency, in turn, causes people to avoid taking risks or powerfully asserting themselves for fear of looking bad. The logic is deceptively simple but pernicious, preemptively offering an excuse for not trying at all. So, get over yourself and your concerns about self-image.

DON'T rely on good performance alone to acquire power.

Research shows that doing great work won't guarantee you a promotion or a raise, and it may not even be that important for keeping your job. What matters even more is your ability to get noticed, to influence the metrics used to measure performance, to figure out what matters to your boss, and, finally, to make others feel better about themselves.

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DO stand out.

Many people believe they can stand out and be bold once they become successful and earn the right to do things differently. But once you are successful and powerful, you don't need to stand out or worry about the competition. It's early in your career when differentiating yourself from the competition is most important. And, don't worry so much about being likable. Although likeability can be an important factor in getting people to do things for you, research shows that too much likeability can be seen as a weakness. Research also shows that people's support for you will depend as much on whether or not you seem to be "winning" as on your charm or ability.

DON'T be a smarty pants.

Studies on the predictors of career success have found that mental aptitude correlates somewhat with grades in school but has virtually no ability to explain who rises to the top. What's more, intelligence, particularly beyond a certain level, may lead to behavior that makes acquiring or holding on to influence less likely. Smart people think they can do everything on their own and do it better than everyone else. Being recognized as exceptionally smart can cause overconfidence and even arrogance, which can lead to loss of power.

DO develop your personal power.

An analysis of literally hundreds of leaders in all walks of life reveals that those who reach the heights possess two fundamental personal attributes. They possess *will*, the drive to take on big challenges, and *skill*, the capabilities required to turn ambition into accomplishment. In addition, they possess 7 essential personal qualities that help them amass organizational power and influence: Ambition. Energy. Focus. Self-knowledge. Confidence. Empathy with Others. Capacity to Tolerate Conflict. Once you set out to develop the attributes that can bring you influence, your next task is to figure out best how to deploy them to your benefit.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jeffrey Pfeffer is the Thomas D. Dee II Professor of Organizational Behavior at the Graduate School of Business, Stanford University, where he has taught since 1979. He is the author or coauthor of thirteen books, and has also held visiting professorships at the Harvard Business School, London Business School, IESE Business School in Spain, and other institutions.