Power Differentials in the Workplace: May the Force Be with You Always

Law School Staff Professional Development
February 1, 2018

Today’s Roadmap

• Ground Rules
• Setting the stage
• Pair/Group exercises
• Tools and resources
• Open discussion
• Key takeaways and next steps
Rules of Engagement

- Here with best of intentions
- Practice empathy
- Listen with an open mind
- Don’t just jump in when the water is warm
- Share air time – step up/step back
- Honor confidentiality
- Other...

Who has Power?

- Power is situational
- Power is relational and interactional
- Power is intersectional
Sources of Power

- **Organization power** – structural, decision-making, financial power
- **Positional power** – title, tenure
- **Personal power** – individual traits; race, socio-economics, gender
- **Expert power** – knowledge, skills
- **Coercive power** – manipulative, punishing
- **Referent power** – respect, admiration
- **Relational power** – Who you know, key influencers

Definition of Power

a: ability to act or produce an effect
   - : ability to get extra-base hits
   - : capacity for being acted upon or undergoing an effect
b: legal or official authority, capacity, or right
   - : possession of control, authority, or influence over others
   - : one having such power, specifically:
     a sovereign state
c: a controlling group:
   - : the "establishment", governing body
   - : physical might
   - : mental or moral efficacy
   - : political control or influence
Power Differentials in the Workplace: May the Force Be with You Always

**Power Scripts**

- Power is based in organizational roles and expectations (Power scripts)
- We use social norms, scripts, and stereotypes to determine power differentials
- Those with power typically define what’s going on and influence the situation
- Legitimate authority vs. power misuse

**Power-Blindness and Emotional Labor**

- People in positions of authority tend to be less aware of disparities and more likely to think things are going well (the privilege of power-blindness)
- People with less power are more likely to experience disparity between their private feelings and public behavior (emotional labor)
- Ways of managing power differentials vary with subject position and include unseen concerns and unintentional but patterned forms of exclusion
Navigating Power & Authority

- Hidden Transcripts (venting behind the scenes)
- Understanding organizational dynamics as a source of power imbalance/misuse
- Fundamental Attribution Error: assuming people are the problem, rather than structure of the situation (assessing root causes)
- Finding voice and moving toward collaboration (reframing)

Recognizing Power Differentials

When are you “one up” to others? When are you “one down”?

Power Differentials in the Workplace: May the Force Be with You Always

Law School Staff Retreat 2018
Power Differentials in the Workplace: May the Force Be with You Always

Pair up

Share an example of a situation where you are “one up” 1) in your life, 2) the workplace.

Describe how it makes you feel.

Describe how you interact with the others who are “one down.”

Pairs Exercise
Pairs Exercise

- Share an example of a situation where you are “one down” 1) in your life, 2) in the workplace
- Describe how it makes you feel
- Describe how the other party treated you
- What went well?
- What felt awkward or was of concern?
Exerting Your power

- As a table, share examples of a power dynamic when you were treated in a dishonoring manner. Describe the impact it had on you.
  - Did you take any actions? Is so, what? If not, why?
- Select one of the scenarios for your table to discuss as a group – share strategies on how address the issue
  - Identify a scribe and speaker for your table
  - Provide a brief description of the issue and approaches to addressing or resolving the conflict

Table Exercise

Assessing the Root Cause of Conflict

Conflict Assessment Framework:

**Structure** - clarity about goals and roles, especially decision-making authority in reaching goals; effective role organization

**Group Culture** - team effectiveness; participation, influence, learning interactions, conflict resolution, membership, interaction patterns

**Interpersonal** - how two people communicate with the other, how they respond to one-on-one conflict, the level of trust and inclusion

**Intrapersonal** - how individuals are behaving in which has an impact on the group and work product Together, openness to feedback and their effectiveness in learning and applying the feedback
Action steps

- Assess
  - Assess the root cause of the issue
- Find
  - Find your voice
- Connect
  - Connect with confidants and allies (vent & vet)
- Put
  - Put together a plan
- Assess
  - Assess the risk (safety, location, partnerships)
- Take
  - Take action
- Conduct
  - Conduct a post-game to determine next steps

Recapping Our Journey

- Setting the context for power differentials
- Identifying your position
- Assessing the root cause of conflict
- Setting a course to smoother waters
- Mitigating risk
- Next steps
Next Steps

• Identify top areas
• Staff Council will meet with Dean Clark to de-brief and discuss action steps

Insert closing quote
APPENDIX

Resources

• Patterson, Grenny, McMillan, Switzler, “Crucial Conversations – Tools for Talking When the Stakes are High”
• Susan Scott, “Fierce Conversations”
• Natalie Reynolds, “We Have a Deal – How to Negotiate with Intelligence, Flexibility & Power”
• Patrick Lencioni, “The Five Dysfunctions of a Team”