



Multiplying Your Management Power

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"Give me a lever long enough and a fulcrum on which to place it, and I shall move the world".

Archimedes, 400 BC

As leaders, don't we often feel like we've got to move the world? Everything seems stacked up against us and there's a mountain of pressure to get it done, and get it done *quickly*. Doesn't it often seem like there aren't enough hours in the day? Wouldn't it be great to have a system through which we could multiply the effort we put in? Wouldn't we love to know some simple mechanism to make our life easier? Then read on...

Have you noticed it? It's one of the buzzwords of the day, being bandied about in boardrooms and coffee shops across the country; "*Leverage*". And if understood and used effectively, leverage can become the most important system we have as a leader, increasing our effectiveness and decreasing our stress. But like a lot of popular terms it has become hollow because it is used to cover a multitude of meanings and circumstances. This article redresses that, by specifying what the 'Leadership Lever' is made up of, and how we can most benefit from it.

The Lever System

But first, let's remind ourselves of how a lever works. Imagine there is a large boulder on the ground that we want to shift. We've tried pushing it with all our might, but it won't budge. So we grab a long, straight lever, such as an iron bar, one end of which we place under the boulder. Then we take another rock, known as a fulcrum, and place it under the iron bar, so that we can pull downwards on the end sticking up in the air. With relative ease, the boulder moves, because the lever system multiplies our power.

The multiple by which the lever will increase our power depends on a number of factors, two of the most important being the size of the fulcrum and the length of the bar. The bigger the fulcrum and the longer the bar, the higher the multiple.

This analogy applies beautifully to leadership leverage. The boulder is the people or circumstances we need to change. The iron bar is made up of the Six Leadership Levers – control through, and of, 1) resources, 2) information, 3) expertise, 4) connections, 5) decisions, 6) position. The more of these sections we have, and the greater our level of control, the longer our leadership lever. The fulcrum is our personal power. Lets examine each of these separately.

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1) The Resource Lever

Control over various kinds of resources will create a perception of power. This extends to material resources; such as finance, raw materials, and staff; and non-material resources, such as allocation of parking spaces in the company parking lot. The more resources over which we can exercise control, the longer this part of our lever.

2) The Information Lever

There's an old saying, which tells us, "Information is power", and it is absolutely true when it comes to leadership leverage. This lever may be lengthened by knowledge of technical information, business information, personal information, and even information about relationships and social structures within our organisation.

3) The Expertise Lever

A specialised skill or knowledge in a given field will increase our leadership leverage. Computer specialists, lawyers, accountants and skilled workers all enjoy a level of power because of their given expertise. The greater the perception of their expertise, the greater their leverage.

4) The Connections Lever

"It's not what you know, it's who you know that really matters". This may or may not be true, but certainly we gain power by the relationships we have with others. Indeed, our network can often provide us with a ready means of obtaining the first three leadership levers of resources, information, and expertise, which is where the saying comes from.

5) The Decisions Lever

The ability to make hard and fast decisions will often lead to greater power. Henry Ford was well known for his stated policy of making decisions quickly and only changing them slowly. Conversely, many managers shy away from making unpleasant decisions, which will tend to reduce their leverage.

6) The Position Lever

Our position within the organisation is the most obvious source of power. In fact, our position is meant to be a reflection of the power we hold through all the other levers (and our fulcrum), although this is not always the case.

The Leadership Leverage Key

So these are the Leadership levers, which determine how long our "iron bar" is. But the key to our leadership leverage is its fulcrum- personal power. This may be described as our charisma, charm, or even personality, but essentially it is our ability to attract people and persuade them to follow our lead. It is comprised of such factors as confidence, communication skills, physical presence, passion, and integrity, and it is the key to leadership leverage for many reasons.

Firstly, when we begin our career, it is likely the main source of leverage we have is personal power. Our control over resources, information, expertise,

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decisions and position tends to be limited. We may have connections, but without the personal power to justify their use, we may soon lose the respect of peers and colleagues and thereby lose personal power. The greater our personal power, the greater our ability to accumulate the Leadership Levers.

In addition, once we have accumulated some of the Leadership Levers, there are two ways we can apply them; through influence where they are used, or through coercion where they are abused. Any abuse of these powers will almost certainly reduce our personal power, as trust and integrity are lost. Influence will maintain or even increase the size of your fulcrum. Coercion will diminish it, taking huge chunks off the "rock" that is our personal power.

Finally, as the "iron bar" of our Leadership Levers grows, our personal power needs to grow along with it. A failure to recognise this is one of the main causes of the Peter Principle, which states – "People are promoted to their level of incompetence". Most leaders are promoted to their leadership position because they have performed well in a more subordinate position. What many fail to recognise is that they require a whole new skill set and much greater ability to influence others in their new position. If they do not develop this personal power, they are more likely to begin abusing their new-found powers, and thereby reduce their leadership leverage.

Your Leadership Leverage

So leadership leverage is the most potent way we can increase our personal effectiveness and get more done with the same amount of work, but it is fraught with danger. Like any mechanical process, any abuse of the system will render it less potent. Developing our Leadership Levers and Personal Power will see our management momentum multiply.

Ask yourself these questions:

- What is my current level of control over the six Leadership Levers - resources, information, expertise, connections, decision, and position?
- What am I doing to increase my Leadership Levers?
- What is my own perception of my level of Personal Power?
- How do others perceive my level of Personal Power?

If you realise through answering these questions that you could increase your leadership leverage, you could benefit from Executive Coaching. We give you the opportunity to take time out from the day-to-day stresses, to work on building a better mechanism – increasing your personal power and your leadership levers. Then you, like Archimedes, can move the world.

To find out more about Equilibrio Executive Coaching, [please click here](#).

Reference:

Reinventing Influence by Mary Bragg, Financial Times Pittman, Publishing 1996