

RECORD OF SOCIETY OF ACTUARIES 1991 VOL. 17 NO. 4A

INFLUENCE WITHOUT AUTHORITY

Leader: CHRISTIAN J. DESROCHERS
Speaker: ALLAN R. COHEN*

MR. CHRISTIAN J. DESROCHERS: Dr. Cohen is currently responsible for all academic activities at Babson College as the Walter H. Carpenter Professor of Management; he has specialized in implementing strategic and organizational change, leadership development, conflict resolution, and experienced-based management.

Allan Cohen will describe powerful new techniques for cutting through interdepartmental barriers and motivating people over whom you have no authority to lend your support, to lend you their support. Allan Cohen presents a powerful new approach to working in an organization which can tremendously magnify your influence in today's workplace. Dr. Cohen has coauthored numerous publications addressing management issues. In his latest book, *Influence Without Authority*, on page 14, he refers to the need for actuaries and other professionals, who among others are interdependent for information, to build influential relationships.

DR. ALLAN R. COHEN: I've been a faculty member for most of the 25 years of my working career. Last July I was appointed academic vice president at Babson. My last book was *Influence Without Authority*. What I've come to realize is that this was a little Finnish torture device invented by my colleagues to teach what it's like to have authority with no influence. Managing faculty members is like herding cats. After four months on the job, I haven't had to change my beliefs about how management works. I've spent most of my life advising managers or future managers. But now it's a lot different doing it than talking about it.

If you want to be influential, you need to find a way to speak the language of the others you're dealing with. For example, if you don't speak the language of your marketing and sales people, if you don't speak the language of your internal accounting people, if you don't speak the language of your operations administrative people, chances are they won't listen to you.

Influence is a function of the sum of treating everyone as a potential ally; it is something about the ratio of the world of the other person and your own world, all times the relationship. Actually, I have done some work in insurance companies, in the Life Insurance Marketing and Research Association (LIMRA) senior executive program. And I've done a number of insurance company consulting things over the years.

In a recent call from an insurance company client, I asked "At my upcoming Society of Actuaries talk, what do you think I ought to say?" And he smiled and ran through his catalog of actuary jokes and then he said, "Well, just tell them they have to learn to work better with us guys in the trenches." And then he proceeded to say, "But you know, something nice has happened since the last time you were at our company. We've actually had a couple of actuaries who we could talk with, who understand." And I thought that was good news. But he also said, "The product

* Dr. Cohen, not a member of the Society, is Professor of Management of Babson College in Wellesley, Massachusetts.

SECTION MEETING

developers are developing the wrong products. So doing it a little better isn't going to be enough." And I said, "No, I can't say that because that would make them feel bad." So one theme is to find ways to increase your influence and you may also have to find ways to be influenced. In fact the two actually go together.

Influence is not getting everyone in the company to listen to you every time. Because smart as you are, and we know that this is a profession that attracts very smart people; smart as you are, you don't have all the answers. I know that may be shocking for you to hear. In one client company I was in awhile back, the top actuary literally did think of himself as the defender of the company. He was the one who stood for profit. He was so vehement, so opinionated, that basically his colleagues didn't listen to him. Wrongly by the way, he was a very smart guy. On the other hand, the top actuary in the first company I was referring to was an incredibly smart guy. He gave one of the most interesting presentations I've ever heard in an executive development program.

He talked about going beyond the numbers to judgment to a group of nonactuarial managers who thought it was all numbers. And it was a beautiful, exquisite talk. But he wasn't listened to by his colleagues. I started hearing actuary jokes from his colleagues. Always in his presence. He was a very smart guy but he didn't like to argue very much and when he'd start, they'd start getting into it, he'd just back off. That doesn't work very well either. So you have a real challenge in front of you. You know important things and you need to get your colleagues to listen to you. But you don't know everything, which means you also need to listen to them. Not a bad starting place for the subject of influence. Now how do you actually get influence?

There is an observation that's based both on empirical evidence and also comes out of social science research and it's worth repeating to yourself. This is the way the world works folks. *Everyone expects to be paid back for what they do.* If you ask yourself why do you allow yourself to be influenced, I always like to start there because I know what an opinionated, dogmatic, and almost always correct person I am, right? And I have to ask the question why would I let anybody influence me? I like to win. I even agreed to be academic vice president which is one of the world's most undoable jobs because at last I hoped I could make something happen the way I knew it ought to happen. So why do I let myself be influenced? Well, it's because when somebody asks me to do something, whether it's change my mind or lend them support or alter the way we create a new product, that's a business I'm in just like you, we're creating new products around the academic world. The reason I go along is because in some way, some how, some time I expect to be paid back. Now that can sound very cynical. I mean that can sound like it's very self-serving. I don't mean it that way at all. Because the ways in which I might want to be paid back could vary dramatically.

The payback might be that we produce a better student. That would make me feel great if I saw students who could go out and be effective managers based on what we do; I'd feel terrific. The payback might be that I say, "Gee, I'm a cooperative team player. I feel great about that." That's a form of payback. Or the payback might be more explicit. On some future issue where I've got a strong point of view, my colleagues will go along even if they don't quite agree because they've seen me as cooperative. So the form in which people are paid back and the timing it takes to

INFLUENCE WITHOUT AUTHORITY

get paid back can vary considerably. You happen to be in a profession where the metaphors I like to use ought to be very dear to your heart. When you begin to allow yourself to be influenced because of payback, you raise wonderful questions. Well what exactly do you have to do to pay back? What's the rate of exchange? How many times do I have to say thank you when my wife gives me a sweater for Christmas before she knows I really liked it and she feels satisfied that she got what she wanted? Hard currency, a sweater for soft currency, appreciation, right? What's the exchange rate? How do we figure that out? How do we decide that when I've moved your idea forward and paid attention to it what you owe me?

What if it turns out that your view of what you owe me is very different from mine? You think you were just doing something routine, I was just doing my job to help you and I think I killed myself for you. So it starts to raise interesting questions which I'd like to elaborate on a bit as we go along. The implication is that what we're talking about is exchanging goods and services. Hard goods and services which are intangible. And these all somehow end up having to equate. Interestingly, when we began to explore the whole notion of exchange and making exchanges we stumbled onto the notion of currencies because of the exchange rate problem. A useful metaphor, about issues of influence is to ask what are the currencies that other people like to trade in and what currencies do you control with which you can pay. What are their interests and what are your resources. We find that the notion of currencies brings together interest values, what people pay attention to with available resources. And that leads to a very interesting set of possible diagnoses.

Everybody does this every day. The language may be a little different, but it shouldn't feel unfamiliar. When you have good working relationships with people you don't pay much attention to this detail. It just happens automatically. Right. You work closely with colleagues. You don't have to go in and explain, look I need your help on this but don't worry I'll give it back to you, you don't say that to your close working colleagues. You just do it, right. The only time you need to think this way is when that doesn't work. Either because it's not a close working colleague or somebody from whom you really want something isn't playing. This is heightening microscopic consciousness of something that's a natural process and in everyday life probably goes on without too much talk. I like to use this example.

When I was working on these ideas and the *Influence Without Authority* book, my secretary said to me one day, "Well you know you're writing all this stuff about exchange and everything and I've got to tell you I have a problem with something that goes on in our office." Now there are five of us in a pod and a secretary. And it happens that we all drink tea. And one of the other people is the main tea drinker along with me. And my secretary said, "You always buy the milk for tea and he never does. That's not fair." And I said, "What do you mean it's not fair." "Well it's not fair. I mean you know you bring the milk at least once a week because we drink it English style. And he never brings it." And I said, "So what. We're colleagues, we're friends. It evens out." "No it's not right and besides when you don't bring the milk he complains." And I tried to reassure her that it didn't matter. I've known him for 25 years, originally as a fellow student. For the last seven years I've been bringing the milk in for tea. And she just couldn't understand that. Interestingly, it was a coincidence a couple of weeks later that I happened to have a big birthday. And he was invited to the party and we said humorous gifts only. Now this is a guy

SECTION MEETING

who follows no sports whatsoever. He knows that I'm a Boston Celtics nut. How many of you have ever been to Boston? A good number. He drove to Logan Airport because he remembered seeing in the airport giant, oversized Celtics T-shirts. He drove through the heaviest traffic to buy at the highest airport prices. That's the kind of person he is. Now was I buying milk for seven years waiting for the big payback? No. This is a friend and a close colleague.

So in everyday life you don't have to think about this stuff. It just takes care of itself. The problem is when those folks in sales or marketing won't do what you tell them. They keep saying to you, "I don't care what your calculations say, the price has to be lower on the product." Fix the reserves, right. And you've got to get them to listen to you or maybe listen back and they're not doing it. So understand that this is in the context of the kind of reasoning you have to do when you're stuck. Use reciprocity to make exchanges that create results in which you get your work done and the other person gets his or her work done.

Now reciprocity is a very fancy social science term. I first heard it in graduate school. It's based on observations of a variety of societies. Have you heard of a certain Indian potlatch ceremony? It's the most puzzling event in the world until you understand reciprocity. They get together and give things away. It's a contest to see who can give away the most valuable things. Now why would anybody do that? Well, for these Indians, the person who gives away the most valuable things gets the highest status. Gets to be chief. That's the payback.

In modern organizations the same things are at work. Peter Blouse studied IRS officers, managers. As expected he found some of the people were more expert than others and in that office one guy really was an expert. So his colleagues came to him for help when they ran up a difficult case. And in return they would be really appreciative. They'd thank him up and down and for awhile that was terrific. He was paid back with their gratitude. And then what he found was so many of them came to him that he hardly had time to do his own work. And pretty soon their thanks wasn't enough. In other words, the value of the currency had deflated. That's why I like the currency metaphor. So the concept comes from social science, but I like to confess this story.

I learned this concept at my father's feet. My father and his brother were partners. They had a retail business so everything happened in December, and therefore my two brothers and I and two cousins all worked at the family store every year in December. We were coming home from work one night just before Christmas and my uncle said, "Why don't you come early tomorrow, I'll make my special pancakes. Not french toast but pancakes." And we said, "Oh, great." And on the way there my father said, "Look, just for a joke when we're done with the pancakes nobody say anything. Don't say they were good, don't say they were bad. Just keep quiet." See only a brother knows how to really stick it to his brother, right. So we said, "Oh that will be great," and we did. The pancakes were wonderful. We got in the car and there was dead silence. Before the engine had started my uncle said, "I think the milk was bad. I meant to buy new milk. No response. The butter. It was the butter. I should have got butter, fresh butter, next time fresh butter." Dead silence. Then he started in on the frying pan. And I don't think I care to tell you the language he used to describe the frying pan that had messed up the pancakes. And

INFLUENCE WITHOUT AUTHORITY

finally, I was the softie. I couldn't take it. I said, "Uncle Harry this is a joke. We loved the pancakes" and everybody joined in and said, "Yeah, yeah, yeah we loved the pancakes." The entire way to work he was still muttering about the milk and the butter and the frying pan. It was unbelievable. He obviously had such strong expectations of being appreciated that even when we said it was a joke that we had that he couldn't let go. That was a great lesson in reciprocity. When you have expectations conscious or otherwise and they aren't fulfilled from the other person, it drives you crazy. So it's a powerful idea. It comes from everyday life, but it is how things work.

It's possible to use reciprocity in a quite cynical and manipulative way, and some people do. There are people who will find ways to do you favors which make you obligated and then they'll ask you for unreasonable things. And I have my favorite horrible example. It comes from a biography of Lyndon Johnson that's been out for a couple of years by Robert Caro. He tells a story about Lyndon Johnson back in the 1930s when the radio station that eventually made Johnson his fortune was getting going. It was Lyndon and his political connections that got the license and did a whole lot of things. So Lyndon was very active in those days. And one day he called one of the young people that worked at the station and said, "I'd like to have dinner with you after work." They went to dinner and he said to this young man, "I want you to be a really important person in Austin. I want you to be somebody that will help the radio station. So I'm going to loan you \$10,000 and with that you go out and buy yourself a Cadillac. Get your wife a mink coat, join the country club in Austin and you'll really be an important person here." And, of course, the young man was very flattered, thought that was very nice. And then he started to think about it. This is back in the 1930s. At no salary he could ever imagine could he figure out how he could pay back \$10,000. And he couldn't conceive that you could ever earn enough money to pay it back. And he started thinking about what it would feel like to always owe Lyndon Johnson money. And he passed, much to everybody's amazement, but a smart move.

Then Caro goes on to describe the person who took the deal, who had been a roommate of Lyndon Johnson's. And he talks about how this very smart man ended up like a personal slave of Lyndon Johnson's. And there's a scene in which this guy is driving the Texas countryside to try to get to an airport because there's fog in Austin and they keep diverting the plane. Johnson is coming back from Washington. And the guy is all night driving from airport to airport to try to get wherever Lyndon Johnson will land; this is an image that's sort of horrifying. And that's a kind of use of reciprocity. A lot of politicians use it that way. That's not very nice. I'm not terribly interested in that kind. And for two reasons.

One, I think it's kind of slimy but that's not relevant. The real reason I'm not very interested is because it turns out in most organizations if that's the way you play, you don't get influence. People freeze you out. And in modern organizations, it's constantly shifting. People are your colleague today, your boss tomorrow, your subordinate the day after. I'm the best living example. Five years ago I hired a guy from Xerox to come teach. He decided he wanted to retire early from Xerox. We decided to give him a chance. I hired him for a year. He was terrific. I was then chairman of the management division. In the academic world, it's opposite of everywhere else. We think getting rid of administrative stuff is good. We're not

SECTION MEETING

trying to get more. So I gave up being chairman, and got him to do it. So I hired him; now he was my boss, right? I'm just a faculty member, he's the chairman. This year I told you I ended up as the academic vice president. He's still the chairman. I'm now his boss. Inside five years, two flip flops. I think that's what it's like in organizational life now. So if you play nasty most of the time, it doesn't work very well.

Poor Leo Durocher just died. He's the one who said nice guys finish last. It isn't true that nice guys always finish first. But I think in modern organizations it's usually true that the SOB's get it in the end. But I'm interested in the kind of exchanges that let people get their work done so you can get your work done. Those are good exchanges. That's what I mean by win, win.

Everyone is a potential ally. As my writing partner and I were out observing managers and professionals, watching them try to get influence and what happened, we noticed a very common phenomenon. When someone would approach somebody else in the organization, let's say with a terrific idea that the first person really believed in, and needed some help. And they go to the other person and they'd make the request. And the person would say, "Gee, I can't. I'm too busy or I haven't got the resources" or they'd stall. And then, if the first person was persistent, he or she would go back and make a second try. And then it still wouldn't work. What happened then? And we noticed a very common pattern. The person who'd made a couple of attempts, who already persuaded by saying, "You know what I'm asking is for the good of the organization -- to do something terrific. It's going to make a product that will put our competitors out of business or whatever." They still couldn't get anywhere. What did they do? Well one of the things we noticed was they began to attribute all kinds of defects to the other person. Bad personality traits, stupidity, something bad.

It's a natural human tendency to find some way to write off or diminish the person who doesn't do what you know that person should do to help you do what you want to do. Absolutely natural human tendency. Very hard to stop it. And we saw this repeatedly in different kinds of organizations.

Once you've decided somebody's a jerk, it doesn't matter how nicely you smile, it doesn't matter how sweetly you coat with sugar your words, what they hear is like a big neon light going he thinks I'm a jerk. She thinks I'm a jerk. That's what people get. Once you've made that decision you've lost. It's very hard to influence somebody who knows you think that they're some kind of defective person. It's very hard. So we spend a lot of time saying what could we tell people to get them out of that. Since once you make that attribution that something is wrong with the other person you've put handcuffs on yourself and you can't get what you want. And around that time, as we were struggling, we found a lot in the business press about strategic alliances between companies. I think even in the insurance industry you're beginning to see more and more of that. And what's that about? Well it turns out that nobody has all the resources to go it alone so they're forced to, I mean Apple and IBM making a strategic alliance? Absolutely unthinkable. That's the same set of people who had the famous 1984 ad about the giant killers and all that stuff. Now they're in a strategic alliance. And what we realized is when companies make a

INFLUENCE WITHOUT AUTHORITY

company-to-company alliance they never assume that it's going to lead to love. It's only a paring of mutual interests.

And the reason you can make an alliance even between an IBM and an Apple which are dramatically different cultures and very different style companies and who are still going to be trying to beat the brains out of each other most of the time. The reason they can make an alliance is because all they say is have we got some common interests? Can we do business? And we'll let the feelings take care of themselves. Now we know it's empirically true when you do good business together it tends to make you feel better about the other party. So better feelings may result. But nobody goes in assuming we're going to fall in love. They just say we have found some way to work together. Well I like that way of thinking about people inside the organization who you want to influence. What you need to say to yourself is every single person no matter how difficult he or she is being, every single department because some of this is departmental not personal. Every single department is a potential ally. And if you can't get them to do what you want, then instead of saying those jerks, those suits in sales, or even whatever you call them, instead of saying that what you say is him, I don't think I know them well enough to figure out where we have common interests so we can do business. It's just a mind set that gets you out of the stereotyping which keeps people from being influential.

That's the framework with which to look at this model. And here are the pieces of the model. In the center is the notion of aligning with organizational goals. And I've already really talked to that. This is not about influence to say, "Ha ha, I'm bigger than you," because that doesn't work very well. The kind of influence that really matters is influence that helps the organization get done what it has to get done. So that's the focus of all this. If it's personal, if it's just to win, it's like the horrible example, seven or eight years ago when there were a bunch of books about power and winning power and stuff? And one of them was by Michael Korda and he tells the story very proudly of this colleague friend of his, whom he would go to lunch with at a fancy restaurant and slowly he'd realize that his friend had captured the table. You know the friend would move the ash tray, then his glass of water and pretty soon Michael Korda would be sitting in a little space. And he says now that's power. I think it's pathetic. Why would you want to treat a friend that way? That's power for its own sake. That's power to say, "Ha ha ha, I'm big." So what. See, I'm only interested in the kind of power or influence to help you get the work done that the organization is supposed to do. So that's why it's, at the center.

When you're having a problem it helps to stop and diagnose the other persons' world. What are the pressures, the situation that the other person is in. If you understand something about how the other person is measured and rewarded, what the other person or group's boss expects of him or them or her. If you understand something about where that person is in his or her career, you get that persons' world and you have a better chance of understanding what it is they might value. These are the relevant currencies that they like to trade in so that you can find something to exchange. The more you understand about the context, the more likely it is you can figure out what matters to them. Now there's another very nice way to find this out. You can ask. It is legitimate to go to somebody and say, "Look I've been trying to get you to understand why it is that we have to keep the price of the product where it is, given our cost structure and so on, given our best estimates of

SECTION MEETING

the future. I've been trying to get you to understand, you're not listening. It's important that I get you to listen. I obviously don't understand enough about you to know how to get you to pay attention. Tell me, what's important to you here?" What would you need to know? I think you can do that.

Now I confess most people don't do it. But if your intention is to figure out how to help them get their concerns met so they can do their work in order to get yours done, I think you can have that conversation. But sometimes you don't know the person yet. You don't feel comfortable, or it's somebody who you're only going see for the first time and you only get one shot, that's probably not true for a lot of product development activities, but occasionally it is. And then the more diagnosis you can do in advance the better. However, even when you've identified the relevant currencies there's the question of well what currencies do I command. I mean it does me no good if somebody says look I'll listen to you but I have to have a budget. You got any extra money in your budget to transfer to my area, then you can have what you need. And if you don't have any extra budget, that's the end of the conversation, right?

So there are occasions when you haven't got the currencies they ask for. What I argue is you control far more of the currencies that other people care about than you think. Because most people trade in a lot of different currencies. And I'll try to illustrate that. Another point, it doesn't matter what kind of deal you offer if you have a lousy relationship with the other person and he or she or they don't trust you. Relationships matter a lot. I know this is bad news to people who's profession starts with rational numerical analysis, but relationships count. They make a lot of difference. Not just because if you have a good relationship people will do anything you want, no. You can have the best relationship in the world, if you ask somebody to do something that's going to be career costly they may still say no. They'll feel bad about it, but they'll say no. So relationships matter in the sense that if the other side doesn't trust you, has had some bad experiences, even when you're offering something that's good for them, they may still say no. They don't trust what you'll do with it eventually. They haven't got time to find out all the facts so they back away.

Well, you need to have the decent relationships. Work on the relationship before you work on the business side. But, the best way to make a good relationship is to do good business together, to actually deliver something, you can go at it either way. Just pay attention to it. Be careful not to make exchanges in a way that make the other party more mistrustful rather than less mistrustful. We had a famous colleague at Babson. I helped him retire. He was a guy who whatever he said automatically made you reach back and be certain your wallet was in your pocket. He would say, "Old buddy, have I got a deal for you." And he often had some hidden motive. One of my colleagues told me the marvelous story of arriving at Babson and in his first year having this guy say to him, "Old buddy, you're going to have to have a career where you can do some outside consulting and the way to that is to belong to the Wellsey Country Club and I can get you in there. And then you'll meet all the right people and your career is going to go," and this guy said, "I don't know what this is. This doesn't feel right to me." And so he thanked him but backed away. Found out a few months later that the one who was offering this great opportunity was trying to sell his share of the country club so he could get out, right. That was the kind of guy he was. People didn't want to do business with him. They ran in the other

INFLUENCE WITHOUT AUTHORITY

direction. Even when he was offering something that might have been good for you, okay.

Finally clarify your own goals and priorities. Obvious? If you're talking about influence, you know what you want. It turns out as we researched, many people don't know what they want. Or they want so many different things that the other side can't sort it out and back away. A lot of people come with some business reason like let's just say setting price, okay. That's one that you all have to deal with. You have a real clear business thing that you want to influence the other party with. But they bring to the discussion a whole bunch of other things like, unstated of course, not only do I want you to set the price correctly, I want you to respect actuarial expertise. I want you to know that I know more than you do. I want you to acknowledge that I've thought about this from many different angles and you haven't. And I have to tell you it's very hard for most people to pay those kinds of currencies back. To pay in, oh yeah you are smarter than me so of course, I'm going to listen. A few people will do it but most won't. So you've got to be sure what it is you're asking for. If every transaction is a chance to right the wrongful balance in the way actuaries are treated in the world, it's probably going to get in the way of having the influence that you want. And you put all these together and you make the exchanges and acquire influence.

Some currencies seem to be in common trade in organizations. We've seen many people who were smart and had good ideas not getting anywhere. And one reason was because often they tended to assume other people value the same currencies they do.

My favorite and most vivid example was a sales manager who, like many sales people, was highly motivated by dollars and whose assumption was that every problem in the universe could be changed by changing the compensation system. And so it didn't matter what the problem was; the answer was always, "We need a new compensation formula." And he couldn't conceive of the possibility that some people don't work only for monetary currencies. It just wasn't in his conception. But that's not the only reason some people work.

Before my recent appointment, I was very keen on a one-year sabbatical. I can tell you for a fact that had the president of Babson called me into his office and said, "Cohen, I'd like you to forget the sabbatical to be academic vice president for the coming year and I'm going to double your salary to do it." I would have said, "Thank you, that's very nice of you, I'll think about it," but I would have said no. I can absolutely tell you that for a fact, for several reasons. Not that I mind money, but it's not my primary currency. And besides in a sabbatical year with the consulting I would do, that would take care of itself. But the president, who's been there two years, got good advice and knew me a little bit. And so he called me in and said, "I've talked to everybody on campus who matters. And they agree virtually unanimously you're the only person inside who can hold this together for the year, would you be willing to do it?" Take me I'm yours, right. He got me where I lived. We didn't talk about salary stuff until the next meeting or the meeting after that. I already said yes without knowing what it was going to mean because he talked to me in the currency important to me.

SECTION MEETING

So the reason I'm going to race through five categories of currencies is just to expand your thinking about those difficult colleagues who don't seem to want to respond to what you try to use on them. And we made some categories. This is not a perfect system. There are maybe 25 or 30 currencies. There could be 1,000, because they could be idiosyncratic. Here are just some of them. There are the obvious task-related ones. Resources like budget, people, and so on. Assistants, cooperation, information, there's one. Knowledge is power. In some organizations people trade in information. That's the currency they most value. Tell them something that they need to know and they'll play along. Also challenge and learning is a very important one. And that, for this group, ought to be easy, right? What do you want most in the world, to work on the bigger, harder, tougher problems. I know it's a pain, but you didn't get into to this profession to do the easy stuff. There are people, on the other hand, who may be way over on the other side of the spectrum who just want big headaches removed. So it can go either direction. But professionals very often value this as much as anything. The chance to work on tough, significant things where they're going to learn. Then there's a group of currencies that are the nice currencies. The inspiration-related currencies. There are people in organizations who'll do anything to work on things that make the organization great. That have a sense of vision that transform peoples' lives. For those people you may want to talk about creating products that make sure that families aren't left destitute. A big stretch from numerical calculations to widows, orphans, and so on. But it may not be a big stretch if the people you're talking to are motivated by those kinds of currencies. That, or sometimes it's just the chance to do things well and right. That's a very powerful set of currencies for some people. You do it because it's good and it helps people. Those are nice because all you have to learn to do to sell people who have those currencies is talk good. You have to be able to talk about what you want in a way that they can get excited about it.

Then there are currencies that are not directly task related, they advance your position to help you do your task. And in big organizations these can be very important to people. A sense of recognition, opportunity, advancement, visibility, reputation, and so on. For some people this is very important. In big organizations you can be doing great work and if you're not visible to top management, so what. You never get anywhere. You could help with that. Then there are more relationship-related currencies. There are people who care more about a sense of being accepted or included, supported, understood than anything else. And this varies at times.