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How to get more power

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This 'tongue in cheek' article takes a Machiavellian look at some of the things individuals can do to enhance their power. Be aware however that the best strategies are contextually determined and will vary from organisation to organisation. Not all the strategies identified below will be appropriate to your situation; some may be counter-productive; some may be deemed immoral; many may be damaging to the long-term interests of the organisation. This article therefore carries a disclaimer and a health warning!

1. Acquire and reflect the attitudes and behaviour codes of those with power. This includes dress codes - 'power dressing' can take you a long way.
2. Perform or, at least appear to perform, well. Earn credibility by delivering on your promises. Give priority to high profile tasks.
3. Exploit your technical expertise. Make other people dependant on that expertise and reduce your dependence on others. Extend your skills and knowledge accordingly. Ensure you have alternative sources of expertise.
4. Understand and use the language of 'experts' and in-groups. Invent a few TLA's (three letter acronyms) of your own to intimidate or confuse others.
5. Control the flow of information. Make sure you know what everyone else is up to. Use informal contacts and listen to the grapevine.
6. Establish relationships with powerful people. Find the right patron.

Short Course for Management & Professional Development

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7. Use the names and positions of the powerful. Imply to others that you are serving their needs. Give the impression that you are on first name or intimate terms with the mighty - 'I think Peter will need that information'.
8. Increase your external visibility. Get yourself known in your industry or profession. Look for opportunities to present at conferences.
9. Drop references to your experience, expertise and contacts, but with sufficient subtlety that you don't appear boastful or pretentious.
10. Give everybody you meet a sense of their importance and individuality. Remember and use their names.
11. Ooze self-confidence in speech, dress and manner - giving the impression that you know what you're doing and that you're used to success. Remember the swan - even if paddling like hell, appear serene on the surface.
12. Maintain a tidy office and a clear desk. This gives an impression of being well organised and efficient.
13. Build alliances by working with those who have the same interests as yourself and by supporting others on a quid pro quo basis.
14. Decrease your dependence on your employer - keep abreast of developments in the job market and maintain your own marketability.
15. Ensure you understand the systems and rules (both formal and informal) that govern the organisation. Know how and when to increase your effectiveness by circumventing the rules that constrain others. Do what others don't seem to be able to achieve.
16. Equip yourself to recognise the power-seeking techniques of others and to defend yourself against them.
17. Be true to yourself. Never lose sight of your sense of right and wrong.

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