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Power

From the Editor

Occasionally, as a deadline looms, I find myself staring at a black video display terminal, blank save for the flashing of the cursor impatiently awaiting my input.

When this happens, I cast my mind back and try to recall whether the white paper in the old IBM Selectric was more welcoming or inspiring ... but I can't remember.

So I delve further into my memory banks. I see — I see — a *Gestetner!* Can it really be that we started this company in 1974?

Technology has changed dramatically over the course of two decades, but our company has adamantly remained high-touch as we've moved into high-tech. We believe that the understanding, rapport, and knowledge that is gained through face-to-face rather than fax-to-fax is one of the key ways in which we meet our clients' needs. We see them regularly. We hear their concerns. Personal contact and relationship-building have been the key to our success — and, clients often say, differentiate us from the pack. I guess you could say we'd rather *know them* than *modem!*

Marilyn Baetz, editor

About the Author and the Article

At the heart of one of the most overused, common buzzwords of the day, *empowerment*, lies a noble, old word which strikes fear or longing into the hearts of those who examine it. Just hearing it uttered turns our heads and fills us with a highly charged mix of awe and wonder, anxiety and apprehension.

Power.

We covet it, thirst after it, long for it, daydream about it, follow its movements, and above all, envy those who have it.

Power.

Oh, to possess that most privileged, priceless of commodities! To hold it in the palm of our hands! To be one of the chosen few ...

Author Stephen Baetz, a principal of LIVE Consultants, has news for you. You *are* one of the chosen few. And it's time to unearth and unleash your potential.



Stephen Baetz

To Those In Power

Have you ever had an experience where a word or phrase that you've heard a thousand times before takes on a new meaning?

That happened to me a week ago. It was at noon hour and I was catching up on some reading. Charles Handy who wrote *The Age of Unreason* was in full flight.

We are entering an Age of Unreason, when the future in so many areas, is there to be shaped, by us and for us — a time when the only prediction that will hold true is that no prediction will hold true.

I matched his perceptions with mine. We both agreed. He went on.

*The changes we face are discontinuous and not part of a pattern; such discontinuity happens from time to time in history, although it is confusing and disturbing, particularly **to those in power.***

Bingo. Did you hear that? **To those in power.** How many times have I heard that, said that, but didn't recognize the assumptions in those words?

The phrase assumes that only a few — the few at the top of the organizational hierarchy — have or are **in power**. And, by contrast, there must be a huge number of people who must have no or, at most, little power.

Nothing could be farther from the truth. *We are all powerful people ... even those who don't think they are or protest that they aren't.*

Sound strange ... that people who don't feel powerful often are?

For several years, I worked along side a person who observed in almost a-matter-of-fact way, "Blessed are the weak for they are powerful." At first I dismissed the observation as cute, but inaccurate. How could the weak be powerful? That was until I watched how passive, weak, and evidently insecure people had a tremendous ability to control the behaviour of others.

Maybe you've seen the same thing:

- a marginal performer consuming an

incredible amount of managerial energy and attention,

- a weak co-worker getting others to do a task with the words "because you're so much better at that than I am," or
- a vulnerable team member begging, through silence and passivity, to be protected by others.

Blessed are the weak for they are powerful. She was right, far too right.

Please don't misunderstand me though. I'm not suggesting that using passivity and weakness is an appropriate power move. Far from it. In fact, passivity and weakness have the ability to create resentment and hostility in the long run. Few people like the burden of carrying an emotional albatross. But the point is this: *everyone, absolutely everyone, is powerful ...* whether they want to recognize it or not. Everyone is capable of influencing others, prompting others to respond, and creating action.

If you buy that premise, the question then becomes, "How do we find our power source and keep ourselves plugged into it?"

At this point, a couple of observations may help. First of all, realize that there are five sources of power and influence. Second, recognize that in the 1990's positional power only works if it is in combination with one of the other five power sources.

So what are the sources of power?

Power of Information

It is perhaps an old and somewhat tired observation but still true: information is power. But don't confuse facts with information. Facts are merely floating pieces of data. They are random, often distracting, noise. Only once the facts are connected and part of a pattern do we have understandable harmony.

Information influences. It changes perceptions. It alters what we know. And, if we can change the direction of thought, we can change the direction of action.

Blessed are those who know for they are powerful.

Power of Expertise

Think about how many times you've said to yourself or to others, "It's impossible to know it all." Everyone gets daily reminders that they've come to the limits of their knowledge and expertise. With each reminder, they learn to rely on those who are competent and skilled. And as much as they rely on the expertise of others, they get power.

Constantly, we all search for experts to provide us with advice, counsel, and direction. Similarly, others depend on our competencies, our abilities.

Blessed are those who are competent for they are powerful.

Power of Enthusiasm

When you're around some people, you can't help but be excited, fired up, keen. These individuals refuse to let small problems discourage them, they view setbacks as an opportunity to learn, and they cheer others on when the going gets tough. They can pick up the energy of a team by telling everybody that it can be done.

A friend of mine calls enthusiasm the fuel of the possible. Not bad, I'd say. Most basketball coaches like home court advantage because the enthusiasm of the crowd is like having another player on the floor. The players come to the game with more confidence, more moxie.

Blessed are the enthused and the positive for they are powerful.

Power of Interpersonal Skills

Not long ago, at a seminar, one of the participants wanted to offer balance to a discussion that was headed in the direction of boss bashing. "I'd walk on nails for my boss ... she's absolutely incredible." The rest of the group almost felt betrayed and demanded to know what prompted such loyalty. "How long do you have? She listens, supports, develops, is flexible, expects me to give my best, let's

me know when I mess up and when I do well. Enough?"

"No wonder," someone conceded, "who wouldn't with a boss like that!" Indeed who wouldn't? Individuals with strong interpersonal skills willingly gain our commitment. We trust them and we give our best in return.

Blessed are the interpersonally skilled for they are powerful.

Power of Possibilities

A prison is a world of limited choices.

Powerful people know that they have options. They refuse to be trapped by a single possibility, by only one door out. If they only have one choice, they redefine the problem until they have more.

Blessed are those who know all the possibilities for they are powerful.

Stay Plugged In

As much as we need to know what our sources of power are, we must know how to stay plugged in.

Try these ideas.

Read one half hour each day to trap your mind into thinking and to build your knowledge base.

Talk with someone you disagree with so you can learn what they know.

Write an article and test your expertise.

Invest one day in making only positive comments. Watch others become enthused. Try it a second day if you see it working.

Listen to someone for ten minutes without telling them what you think.

Never make a recommendation for action if you've thought of only one course of movement.

Invest your time with those individuals who are powerful and note what their secrets are. Flatter them by copying their behaviour.

And the next time you hear or read the words — **to those in power** — recognize they are talking about you.

Invest In Your Own School

Don't pay the high tuition fees in the School of Hard Knocks. Send your people to your own school with programs you have developed. You may not realize it but you already have the basic ingredients you need for your own in-company program.

If you haven't had the time, the people power, or the expertise to do it, let us help.

What you supply is the expertise about your business, service, or discipline. LIVE Consultants Inc. provides the know-how on

- how adults learn,
- how to design education programs, and
- how to make complex ideas and terminology straightforward and easy to understand.

Together, we are a performance team that develops winning programs.

When we are finished, you will have everything you need for your own program — a leader's guide with step-by-step direction, and participant manuals that include classroom materials as well as pre-program and post-program booklets.

Many And Varied

Some of the programs we have designed for our clients include customer service, negotiation, selling strategies, interviewing skills, total quality management, marketing, telephone techniques as well as the basics in management education — listening, communication, leadership, motivation, delegation, change management, and team building.

Whatever the focus, we can help you develop it. We can engineer and produce the program from initial design and development ideas right through to the completed, printed copy.

Avoid tuition in the School of Hard Knocks. Invest in your own school.

For more information about our services, contact us at (519) 664-2213.