

Case Incident 1

Dressing for Success

Jennifer Cohen thought she had a good grip on her company's dress code. She was wrong.

Cohen works for a marketing firm in Philadelphia. Before a meeting, an older colleague pulled 24-year-old Cohen aside and told her that she was dressing inappropriately by wearing Bermuda shorts, sleeveless tops, and Capri pants. Cohen was stunned by the rebuke. "Each generation seems to have a different idea of what is acceptable in the workplace," she said. "In this case, I was highly offended."

What offended Cohen even more was what came next: Cohen wasn't allowed to attend the meeting because her attire was deemed inappropriate.

Cohen's employer is not alone. Although many employers have "casual" days at work, the number of employers who are enforcing more formal dress codes has increased, according to a survey of employers by the Society for Human Resource Management. In 2001, 53 percent of employers allowed causal dress every day. Now that figure is 38 percent. Silicon Valley marketing firm McGrath/Power used to allow causal attire. Now, it enforces a more formal dress code. "The pendulum has swung," says CEO Jonathan Bloom, "We went through a too-casual period. . . . When we were very casual, the quality of the work wasn't as good."

Ironically, as more employers enforce more formal dress codes, other employers known for their formality are going the other way. IBM, which once had a dress code of business suits with white shirts, has thrown out dress codes altogether. IBM researcher Dan Gruhl typically goes to work at IBM's San Jose, California, office in flip-flops and shorts. "Having a relaxed environment encourages you to think more openly," he says. Although not going quite as far as IBM, other traditional employers, such as Ford, General Motors, and Procter & Gamble, have relaxed dress codes.

Still, for every IBM, there are more companies that have tightened the rules. Even the NBA has adopted an off-court dress code for its players. As for Cohen, she still bristles at the dress code. "When you're comfortable, you don't worry," she says. "You focus on your work."

Questions

1. Do you think Cohen had a right to be offended? Why or why not?
Answer: No, most companies have a handbook that includes information on the dress code. If her dress was not compliant with the dress code, she should make the appropriate changes.
2. In explaining why she was offended, Cohen argued, "People my age are taught to express themselves, and saying something negative about someone's fashion is saying something negative about them." Do you agree with Cohen?

Answer: No, a work culture is not always about individual preferences. Addressing a person's attire when it is against a dress code is a manager's obligation and should

not be taken personally.

3. Does an employer have an unfettered right to set a company's dress code? Why or why not?

Answer; Yes, it is based on the company's image, reputation, and culture and they have every right to set the policies on dress code. As noted, productivity sometimes decreases with a very informal dress code.

4. How far would you go to conform to an organization's dress code? If your boss dressed in a relatively formal manner, would you feel compelled to dress in a like manner to manage impressions?

Answer: Employees should adhere closely to an organization's dress code. Impression management is important and dressing formally if your manager does, probably is a good move.

Source: Based on S. Armour, "Business Casual' Causes Confusion," *USA Today*, July 10, 2007, pp. 1B, 2B.

Case Incident 2

The Persuasion Imperative

There may have been a time when a boss gave orders and subordinates followed them. If you've watched the AMC series "Mad Men"—based on Madison Avenue marketing executives in the 1960s—you've seen an image of deference to authority, respectful obedience to those higher up in the hierarchy, and a paternalistic relationship between boss and employee.

With time comes change. Organizations are no longer male dominated as they were in the 1950s. Laws and policies are in place that better protect employees against the sometimes-capricious whims of supervisors.

Another sign of shifting cultural values is the way managers use their power. Commandments are out. Persuasion is in.

When IBM manager Kate Riley Tenant needed to reassign managers and engineers to form a database software team, she had to persuade IBM employees from all corners of the globe, none of whom directly reported to her. According to Tenant, it's a big change from when she started in the field 20 years ago. "You just decided things, and people went off and executed," she said. Now, "not everybody reports to you, and so there's much more negotiation and influence."

John Churchill, a manager with Florida-based Gerdau Ameristeel Corporation, agrees. The question now, he says, is "How do I influence this group and gain credibility?"

At IBM, the challenge of persuading employees across reporting relationships has become so significant that the firm developed a 2-hour online course to help managers persuade other employees to help with projects crucial to its business. IBM's tips for managers include the following:

- Build a shared vision
- Negotiate collaboratively
- Make trade-offs
- Build and maintain your network

Despite meeting initial resistance, after completing the training program, Tenant was able to persuade most IBM managers and engineers to join the team.

This doesn't mean authority has lost all its power. Robert Cialdini, a social psychologist who has studied persuasion for decades, lists authority as one of his keys to influence. Even more important may be the so-called "bandwagon effect" (or what Cialdini called "social proof")—Cialdini and others have found that people are often deeply persuaded by observing what others are doing. From his research, no message more effectively got hotel guests to reuse their towels than citing statistics that others were reusing their towels.

So, if you're a manager who needs to persuade, present the vision behind the request and be collaborative, but it also wouldn't hurt to tell those you're trying to persuade about others who have already agreed to your request.

Questions

1. Are the precepts of the IBM training program consistent with the concepts in this chapter? Why or why not?

Answer: Yes, the concepts are compatible with ideas presented in this chapter as well as the chapters on motivation and leadership. These concepts indicate that a greater formalization of Charismatic, Referent, and Expert power is occurring to work with a changing workforce.

2. Again based on the chapter, are there other keys to persuasion and influence that might be added to the IBM program?

Answer: One of the most significant concepts in this chapter that could add to the success of a manager is the Power Tactics on page 425. These tactics provide guidance to the most effective methods of persuasion to secure the cooperation of target audiences.

3. If you had a manager who wanted you to do something against your initial inclination, which of IBM's elements would work best on you? Why?

Answer: Making Trade-Offs would most likely be the best option. Here you could offer an alternative that would be to the self-interest of the manager to allow you to forgo the action you do not wish to take.

4. Drawing from Chapter 5: Personality and Values, do you think generational values explain the changing nature of the employer–employee relationship?

Answer: The generational values are probably detectable in the change of the employer-employee relationships, but the probable source of the change is in the operational environment rather than in the age groupings. In other words, two people spanning the generational divisions can be found to embrace the new relationships because of changing personal preferences rather than being secured by values developed early in a person's psychological development.

Sources: Based on E. White, "Art of Persuasion Becomes Key," *Wall Street Journal* (May 19, 2008), p. B5; B. Tsui, "Greening with Envy," *The Atlantic* (July/August 2009), www.theatlantic.com; and R. Cialdini, *Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion* (New York: HarperBusiness, 2007).

Instructor's Choice

Applying the Concepts

For a number of years, Scott McNealy has been Sun Microsystems' leader and champion. Mr. McNealy has carried the company through the wild '90s and has made profits for shareholders. Sun produced products that the industry wanted and needed and McNealy's presence and vision kept Sun on the correct path. What happened to derail the Sun Express? Instead of listening to those that preached conservatism as the dot.com bubble burst in the early 2000s, McNealy conducted business as usual and with this approach made a big and costly mistake. Sun stock went from a high of \$64 in 2000 to roughly \$4 today. McNealy's leadership style—optimism, daring, humor, and even outrageousness—that served Sun so well in the '90s do not seem to be what Sun needs in the more cost-conscious 2000s. Friends have pleaded with McNealy to back off a notch or two of his old approach but have failed to sway him. Is there any way out for Sun and Scott McNealy?

- Do an online search of Sun Microsystems' current status (or see www.sun.com) and review Sun's history. Write a short one- to two-page paper reviewing management practices that have helped and hurt Sun in the past few years.
- Review current periodicals to determine views on Mr. McNealy's leadership style and managerial decisions at Sun. Summarize your findings.
- Assuming that you were hired as a consultant to the Sun board of directors, write a one-page brief describing what should be done with the Sun management team. Make it clear whether the management team should be changed or whether economic and technological circumstances have caused the problems at Sun, meaning the current management team can still lead Sun to success.

Instructor Discussion

Students will find an abundant amount of material on the Internet and in current periodicals about Sun and Scott McNealy. The difficulties will also be reported. An excellent source is "A CEO's Last Stand" by Jim Kerstetter and Peter Burrows in *Business Week* July 26, 2004 on pages 64–70. Students can also see a Q&A with Scott McNealy by going to www.businessweek.com/magazine/extra.htm. These interviews are normally carried for some time on the magazine's Web site. Students should also appreciate the rich history of Scott McNealy and his leadership of Sun. This activity is a good study of how a senior executive can have difficulties in retaining power when economic and managerial decisions become difficult.



EXPLORING OB TOPICS ON THE WORLD WIDE WEB

Search Engines are our navigational tools to explore the WWW. Some commonly used search engines are:

www.goto.com
www.lycos.com

www.google.com
www.hotbot.com

www.excite.com
www.bing.com

1. Knowing about “personal power” is one thing—applying it to everyday work life is another. Learn how Craig Ohlson of Activation does it to be the top salesperson in a featured article in Inc. Magazine. Point to: <http://www.inc.com/magazine/19950201/2142.html> to read the article. Write a short reaction paper describing the power tactics he uses to influence his customers. Could any of his methods be applied to an activity you are involved in—why or why not?

2. For a wide variety of resources on business ethics (articles, cases, corporate ethics codes, publications, and organizations) visit: <http://www.web-miner.com/busethics.htm>.

Browse through the various resources. Select one or two articles to read; print them out and bring to class to discuss during the next class session.

3. Are smart people overrated? That was the question put forth by New Yorker Magazine in the article, The Talent Myth. Read this article at: http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2002/07/22/020722fa_fact. Make a list of every impression management behavior you spot in the article. Then make a list of impression management techniques you plan to develop in the next years. Bring both lists to class for discussion.
4. Go to: <http://www.itstime.com/oct97map.htm> and develop your own personal power map for an organization you’re involved (or have been involved) with. Bring it to class for discussion.