
Reviewed by Andrew P. Knight, Assistant Professor of Organizational Behavior, Washington University in St. Louis, St. Louis, MO.

Terry Bacon’s stated goal in *Elements of Influence* is to help readers develop influence skills that are ethical and effective for organizational situations. Interpersonal influence skills, Bacon asserts, are essential for effective leadership in contemporary organizations. I teach classes on informal leadership at the undergraduate and graduate levels and incorporate a healthy dose of “influence without authority” content, so I read Bacon’s book with my students in mind. As I describe below, there are useful insights in this book and Bacon’s writing is at times entertaining. However, because of its unclear empirical grounding, *Elements of Influence* won’t knock Cialdini’s (2009) classic *Influence: Science and Practice* off of my bookshelf.

*Elements of Influence* feels like a supplement to Bacon’s (2011) *The Elements of Power: Lessons on Leadership and Influence*, to which Bacon often refers. In both of these books, Bacon draws heavily from proprietary 360-degree survey data that he and his colleagues have gathered from more than 300,000 respondents, focusing on 64,000 individuals who represent 45 nations. Because the same dataset drives both books and because the power and influence are so tightly intertwined in organizations, I think a single volume integrating the two topics would be more useful than two separate books. Indeed, the frequent referrals to *The Elements of Power* made me wonder whether *Elements of Influence* can successfully stand on its own.

*Elements of Influence* comprises three parts plus supplementary material. Part I contains two chapters that introduce influence concepts and give an overview of Bacon’s influence taxonomy. Part II consists of six chapters that dive deeply into ethical influence techniques and provide guidance on developing influence skills. Part III contains four chapters, each of which focuses on a specific unethical influence technique. Finally, the book includes two appendices. Appendix A is a summary of key terms and definitions, and Appendix B describes the survey data that Bacon draws upon throughout the book.

In Part I (Chapters 1 & 2) Bacon introduces core concepts and issues in thinking about influence in organizational contexts. Chapter 1—perhaps the strongest chapter in the entire book—begins with a focus on the outcomes of influence attempts. Bacon offers a useful continuum, ranging from rebellion (i.e., actively trying to thwart the intentions and efforts...
of an influencer) to leadership (i.e., taking up the flag of the influencer and helping to lead the cause), to conceptualize how someone might respond to an influence attempt. Bacon also describes in Chapter 10, “Laws of Influence,” general themes that appear throughout the book, such as “influence is contextual” and “influence is often a process rather than an event.” Chapter 2 then presents Bacon’s taxonomy of 10 ethical influence techniques, grouped into categories of (a) rational approaches, (b) social approaches, and (c) emotional approaches. From his survey data, Bacon reports the frequency and perceived effectiveness of each influence technique.

Part II (Chapters 3 through 8) is the meat of the book, describing each of Bacon’s 10 influence techniques and giving guidance for how to improve influence skills. Each chapter of Chapters 3 through 7 covers two influence techniques and is structured in a similar way. The chapter opens with a story or description of a person to illustrate the focal influence techniques of the chapter. Then, Bacon describes (a) how and why the techniques can influence others, (b) the limitations of the techniques, (c) when the techniques are most likely to be effective, and (d) how to use the techniques effectively. Chapter 3 focuses on the rational techniques of logical persuading and legitimizing. Chapter 4 describes the social techniques of socializing and appealing to relationship. In Chapter 5, Bacon reviews the social techniques of consulting and alliance building. And, in Chapter 7, Bacon reviews the two emotional approaches in his taxonomy: appealing to values and modeling. Bacon uses the concluding chapter of Part II, Chapter 8, to recommend actions that a reader can take to improve his or her influence effectiveness. Chapter 8 also includes a 40-item self-assessment of influence effectiveness.

The taxonomy of influence techniques that Bacon presents in Part II overlaps considerably with content found in other books on influence (e.g., Cialdini, 2009), so it was unclear how this book adds value above and beyond other available resources. I think Bacon’s survey data hold the potential to add value, especially with respect to (a) self–other differences in perceptions of influence use and effectiveness, and (b) cross-cultural differences in influence use and effectiveness. But there is very little detail in the book about the survey data, leading any references to these data or Bacon’s research to raise more questions for me than they answered. For example, are Bacon’s conclusions about influence effectiveness based on self-ratings, other-ratings, or both? And, to what extent do perceptions of influence effectiveness reflect true behavioral change on the part of the influence target? Because Bacon gives so little detail about his research
(even in Appendix B, which I assumed would do so) and infrequently links his findings to other empirical research on influence in organizational settings, his survey data were less impactful than they might have been. I suspect this will be a significant issue for readers striving to learn evidence-based practices.

Part III (Chapter 9 through 12) highlights four influence techniques, one per chapter, that Bacon considers unethical. In Chapter 9, Bacon introduces avoiding (e.g., avoiding conflict) as an unethical and ultimately ineffective influence technique. With the Bernie Madoff story as the backdrop, Chapter 10 focuses on manipulation as an unethical influence technique. Chapter 11 describes the negative impact of intimidation as an influence technique, illustrated by the case of Enron leaders Jeffrey Skilling and Andrew Fastow. Finally, Chapter 12 is a brief description of threatening as an unethical influence technique.

I found Part III to be the weakest and least useful part of the book. Ethical issues in interpersonal influence are fascinating; in the classroom these often generate the most energetic discussions among students. Yet, by devoting Part III to the extremes—illegal and/or large-scale frauds such as Madoff, Enron, and even the Godfather threatening to murder someone—Bacon neglects those situations that many students find are the most challenging and troubling ethical dilemmas: the gray areas of what Bacon calls ethical influence techniques. For example, media reports (e.g., Spiegel, 2010) have recently questioned pharmaceutical salespeople’s use of the influence technique that Bacon refers to as “consulting,” in which salespeople target physicians serving a large number of patients and invite them to speak about a given drug. A discussion of these kinds of gray-area ethical dilemmas—the kinds that readers are likely to face regularly—would enrich the book.

Surprisingly, the book ends with Chapter 12’s focus on threatening others to influence them. This has two unfortunate results. First, by ending on a flagrantly unethical influence technique, Bacon left me with a sour taste in my mouth. Rather than feeling excited to improve my influence skills, I closed the book feeling cynical and a little disillusioned by the topic of interpersonal influence. Second, the book’s abrupt end felt a little like having the power go out while in the middle of watching a movie; my need for closure was unfulfilled. Bacon could have used a concluding summary chapter to avoid both of these outcomes. A summary chapter would have enabled Bacon to integrate and organize the content of the book, which is overly dominated by bullet lists of recommendations and conclusions, into a coherent, parsimonious, and practically useful presentation. Perhaps more important, a summary chapter would have given Bacon the opportunity to reemphasize the positive side of interpersonal
influence and inspire the reader to, through improved influence skills, become more effective in driving positive change through organizations and society.

I don’t plan on adding Bacon’s *Elements of Influence* to the list of resources that I recommend to graduate and undergraduate students in my informal leadership courses. Although his dataset may hold great potential, this book does not capitalize on that potential to deliver novel, empirically grounded insights for how to improve interpersonal influence skills in organizations.

**REFERENCES**


Reviewed by Paul W. Thayer, Professor Emeritus, North Carolina State University, Cary, NC.

This is the second edition of Latham’s *Work Motivation*, originally published in 2007. This edition brings his review of the history of work motivation theory, research, and practice up to date. The fact that only 5 years have passed is one indication of the liveliness of work in this area.

For those who know Latham, they will recognize his dedication to the idea that science informs practice and practice informs science. In this review of the field, the reader will get to know Latham, as he provides numerous examples of his thinking, experiences, and orientations. This is not just a book about goal setting but is a comprehensive review of theory and research on work motivation from 1900 to the present. It is aimed at practitioners as well as students. It will help both to translate theory into practice and to learn from experience so that theory is enriched.

Part I covers the 20th century and is broken into five chapters: the period 1900–1925, with an emphasis on biology, money, and behavior(ism); 1925–1950, focusing on the lack of theoretical work to guide research or practice; 1950–1975, when theory began to emerge around
job satisfaction, motivation, need hierarchy, theories X and Y, job characteristics theories, equity, behavior modification, and goal-setting theory; 1975–2000, reflecting the cognitive revolution in psychology and motivation, expanding on goal-setting, self-regulation, the high-performance cycle, and organizational justice; and 20th century controversies, which looks back over the century and addresses controversies concerning money, intrinsic versus extrinsic motivation, performance and satisfaction, and participative decision making. This last is capped off with an excellent commentary from both a scientist and practitioner viewpoint. Latham is extremely effective in either role. In both, he is appreciative of the value of each theory, the research, and applications. Given his strong identification with goal-setting theory, his evenhandedness is impressive.

The major differences between the two editions begin in Part II. Part II takes us into the 21st century, dealing in turn with needs, personality traits as predictors of motivation, contextual issues such as culture, job characteristics and person–environment fit, cognition, social cognitive theory, and affect and emotion. The chapter on cognition has a great deal of new material on goal setting theory and goal commitment, as well as new work on subconscious goals and priming. Criticisms of goal-setting research and theory are also described, including the possible negative effects of goal setting. New work in the area of self-efficacy and its impact upon motivation and performance is covered in the chapter on social cognitive theory, and organizational justice work is brought up to date in the chapter on affect and emotions.

The final section deals with future directions and misdirection, and is followed by Latham’s epilogue on the art of practice. This chapter is similar in tone to that in the first edition, but it is well worth reading again.

I liked the first edition and like the second even more. Latham writes in a conversational manner and makes difficult material clear and digestible. His asides and personal anecdotes add an informality and intimacy not often found in a scholarly work, and this clearly is a scholarly work. Coverage of the field is quite complete and his treatment of various theories and views is fair and balanced.

But as a scientist–practitioner, I am particularly impressed by Latham’s ability to translate science into practice and to show the benefits of practice for science. I know of no one who is better at this translation. Graduate students (and faculty) who look down at practice could benefit from exposure to Latham’s linkage of science and practice. Those who see research and theory as irrelevant to practice could also benefit. His commentary at the end of Chapter 5 (pp. 126–128) illustrates that the value of knowledge and understanding of various theories—attitude, job characteristics, job
previews, the role of cognition in learning, expectancy, equity, goal-setting, self-efficacy, organizational justice, and others—are essential for sound practice. I strongly recommend this book as a text and as a reference for anyone dealing with I-O or HR issues.


Reviewed by Gerard Beenen, Assistant Professor of Management, Mi-haylo College of Business and Economics, California State University-Fullerton, Fullerton, CA.

In today’s global economy, successful managers and executives need to motivate their teams across competing agendas, time zones, and cultures. *Boundary Spanning Leadership* provides a solid, research-informed guide for leaders and team members looking for insights on how to do just that. The authors develop a “boundary spanning leadership model” that uses the metaphor of an upward spiral. The model is posited to move organizations from the “Great Divide” of status quo norms and habits that impair collaboration and innovation to the “Nexus Effect,” which is a kind of organizational nirvana that enables teams to realize their full potential. For some this will be the strength of the book. Others may be skeptical this Nexus Effect can be achieved and may find it difficult to implement their full model.

The book is organized into five parts. Part 1 builds the case for the Great Divide by describing five boundaries (vertical, horizontal, stakeholder, demographic, geographic) that leaders find increasingly difficult to manage across. They provide concise definitions of each boundary and colloquialisms to connect each boundary with a manager’s experience. For instance, common labels for demographic boundaries include “glass ceilings,” “generation gaps,” and “culture clashes” (p. 29). The authors also explain divisions across these boundaries through the lens of social identity theory. A strength of their approach is that they make social identity theory very accessible to practicing managers (e.g., an “interplay” between our needs for uniqueness and belonging, p. 40). Referencing the classic Robber’s Cave Boys Camp experiment also engages the reader’s attention (p. 57).

Parts II through IV present the three components of their model, each of which has two recommended practices. The first component (Manage Boundaries) focuses on creating conditions to balance healthy and
mutually respectful boundaries between groups, with shared identity across groups. The second component (Forge Common Ground) is about developing trust across boundaries and reframing those boundaries to create a sense of community. The third component (Discover New Frontiers) is aimed at fostering innovation by increasing cross-boundary interdependence and organizational change that implements “the integrated totality of the tactics in this book” (p. 203). As the three components of their upwardly spiraling model are presented, the authors use storytelling from actual organizations to illustrate each recommended practice. This makes the implementation tactics for each component tangible. It also may help readers translate the examples to their own situations, though some examples may get lost in translation (e.g., a community organizer trying to merge diverse perspectives on redevelopment without resolution, p. 200).

Each well-organized chapter ends with a “Cliff Notes” summary table. By the end of Part IV, however, some readers may find their heads spinning like the spiraling metaphor of their proposed model. Though the model is cogently presented, its interlocking processes and conditions become a bit cluttered by the closing chapters.

Finally, Part V elaborates on the Nexus Effect. The Nexus Effect is a sort of collective “flow” experience that energizes leaders, teams, and organizations to achieve great things as all three components of their model are achieved. The book ends with another summary of the model, using more storytelling to emphasize the possibilities awaiting those able to achieve the Nexus Effect. Managers should appreciate the planning template (pp. 240–245) that encourages readers to identify their own organizational challenge and to formulate specific tactics for addressing it based on the model presented in the book.

Overall, Boundary Spanning Leadership provides managers and executives with useful tactics to foster shared purpose and to enhance collaboration in their organizations. The book does an excellent job building the case for why it is imperative for leaders to motivate and forge cooperation across organizational, geographic, and demographic boundaries. The book is very well organized, with summary features that make it user friendly for busy readers. Their intervention frameworks have a reasonable basis in the research literature, though this basis may not always be explicitly referenced. Consistent use of social identity theory provides managers an excellent introduction to this paradigm for understanding group formation, affect, cognition, and behavior. Their focused treatment of social identity (e.g., Chapters 2 & 3) is even suitable as supplemental reading for leadership or organizational behavior courses. Where the book may fall short for some is that the tactics needed to move organizations from the Great Divide to the Nexus Effect are quite elaborate. Some managers
may find an upwardly spiraling model of three components, each having two subcomponents, a challenging template to implement. Nonetheless, for those with the patience and opportunity to do so, it may be worth a try.


Reviewed by Scott P. Mondore, Managing Partner, Strategic Management Decisions, LLC, Huntersville, NC.

The level of attention on evidence-based management has certainly grown exponentially in the field of human resources because of its potential to impact business outcomes. Interestingly, the focus on the topic has even been helped along by the movies (“Moneyball”) and the field of marketing research (“Big Data”). More importantly, in the age of outsourcing and other budget cuts, human resources departments are waking up to the fact that they could return to days of just being the “personnel” department if they don’t start showing a return-on-investment for their work. Although using analytics and data to make decisions is not new, it is new for HR. Unfortunately, there have been many new approaches in HR that have damaged its credibility, spanning from “engagement” to “empowerment.” It is important for the human resources profession to clearly define exactly what evidence-based management means, what skills are needed to make this a reality, what technology is needed to make it practical for all leaders (not just senior leaders), how to make it “stick” with a solid business case for change, and the real long-term impact (i.e., return on investment).

Transformative HR is a case-study/example-driven overview of how large organizations have used various levels of analytics and intuition to make decisions and changes that attempt to drive business outcomes. The book promises to provide leaders the information and tools they need to create superior organizational performance through synergistic human capital decisions and investments that span the employment life cycle and organizational design decisions.

That said, a very clear and illuminating point is made early in the book that drives the entire discussion:

In recruiting, for example, there is evidence that unstructured interviews are far less effective than more structured approaches in identifying the best candidates, and yet despite the evidence unstructured interviews are still the preferred method of many managers (p. xi).
In fact, there are over 100 years of evidence that structured interviews (among other assessments) are far more effective than unstructured interviews (Schmidt & Hunter, 1998), and yet HR has come up short in driving home this point and changing managers’ behavior. It is hard to imagine a medical doctor ignoring 100 years of evidence and continuing down the path of less effective treatments. The authors do point out that quantitative and qualitative data must be utilized and clearly articulated to make a real impact.

The book is set up to provide new frameworks and principles to organize the various levels of analytical approaches and then provide case studies of how large, international organizations have attempted to implement these ideas and approaches. Evidence-based change is based on the following five principles.

- Logic-driven analytics: identifying the most pivotal issues that an organization needs to focus on and then using robust analysis to describe those issues as well as the likely outcomes from addressing them (p. 3).
- Segmentation: discovering the strategic categories of employees and potential employees by understanding the most vital differences between them (p. 27).
- Risk leverage: knowing when and when not to take risks (p. xviii).
- Integration and synergy: understanding how different HR solutions mesh with one another and with other organizational processes to deliver a unique and distinctly compelling proposition to the organization and the workforce (p. 77)
- Optimization: exploiting the differences between employee groups to enable the organization to realize the optimal value exchange between itself and a particular group (p. 95).

The authors take us through the theoretical framework for each of these principles, explain why these principles are important, and provide case studies on how organizations conducted analyses within each principle. For each principle there are even comparison tables showing “typical” and “transformative” approaches to each principle. Their note of caution against information overload is particularly relevant in the coming age of Big Data.

The way that the book is set up makes sense and creates a consistent flow of introducing topic and frameworks, followed by case studies. Citing specific companies who are taking specific actions brings the information somewhat away from the theoretical/academic world and into reality for leaders. There is also a good summary of the case studies and the lessons learned on each of the principles.
However, an opportunity jumps out the most: How do we know that all of the diagnostic work actually yielded the results that were postulated? The book articulates many points that make sense and frameworks that seem to follow a strong path, but what happened after all of these ideas were put into place? Did they move the key drivers, and ultimately, did that improve business results? HR and front-line leaders may find themselves saying “so what?” to some of what is put forth. A long-term study or follow-up in each of the case studies that shows the direct connection between improvement on the diagnosed areas and improvement in business outcomes would really help the authors to make the key point of this book, which is to use real evidence to make decisions. The book’s title also uses the phrase “sustainable advantage,” but without a longitudinal study, it is difficult to make that assertion. How much was invested and how much was gained are questions that should be answered in the case studies—and would be a great opportunity to get 100% buy-in from leaders at all levels. A key point made earlier was about the preponderance of evidence that unstructured interviews are ineffective. In order to get managers to buy-in, there needs to be an evidence-based follow-up that shows directly that using structured interviews in that particular organization led to better hires/performance/retention than using unstructured interviews.

Another opportunity is for the authors (and those in HR in general) to define what “evidence” is and what types of evidence are needed to make important decisions and changes. There is a sense that a lot of work and investment should be put into analyzing data using the principles outlined, but what should success look like? What evidence justifies the work and investment? Will evidence-based change or evidence-based management go by the wayside like many other HR approaches?

The book provides thought-provoking principles, frameworks, and advice on the need to incorporate more data and analysis into HR decision making, and it does provide an approach for HR leaders to approach their data more critically and present it more compellingly. It falls short in providing “the information and tools they need to create superior organizational performance through synergistic human capital decisions.” Based on the case studies, the “superior organizational performance” that can be achieved shows promise but is still a question mark.

REFERENCE


Reviewed by S. Bartholomew Craig, Associate Professor of Psychology, North Carolina State University, Raleigh, NC.

Gary Brumback’s (2011) The Devil’s Marriage is shocking, and frightening, and hopeful. And with a U.S. presidential election looming as of this writing (probably concluded by the time you read this), it could not be more timely. In 263 pages guaranteed to make your head spin, Brumback argues that the United States is being governed by a “corpocracy . . . a marriage between big business and big government that turns a formally democratic government into a vehicle for corporate ends” (p. 4), that any sense we might have that we live in a democracy is an illusion, and that major changes in the relationship between government and business will have to occur if we are ever to fulfill the dreams of our Founding Fathers. And when I say he argues, I mean he really argues. Brumback has loaded this book chock full of analyses of historically verifiable events that illustrate the influence of business on government (e.g., the rise of corporate personhood).

Brumback begins The Devil’s Marriage with definitions of terminology (e.g., “corpocracy”) and the basic philosophical premises upon which his arguments rest (e.g., corpocracy and true democracy cannot coexist in the same nation; corpocracies exist because both business and government benefit from them). He then provides brief histories of American corpocracies from eras past (e.g., the British Crown during the colonial era, the robber barons of the late 19th century). This section culminates in a discussion of the current corpocracy, which Brumback traces back to the 1970s, and is essentially his case for viewing the current state of affairs as a corpocracy.

After painting this rather bleak picture in the first 32 pages, The Devil’s Marriage starts its long climb out of the hole on page 33, beginning with a discussion of factors that operate in opposition to the corpocracy (e.g., labor unions) and transitioning to a prescription for individual and group action to restore true democracy to the United States, which culminates in an all-out call to (metaphorical) arms. This call to arms appears to be Brumback’s real purpose in writing The Devil’s Marriage, and it constitutes the last two-thirds of the book.

Brumback outlines his “POW!” plan for restoring democracy in considerable detail—certainly no reader could accuse him of complaining without offering solutions. Without giving too much away, Brumback’s plan includes a large role for nongovernmental organizations (NGOs),
some of which currently exist, with others being brought into existence as part of the plan. Brumback includes proposals for how to leverage media, technology, and the educational system to combat the corpocracy. He proposes specific legislative changes (e.g., ending corporate welfare, reforming campaign finance, and corporate charters) and the creation of a U.S. Chamber of Democracy as a counterweight to the Chamber of Commerce. Some of these ideas have been voiced before, by others, and Brumback takes care to attribute them to their sources. But an enormous fraction of Brumback’s plan appears to be original to him, and much of that is really quite out of the box. My brief description here doesn’t begin to do it justice.

Despite the somewhat grim subject matter, The Devil’s Marriage is a lively, entertaining read—I was quickly hooked into wondering what wholly unexpected thing he would say next. In addition to his penchant for finding the patterns in what might otherwise seem to be unrelated events, Brumback has a gift for creating new terms (e.g., RuiNation, Alter-America)—chapters even end with lists of “memory ticklers and one liners” that boggled this reader’s mind with their linguistic creativity. There’s even a short poem that is completely on point. Perhaps most importantly, the book takes on a decidedly optimistic tone in its second half, as it paints a picture of how things should and could be. In addition to his “POW!” plan, Brumback also includes three appendices containing pointers to additional resources to help motivated readers get started putting it into action. These include contact information for NGOs, corpocracy-unfriendly media outlets, and the encapsulated ideas of numerous similar-minded thinkers.

Readers who subscribe to conservative ideologies or who feel strongly that business is the solution to humanity’s problems probably won’t agree with Brumback, and a less-than-thorough reading could leave one with the impression that this is just another liberal rant against the “job creators.” But on closer inspection, Brumback is fairly equally derisive of Democrats and Republicans alike; his beef is much more with a system that allows too much cross-talk between government and business than with the individuals who inhabit that system. And, regardless of political orientation, all readers will be impressed with the compendium of public events that Brumback has amassed to support his case. The writing can seem frantic at times, and the examples and anecdotes can come at you so fast and furiously that you can lose track of the overarching point if you’re not careful. But the overall effect of this book is that it gets you thinking and possibly even acting. And I suspect that Brumback would consider that to be a mission accomplished.


*The publications listed are either already scheduled for review and/or are included as a new listing. Readers interested in reviewing for Personnel Psychology are invited to write our Book Review Editors Dr. Lee Konczak at konczak@wustl.edu or Dr. David E. Smith at david.smith@easiconsult.com—providing information about background and areas of interest.*