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11.958 Getting Things Implemented: Strategy, People, Performance, and Leadership  
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# NEGOTIATION AND COALITION BUILDING

*Core concepts and application*

- 1. Analyze the situation: Who holds influence, what is the nature and direction of that influence, and who needs influence?**
- 2. What kind of agreements am I out to create?**  
What are the issues, interests, possibilities for joint gain?
- 3. What kinds of coalitions are possible? Which are essential?**
- 4. How can favorable coalitions be built? How can unfavorable ones be blocked?**

## **Myths and Realities of Influence: “Vulnerable” Need Not Mean “Powerless”**

- “Resources” (structural advantages, such as formal authority, land, money) do not ensure “resourcefulness.”
- Likewise, a lack of resources (or a structural disadvantage) calls for *extra* resourcefulness.
- Keys are: (a) savvy preparation “away from the table,” (b) getting to the table “early” (consider pre-meeting moves, avoid getting shut out by early side deals), (c) heading off or breaking up adverse coalitions while “at” the table, and (d) creating a “blocking” coalition if necessary.

## Creating Value through Trades

- Stakeholders often look instinctively for “common ground,” but value is usually created by trading on differences in what parties want.
- Many differences matter and may be exploited creatively, for example differences in: TANGIBLE INTERESTS, TIMING, FORECASTS, RISK AVERSION, SUBSTANCE vs. APPEARANCES.

See Briggs, “We are all negotiators now: An introduction to negotiation in community problem-solving,” The Community Problem-Solving Project @ MIT (June 2003). At [www.community-problem-solving.net](http://www.community-problem-solving.net)

## **Identify and Pursue Favorable Coalitions**

There are multiple bases for creating them:

- Shared interests?
- Shared positions (e.g., prefer “no deal”)?
- Valuable trades?
- Common history?
- Common allies or enemies?
- Shared vulnerability? (for example, risk of being locked out of decisionmaking)

## Identify and Deal with Adverse Coalitions

- **Anticipate them—do your homework.**
- **Break them** (divide and weaken them, within ethical bounds): pre-empt when you can; divide/encourage defectors after-the-fact. Look for “holes” in the adverse coalition.
- **Discourage processes that might produce them.**
- **Move the conversation beyond narrow claiming, immediate interests**—appeal to higher principles, shared goals, notions of fairness (where appropriate), “norm of unanimous action.”

## **Timing the Approach to Potential Allies**

### **Map influence patterns, then best sequence**

- How probable is successful recruitment of Party A now?
- How valuable is successful recruitment of them now (process effects on decisions of others, outcomes)?
- How costly is successful recruitment now (goodies, process effects, for example if others would be less likely to join)?
- How costly is failed recruitment now (process effects)?

***Example of U.S. recruiting both UK and Saudi Arabia early to Gulf War coalition.***

## Key Lessons

1. **POWER. Stakeholders often have more power and coalition potential than they assume.** Structure merely sets up possibilities and boundaries—the key is resourcefulness, not just resources.
2. **COALITIONS. Strong coalitions tend to be based on shared interests and/or values** or a shared position.
3. **“EXPANDING THE PIE” (JOINT GAIN).** Most value creation requires trading on differences in what parties want.
4. **PROCESS PLANNING. Keys to sequencing that let you create and claim value:** carefully packaging issues, sequencing meetings to recruit allies and deflect opponents, being proactive about both favorable and “blocking” coalitions.