Women and power in business
Does gender matter when building your position and influence in an organisation?

Report on the mechanisms of building a position in an organisation and methods of exerting influence, as applied by persons in high executive posts in Poland

October 2012
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“In today’s changing economy leaders are confronted with increasingly more serious challenges. They are expected to prove themselves. In my opinion, true leaders are those that lead by example. A leader is able to convince and is followed by clients and employees alike if they can be identified with the thought, attitude and direction they want to promote among others. A leader must be consistent in that. It has to be a lasting process.”

Maciej Witucki, the President of Orange Polska

“Leadership is a competence and it can be developed. If you are interested in people and show readiness to spend time with them – even if you have to overcome shyness first – you reach a point when you gladly face the crowd to share your experience, passions and history of your professional success. Self-esteem is crucial here, as it gives you power. The total of successes plus the total of feedback responses makes you feel better about yourself, improves your self-assessment and shields you against your competitors’ plots and hostile attempts. You naturally become more assertive, stable and consistent, you do not need to pose as somebody else or assume a role. You can remain faithful to your unique and original self, give up copying others in their roles of tough bosses, employees and advisers, and the labour market is teeming with such role-playing individuals.”

Joanna Malinowska – Parzydło, CEO Personal Branding Institute, former HR Director in TVN, currently adviser to TVN management board
Achieving power in organisations – a dilemma between necessity and fear

Even though the notion of ‘a career’ seems universal and inter-gender, power is inextricably associated with politics and the male sphere. However, let us ponder the idea that perhaps career and power are organically the same and they cannot do without one another. This thesis might prove true not only for politics but also for business. If we examine the history of knowledge and research on power of the last few dozen years, we can come to a conclusion that contemporary knowledge in this scope has come primarily from within the realm of business. Why does business invest in development of knowledge on power? What is the return on this investment? What is the significance of power and its use in business?

“Business is control, it is selecting the course for your company – the course you believe to be most desirable. Hence, there is no business without power. The executive officer’s power consists in taking a discretionary decision on the work and the work methods to be followed by others.”

Paweł Cieślak, HR Business Partner, Head of HR, Roche Diagnostics

Where does power come from? The simplest answer is: from your position. You obtain power along with your executive position. This kind of power has its advantages – it allows you to exercise influence by giving instructions, making sure that they are carried out, rewarding through a system of bonuses and pay rises and punishing by reprimands and dismissals. The matter gets more complicated if you want to use the power for long-lasting involvement, for winning the trust of others in your decisions or for example, for motivating people to display innovation. Such influence requires more than just a position. It is associated with authority, which is more than filling the position of an executive – it means being somebody who is competent, somebody people trust, somebody credible – somebody who exudes some form of magnetism and charisma.

“Power is the comfort of being able to decide regardless of what your peers, superiors and subordinates think. If you have power, you can take decisions, you can wait to have them executed and you can expect that others will work towards your goals.”

Justyna Stachowicz, Financial Director, member of PRIB’s board of directors (ABM Solid Group)

Power is the ability to influence others, to build your position within the structure (e.g. a firm) and to adapt to the environment and circumstances in such a way so as to be able to take decisions, push through your ideas, put into action your concept of work and cooperation within and outside the company. This perspective makes power more familiar for business organisations.

Can you be a good executive officer without extending your influence in an organisation? Executives, regardless of whether it is on the strength of their post or their personal attributes, are bound to exert influence – they persuade, engage, motivate, order and enforce. They influence their subordinates as well as superiors and peers. This ability to exert influence is instrumental in becoming business effective. When you influence, you use power, and each instance of using power is linked with exerting influence. Yet, power is not always desirable. Executives are often unwilling to admit that...
they want to have power. At the same time, based on research conducted by McClelland and Boyatzis (1982)\(^1\) it can be concluded that an effective leader is driven by a need for power and uses such power. Willingness to exercise power is among the attributes of the best and most effective executives. Hence, power – understood as exerting influence on others – is an important skill in managing people and the basis of leadership. Leaders – to be effective – must exert influence and use their power – otherwise they lose their raison d’être.

**Power versus leadership**
An effective executive officer uses power and influence. The person who – by exerting influence – obtains good results for the organisation and raises professional satisfaction as well as involvement of the employees becomes a true leader. A leader is someone who creates the work environment within which simple reward and punishment mechanisms are of little importance, as they are supplanted by inspiring motivation, individual treatment of subordinates and the presence of an authority figure. There are many ways to exercise power in organisations.

Depending on the outcome, three main influence tactics can be distinguished: persuasion, exchange and coercion\(^2\). **Persuasion tactics** (rational persuasion, inspirational appeals) focus on using logical arguments or appealing to values and ideals in order to persuade people. They are most effective when building involvement and their results are long-lasting because they lead to changes in attitudes. **Exchange tactics** (consultation, ingratiating and exchange) seek to get people into a favourable mood in order to encourage them to act as the executive requests. They make people more compliant, but the tactics themselves are demanding – they take time and effort. **Coercion tactics** (coalition and pressure) are linked with exerting pressure and their main function is to break resistance. They require courage in direct confrontation and they can be most effective where adversaries are unwilling and raise objections that something cannot or should not be done. If the executive has no time for persuading and ingratiating and has used such tactics before to no avail, then coercion seems the only way to influence others. Nonetheless, one needs to keep in mind that coercion tactics serve the purpose of overcoming resistance where resistance is met and where it threatens the success of an undertaking. Thus, their ill-timed use may trigger resistance that will have to be dealt with later.

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2. A detailed description of influence tactics, their results, mechanisms, effectiveness levels and benefits is provided in the Attachment.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Persuasion Tactics</th>
<th>Exchange Tactics</th>
<th>Coercion Tactics</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Objective</strong></td>
<td><strong>Objective</strong></td>
<td><strong>Objective</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ingratating and building involvement</td>
<td>creating potential consensus and willingness to get involved</td>
<td>breaking resistance</td>
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</table>

**Types Of Tactics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rational persuasion</th>
<th>Consultation and ingratiation</th>
<th>Coalition</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>referring to facts, data, numbers and the resultant logical arguments</td>
<td>persuading others by engaging them in the work process or encouraging them to express their opinion</td>
<td>forming a group of persons who have been won round to an idea and will help in influencing others</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Inspiration</th>
<th>Exchange</th>
<th>Pressure</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>appealing to common values and ideals</td>
<td>offering benefits in exchange for performing the work</td>
<td>direct coercion (order, demand expressing expectations, nagging, intimidation by higher rank)</td>
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<th>Effectiveness</th>
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<tr>
<td>establishing convictions and beliefs about a subject and a specific proactive attitude; such beliefs result in internal readiness to particular actions which is kept up relatively long and does not require immediate presence of a superior</td>
<td>they are based on two most common and fixed social rules – readiness to be consistent and willingness to reciprocate; thus social norms rather than inner convictions force people to exhibit specific behaviours; such tactics seem to have lasting effects especially regarding persons for whom external rules, customs and conventions constitute important behaviour determinants</td>
<td>they are based on a very important type of motivation – avoiding unpleasant and unwanted consequences – which is a stronger motivator than positive encouragements; they are very effective in the short run when we want to exert influence now and break down resistance</td>
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Women and power in business Does gender matter when building your position and influence in an organisation?
Influence tactics used by Polish managers

In order to learn more about specific methods of exerting influence and using power in organisations we have conducted a survey among Polish executives with many years of experience in managing teams. The survey has given us an invaluable insight into various influence building tactics applied by men and women occupying middle and top executive posts.

The objective of our survey was to call attention to the ways in which power is built in organisations, to show the benefits and potential risks arising from the application of specific influence tactics and primarily, to present the differences between how men and women gain advantage. This report aims to initiate discussion on the conscious uses of power for the good of the organisation as well as for the good of both the persons subject to power and the persons who exercise it.

The application of tactics equals exerting influence, and exerting influence is an inherent trait of power. How do Polish executives use their power in businesses? Our study shows that factual evidence and consultation tactics are applied most often. Such tactics fall within the categories of rational persuasion and bilateral exchange, i.e. they inspire others to take action by fuelling their beliefs and personal convictions; they are dialogue tactics. Rational exchange and pressure, i.e. tactics from the categories of unilateral coercion and bilateral exchange, are used least often. Pressure is a monologue-based tactic; it implies an undisputable order and prohibition.

The context and the group at which the influence is targeted are important elements of influence mechanisms. Therefore, our study examines which tactics are favoured by Polish executives in respect of four selected groups. As far as peers are concerned, i.e. persons over whom executives have no authority, the influence tactics focused on rational persuasion, consultation and inspirational appeals are most often selected. The second influence group consists of the persons with whom managers carry out projects – in this case the tactics based on logical argumentation and inspirational appeals are preferred. Concerning subordinates, executives are inclined to influence them by rational persuasion and consultation, whereas inspiration-related appeals are rarely used. Superiors are treated in the same way as peers – with them executives favour factual evidence and consultation. Our study concentrates on differences between men and women when it comes to choosing influence tactics.

Chart 1: Influence tactics used by Polish executives

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<th></th>
<th>Facts</th>
<th>Inspiration</th>
<th>Consultation</th>
<th>Exchange</th>
<th>Coalition</th>
<th>Pressure</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
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</table>

"Power based on authority and leadership is the most desirable model. This requires predisposition, though, significant effort (including continuous self-development) and involvement. Unfortunately, too many managers opt for the simplest model of power based on fear and so called managing through the door. This is easier but much less effective, especially in tough moments, which each organization will face sooner or later. Authority helps mobilizing peers in critical moments."

Grażyna Piotrowska-Oliwa, President, PGNiG
Glass ceiling or glass cliff?
According to the data supplied by recruitment agencies, business organisations recruit an equal number of women and men. Nonetheless, if we make the effort to track the recruits’ careers further, we can see that the balance ends there. The number of women on the upper rungs of the career ladder gradually decreases. Even though Poland is not characterised by very high disproportions in this sphere, 40% of women\(^4\) occupy executive positions and far fewer of them sit on management boards or fill CEO positions. Based on the latest CE Top 500 Deloitte ranking, women serve on the boards of 28% of the largest Polish companies and only in 4% of companies do they fill the top executive functions. Polish listed companies have similar statistics (24% of women on boards and only 6% fill general director positions). Does that imply that women are less enterprising? According to research\(^5\), women own 37% of all companies. Psychologists highlight their resistance to stress, ability to cope under pressure, better work organisation and team-playing skills. Thus, it seems that women are not less resourceful than men, although this does not translate into career advancement. As a rule, women are owners of small businesses (they own 2/3 of them)\(^6\), which goes to show that they function better in flat structures and that there are obstacles that hinder their promotion to executive positions in large organisations. This phenomenon is called the ‘glass ceiling’, i.e. the undetectable (in the sense of no formal rules prohibiting women from occupying executive positions) yet significant barrier that keeps women from rising to the upper rungs of the corporate ladder. A woman’s career resembles a pyramid or a glass cliff that cannot be climbed, and considering the latest trends the prospects are not bright. Even though on the average women are promoted to executive positions more often in Poland than in other EU countries (the Polish result is higher by six percentage points), we are on our way to a result lower than the EU average – over the last 5 years the number of female executives has dropped by 3\(^%\).\(^7\)

Despite the alarming data that show gender imbalance in executive positions and the prevalence of exacerbating trends, women who are actively involved in business are not in agreement about solving this issue by parity. Only 32% of executives give an affirmative answer when asked whether they believe that, as in the case of Norway and France, the law should establish quotas for women on the management boards of companies. Male managers (80%) are definitely against it, and only slightly it more than half of the women in business (55%) support the idea of solving inequality by parity.

Most probably, liberal thinking which is so characteristic in business circles is to blame – an attempt to regulate the sphere is perceived as appropriation of the freedom of choice. According special privileges to one group triggers suspicions of patronage and partiality, it is seen as creating special privileges for a handicapped group, and women neither feel a part of such a group nor want to become one. They reject privileges and promote the notion of healthy rivalry. Parity stirs up emotions and, regardless of whether the intentions behind it are positive, both men and women believe it is linked with inequality which breeds a sense of injustice and, by the same token, motivates people to compete on a level playing field.

\(^4\) Puls Biznesu, 08 March 2012
\(^6\) gl24.pl, 31 January 2012
\(^7\) Centralny Ośrodek Informacji Gospodarczej in: Puls Biznesu journal, 8 March 2012
Poles in general hold a different opinion about introducing regulations that will narrow the gender gap on corporate management boards. In a nationwide survey organised by Homo Homini for Deloitte Polska, the question that was asked of business executives was also put to a representative sample of Poles: whether they believe that, as in the case of Norway and France, the law should establish quotas for women on the management boards of companies. It transpires that parity is definitely more popular among the general public. The vast majority of Poles (74%) advocated parity and 22% of respondents were against it. This strong support for parity in the national sample may be due to the media discussions taking place in the wake of the Fourth Women’s Congress (i.e. at the time when the survey was carried out).

The results of the survey also show that the highest percentage of parity opponents can be found among the inhabitants of large cities (44%) and in the following age groups: 18-24 years (45%) and 35-44 years (33%). Most probably, young people enter the world of business in the belief that competence is what matters most; they also think that the accomplishment criterion is linked with an independent, unaided climb up the corporate ladder. At the same time, people living in large cities are bound to have a strong belief in their own ability; they also view themselves as highly competent.

**Conclusion 1:** There are fewer women than men in corporate management bodies; their numbers are on the decline and legal solutions that could narrow the gender gap on corporate boards are supported by the general public more than they are by Polish business circles.
Why don’t women get promoted?

As a rule, asking a question of this sort polarises interviewees and their gender has little to do with the answers they provide. The advocates of bearing individual responsibility for your life and development say: women themselves are guilty when it comes to their stagnation and lack of professional advancement – they hesitate too long, they mull things over – they are simply too shy in their struggle for power. Those in favour of social responsibility claim that social mechanisms, habit and stereotypes that support men are to blame. The former ones advise: ‘Women, wake up and fight for your rights’, whereas the latter – apart from demanding that women take a proactive approach – also state that certain legal solutions increasing the proportion of women on management boards should be implemented.

One must supplement the discussion about the power and influence of women in the corporate world with an analysis of how men and women build their influence in organisations, how they obtain power and how they make use of it. According to our research, women and men choose different courses of action. Women much more often decide on rational persuasion (factual evidence) and consultation, i.e. they engage others in joint actions (Chart 4). These tactics fall within the group of direct persuasion techniques. According to the social psychologist Professor Wojciszke, men are more focused on power in the sense of prestige and status in social hierarchy. They are generally more hierarchic, and they construct their status differently. One can observe it even among children. Boys – like grown men – make efforts to dominate others. On the other hand, women compete against each other in terms of the number of friends they have…8. The results of our research make it possible to work on that observation. Women influence their surroundings in business dealings primarily through cooperation with others, getting people involved, asking for their opinion and viewpoint, consulting them about different courses of action. Thus, they tend to disarm their opponents and nip resistance in the bud; they also help all the parties concerned to see the situation in different lights. Hence their asking the following questions: What do you think? What would you do? What if…? etc. broadens horizons and increases involvement.


“I have built my position in the organisation mainly with the help of my competence – people need to have confidence in me, to believe that I know what I am doing. They must see me as a person who knows the ropes, who has skills and experience. I also exert influence through relationships and show that whenever I take actions I do it for the benefit of others rather than against their interest. I influence through my experience. More than once I have supported managers in crisis and thus my influence over them has increased.”

Lidia Ołowska, HR Director, Russia and CIS, Novo Nordisk

“It is important to understand that people have different values, each person filters the world in his or her peculiar way. When I liaise with women I make sure that the language of values and benefits I use is attuned to women. I refer to my own experience, I empathise, because I remember my own good times and bad times as a mother, wife, boss and a blonde in the tough business world. I scrutinise myself, other people and the surroundings to be more effective, better understood and more communicative. Management through values, management through communication, management through attention, management through delegating trust, management through recognition of talents, management through respecting other people’s opinions, coaching management through asking questions, management through the authority of a decent person, management through assertive communication of expectations, management through rewarding courage and ethical behaviour – these are some of my favourite tools.”

Joanna Malinowska – Parzydło, CEO Personal Branding Institute, former HR Director in TVN, currently adviser to TVN management board
Significant differences also occur as regards exerting influence on subordinates (Chart 5). A female boss, as compared to a male boss, inspires more often and rarely applies pressure. Consequently, it can be concluded that women build their status in organisations primarily by their involvement and winning over other people rather than by breaking their resistance. Are they more effective thanks to this? That depends on the objectives to be accomplished and the methods of measurement. Many executives emphasise that they find it easier to cooperate with women, that women are better organised, etc. Hence a question arises why so few women manage companies or sit on management boards?

“To impact each group of people, you need to know its specifics. There is a saying that each group is as strong as its weakest component. It refers to both education, emotions at a given moment and events that take place in our surroundings. Ability to correctly read and analyze these factors guarantees a success. Talking to people not only about business is worth your time. If you know your people, few things can surprise you as a manager.”

Grażyna Piotrowska-Oliwa, President, PGNiG

“I see no problem in acting as a subordinate in specific situations. Sometimes it is a relief. But I quickly detect lack of logic or ineffective actions within a group. I am not able to stand back when time and energy is wasted. This motivates me to act. The bottom line is that I can be an ideal subordinate of an ideal boss.”

Marta Towpik, Management Board member, Economic and Finance Director, PKP Energetyka
How much does the glass ceiling cost us?
The data about declining gender diversity in executive positions and the amplified glass ceiling effect provoke questions about how these obstacles affect the effectiveness of businesses. To put it in other words, do the companies managed by men fare better? Or can it be that gender diversification creates favourable conditions for increased effectiveness and stability in business? The issue is especially interesting if we take into account that, considering the dominant trends, in few years’ time there will be even fewer female executives around. No research in respect of the implications of lack of diversification has been carried out in Poland, but foreign studies clearly indicate positive correlations between gender diversity in executive positions and effectiveness and innovation in enterprises. According to the research involving the largest Fortune 500 companies, those employing more women have better financial results. This cannot be interpreted to mean that inviting women to management boards will heal the economy. Nonetheless, it should be pointed out that the focus on diversity rather than preserving monolithic structures seems to be a driver of success and effectiveness.

Undisputedly, women are better educated (90% of women in Poland have secondary school education) and they contribute many values linked with their gender of managing people and organisations. Hence, why isn’t women’s potential put to good use? Even if we take account of the natural constraints linked with the role of women in families, their participation in management is very low, within the range of a few per cent for the top executive positions – especially in view of the fact that at lower levels women occupy half of all positions and their qualifications are the same if not better. The so-called stereotype threat may be considered among the causes of the above. If a woman takes efforts to get a promotion is said that women are not natural leaders, directors, etc. and that the leader function will impair her mother role, it is likely that a negative stereotype will be activated. In fact, when competitions or assessments are organised women do not come out as well as men, because they are stressed about confirming the stereotype, not being sufficiently good as managers and becoming worse mothers. Another reason may be that women try hard to convince men that they are equally good; this willingness to prove themselves and the additional pressure may negatively affect their powers of concentration. Women come out poorly because the additional distress caused by thinking about difficulties linked with the role decreases their data processing capabilities. To some extent, it is women’s personal responsibility not to let themselves and the people around them activate the stereotypical gender bias in difficult situations, but to focus on their own achievements and successes; not to perceive themselves only as women but as persons with expertise that will be able to cope with the task. The latest scientific reports show how harmful the negative stereotype is, not so much for women as for businesses and markets.

In 2010, Science journal published research based on which the effectiveness of groups working on specific tasks or problems increases in proportion to the diversity of competence demonstrated by their members. Diverse groups have a higher potential to find adequate and advantageous solutions. This diversity is primarily gender-related – teams with women on them are far more effective. Hence, diversity fosters productivity.

Conclusion 2: There are few women in executive positions, and this is a pity because diversity is profitable.

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9 Gazeta Wyborcza, 4 July 2012
10 pkplewiatan.pl, 21 July 2011:
http://pkplewiatan.pl/dla_medialow/informacje_prasowe/1/ dlaczego_w_zarzadach_firm_jest_tylko_7proc_kobiet

Do women let themselves rule in a feminine fashion?
The Deloitte survey carried out in 2011\textsuperscript{12} evidences that the management styles employed by men and women differ fundamentally. Women who fill executive posts are rated higher as regards good organisation of work, ethics and a readiness to develop and acquire new competencies. Men are valued for their decision-taking skills, indicating strategic directions of development and their high availability and flexibility. Thus, both female and male management styles add value to business organisations. Depriving a corporation of one of them seems to impoverish it in meeting the specific needs of employees.

The survey conducted in Poland in 2011\textsuperscript{13} shows that irrespective of gender, managers prefer men to women as their bosses – as many as 40% of the respondents said that they would rather have a man as their direct superior, whereas only 20% preferred a woman.

Chart 7: I would prefer my boss to be a man rather than a woman.
Deloitte management survey

According to the survey commissioned by Deloitte Polska and carried out on 17 September 2012 on a nationwide sample of Poles, the majority of the respondents (68%) state that the gender of the superior is irrelevant. One can assume that the participants of the survey give priority to the traits of character and skills. However, a certain significant percentage (22%) prefers to have a male boss – only 8% of the respondents say that they would like to have a female boss.

Chart 8: If you had to choose would you prefer a male or a female boss?
Representative sample of Poles

Gender is not perceived as an important characteristic of a boss for more female participants of the survey (72%) than for male participants (65%). More men than women (respectively 13% and 6%) state that they want their boss to be a woman. The majority of young Poles (aged 18-24) believe that men are better suited to fill the role of a superior, and 48% of Poles prefer to have a man for a boss. Most probably, this is because power is typically associated with male characteristics and young people with no professional experience are bound to select a man as the embodiment of power. That opinion may be revised over time, out of experience.
Hence, for some reason men are favoured. Do these preferences result from habit and set beliefs (“this is how it is and it has always been so”)? Or is it possible that they are also linked with the characteristic way in which men build their careers, i.e. their use of influence-related tools and power as well as their willingness to obtain power as such? According to many studies, the actual evaluation of one’s boss is, to a considerable degree, based on the management strategies applied14 rather than the gender and the characteristics linked with it. Australian15 and Dutch16 studies show that executives who adopt management styles consistent with gender stereotypes (the female style relies on relationships and the male style is focused on the task) are rated highest. Conversely, ignoring gender-specific styles leads to very negative assessment. Jack Welch, a business authority and former CEO of General Electric, said the following during an interview with Mika Brzezinski: “(...) women make a mistake when they try to mimic what they see men do. Authenticity is a huge deal, he said, both for women and men. Men are jerks when they are not themselves... I mean authenticity is a killer, and women sometimes don’t behave as themselves, he says. For

most women an aggressive verbal style is just out of character”17. Hence, one can conclude that using influence tactics typically associated with a man will not be effective for a woman. Copying men’s style may prove risky for women, but one frequently observes such behaviours among female executives. The meta-analysis (method focused on contrasting and combining results from different studies in the hope of identifying patterns among study results) of Eagly and Johnson18 carried out in the 1990s evidences that in general there are no significant gender differences in respect of action strategies, work methods and work effects. If women are to obtain a particular outcome, such as specific sales results, and they need to motivate their team, they tend to use the same tools as men in corresponding situations, provided those tools yield the desired effect. The effect becomes the objective, and both men and women employ such tools that are likely to help them obtain it.


16 ibid

17 Mika Brzezinski (2012) Knowing Your Value Weinstein Books

Generally, the results of our study are consistent with the meta-analysis, but with one essential difference: female managers differ from male managers most when they occupy the lowest and the highest positions in hierarchy – at middle level both sexes proceed in similar ways. Women holding lower executive positions often employ persuasion and involve others. When women are top executives, they use fewer transactional (one thing in exchange for another) and coercion-based techniques, but employ logical argumentation and rational justification instead. Women in top executive posts use pressure-related tactics far more seldom than men. Perhaps one can explain this phenomenon with the following mechanism: when a woman starts performing an executive role she acts as women do, because it is closest to her style of work. Then she notices that her actions are sometimes ineffective and by learning from examples in her environment (usually male) she begins to employ male influence tactics. After a woman climbs to a top executive position, she often has considerable liberty to apply the influence tactics that are most natural and best suited from her female perspective.

“I used to take decisions safe in the knowledge that as a leader, I was able to pull through. I would shoulder any burden and say: I will make it no matter what. Today I act differently: I try to delegate responsibility and tasks to my subordinates and I expect genuine commitment. I used to exact results; today I make sure that I have allies and involve others in work.”

Justyna Stachowicz, Financial Director, member of PRIB’s board of directors (ABM Solid Group)

“Over time, everybody becomes more experience and detachment. Young people get excited easily, thus miss details that are often decisive to the final success. Experience people can see better, wider and deeper. This knowledge impacts the direction and pace of decisions. Experience you build on a continuous basis makes you reflect over and consult your future decisions. Inexperienced managers make quick, often instinctive decisions, and thus are most exposed to mistakes, even critical ones.”

Grażyna Piotrowska-Oliwa, President, PGNiG

“In my professional life I rely on different types of power depending on the situation and circumstances. Sometimes charisma proves useful. I like building relationships in such a manner that people who are formally my subordinates feel that they themselves have given me the right to lead them. It may be for various reasons: because I am an authority for them in a certain field, they respect me for my consistent adherence to my values, because I listen, because I boldly express my opinions or because being on my team guarantees progress and development. In some cases I resort to specialist knowledge, I say: yes, I know, I am a leading expert, I have many years of experience and a portfolio of successful projects to back me up. Along with my professional experience, my readiness to delegate and win people over has been growing. Now I engage and motivate them through consulting decisions and creating a collective mind – inviting them to participate in creating a vision and a strategy.”

Joanna Malinowska – Parzydło, CEO Personal Branding Institute, former HR Director in TVN, currently adviser to TVN management board

It is possible that the readiness to apply male tactics is the result of rational calculations – women may think it is the only way for them to advance. However, as personal stories of female executives show, women are effective primarily when they stick to their own natural working style. Lidia Ołowska, HR director in NovoNordisk, says the following: “I remember the period in my career when I was forcing through my decisions, I was stricter, I never eased off. I acted independently and focused on keeping my ear to the ground rather than letting others carry out tasks for me. Now I am different; I do my best to make others feel that ideas are their property and the actions they take are theirs as well. I make an effort not to impose my will, not to force but to inspire others to take actions. It has proven to be more effective.”

“My influence exerting techniques have evolved. They follow from my experience and … lack of time. I try to adjust influence tactics to situations. I choose them intuitively.”

Marta Towpik, Management Board member, Economic and Finance Director, PKP Energetyka

Women and power in business Does gender matter when building your position and influence in an organisation? 17
Many women who occupy high positions in hierarchy no longer feel the need to dominate. They already have evidence of their domination and do not fight any more – they rule, while the majority of men have not passed through the stage of fighting and domination. A woman in a high executive position may feel that she does not need to force anything through – the rank she has reached guarantees her power. Perhaps such women, based on their experience and observation, have come to a conclusion that persuading someone is more effective (because a person persuaded will do what is expected of them on their own accord).

It is interesting to find that men and women, even though they act differently towards their subordinates, employ similar influence tactics (mainly rational persuasion, consultation and inspirational appeals) towards their superiors and the persons over whom they have no formal authority. Let us have a look at the reasons why this is so. Possibly, since female managers often report to male superiors, they learn how to exert influence from men, imitate their style and along the way lose their female character in management thus forfeiting their chances to advance. In the struggle for a higher rank the winner is the one who is more authentic and more effective (because they are naturally trained) in the management style employed to influence others. Maciej Mikucki, the finance director in Teva Polska, a large pharmaceutical corporation, wonders whether a lack of skills in managing women constitutes the true obstacle to promoting them: “Perhaps there are no people who are good enough in managing female emotions to help them up to the top. I believe that the differences between the male and the female working styles constitute a starting point. Men are able to carry out many tasks on their own and they are aggressive in it, whereas women need confirmation and approval. If you, as their superior, are unable to provide it – tough luck – you lose and they lose along with you. Sound management of women is management not only through formulating objectives and checking whether they are accomplished. It also consists in sensing female emotions and managing them, noticing them. In other words, it boils down to a female management style that is in keeping with female ways. If we succeed in that, maybe women will have a chance to climb the corporate ladder.” This thought is consistent with the results of the research concerning personality-based gender differences. Women are more emotionally sensitive, that is to say they react stronger than men to the same stimuli; they are also more apprehensive and depression prone. They favour rational argumentation and consultations, and this regularity can be observed in women occupying top executives positions as well. The effects of such strategies are weaker but they last longer, because people who are brought around to certain ideas with logical arguments take the initiative even if the prospect of a direct reward (exchange strategies) or punishment (pressure) is removed. According to the studies conducted by social psychologists, when people have no external justification for doing something, they become more involved.

Conclusion 3: The power and influence tactics employed more often by women than men lead to more intense commitment and long-lasting effects.
Is there room for gender differences in business?

**Business is characterised by rigid rules that standardise patterns of behaviour**

The gender issue has become more complex not only in business but also in contemporary culture. First of all it is crucial to decide whether the gender-based characteristics and the attendant differences in the work methods applied can be displayed in business and the business environment. If we consider the business environment as the territory in which a group of people must carry out tasks in the most effective way possible and act quickly, efficiently and forcefully in the process, then a question arises whether men or women are more apt to accomplish those tasks. One cannot, however, draw a conclusion here without an attempt to look at what gender is and what changes have taken place over the last few years in the social functions of men and women. In the Polish language we have one word for the concept, namely: PŁEĆ, whereas in English there are two: SEX describing the state of being male or female in terms of biology and GENDER concerning male or female traits with reference to social and cultural differences. In our culture the biological sex and cultural gender overlap, even though they are separate phenomena. The cultural gender embraces social expectations of how the biological sex should manifest itself; it defines what is allowed, typical and appropriate. For hundreds of years the cultural gender was identified with the biological sex – female ways were different than male ways and everybody knew what belonged to the female sphere and what should be seen as a typically male attribute. In today’s world a strong, independent, enterprising woman is as common as a sensitive and emphatic man who decides to take paternity leave. In a way, it has given women an opportunity to be active in the business world which by definition seems to be shaped to accommodate male action patterns and the age-old beliefs and clichés that “war is not for women”.

Analysis of the influence tactics favoured respectively by men and by women confirms the thesis that the business environment creates a platform for men and women to engage in similar actions rather than helps emphasise cultural differences between them. In this sphere there are no significant or conspicuous dissimilarities.

On the other hand, they seem more prone to involve others by encouraging them to take actions and build common property which seems more characteristic of the female style of work.

“I have noticed that female top executives are less inclined to procrastinate. They are more effective. Men tend to wander, discuss other things that are on their minds. Women are more self-disciplined, more focused on their goal, they use factual evidence to persuade. All in all, they are manlier than men.”

Paweł Cieslak, HR Business Partner, Head of HR, Roche Diagnostics

“I am used to exact results; today I make sure to have allies and involve others in work. There is a serious difference between exacting work from others and making people commit as co-creators.”

Justyna Stachowicz, Financial Director, member of PRIB’s board of directors (ABM Solid Group)
Is there room for gender differences in business? What are the conclusions and recommendations derived from our study for the market, for companies and for executives?

Can we support a thesis that the current economic downturn gives room for intrinsically male influence tactics geared towards effectiveness? On the one hand – yes. The market in crisis is ready to promise and sacrifice a lot for success. When under threat, people are more willing to submit or even accept unfriendly tactics, such as pressure. On the other hand, however, they also are more responsive to influence and action strategies that they have less experience with. This is a slot for women to slip into. Supervisory boards and managements may attempt to encourage women to exercise power “in their new ways during difficult times”. In view of such – sometimes very tempting – opportunities one needs to bear in mind the ‘glass ceiling’ phenomenon described by British scientists, Michelle Ryan and Alex Haslam. The glass ceiling consists in increased readiness to appoint women to positions of power in ‘hopeless’ situations, as a sort of the last resort. Promoting women in unsure times where the risk of failure is higher gives them fewer chances of success. For that reason, the economic crisis is only an illusory hope, an empty promise that – in the fashion of self-fulfilling prophecies – may lead to a confirmation of the charge that women do worse than men.

Can certain tactics prove crucial for companies in their struggle to survive in times of trouble? Which of them will help to successfully lead companies through the period of transition? Pressure and exchange tactics that, according to our study, are typically employed by men have more ‘striking power’. They work faster, have a stronger impact and are more effective, but they work that way in the short run. Stimulating people to make sacrifices in uncertain times may be seen as falling within the male domain. Business is where effectiveness is awarded, especially in the era of limited possibilities. Nonetheless, effectiveness amounts to more than just the struggle to survive. Typically female influence tactics may contribute to strengthening the position of the company in the market – its stability, trust and commitment. The tactics underlain by rational argumentation, which according to our studies are typically used by women, create solid foundations and have long-lasting effects. Thanks to them people can work conscientiously and have confidence in each other without paying constant attention to potential losses and rewards, which may become crucial after the struggle for survival is won. The tendency among women to influence others through consultation (which implies commitment), encouragement to improve processes, etc. constitutes an important tool for building the employees’ responsibility for their work, for their development within the firm and for fostering mature attitudes linked with balanced enthusiasm that may protect people against the burnout syndrome.

There is one more aspect of the situation that needs to be pointed out. The economic crisis has opened up space for innovation, which gives corporations a unique opportunity to distinguish themselves and add value. Organisations that wish to be innovative even when the economy is on the downside must bear in mind that creative licence abhors pressure and contractual exchange, and it flourishes when people understand what to do, feel important and recognised, feel that they are part of the process. These results can be accomplished with the help of typically female tactics: rational arguments, inspirational appeals and consultation.
Below we present the conclusions of our survey for executives to ruminate on:

- The style relying on relationships, i.e. soft management, matches the female personality and nature. Women who adopt that style can be more effective in exerting influence, provided they keep it real, i.e. they consistently follow the style based on relations. Management through taking care of the employee and listening intently to the employee’s needs is a skill that women use every day. It enables women to improve relationships and strengthen trust; it also enhances cooperation.

- According to research, women in executive positions are as effective as men. The effectiveness potential is the same, but the tools used to unlock it are different. Women should start exploiting their capacities, but they cannot mix power with male domination. Instead, they should identify power with effective and persuasive exercise of influence using factual evidence and inspirational appeals. It is the main distinguishing attribute of women in top executive posts; it is their strength.

- A woman who decides to use inherently male influence tactics, where she herself does not feel the need to employ them but it appears to her that they are effective, may be perceived as a schemer; the people around her will soon detect inconsistencies and interpret them as lack of credibility or manipulation; then the tactics are bound to stop working.

- Women are more likely to compromise, but mainly in situations of conflicts within a small group. This apparent weakness can be used as a capacity to solve disputes in groups.

- Women, if they are consistent in their management style, can also change the way in which business is perceived. Men often treat business dealings as a battlefield, whereas women may show that business can be seen as teamwork and interaction, sometimes even with the competitors.

The current economic crisis seems to be a chance for women to take leadership in business, leadership that will not necessarily entail domination and a takeover of power. More room for female-style management may help achieve stability in difficult times. Our study shows that women are apt to select those tactics of exercising power which bring long-term effects, lead to lasting changes in attitudes and make business environment more transparent. Consequently, they may create a platform for communication both within the organisation and outside it. Women as management board members and CEOs have the ability to assist corporations in building their positions in a systematic and sustainable manner. Thus, gender diversity can strengthen the market; it can develop both business organisations and the people working for them.
Metothology
The survey was conducted in two stages. The first one was an online questionnaire and the second focused on in-depth individual interviews with 12 top level executives. 242 executives of all levels working for Polish business organisations took part in the first stage of our survey, including 131 women and 111 men. 43 of the respondents were management board members, 57 were top-level executives, 84 were middle-level executives and 58 were low-level executives. The survey was carried out online. The executives invited to participate in the survey were selected from Deloitte database or were the graduates of Warsaw School of Economics or the University of Social Sciences and Humanities who filled managerial positions. 600 invitations to take part in the survey were sent out and 242 persons replied offering their readiness to participate. The survey method selected was non-standard in the case of the online questionnaire. It did not involve simple close-end questions, as in such cases responses often become distorted due to the so-called social approval effect (people give responses that are consistent with the social norms). To mitigate that effect, the respondents were put in realistic business situations. Four professional-life situations requiring the use of influence were presented. They concerned influencing: (1) the Boss, (2) peers occupying equivalent positions, (3) subordinates and (4) persons with whom no reporting relationship existed (e.g. employees of other departments engaged in the project). In each situation six courses of action were offered and each of them corresponded to one influence tactic. The survey participants assessed the likelihood of their applying a specific tactic. This method, apart from eliminating errors, makes it possible to discover regularities in human actions in various situations. It also allows the researcher to seek the specifics of actions taken by various groups (in this case: men and women) and find how significant the differences are instead of only indicating the respondents’ opinions (e.g. as a percentage). When presenting the outcome of the survey, the results showing significant statistical differences between men and women in their business-related use of various influence tactics were discussed. This is so because the application of influence tactics to a significant degree depends on the context and circumstances.

Our survey examined which management strategies were selected by men and which by women in respect of six influence tactics of building position in organisations. The following questions were asked:

- What influence tactics do executives use to build their position in organisations?
- Do men and women build their positions in organisations based on different influence tactics and what are the differences?
- Do men and women influence groups they work with in different ways?
- Do influence tactics employed by men and women evolve along with their career advancement?

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Detailed description of the tactics employed for influence and power building in organisations

There are various tactics of exerting influence (power tactics). The professional literature distinguishes three basic groups: persuasion, exchange and coercion.

Persuasion tactics

Imagine that your superior has decided to introduce a new bonus system based on 80:20 proportion (20% of the most effective employees will receive 80% of the bonus). You are the head of the sales team and you want to convince your boss (exert influence) to modify the system so that it will depend not only on individual results but also on the level of goal accomplishment reached by the team as a whole. You can use different methods to attain that objective: you can protest, assert your authority as a sales manager, you can present a horrible picture of the future in which the majority of the employees quit or go to work for the competition. But you can also give arguments and evidence what advantages are linked with the solution you propose. This is what persuasion tactics are about – you give people reasons based on which they themselves feel inclined to take a specific standpoint, support a particular solution or perform a task. When employing such tactics the executive strives to cause that the target should adopt or change his or her attitude in such a way so that the desired behaviour becomes a consequence of that attitude.

Persuasion-based tactics are most transparent – the person who employs them directly presents arguments, has the possibility to listen to doubts and respond to them. When applied directly, persuasion tactics are associated with a very important psychological benefit on the side of the target – they fuel a belief that the target is a significant person. This is so because when the executive explains, rationalizes, persuades, he/she also devotes time, is involved and shows that the target is of importance. Persuasion tactics are most effective when it comes to creating commitment; their results are long-lasting. If people understand the sense behind certain actions and their implications – both for themselves and for others – they are more willing to take actions for longer and they are better motivated. Persuasion tactics come in two forms: rational argumentation and appealing to the emotions.

Tactic 1: Rational argumentation consists in using facts, data and numbers that arise from logical arguments. For example, rational argumentation is used when we show data indicating that competition is very effective but it divides the team and improves the level of motivation for only a small group of employees. Thanks to the tactic of rational persuasion people see that the actions suggested by the executive are rational, justified and primarily that they are logical, consistent and supported by facts (in other words – they are credible).

Tactic 2: Inspirational appeals refer to common values and ideals. According to this tactic executives justify why something is important from the perspective of the values shared by the members of the organisation and the goals of the organisation as a whole. Inspiration may consist in showing examples from the past which evidence that goals can be accomplished. In practical terms, executives can refer to examples of other companies or their own (or joint) past experiences in which they have managed to cope in crisis through cooperation rather than by competing against each other. This kind of persuasion stimulates imagination and emotions. It is often associated with the use of metaphors and history. The purpose of using the inspirational appeals tactic – even though it involves other methods – is similar to that of rational argumentation: the target is to be persuaded and his/her further actions should result from their internal beliefs.

Persuasion tactics

Effectiveness: establishing convictions and fixed beliefs about and a specific proactive attitude; such beliefs result in internal readiness to undertake particular actions which is kept up relatively long and does not require immediate presence of the superior.
Exchange tactics

Let us assume that the team managing your organisation must take a decision about hiring freeze due to the difficult market situation and the need to limit personnel costs. This entails stagnation, lack of motivation and fewer fresh ideas for your team. You are aware that the decision will be made following a discussion involving all team members. Finding allies who will adopt and promote your viewpoint may significantly affect the way the issue is perceived and may prove instrumental when the final decision is reached. The application of logic and rational arguments will be useful, but it is crucial to set the stage right. This means winning over other management team members before the meeting takes place. The executive may decide to gain that support with the help of exchange tactics. Such tactics are direct in their character (used in relations), but they are usually not very transparent, which means that the methods applied by the executive using them does not reveal the intentions right away and the resultant influence is indirect. In other words, exchange tactics ‘set the stage’, they cause that people become more compliant and willing to act in a specific way. However, the tactics themselves are demanding – they take time and effort. As a rule, there are two types of exchange tactics:

Tactic 3: Consultation and ingratiation – the tactic consists in persuading others by involving them in work on a specific issue or provoking them to express their opinion about it. Social psychologists emphasize the human need linked with the necessity to be predictable. It is called the rule of consistency and is among the basic rules that govern human behaviour. Consistency is linked with coherence. People whose words are in agreement with what they are doing are seen as coherent and mature. Conversely, lack of coherence breeds distrust. The consultation tactic employs the above rule in practice. If the executive involves a person as a consultant and allows them to give their opinions and familiarise themselves with an idea and in consequence, that person commits, the likelihood that they will agree to put the idea into practice increases. What is more, if the suggestion is made by someone seen as nice and friendly, the likelihood grows even more – we all know that people are ready to make an effort for someone they like. This tactic has a certain disadvantage – it consumes a lot of time and patience, it requires many meetings, discussions and the ability to listen to what others have to say. Unfortunately, this tactic may sometimes prove to be less effective, because it does not entail a clear declaration and commitment; instead it encourages involvement which does not ensure commitment to take actions.

Tactic 4: Exchange relies on another important rule of social life, i.e. reciprocity. It rewards the target with benefits in exchange for the work performed. Exchange may take the form of rational negotiations (e.g. if you verify the report, I will prepare the data for tomorrow’s presentation), but such instances are rare. Exchange tactics most often refer to previous commitments and they do not always do it directly. We all know that people willingly return favours and for that reason when we request something of a person for whom we have done something in the past we can expect that they are likely to agree or support our suggestion. This tactic can be seen as manipulation, and it is in fact manipulative if we do people favours only to have our gestures reciprocated. Nonetheless, business dealings consist in granting favours which practice constitutes an investment for the future. In general, this rule is rarely mentioned, even though – according to studies – it is often unconsciously applied and equally often succumbed to. The reciprocity rule, being the basis of the effectiveness of exchange tactics – is among the few norms the existence of which has been observed in all cultures; its impact on our behaviours is also strongest.

The effectiveness of exchange tactics relies on employment of certain rules (consistency and reciprocity) that motivate target recipients to adopt the attitudes and follow the behaviour modes desired by the executives who use those tactics. What distinguishes them from persuasion is that with exchange tactics a specific behaviour is not caused by the target recipients’ beliefs but rather by the rules they are induced to follow.

Exchange tactics

Effectiveness: They are based on two most common and fixed rules of social life – readiness to be consistent and willingness to reciprocate; thus social norms rather than inner convictions/beliefs force people to exhibit specific behaviours; such tactics seem to have lasting effects especially regarding persons for whom external rules, customs and conventions constitute important behaviour determinants.
Coercion tactics
Every executive has been in a situation where the influence methods based on arguments or rewards are no longer effective. Employees (subordinates) refuse to work overtime (for additional pay), they do not listen to logical arguments and are not responsive to any bonus systems (it may happen that the rewarding capacities are too limited to constitute an attractive incentive). On the one hand, there is a problem to be solved and on the other, there is resistance. It often happens that only executives are aware that it is the ‘make-or-break’ period for the company and taking certain actions is essential. Then the only way to motivate people is to issue a threat. Coercion tactics are always linked with exerting pressure and their basic aim is to break resistance. They can be most effective where adversaries are unwilling and raise objections that a thing cannot or should not be done. If the executive has no time for persuading and ingratiating, and has used such tactics before to no avail, then coercion seems the only way to influence others. The problem is that coercion tactics are not always used as the last-resort. One needs to keep in mind that coercion serves the purpose of overcoming resistance where resistance is met and where it threatens the success of the undertaking. Thus, its ill-timed use may trigger resistance that will have to be dealt with later. There are two types of coercion:

Tactic 5: Coalition is a veiled form of coercion and it consists in forming a group of persons who have been won round to an idea and will help in influencing others. In practice, coalition is built through behind-the-scenes work focused on gaining supporters, for instance so as to be able to refer to their involvement at meetings or mention them as important stakeholders. Coalition is less transparent, but it seems very effective if applied correctly. This is so because coalition is linked with another important rule of social life, namely social proof. The essence of social proof ( informational social influence) is that people are more likely to agree to something or believe that something is true if the majority believes the same. This effect is prominent when we are in doubt or when we are unsure - then we are driven by other people’s opinions. The more people adhere to a specific opinion, the more we are convinced that the opinion is correct. Only one important factor allows us to resist the social proof – our belief in our competence. If we are competent in something and know how to act, then we are more seldom inclined to follow others. However, considering the changeability and uncertainty of business situations, it is understandable that in many cases people are bound to conform to the choices made by the majority. In practice, executives single out the individuals whose opinions affect the majority and persuade them to take their side during one-to-one meetings (the persuasion methods may vary). Then, executives are able to refer to their support in public discussions.

Tactic 6: Pressure and legitimating – direct coercion which can be expressed as an order, a demand to do something right away; it may also take a more subtle form of stating an expectation, nagging, intimidation by higher rank (e.g. it is the HQ’s decision ), or it can be expressed as a threat (e.g. if we do not do this, then…). Applying pressure is effective, but it has certain limitations – it requires courage and determination. With this technique, executive officers can be sure that the task will be accomplished, but pressure tactics work in the short run – the executive must be around, must supervise, control, check. Coercion relies neither on internal beliefs nor on rules that people want to adhere to. Instead, it threatens the interests of the target if they do not follow the expected mode of behaviour. Hence, the influence exerted with the use of coercion tactics is strong but short lasting.
Coercion tactics
Effectiveness: they are based on a very important type of motivation – avoiding unpleasant and unwanted consequences – which is a stronger motivator than positive encouragements; they are very effective in the short run when we want to exert influence now and break down resistance.

Undisputedly, the way in which executives use their power and the tactics they apply constitute important elements determining their business effectiveness; they also build the executive’s position in the organisation. Many executives would like to know which tactics are effective or more effective than others. In fact, influence tactics always must be closely interlinked with their context, and their effectiveness is conditional upon their purpose, the culture of the organisation as well as the consistency and authenticity of the executive.

For instance, as far as effectiveness goes, persuasion-related influence tactics serve the purpose of building commitment and are most effective when the influence translates into winning people over. If there is resistance (our subordinates or peers are convinced that something cannot be done or it does not make sense), such tactics will not work. If targets are indifferent to our suggestion (or they do not have an opinion about it) all it takes is to win them over, give them arguments that support our position. Persuasion-related tactics are most effective in such cases. However, if we use resistance-breaking methods in those situations (where there is no actual resistance), the targets may become discouraged.

Persuasion tactics – objective: winning support and building involvement;
Exchange tactics – objective: working towards potential consensus and willingness to get involved;
Coercion tactics – objective: breaking resistance
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