

Reading the Context

STANFORD UNIVERSITY

Stanford Center for Professional Development



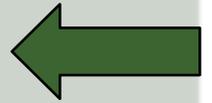
Module Objectives

- Apply tools that will enable you to read the context in which you want to be influential
- Recognize organizational dynamics—the larger drivers that influence decisions and behaviors within the organization
- Read social dynamics in an organization—the networks and relationships that lead to success

Course map

Reading the Context

- Frank Mason Case Study
- MWA Context Model



Being Influential

- Influence Strategies
- Building Credibility
- Understanding Organizational Politics

Influence in Action

- Building and Maintaining Networks
- Persuading Others
- Handling Difficult Interactions
- Influencing Up

Putting It All Together

- Influence in Action Exercise
- Elizabeth Best Case Study

Reading the Context: Organizational dynamics

ENVIRONMENT

What larger outside forces are shaping the organization?

ORGANIZATION

To what degree is the organization aligned for strategic execution?

NETWORKS

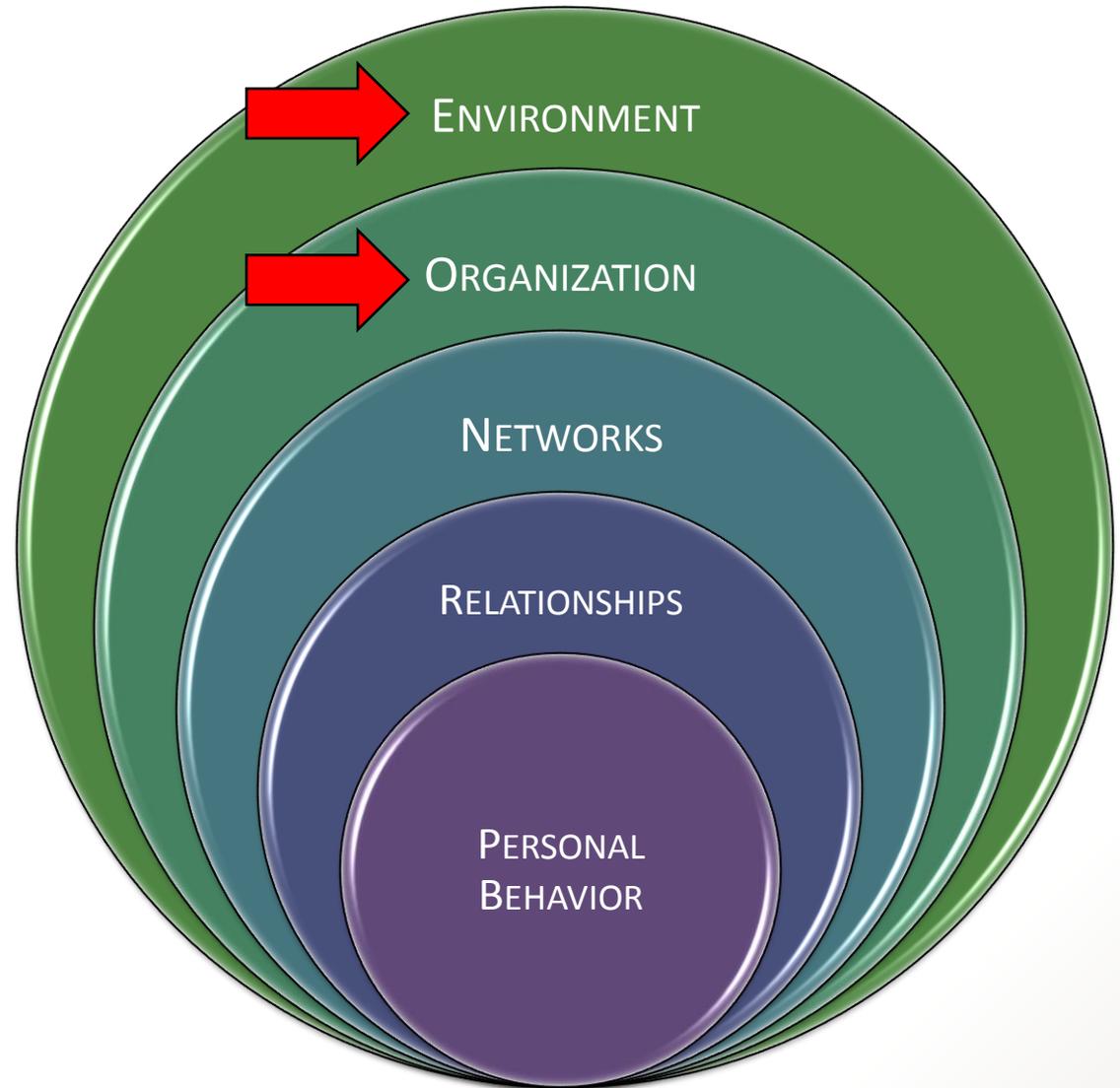
How large, vigorous and varied are they?

RELATIONSHIPS

On whom do I depend to get things done?

PERSONAL BEHAVIOR

How am I perceived by others?



Strategic Execution Framework

Economic
Legal/Regulatory
Political
Industry
Technological
Competitive
Others?



To be influential in the organization

- Understand how organizations work
- Recognize the role you already play
- Focus on the good of the enterprise, even when there's conflict about how to do so
 - Avoid the extremes of cynicism and naïveté
 - Don't let disagreements become personal-- stay engaged with those who criticize
 - Stay true to standards important to you such as dependability, integrity, etc.
- Find and learn from people who possess organizational skills and use them well

Case study: Frank Mason A

- Read pages 1 through 4
 - Stop at heading “The First Three Months at Abbot”
 - Focus on understanding the organizational dynamics driving Frank’s world

Discussion: Frank Mason A

- What are the larger organizational dynamics impacting Abbot?
- How well does Frank navigate these dynamics within the context of his new job?

Discussion: Frank Mason A

- Frank interviews with Nolan. Any red flags?
- He visits Abbott. Any more red flags?
- What do we learn from St. Clair?

Discussion: Frank Mason A

- Further discussion questions:
 - What should Frank know about Abbot's organizational dynamics?
 - Why is it important for him to know this?
 - What organizational dynamics are important to you?
 - Why must we assess organizational dynamics if we wish to be influential?

Case Study: Frank Mason A

- Read from Page 4 (“The First Three Months at Abbot”) to the bottom of page 7
- Focus on Frank’s and Nolan’s relationships and how they might impact Frank’s chances of success.

Reading the Context: Networks and relationships

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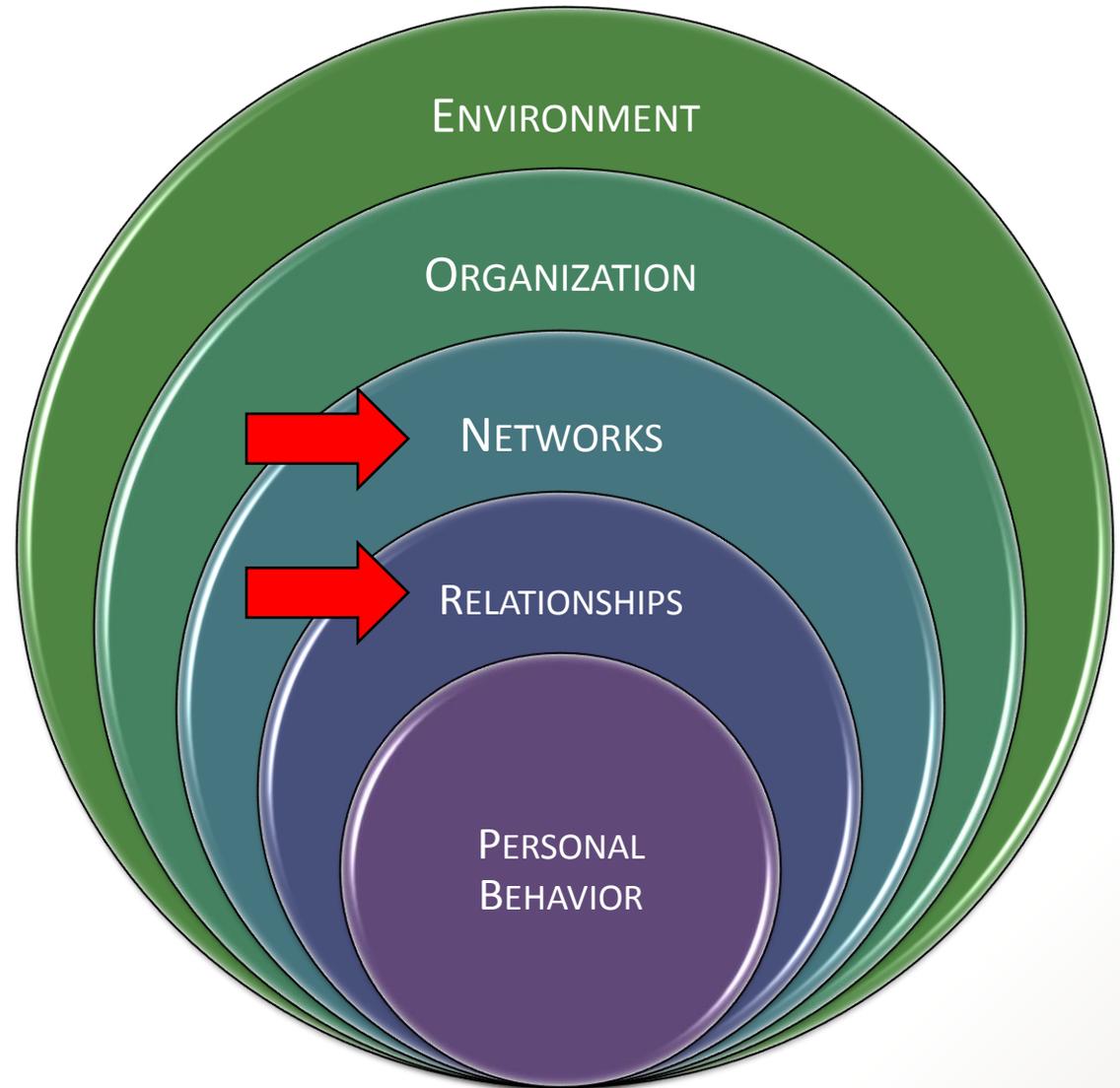
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Discussion: Frank Mason A

- Frank takes over sales. Risky?
- What do we learn from Frank's presentation?

Discussion: Frank Mason A

- What do we know about Nolan's relationships?
 - What are his strongest connections/relationships?
 - Where are there gaps?
- What about Frank Mason's relationships?
 - What are his strongest connections/relationships?
 - Frank hires two people. What impact do they have on how the social dynamics?
- Where's the power in this organization?

Discussion: Frank Mason A

- Frank's project: volume versus margins
 - Why is this project important?
 - Which key people will influence this project?
- How would assessment of organizational relationships have helped Frank?
- How could assessing your own networks and working relationships help you in increasing your ability to influence?

Identifying dependencies

Begin your analysis by asking:

- Whose *cooperation* do I need?
- Whose *compliance* do I need?
- Whose *opposition* would keep me from accomplishing my work?
- Who needs *my* cooperation and compliance?

Source: Linda Hill: "Exercising Influence Without Formal Authority": Harvard Business Review Press, 2004

Assessing dependencies

- Having identified dependencies, “step in the other person’s shoes” and ask:
 - What *differences* exist between us?
 - What factors are *reinforcing* those differences?
 - What *sources of power* do I have to influence this relationship?
 - Do *mutual expectations and trust* exist between us?
 - What can be done to *cultivate or repair* the relationship?

Case study: Frank Mason A

- Read from Page 8 through the end of part A
- Focus on how Frank is managing his relationships with others

Reading the Context: Personal behavior

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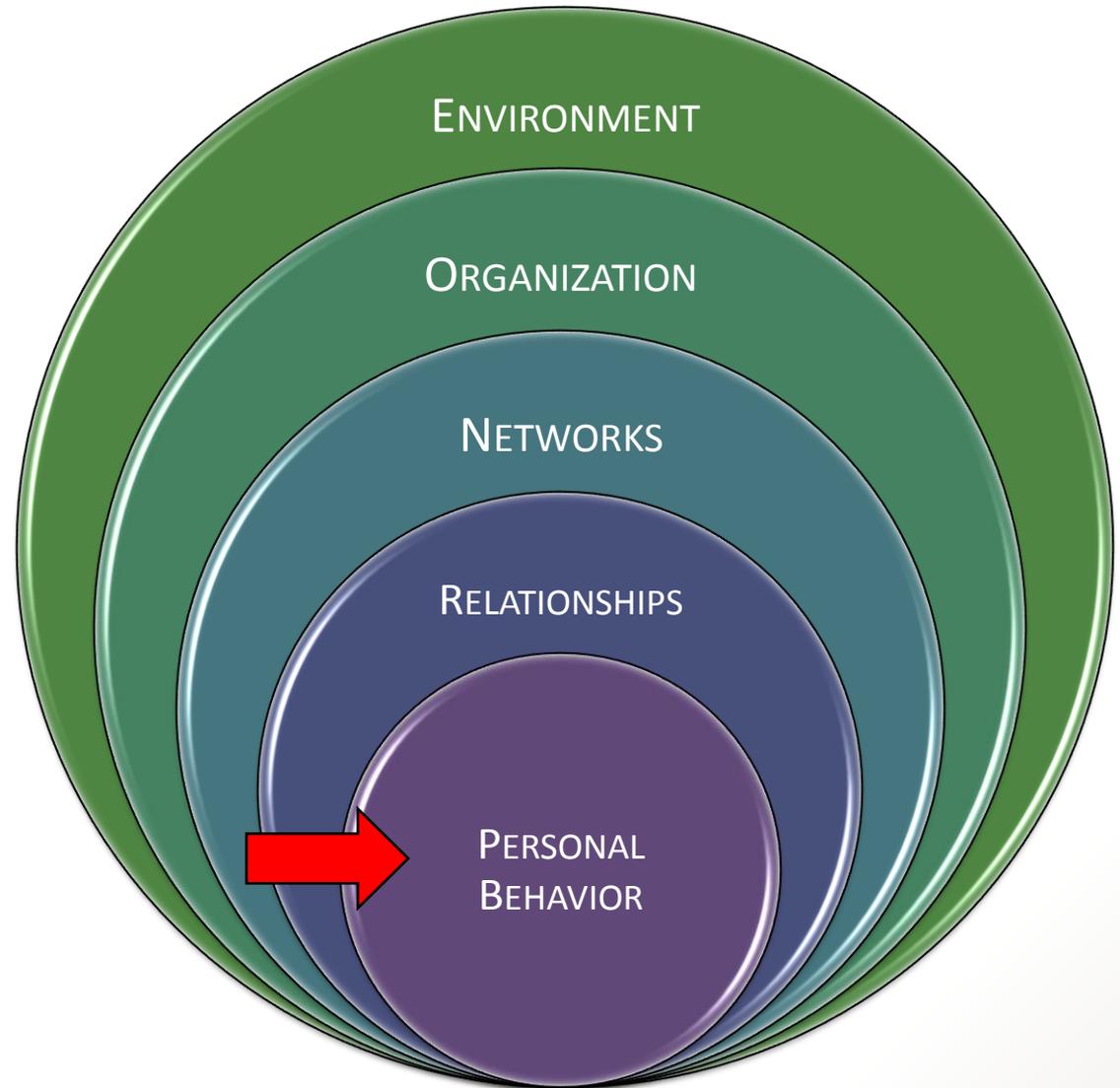
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Discussion: Frank Mason A

- What happens in the construction paper incident, and what does it tell us?
- How about the new pricing scheme, and Frank's problems with Cunningham—what do these events tell us?
- What do these events tell us about how Frank is viewed by his colleagues?

Case study: Frank Mason B

- Read all of Frank Mason, part B

Frank Mason B

- Why did Frank get fired?

Course map: What's next?

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