

**POWER,  
INFLUENCE,  
and  
SURVIVAL  
in  
DIFFICULT  
TIMES**

by Dr. Mark Pastin



*Pastin challenged APPA members to take more control of their futures.*



We are talking about power and influence today, and, mainly, I want to give you some fighting words. But before I do that, I want to share with you some thoughts on power that I've gathered over the years. Here's a Chinese proverb that you need to think about: "If we don't change directions, we'll end up where we're headed."

I've been reading some of the statistics gathered about where we are headed in terms of the physical facilities of our universities and colleges. Here's another great one: "You can never plan the future by the past," Edmund Burke. And: "Action may not always bring happiness, but there is no happiness without action," Benjamin Disraeli. That's a lot of what I'm going to talk about. Here's a great one; I attribute this quote to God: "Complain to some-

one who can do something about it or shut up."

But this talk is going to be built around one final quote, and this is from Henry Luce, who was chairman and chief executive of Time, Inc. He said, "In life, there are no permanent victories or solutions. To win is to stay committed and maneuver."

I'm going to talk to you about winning in facilities management because, generally speaking, you, and I really mean *we*, are not winning today. I'm not going to repeat the sorry statistics on deferred maintenance and capital renewal, which you know much better than I do. I want you to consider a few things.

Higher education is the only major U.S. industry not making a record commitment to plant and equipment today. Across this country, people have realized that competing in the international environment requires constant reinvestment in plant and equipment. You're in one of the few industries not deeply concerned about providing the highest quality physical environment for its customers. The customer really is king today, and we must recognize that the customer judges both the service itself and the physical environment in which it's presented.

You're in one of the few industries not making massive investments in anticipation of stricter environmental regulation

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and enforcement. We are in the environment decade, and industry is really investing in anticipation of where this is going. By and large, we in higher education are not investing at that level. We are in an industry that doesn't realize that a superior physical plant provides a sharp competitive advantage over low-cost, low-quality competitors, and that is part of what the competitive game is about today.

We're in an industry in which money is galloping away from us, and our leaders have been reduced, frankly, to begging. I'm not saying this to discourage you. There is no point in getting discouraged in anything you do in life. But I am saying this because we have a crisis in higher education today, and, by and large, the facilities management function is not winning.

I don't want to ask you how bad it is but, rather, what will it take to change this—to exercise some power to influence—and not merely survive?

Facilities officers can strengthen their positions not at the expense of their institutions, but instead *on behalf of their institutions*. I'm going to give you some ideas about how to do this, and I'll start with one that should be very obvious.

I've had the chance to observe APPA over the past three years, and I will tell you that it is an excellent, constantly improving organization. Some of the things I've seen are the name change to add prestige to the profession and some very strategically important studies. I'm

not a great believer in studies for the purpose of printing paper, but APPA's studies really support the mission of higher education. The Facilities Management Evaluation Program is an important service, and one that will make a big difference in the profession. And of course, public and government relations is an area in which your field will see vastly growing needs. *Power by association* is important in gaining influence within your own institutions.

You've made a lot of progress, but I want you to stop and think about the next phase. What is the next phase for APPA as an association? From my distant and less-involved perspective, I'm going to urge you to continue what you're doing. But I think the time has come to play much, much tougher. If you please, the gloves have got to come off.

**T**o win at the level of association, there are some things you are going to have to think about doing. One is focusing attention on the environmental and safety problems caused by deferred maintenance. We've been too polite about this. As part of the education establishment, it's time to take your cue from other campus interest groups. Who of us has not sat in wonder as the real need goes unmet while the squeaky wheel of the day attracts resources? That's a fact of life. It is time to learn from special interests who are highly effective in the institutions in which we operate.

It's time to start creating awareness of the environmental impact of these things by using the tools used in industry and by other associations. For example, environmental hotlines

encourage people who see the effects of deferred maintenance or a lack of capital renewal to report environmental problems and help you build a record of what needs to be done. For facilities management as a profession, there is the job of learning the regulation and litigation environments and using them. By and large—and it won't feel this way to you—higher education has gotten a “free pass” on the environment. Compared to the kind of litigation, regulation, and frankly, outright terror you see out there in the corporate world, we've gotten a free pass. But that free pass is in the process of being canceled. It's time to build even deeper alliance with the suppliers, regulators, and the media and to begin to use these alliances aggressively.

The things I'm talking about are extremely hazardous *individual* pursuits. They may be career killers. But they are highly effective association pursuits, and that's one of the reasons why people associate. There are things that need to be said that the individual cannot easily say. But the individual as part of an association gains voice.

I also want to focus some attention on what needs to happen at the individual level. Power and influence cluster together with leadership. And there is so much academic baloney on leadership that you need a wheelbarrow to carry the books around. But there are some things that I've observed that really work for people who are trying to increase their power and build influence. Remember that your job as a leader is to motivate or to influence, and also remember that the great motivators are unchanged: fear and greed. Much has changed in higher education and much has changed in the world, but not the basic human motivations of fear and greed. The strategies that work in power and influence, when you cut through the fancy-shmancy language, generally relate to fear and greed.

Here are some specific things that I think are important as you go forward.

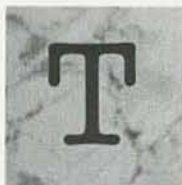
One is to *stick with your message*. Of course the times are tough and it's hard to do this, but leaders win by sticking with their message even when the going gets tough. If what you're saying all along has been true, then it's still true. The fact that times are tough doesn't make the bricks and mortar need repair any less. If what you're saying has been true then it's still true so keep saying it.

There is a lot of what I call noise in the environment now—a lot of pain, a lot of suffering, and a lot of interests competing with each other. But the noise may actually make it easier for a *consistent* message to get through. People tend to discount the noise when everybody's yammering. If, however, you're saying the same thing today that you were saying one year ago, two years ago, and you are saying the same thing a year from now, your credibility increases in this kind of an environment. On the other hand, if you change your tune, if

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something that was critical and had to happen last year isn't so important this year, you'll have a hard time regaining your credibility. If it's true, it's still true and you ought to still be saying it.



The next point, and this is one I really want to drive home, is that you must **operate from the stance that you can and will win**. Many facilities officers assume that they really cannot win and, bluntly, it shows. The positions taken are soft, losses are graciously accepted, and altogether it doesn't work. This was brought home to me by a fellow who served as western regional human resources manager for Motorola. He was talking about why human resources people often have the ideas and knowledge to change their organizations but very seldom do it. He said that it's because they never come from the position that they really can win on the things that matter. And it shows. Your position, your stance, will only prevail if you hold it in a context that says, "We can win, we need to win, we will win."

In measuring power and influence, there's a transaction that occurs when somebody looks in your eyes and asks, "Is this person negotiating, or is this person taking a real position?" Operate from the position that you can and will win.

The next point is to **set the terms of debate**. You cannot buy into the death-by-a-thousand-small-blows game; there is no winning in that game. You must argue your perspective *first* by the issues and *then* by the realities of the budget—never, ever the other way around. There is no winning in 1 percent, 3 percent, 5 percent. My view is that the budget is gravity, and you can't change gravity. I'm sure people in the early days of flight wanted to wish gravity away. But you cannot fly by standing on the ground and saying, "I wish there were no gravity because then I could fly." But you also don't fly by letting gravity depress you and hold you to the ground. You fly by designing the aircraft that will work given gravity. You think first about what it is that will work, and then you deal with gravity or with the budget. But you have to define your issues.

**Align your staff with your plan.** Teach your staff that the facilities perspective really can win. And know that if your team believes it can't win, then it can't. It can win, but only if the whole team continually sells that perspective. That means on a day-to-day basis, every day, explaining to people why things that should work, don't. If people don't understand why, then they blame you and they blame your team. Explain to people what the risks may be of not doing something the right way and what the long-term costs may be.

Let me share an experience. I have an office in a building

that has one of the slowest elevators on Earth. There are two elevators in the building, and one of them is broken much of the time. I can't tell you how many times I've stood at the base of that elevator and heard people say, "When are those bozos from physical plant going to get over here and do something about this piece of junk? I'm fed up." One day we're in the elevator with a fellow from physical plant, and everybody is standing there with their arms folded thinking, "Okay, he finally showed up." And I said, "You know, it would be interesting to understand why we have so much trouble with this." And the fellow said, "Let me take a moment and explain." Then he held up a component and said, "This is a used, remachined component, and it's not quite to the specifications we want. But we're under orders, because of the budget, to remachine parts, and it's not so easy to do that. We know they're safe, but they're not the best they might be." Then some other people in the elevator said, "Yeah, we get that; we're up against the same problem. We're trying to run some numbers in our computer and our version of Lotus is ten years out of date." Suddenly, we were on the same side. We understood the facilities management world a little bit better, but only because that person took the time, had the patience, and felt he had the right to discuss the problems as he saw them.

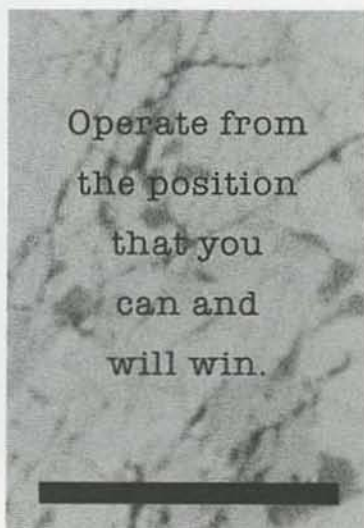
The academic environment is one in which you have very high volume, in the sense that people speak loudly, but there is little real communication. People are used to listening to themselves. They are used to writing articles that few will read and speaking to hostage audiences—to kids who are locked in because they've got to get their final exam and their grade. Consistent, careful communication can pay big dividends in an environment in which people need communication and mutual understanding, because there is so little of it.

Your facilities staff is probably more a team than any function on campus. Your interests really are shared. You sink or swim together. Build upon that sense and authorize people to talk and to support your function.

The next point is to **identify issues on which those above you can win**. True, people don't see that they can win by spending a lot of money and only being 10 percent behind. But the people to whom you report are trying to find issues on which they can win, because there aren't that many. So don't argue the incremental gains or losses. Argue the issues, the topics, the projects on which people can win.

These issues might include things such as historic and sentimental renovations. People have a longing for things that are going away. Help them keep some of them. Advance approaches to environmental problems. Since we've got 98 percent of the world's environmental scientists on our campuses, administrators can win by showing that they want to be environmental leaders. You can help them.

Get people involved in their physical environment—things that will help attract grants to a campus. How many people have taken the time to think about the extent to which a poor physical facility inhibits grant money? How many people have taken the time to learn what changes can be made to facilitate grant activity for the campus? Believe me, this is something that the campus powers will listen to. You also want to look at things that will earn the school credit in the community. Most schools are a big factor in their communities, and the physical state of the school is important to the community. Property values rise and fall with the physical





## The Principles of Executive Power

1. "In life there are no permanent victories or solutions. To win is to stay committed and to maneuver." —Henry Luce
2. In the final analysis, executives manage power. The rest is incidental.
3. Politics is the art of managing power.
4. Effective politics means directing power without taking possession of it.
5. In order to direct power, first find out who the power groups are.
6. There are two kinds of power groups—those who have power but no ticket and those who have a ticket.
7. Those who forget the ticket-holders don't get to play.
8. Those who forget the power groups play but don't win.
9. Let others be the source of power, while you give their power form.
10. If you can't say "goodbye," you have no power.

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quality of your campus. Get out there and raise those issues with the community.

If you create opportunities for your business officer or president to win—even if they are not, in your professional opinion, the things most needed—the things that are most needed will follow. If you make somebody a winner, they are more inclined to meet your needs.

Think about the fact that your audience, the academic administrator, is more survival-oriented than progress-oriented. Frankly, you seldom make it as a university administrator by taking big risks and unpopular positions. You make it by getting the job done and keeping your head low. This means that you must advocate the real risks of environmental violations and safety issues, and the real embarrassment of compliance violations and waste problems. No university president can afford to be viewed as environmentally unconcerned. And the most direct aspect of environmental concern is one that you control.



Universities, as I mentioned earlier, have had a curiously easy time on environmental and safety issues, and in fact on other regulatory issues. Just to give you an idea of how this has changed, when I first became a professor I bought malpractice insurance, more as a joke than anything else. It cost five dollars a year. Today the only company that will sell malpractice insurance to a professor is Lloyds, and it costs two-and-a-half times my annual salary. That's my risk exposure, as an individual, to litigation and regulation.

The idea that universities and colleges are polite places that don't have to play by the rules that everybody else has to play by are over. People are suing us, they're angry at us, they think we're just like anybody else. This will be the decade in which we get our regulatory comeuppance, and we're not going to like it.

For example, consider the 1991 Federal Sentencing Guidelines for Organizations. The guidelines will raise fines for certain violations of the law by as much as ten times their current level, if the courts decide that you haven't done an effective job of preventing those violations. It's called the "culpability index." Soon an extension of the sentencing guidelines deal-

ing with environmental infractions will be issued. They will raise fine levels across the board and then add a multiplier of one to ten times for a lack of effective reporting and prevention. The guidelines apply to all organizations including universities. This is just one example of the fact that what we decide in-house may not be good enough anymore.

Both your position within higher education and external realities require that you begin playing hardball on safety and the environment. You're going to do yourself and your institution a favor by doing so. Remember, your audience is survival oriented. You don't survive by being environmentally irresponsible in 1992, 1995, or at any time from now on.

The last general point I want to make is to **build alliances inside and outside** the university and college. For the level of accomplishment and responsibility that facility officers have, most are virtually unknown off and on campus. This is a choice, and it may have been a good choice at one time, but it isn't today. Today the ding on the door of the vehicle gets fixed because it can be seen, but the oil isn't changed in the engine.

People on and off campus really do care. Get support on campus. Get support from your suppliers. Be involved in public events. Be involved in the community's concerns about your campus. Seek involvement where it's available. If you begin taking a higher profile and building alliances—and there's no reason not to do it—your interests will align with campus interests, with community interests, and with most regulatory interests. You may offend some, but it will also heighten awareness and build respect for you and the issues that you advocate.

In today's environment of harsh competition for scarce resources, invisibility is not a winning strategy.

Let me review some of the points I've made.

**1** You win by association. Learn what the special interests have learned: Campuses respond to sharply focused interests; become a focused interest yourself.

**2** Stick with your message even in tough times. When others are waffling and vacillating, you may have your best chance to be heard. You have a solid message; it's real. Stick with it.

**3** Operate from the stance that you can and will win. This is an important point. Leaders are more concerned about what it will take to win than about what will happen if they lose. As soon as you think about what will happen if you lose, you lose.

There are many examples of this, the most famous is the Flying Walendas. Old Karl Walenda never had an accident until the last time he walked the high wire. It was the first time in his life when he didn't trust his team. He rechecked the fastenings on both ends of the wire, and when he was on that wire he looked again to see if everything was okay. He fell and died.

Leaders aren't worried about what will happen if they lose; they're worried about what will happen when they win. You have to come from that position.

**4** Set the terms of the debate. Define the issues first, and then react to the conditions. Don't react to the conditions and then define the issues. Determine the issues that you want to address over the next three to five years on your campus, and align your staff with the plan.



**5** You have a team, so use it well. You've got something that very few people have, so use that team. Use it as an influence resource. Remember, you're on the same side as they are.

**6** Find the issues and projects that will make winners of those to whom you report. Find some winners in the list of issues, things that people can get behind and get credit for. And advocate the realities of risk. If making winners plays to greed, then advocating the realities of risk plays to fear.

**7** Finally, build alliances and be a consistent participant. Particularly on campuses, all you have to do is want to be involved and you are involved. Take advantage of some of the opportunities.



What I've delivered to you should be no news; there should be nothing new here. But I am recommending a big change in approach. There is a rule in life and it's really true: no risk, no gain. In tough times you must certainly take risks or you will definitely lose.

Of course, you might also lose if you take a risk. That's what makes risks exciting, that's what makes them invigorating, that's why they promote personal and organizational growth.

These really are not tough times. In other words, this isn't a bad time that's going to go away. My belief is that the economy and education are not in a recession. They're in an adjustment. We'll call this recession over when we're used to it.

And incrementally, that's what's going on; we're getting used to it. Those big, high-paying, heavy-benefit, lifetime jobs aren't being manufactured. And the competition around the world isn't going away. Competition isn't getting less just because we want the recession to end. The deficit isn't getting paid off. This is going to be with us for a while.

The days when campus needs would *eventually* get met because things *eventually* got better are over. There is no choice or alternative to advocating today, because otherwise it just won't get done. I predict a decade in which facilities officers will need to take a much more aggressive stance. Those who don't will eventually be blamed for the sorry state in which their campuses end up. In other words, the choice of keeping your head low is really not available. Those who really play have a chance to win, and it doesn't mean you necessarily will win if you take risks.

I want to conclude by going back to what I said at the beginning. "In life, there are no permanent victories or solutions. To win [and winning is good] is to stay committed and to maneuver." I have one final quote that you may enjoy thinking about. It is, "If you can't say goodbye, you have no power." What that really means is that in tough times we may have to risk our jobs to have real power. We have to have that strength to admit that one of the values of associations is to give that strength to each other. I see a lot of friendship and a lot of affiliation within APPA, as well as a lot of opportunity for growth. It is very important to maintain those strengths as we move forward. ■

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softcover, 173 pages

ISBN 0-913359-69-6

\$27/APPA members

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Alexandria, Virginia 22313-1201

## Critical Issues in Facilities Management

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## OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE

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