Talking Up: Study of Upward Influence Strategies

Asha Kaul
Associate Professor, Indian Institute of Management
Vastrapur, Ahmedabad
India

Abstract

The principal aim of this paper is to examine upward influence tactics used by employees working in a Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) organization. Drawing on evidence from 23 interviews, the choice and significance of upward influence tactics employed in the company are mapped out. Informed by a plethora of data on upward influence (UI), several tactics are discussed. The main finding in this study is that there is more flexibility in terms of usage of tactics when the communication process is informal. This paper confirms use of many tactics discussed over the past three decades. It proceeds to analyze two different tactics, reasoned aggression and nonchalance, which emerged in the course of the analysis, and discusses the need for improved understanding of upward influence tactics both, in isolation and combination, and in relation to organizational culture and interpersonal relationships.

Introduction

The ability to influence, within an organization, serves as an important determinant of the organization's effectiveness (Bass, 1990; Yukl, 1989). The success of an influence attempt depends on a variety of issues, like the choice of tactic, organizational attributes and interpersonal relationships. Frequently described as "getting one's way" (Kipnis, Schmidt and Wilkinson, 1980), influence is of two types – downward and upward. It can be understood as an attempt made by an agent (individual) to sway the target to a mode/manner of thinking that is in sync with the intentions of the agent. The focus of this paper is study of UI tactics in a multi-national FMCG organization, through an analysis of talk patterns.

Review of Literature
Literature on UI addresses the following issues: choice of tactic (Madison, Allen, Porter, Renwick and Mayes, 1980, Mowday, 1979; Judge and Ferris, 1993; Wayne and Ferris, 1990; Wayne, Liden, et al.,1997); reasons for choice of a particular tactic (Kipnis et al., 1980; Ansari and Kapoor, 1987; Waldera, 1988; Kipnis and Schmidt, 1988; Kumar and Beyerlein, 1991; Waldron, 1999 etc.) and tactics adopted (Kipnis et al., 1980; Kipnis and Schmidt, 1982; Schilit and Locke, 1982; Falbe and Yukl, 1992; Waldron et al., 1993 etc.)

Managers attempt to influence their superiors in a number of ways in order to secure personal and organizational goals (Madison, Allen, Porter, Renwick & Mayes, 1980; Mowday, 1979; Schein,1977). The choice of tactics however, varies in accordance with the goals. Research indicates that motives or goals of the members, be they personal or organizational, internal or external, determine the choice of tactic for influencing the leader (Kipnis & Schmidt, 1983; Kipnis, Schmidt & Wilkinson, 1980). This choice may affect the result by coloring the superior's perception of skills or competence, affection for the employees (Judge & Ferris, 1993; Wayne & Ferris, 1990) and/ or perception of similarity between the two (Wayne & Liden, 1995). However, the effectiveness of different influence tactics varies, and subordinates use them differently in their attempts to receive desired outcomes such as positive performance ratings, promotions and salary increase (Kipnis et al., 1980).

Substantial research has been conducted on UI tactics. Kipnis and Schmidt (1982) developed the Profiles of Organizational Influence Scale (POIS) with a 27–item sub scale that measured six tactic categories: rationality/ reason, ingratiation, exchange/bargaining, assertiveness, coalition, and upward appeal. Appropriateness of these six upward influence tactics has been measured by researchers and various research questions have been generated using the original questionnaire employed for measuring them (Ansari & Kapoor, 1987; Erez & Rim, 1982).

Reason has been understood to be the most "direct" of all tactics. Its use is contingent upon the relationship between the superior and the subordinate, and choice is directly proportionate to the goals and needs of the subordinate (Waldera, 1988).

Ingratiation is an informal or nonperformance specific exchange (Schilit & Locke, 1982). It takes into account interpersonal attraction, impression management, flattery and creation of good will (Kipnis & Vanderveer, 1971; Kipnis et al., 1980; Mechanic, 1962). Creating a favorable impression could be another reason for the choice of this particular tactic (Leary & Kowalski, 1990; Schlenker, 1980; Tedeschi & Reiss, 1981). Ingratiation has also been referred to as the influence tactic of favor rendering (Kipnis & Schmidt, 1988; Kumar & Beyerlein, 1991). The agent in this case renders favors with the purpose of ingratiating himself with the target (Kipnis & Schmidt, 1988; Liden & Mitchell, 1988). It has been observed that when subordinates have less power than the managers they are trying to influence, both ingratiation and reason are used (Kipnis & Schmidt, 1983; Rao, Schmidt & Murray, 1995).

The exchange tactic becomes operational when there is reward envisaged in the process. Individuals volunteer to exchange of benefits or favors (Kipnis et al., 1980), exchange resources or even propose to make sacrifices. Another example of an exchange/bargaining tactic could be indebtedness, which reminds the receiver of promises for exchange of obligations requiring compliance (Waldron, Hunt & Dsilva, 1993).

Assertiveness or the "hard" tactic is also referred to as overt or direct. Employees in complete command of the situation, with strong internal loci of control, technical expertise and

information are more likely to use this tactic.   Falbe and Yukl (1992) refer to them as "pressure" tactics.

The coalition tactic would entail working with colleagues and developing support among them for UI. There is more emphasis on numbers, majority opinion and ability to associate with prevailing opinion. In most of his works, Schilit (1987a; 1987b) refers to it as "group support".

In upward appeal the manager convinces the target of the acceptance of the proposal by higher authorities. This tactic is normally used as a last resort in cases where all other influencing tactics have failed. It is normally understood as a secondary tactic, as the superior, in the initial stages, resists all other efforts on the part of the agent (Maslyn et al., 1996; Waldron et al., 1993).

Yukl and Falbe (1990), and Yukl and Tracey (1992) replicated the work of Kipnis et al. (1980). They added two more tactics, inspirational appeal and consultation, to the already existing list of six postulated by Kipnis and his colleagues (1980). Inspirational appeal (Yukl & Falbe, 1990) arouses enthusiasm by appealing to the emotions or values of the recipient. This tactic, referred to as *allurement* by Lamude (1993), presupposes that the target will eventually benefit by providing happiness to and complying with the wishes of other members within the organization. Consultation (Yukl & Falbe, 1990) involves the recipient in the decision making process so as to secure commitment at a later stage.

The foregoing discussion suggests that choice of UI tactics is contingent upon the motive/intent of the sender for achievement of a higher goal, be it organizational or personal. The present work borrows from the existing literature on UI and proposes application of the same to a FMCG company.

Methodology

Choosing the appropriate strategy for operationalizing the UI attempt is both tough and complex. Multiple influences, micro as well as macro, can determine the choice and application of a particular tactic for optimum results. Study of internal as well as external factors, individual as well as organizational factors affecting choice of tactic necessitates qualitative research. Further, researchers need to go deeper into the reasons for application of tactics for UI, to understand the motive/intent of subordinates. Statistical analysis precludes any possibility of understanding the "commonsense" or intuitive approach to UI. For these reasons, this research studies UI tactics through analysis of conversational discourse within a multi-national FMCG company.

The company chosen for study is a global player with strong presence in 100 countries. Known for its flexibility, transparency, open-door policy, and free-flowing communication or informal talk patterns, the company provided requisite grounds for analysis of UI tactics used within the organization. The managerial job profile involves a lot of traveling and interacting with internal

and external customers around the globe. Questions that arose were: Do the macro and micro organizational influences impact the thinking and behavioral patterns of the employees? To further analyze the first part of the question a few queries can be raised: What is the influence of organizational culture on the choice of the UI tactic? Does it permeate to all levels? Do the members merely project or actually employ larger cultural dimensions (such as open policies) for enhanced subordinate-superior relationship? The impact of cultural attributes of the organization on the UI tactics was studied.

Two factors determined the choice of the present company for analysis:

1. The company should have had a substantial presence (inter)nationally for a considerable period of time so that the corporate culture processes have reached a certain level of stability.
2. Local offices should have been in existence for ten years or more, with a sizeable number of employees.

The first criterion ensured that relationships and organizational structure were well established, and the second gave flexibility in choosing the respondents.

Sample
A purposive sample was selected for this study. The General Manager, Human Resources, provided a representative list of managers. After intense discussion with him, I identified 23 interviewees who would be willing, open and forthcoming. The minimum time respondents had spent in the organization was three years. At the preliminary round I decided to restrict the study to the western zone - in and around Gujarat. To make the data truly representative of the company, at least of the western zone, I selected managers at four different levels from Ahmedabad, Naroda, Bhuj, Rajkot, Bharuch, Vapi, Surat and Jamnagar. To avoid any bias that might arise due to departmental affiliations or politics, managers from different departments were interviewed, including finance, general management, human resources, logistics, manufacturing, sales and distribution. Given the existing standing and culture of the company, the interviews focused on the choice and use of UI tactics.

The following framework for UI was conceptualized as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1
Conceptual framework for a study of UI tactics in a FMCG organization
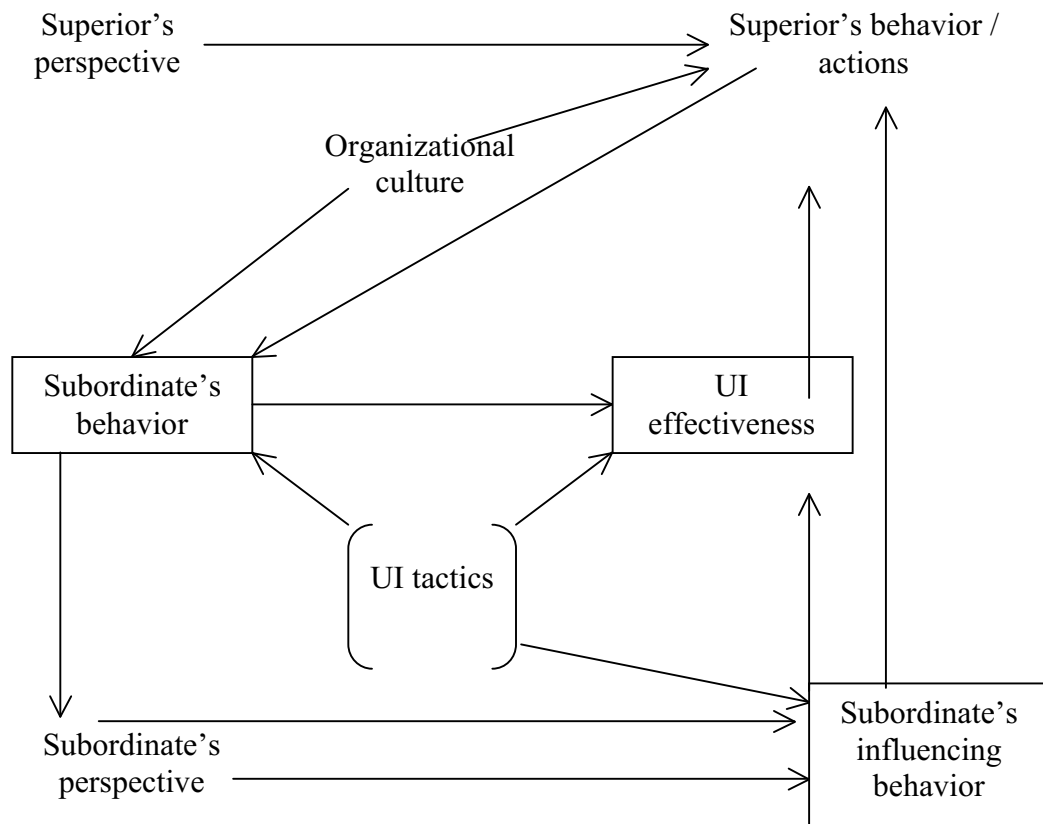
The above framework provides ease of analysis but it requires that the researcher carefully examine the validity of the data and removes possible bias by collecting data through multiple sources.

Procedure
I used an interview script because a detailed survey instrument would have interfered with the inquiry. The interview technique was preferred since the study dealt with complex issues, which were not predetermined, but emerged in the course of the discussion. Various nuances pertaining

to processes and individuals could best be captured through interviews and not structured through a questionnaire that had little scope for probing. The list of questions elicited responses with overt and covert implications for choice of UI tactics within the company. The script presented the concept of tactics in relation to organizational culture and subordinate-superior relationships as a series of topics in a simple three-part outline. The first part was organization specific: it queried familiarity with the culture, adherence to norms, and likes and dislikes. The second part dealt with subordinate-superior relationship. Part three probed into reasons for the manager's choice of tactic for persuading/influencing the superior. The interviews were tape recorded and lasted about 45 minutes.

This study used an interdisciplinary approach adopted from the ethnographic traditions of mass communication. Hence the coding patterns emerged from the words used by the interviewees. The procedure used was that provided by Fielding and Fielding (1986) who stated that the frequency and themes offered by the participants should be used for analysis. As suggested by Walzer and Gross (1994) I chose to use the participants' own words, often grammatically incorrect, for descriptions and statements.

I assigned each interviewee a sequence number as a means of protecting his or her identity. The interview numbers remained to the very end for coding and record keeping. All interviews were transcribed and identifications of the speakers were removed from the transcripts. Two separate readers coded each transcript. I compared the coding and determined the ultimate classification of each type of item.

Data interpretation was validated through a presentation to some members of the organization. Analysis was further shared with faculty colleagues for their comments and insights in the interpretations presented in the paper. The statements of all the interviewees were cross-validated. Some managers were even interviewed twice for authenticating the data.

Analysis

To study application of UI tactics, 23 transcripts were analyzed. Examples provided in the text below represent a sample of these instances. In a few instances, the transcripts did not contain examples of overt usage of tactic. For these cases, evidence with covert statements is used. This was not thought to be problematic as (a) the study was exploratory and not definitive in nature, and (b) the examples provided seemed to represent common, not idiosyncratic, experiences.

In this study I explored three research questions:

1.   What are the factors that impact the choice of UI strategies in a FMCG multinational company?
2.   What strategies are adopted for successful UI?
3.   What are the implications of this study for future research?

Research Question 1: What are the factors that impact the choice of UI strategies?
Interviewees shared a view that organizational culture shaped their behavioral and
communication patterns. Within this framework, the participants defined organizational culture
as "transparent, flexible, with an open door policy and informal talk patterns". From the
participants' comments I structured a typology of attributes: transparency, flexibility, open door
policy, and free-flowing communication/informal talk that could be associated with their
organization and explored the impact of the same on their influencing patterns.

Table 1
Organizational attributes

Organizational attributes	Positive responses (in percentage %)
Transparency	78.26
Flexibility	95.65
Open door policy	82.6
Free-flowing communication/informal talk	100

Transparency has been defined in terms of environment, definition of roles and job profiles, by
the interviewees. Policies, roles, attitude to work, relationships with superiors or subordinates
were clear and transparent. Attributing reason and logic to this phenomenon, participants agreed
that transparency is a requisite for efficient functioning within the organization. "Ninety percent
of the issues can be sorted out the moment you are honest, transparent, discuss along that topic."

Differences in opinion did surface. As one participant recounted: "at times it so happens that
different rules are applied to different people depending on . . . on the kind of person he is." Top
team players were, by some participants, accredited with avoiding embarrassing or threatening
issues: "instead of being transparent, they resort to avoidance". The size of the organization, it
was generally felt, precluded possibility of complete transparency, on all occasions within the
company. As counter argument, 18 respondents agreed that " because of the size sometimes it
becomes very difficult although the intention of the organization is very good, it happens so that
you feel that communication has not happened to you or your people . . . wherever they are". All
the participants stressed the importance and benefits of transparency in shaping the behavioral
and communication patterns of managers.

Understanding of the term *flexibility* ranged from meeting deadlines, achieving goals, adhering to
policies, to dealing with personal issues like: working with flexi-time, taking leave, and
presenting new ideas. Interviewees proclaimed the openness of superiors to ideas, concepts and
change: "if you are not able to achieve your numbers, ok, the top bosses will understand that
there are certain limitations, there's possibly something wrong in the market, and that's why you
are not forced beyond a limit." Logic was stressed by 22 participants and accredited as an

important factor in generating and sustaining flexibility. Twenty interviewees professed that despite immense freedom given to them in terms of designing the input, strict adherence to time was also imposed.

> Suddenly they give us this period   . . . you have to complete this work.
> They give the freedom. Whatever you want to do, do it. Deliver the
> result. Like that. For example, I'll give, suppose you have to put up a
> paper of your plan, okay? They give a certain time – in two months
> you have to finish. Whatever you do, you do, you have the freedom.
> We want the results.

Flexibility did not extend to personal goals or understanding or handling of personal issues. There is "no balance between personal life and work". Seventeen interviewees were of the opinion that genuine and sound reason can get desired results: "leave is never turned down, even if there is a critical situation. In a genuine case of taking leave, they never asked us to stay or compelled us to finish, never denied."

In terms of the open-door policy, systemic procedures encouraged reasoned interventions. Superiors were open to policy discussions, influences, irrespective of hierarchy, recounted 19 interviewees. "It's pretty open kind of an organization. Open as in . . . the top bosses are actually receptive to what you are saying. That way you are actually free to express your . . . opinion, feeling about any particular issue." Four, however, were skeptical of the existence of an open door policy, as their views were not taken cognizance of. A logical analysis of the problem led to the conclusion that a mismatch between the expectations and priorities of the superior and the subordinate occurred. While statements contrary to the hierarchical structure were made, evidence in the data proves that superiors did gain compliance from their subordinates by virtue of their position in the company. "Okay being a subordinate if he [superior] puts through some things down my throat, that no this thing has to happen, probably because I am supposed to be doing a job I might do, but I might not be convinced to do that."

Informal sharing of knowledge/information is preferred to formal meetings or emails, recounted 23 participants. Some representative responses to the interviewer's question of approaching the superior for influencing/chatting or discussing are: "informal talks are better", "informal talks and meetings", "informal talks followed by letters, memos", "verbal, I mean, informal talk". More important than meetings or informal talk was the telephonic conversation that "connected immediately".

Meetings, another form of interaction, are preferred to written, formal communication. Interviewees neatly tried to categorize the choice and use of informal channels for communication: an informal chat was preferred when there was involvement of two people and meetings when the number was over two. Informal talks, as recounted by interviewees, build rapport and help in influencing. Influencing as a process:

> …begins usually with informal talk. Then you start talking about an idea
> that you have in mind, which is followed up with an e-mail, which then
> concretizes the whole thing, then you put a proposal in concrete and you
> refer to the discussion that you had earlier, then you put that up and on
> that basis, what ever happens.

Relationship building by making small talk before embarking on larger issues pertaining to the organization is viewed very positively.

> Informal way . . . you know normally we meet outside, then we talk it out
> . . . first, we talk, talk out those things which are of his interest and then
> slowly and gradually we begin talking about the organization, about the
> plant, about the plant operation and lastly about the people. What kind
> of people we have, you know, surrounding us and all that. Even we talk
> about internal environment as well as external environment. Like, we
> do talk about political issues and, you know, police administration,
> collector office and how do they influence our business, you know,
> even *goondas* [thugs] also at times.

The level of informality had decreased in the organization in the last five years with the introduction of different levels. However, the best part of this "happening change" was that "you can still communicate informally with your boss".

According to the participants all influencing is team-oriented. The communication and influencing patterns are a result of the relationship between the subordinates and superiors and the organizational culture. Reflection of it is seen in the behavioral aspects and the talk patterns of the employees.

> Generally see, admin. issues like whether it is arrangement of transport,
> or whether, you know, cost saving initiatives. On those points, suppose I
> differ with them [subordinates] or they differ with my decision, they do
> come to me, tell upfront that boss, whatever you are thinking is wrong,
> we are damned sure that if we do this we will deliver this.

When the goal is organizational or team related, any or all combinations of UI tactics are adopted to secure a desired output.

Seventeen interviewees stated that their relationships with superiors were informal, which accounted for aggression, arguments and confrontations. A few critical respondents stated that they did try to seek information about the leader's expectations as "it will elevate our position in the company, I think every individual does, those who don't . . . those people lie." These

statements indicate that employees do try to informally gain information about the superior's expectations prior to vocalizing their intent. The boss was always kept "in the loop" through informal talks, so that in times of emergency, persuasion could be expedited

Three points emerged as a result of analysis of the interviews
1. Open door policy encourages informal talk
2. Informal talks are preferred for influencing
3. UI can be effectively done by informally using tactics.

Research Question 2: What tactics are adopted for successful UI?
Given a particular environment, what are the UI tactics employed within an organization for successful persuasion? On the basis of the responses of the participants, a typology of tactics emerged. I studied the participants' understanding of UI process, then looked at the sample for patterns and combinations, if any, for influencing the superior.

Table 2
Adherence to UI strategies

UI strategies	Positive Responses (in percentage %)
Reason and logic	100
Aggression	91.3
Reasoned aggression	91.3
Upward appeal	86.96
Imitation	73.91
Nonchalance	69.56

Reasoned presentation of arguments and discussions was unanimously agreed to be the best UI tactic. Influencing the superiors was easier in reasoned and logically sound processes. Sixteen respondents were of the view that appropriate use of reason would help them in UI. Acceptance of an either-or situation is relatively simpler when backed with logic. Major disagreements and arguments, when logically discussed, were sorted out with ease.

> Yeah, these four-five things in the past have not happened properly, and
> this is the reason that I need to intervene more than what I used to do
> earlier. I think this is the way . . . best part is you need to communicate.
> Whether it is with your peer group, whether with your subordinate group
> or whether it is your boss group.

Traits of being open and reasoned in presentation of viewpoints have been consciously developed for galvanizing the process of influencing. "There has to be a reason"; "They [superiors] will listen when there is logic." "Explain it logically" is an example from the

transcripts that prove the overriding concern for reason and logic within the organization. All participants agreed that superiors are trained enough to understand the situation; hence if the subordinates can provide reason and logic the process can be galvanized. "End of the day, unless things are rational and logically presented, I don't think it is going to be accepted." It is not only a case of persuading the superior but also convincing other members. Describing a situation, one interviewee recounts,

> [I] was very new to the setup; hardly joined organization. I spent about three. . . three months or so. But I could immediately figure that out, that this was wrong. So, in one of the review meetings I voiced it out, and it did not happen. So next time when the review meeting took place. . . this time I went with preparation. I told them, look this is variable cost and how it is variable cost. I had all other data and, you know, ancillary information with me. And, I proved the point that yes, this is a variable cost and it, it. . . in fact, it went into altercation kind of thing. You know, the person was showing, you know, blood rushing in his veins and that kind of a thing. But then, I stuck to the point I had in mind and ultimately I emerged victorious. Because then I asked him certain questions as to what is the definition of fixed cost, what is the definition of variable cost . . . there is variable cost attached in fixed cost, what is that . . .and what is fixed in variable cost, you know. He could only explain those terminologies. And . . .person could not explain. So, ultimately it so happened that he had to get convinced. And, it so happened that it was in a meeting with all the HODs. So, though it was heated argument, but ultimately I could prove my point. You know, without compromising on the, the definition part, you know, I did not play with the definition.

An issue raised is that one is "listened to", "acknowledged", and "taken cognizance of". Reason and logic has to be structured in the content for the superior to pay heed.   In this organization, referred to as "firm and fair" by a couple of interviewees, employees were divided in their opinion on action taken after the presentation and analysis of a viewpoint. Six interviewees categorized it as an issue of priorities: "superiors with different priorities [might] consider the presentation unsuitable in the current situation."

Similar instances were cited by almost all participants. The technique, however, of using the tactic changed with a change in the HOD. "A story needs to be sold"—to whom, how and when are prioritized and the "story" is then suitably "sold".

All participants stressed "aggression" as a way of functioning. Understanding of aggression took the form of a communication pattern in which interviewees need to take a stand, push their way forward, and convince the other by forcing their views and opinions.

Participants stated that a maximum amount of aggression is witnessed at the time of "seasonality" (the months in a year when the demand for the product is maximum). Elaborating

further, an interviewee recounts that the appropriate person to take a decision in moments of crisis is the employee "on the spot". Understandably, he or she has his or her constraints in terms of co-employees and resources. Deadlines need to be met, and targets achieved. In this situation, unwillingness of the superior to listen or unfamiliarity with the situation, for instance, can result in time loss and cancellation of deals. Such instances necessitate that the subordinates merely "tell" the superior of moves being taken for producing desired results "because our presence is in a do or die situation".

Mismatches in perceptions between members and leaders, according to 14 interviewees, were referred to 'boss's boss'. Dissent, whether with superior or subordinate, it was strongly felt, needed aggressive handling. "You cannot do conflict management by postponing it or by avoiding it."

Aggression and "aggression in the market" while dealing with customers and competitors, 21 participants felt, was enjoyable and the best possible tactic to be adhered to. They recounted their enjoyment of aggressive display of attitude in the organization. Extolling the virtues of aggressive behavior, one interviewee extended the discussion by insisting that aggression was "part of human nature." However, three members were mellow and stated that only in situations when they were pushed in a corner and could see no way out would they "sternly" and aggressively push their way forward. They stated that "vocally" they never became aggressive, with seniors they were never aggressive but in certain situations they were forced to take on an aggressive stance.

The subordinate-superior relationship is informal, and based more on team camaraderie than hierarchical bindings. Because there is immense pressure to deliver, need for cooperation in individual teams is higher with greater potential for confrontations and resolutions in the interest of the team. Hence, superiors are also open to the convincing strategies used by subordinates as individual performance is measured in terms of team performance. Assertiveness, as a strategy for conviction, can then give way to aggression, but one that is reasoned. Excessively smooth functioning of the team may signal apathy. Managers are thus rationally motivated to draw out the best from their subordinates. This can only happen if their choice of tactic for gaining compliance is mirrored by the subordinates' adoption of similar tactic for convincing/influencing or persuading. Members in a team normally emulate the leaders in the group. Organizational and personal goals, it is felt, and rightly so, can best be achieved if the tactic for gaining compliance appeals to the superior and is also used by him. To further elaborate, if the tactic employed by a subordinate for influencing is one that the superior also employs, degree of compliance to the UI attempt is bound to be higher.

"Reasoned aggression" as defined by participants, entails forceful expressions or statements, pushing forward of ideas relentlessly, unmindful of the convictions of the other party. Employees using this strategy are "generally aggressive" (Devito, 1995: 164) people. They take over in almost all situations. They think little of the values, the beliefs and opinions of other people but

are sensitive about criticism of themselves. As a result they frequently get into arguments with other people. However, this study revealed that there was a clubbing together of reason/logic and aggression. From the findings it emerges that usage of either reason or aggression is not enough. Conjoining the two tactics produces optimum results in persuasion. Twenty-one interviewees claimed that it was only with aggression that they could get an active audience; however, "reason/logic has to be built into the argument". The use of this tactic came out more openly when dealing with personal issues. All interviewees felt that they could use reasoned aggression in issues pertaining to leave taking, when work pressure was high and deadlines had to be met. The manager's "sincerity and integrity" was recognized and it took but little time for the superior to thaw and relent to the strategy adopted by the subordinate. Five participants were hesitant to use this tactic but the rest aggressively countered all arguments and stated that reasoned aggression with the boss worked and delivered results in 80 percent of the instances.

An open door policy, amicable subordinate-superior relationships and informal talks within the organization facilitate upward appeal. Twenty interviewees agreed that the boss's boss could be approached if immediate superior was not receptive. Fifteen attributed this to a flat organizational structure and stated that it was not a "hierarchy bound organization". As indicated earlier, not all agreed to this fact. However all 20 felt that the boss's boss could be influenced by reasoned arguments or presentations: "in case of policy guidelines, if my boss is not agreeing, I have to overlook my boss. I have to ask permission from his higher authority also."

The remaining three also agreed that not all problems and issues were necessarily handled at the immediate level. What all agreed to was the need for a reason for bypassing one's immediate superior. Recollecting an incident, an interviewee sums up the need for upward appeal,

> After presenting my viewpoint and listening to the viewpoint of
> the superior, I am still not convinced, I need to present additional
> data, more logic and reason. Failure on both counts can be then used
> as a reason for upward appeal for boss is in his place, [and] I'm
> in my place.

Arguments used in cases of upward appeal need to be well structured and logically sound. Reasons have to be given and risk factors spelt "I need to be *pucca* [absolutely sure] about my data, logic, why I am doing this." Inaccuracy in the presentation of data or facts would not be tolerated.

"If my senior is arrogant, then probably that attitude will trickle down to me as well. If he is arrogant, I'll also get arrogant." Imitation of communication and behavioral patterns is viewed as a successful means of gaining ground, according to 17 participants. How much of it is trickle down and how much is imitation is proved by employees stating their belief in—and practice of—"Do as I do" or "Do as I show," and not "Do as I say" or "Do as I reward." Recounting their interaction with and training imparted to fresh recruits within the organization, all interviewees

stated that there were no theoretical concepts imparted. Knowledge was imparted by giving the participants an opportunity to observe and practically implement learning. "Whoever comes, I will do and show them. That is how they learn. No dialogue, but I can make them understand while doing work. They will learn more." The learning is not restricted to technical details but also to behavioral patterns.

Nonchalance is a UI tactic in which the agent makes an attempt to sway the target by indicating lack of interest or involvement in the subject under discussion. However, it is not the truth but a mere projection of an attitude at the time of influencing. This take it or leave it tactic was seen to follow the reasoned aggression tactic. Time pressure is one reason attributed to adherence to this tactic. As one interviewee explained,

> Completion of various tasks in teams requires coordination at different levels. If the boss is not willing to listen or get convinced by reason, aggression or a combination of the two, I move on to a very effective way of convincing him. . . . Show total lack of interest in the issue . . . show disinterest in the team proceedings . . . the [superior] then asks me the reason for it and in an informal chat I tell him.

Sixteen interviewees recounted use of this tactic to persuade the superior. However, very pointedly they stated that a display of lack of interest or involvement is only at the superficial level; in reality it is a projection of an attitude that does not really exist. I refer to it as a projection, for the interviewees at different stages in the interview did reveal their concern with the superiors' expectations and their desire to work towards accomplishment of the same. Twenty interviewees stressed that they were spontaneous in giving their responses. Out of these 20, only six were of the view that if they were unable to convince the superior by the "spontaneous integrity" of their responses, they would remain unaffected. As one interviewee out of these six stated, " Whatever the idea I believe is right, I'll stick to my decision." Similar statements were made by other participants as well.

Research Question 3: What are the implications of this research for future study?
Organization and organizational attributes play an important role in determining the choice of UI tactics. In this particular case, the participants clearly identified the predominance of four attributes: flexibility, transparency, open door policy and informal talks. A direct relationship between the attributes and tactics was identified. (Table 3)

Table 3
Relationship between organizational attributes and UI tactics

Organizational Attributes → / UI Tactics ↓	Flexibility	Transparency	Open door policy	Informal Talks
Reason and Logic		✓	✓	✓
Aggression	✓			✓
Reasoned Aggression	✓		✓	✓
Upward Appeal			✓	✓
Imitation			✓	✓
Nonchalance	✓		✓	✓

This section delves into the key findings of this report and discusses the implications for research.

1. Direct and positive relationship between organizational culture and UI tactics. As revealed through the study, UI tactics are impacted by both, the macro (organizational) and micro (team) culture. Of the 23 interviewees, all spoke of the organizational culture that impacted their choice of UI tactic (Table 3). My study would seem to indicate that culture and modeled behavior, that is imitated, play an important role in shaping the influence processes.

A study examining other dimensions within the organization, apart from culture and subordinate superior relationship, might facilitate a complete understanding of tactics and reasons for choice of a particular tactic. The study suggested that organizational culture and subordinate-superior relationship would exhibit stronger effects on choice of UI tactic, but its relationship to decision making was not analyzed. Within a larger population of organizations, explicit or implicit intent of employees while persuading or being persuaded may be more diverse and thus the potential for analytical generalizations may be greater.

2. High interpersonal relationships encourage reasoned aggression. All 23 participants spoke of good interpersonal relationships with their superiors, primarily a result of the preponderance of informal talks, team affiliations and open communication channels. Greater proximity and subsequent imitation of behavioral traits emerge as part of the findings. While reason has been recognized as the most basic yet powerful tactic for UI, reason in combination with aggression, in this study, provides ground for future research. Data would seem to indicate that interpersonal relationships are a major factor in deciding on UI attempt, specifically the tactic of reasoned aggression. However, healthy interpersonal relationships could also be a precursor to choice of other UI tactics.

3.Nonchalance is preceded by reasoned aggression. The findings reveal that nonchalance always follows reasoned aggression. As discussed earlier it is projected and not real. Lack of interest in the discussion or the argument subsequent to receiving an unfavorable response from the superior qualifies use of this tactic. Only when reason, aggression or reasoned aggression fail, do employees resort to nonchalance. This tactic involves exasperation in behavior and mannerism at the failure of the superior to comprehend logical arguments.

Conclusions

The key findings of this study are related to the use of UI tactics in a multinational FMCG organization. The choice of tactics was determined by the organizational culture. These influences were partially mediated by witnessing behavioral traits in superiors as well as cultivating them for cohesion in the team and acceptance by the team members. From the descriptive perspective, team players who are not in sync with the rest of the team members or who do not abide by the cultural norms of the organization are misfits and would need to look for exit routes at the earliest. Thus ideally each participant's following a different tactic in the organizational context for influencing may not necessarily work. Hence, the need exists to work in situations in which being similar to one's superiors and their choice of tactics would yield the desired result.

From the perspective of the organization, successful UI influences suggest smooth functioning and good health. Thus, developing a culture conducive to open and informal communication patterns is of paramount importance for organizational well being. Understanding superiors, their expectations, constraints and being familiar with the types of communication would aid in influencing. Familiarity with the organizational culture and formulation of tactic in strict adherence to the same would facilitate the UI process.

References

Ansari, M. A., & Kapoor, A. (1987). Organizational context and upward influence tactics. *Organizational Behaviour and Human Decision Processes*, *40*, 39-49.

Bass, B.M. (1990). *Handbook of Leadership: A Survey of theory and research*. New York: Free Press

Cheng, J. L. C. (1983). Organizational context and upward influence: An experimental study of the use of power tactics. *Group and Organization Studies*, *8*, 337-355.

Deluga, R. J., & Perry, J. T. (1991). The relationship of subordinate upward influencing behavior, satisfaction, and perceived superior effectiveness with leader-member exchanges. *Journal of Occupational Psychology*, *64*, 239-252.

Erez, M., & Rim, Y. (1982). The relationship between goals, influence tactics and personal and organizational

variables. *Human Relations*, *35*, 871-878.

Falbe, C. M., & Yukl, G. (1992). Consequences for managers of using single tactics and combinations of tactics. *Academy of Management Journal*, *35*, 638-652.

Fielding, N.G., & Fielding J.L. (1986). *Linking data.* Beverly Hills, CA: Sage

Judge, T. A., & Ferris, G. R. (1993). Social context in performance evaluations. *Academy of Management Journal*, *36(1)*, 80-105.

Kipnis, D., & Schmidt, S. M. (1982). *Profile of organizational influence strategies (Form M)*, San Diego, CA: University Associates.

Kipnis, D., & Schmidt, S. M. (1983). An influence perspective on bargaining within organizations. In M. H. Bazerman & R. J. Lewicki (Eds.), *Negotiating in Organizations* (pp. 303-319). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Kipnis, D., & Schmidt, S. M. (1988). Upward influence styles: Relationship with performance evaluations, salary and stress. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *33*, 528-542.

Kipnis, D., Schmidt, S. M., & Wilkinson I. (1980). Intraorganizational influence tactics: Explorations in getting one's way. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *65*, 440-452.

Kipnis, D., & Vanderveer, R. (1971). Ingratiation and the use of power. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *17*, 280-286.

Kohn, M.L , & Schooler, C.(1982). Job conditions and Personality: A longitudinal assessment of their reciprocal effects. *American Journal of Sociology, 87, 1257-1286.*

Kumar K., & Beyerlein M. (1991). Construction and validation of an instrument for measuring ingratiatory behaviors in organizational settings. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *76*, 619-627.

Lamude, K. G. (1993). Supervisors' upward influence tactics in same-sex and cross-sex dyads. *Perceptual and Motor Skills*, *77*, 1067-1070.

Leary, M. R., & Kowalski, R. M. (1990). Impression management: A literature review and two component model. *Psychology Bulletin*, *107(1)*, 34-47.

Liden R.C., & Mitchell T.R. (1988). Ingratiatory behaviours in organizational settings. *Academy of Management Review*, *13*, 572-587.

Madison, D.L., Allen, R.W., Porter, L.W., Renwick, P.A., & Mayes, B.T. (1980). Organizational politics: An exploration of managers' perceptions. *Human Relations*, *33*, 79-100.

Maslyn, J. M., Farmer, S. M., & Fedor, D. D. (1996). Failed upward influence attempts: Predicting the nature of subordinate persistence in pursuit of organizational goals. *Group and Organizational Management*, *21*, 461-480.

Mechanic, D. (1962). Sources of power of lower participants in complex organizations, *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *7*, 349-364.

Mowday, R. T. (1979). Leader characteristics, self-confidence, and methods of upward influence in organizations'

decision situations. *Academy of Management Journal*, *22* (*4*), 709-725.

Philbin, A.I., & Spirek, M. M (1996). The paradox of revision: A study of writing as a product in the revision of manuals. *IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication,* 39 (1), 30-37.

Rao, A, Schmidt, S.M., & Murray, L.H (1995). Upward impression management: Goals, influence strategies, and consequences. *Human Relations, 18(*2), 147-167.

Schaubroeck, J,. & Lam, S. S. K (2002). How similarity to peers and supervisor influences organizational advancement in different cultures. *Academy of Management Journal, 45*(6), 1120-1136.

Schein, V. (1977). Individual power and political behaviors in organizations: An inadequately explored reality. *Academy of Management Review*. *2*, 64-72.

Schilit, W. K. (1987a). An examination of the influence of middle-level managers in formulating and implementing strategic decisions. *Journal of Management Studies*, *24*, 271-293.

Schilit, W. K. (1987b). Upward influence activity in strategic decision making. *Group and Organization Studies*, *12*, 343-368.

Schilit, W. K., & Locke, E. A. (1982). A study of upward influence in organizations. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *27*, 304-316.

Schlenker, B. R. (1980). *Impression management: The self-concept, social identity, and interpersonal relations*. Monterey, CA: Brooks/Cole.

Schriesheim, C., & Tepper, B. (1989). *Interpersonal influence tactics in organizations: Content-analytic and experimental investigations*. Unpublished manuscript. University of Miami, School of Business Administration.

Tedeschi, J. T., & Reiss, M. (1981). Verbal tactics of impression management. In C. Antaki (Ed.), *Ordinary Explanations of Social Behavior* (pp. 271-326). London: London Press.

Waldera, L. M. (1988). A study of key variables related to the directness of upward influence strategies and to self perceptions of upward influence. *Dissertation Abstracts International*, *50*, 02B.

Waldron, V. R. (1991). Achieving communication goals in superior-subordinate relationships: The multi-functionality of upward maintenance tactics. *Communication Monographs*, *58*, 289-306.

Waldron, V. R. (1994). Once more, with feeling: Reconsidering the role of emotion in work. In S. A. Deetz (Ed.), *Communication Yearbook 17* (pp. 388-416). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications

Waldron, V. R. (1999). Communication practices of followers, members, and protégés: The case of upward influence tactics. *Communication Yearbook 22*. (pp. 251-299) Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Waldron, V. R., Hunt, M. D., & Dsilva, M. (1993). Towards a threat management model of upward communication: A study of influence and maintenance tactics in the leader-member dyad. *Communication Studies*, 44, 254-272.

Walzer, A.E., & Gross, A. (1994). Positivists, postmodernists, Aristotelians and the Challenger disaster. *College English*, 56(4), 420-433.

Wayne, S. J., & Ferris, G. R. (1990). Influence tactics, affect, and exchange quality in supervisor-subordinate interactions: A laboratory experiment and field study. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *75*(5), 487-499.

Wayne, S.J., & Liden, R.C., et al. (1997). The Role of Upward Influence Tactics in Human Resource Decisions. *Personnel Psychology*, *50*(4), 979-1006.

Yukl, G.A., & Falbe, C.M. (1990). Influence tactics and objectives in upward, downward, and lateral influence attempts. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 75*(2), 132-140.

Yukl G., & Tracey J. B. (1992). Consequences of influence tactics used with subordinates, peers, and the boss. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 77,* 525-535.

ASHA KAUL is working as an Associate Professor in the Communications Area at Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad, India. She has done her Ph.D from Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur, India. She has written two books on communication: *Business Communication* and *Effective Business Com*munication, both published by Prentice Hall of India. She is currently doing research on "genderlect" and "Upward Influence and gender".