

LAW 8

MAKE OTHER PEOPLE COME TO YOU—USE BAIT IF
NECESSARY

JUDGMENT

When you force the other person to act, you are the one in control. It is always better to make your opponent come to you, abandoning his own plans in the process. Lure him with fabulous gains—then attack. You hold the cards.

OBSERVANCE OF THE LAW

At the Congress of Vienna in 1814, the major powers of Europe gathered to carve up the remains of Napoleon's fallen Empire. The city was full of gaiety and the balls were the most splendid in memory. Hovering over the proceedings, however, was the shadow of Napoleon himself. Instead of being executed or exiled far away, he had been sent to the island of Elba, not far from the coast of Italy.

Even imprisoned on an island, a man as bold and creative as Napoleon Bonaparte made everyone nervous. The Austrians plotted to kill him on Elba, but decided it was too risky. Alexander I, Russia's temperamental czar, heightened the anxiety by throwing a fit during the congress when a part of Poland was denied him: "Beware, I shall loose the monster!" he threatened. Everyone knew he meant Napoleon. Of all the statesmen gathered in Vienna, only Talleyrand, Napoleon's former foreign minister, seemed calm and unconcerned. It was as if he knew something the others did not.

Meanwhile, on the island of Elba, Napoleon's life was a mockery of his previous glory. As Elba's "king," he had been allowed to form a court—there was a cook, a wardrobe mistress, an official pianist, and a handful of courtiers. All this was designed to humiliate Napoleon, and it seemed to work.

That winter, however, there occurred a series of events so strange and dramatic they might have been scripted in a play. Elba was surrounded by British ships, their cannons covering all possible exit points. Yet somehow, in broad daylight on 26 February 1815, a ship with nine hundred men on board picked up Napoleon and put to sea. The English gave chase but the ship got away. This almost impossible escape astonished the public throughout Europe, and terrified the statesmen at the Congress of Vienna.

Although it would have been safer to leave Europe, Napoleon not only chose to return to France, he raised the odds by marching on Paris with a tiny army, in hopes of recapturing the throne. His strategy worked—people of all classes threw themselves at his feet. An army under Marshal Ney sped from Paris to arrest him, but when the soldiers saw their beloved former

leader, they changed sides. Napoleon was declared emperor again. Volunteers swelled the ranks of his new army. Delirium swept the country. In Paris, crowds went wild. The king who had replaced Napoleon fled the country.

For the next hundred days, Napoleon ruled France. Soon, however, the giddiness subsided. France was bankrupt, its resources nearly exhausted, and there was little Napoleon could do about this. At the Battle of Waterloo, in June of that year, he was finally defeated for good. This time his enemies had learned their lesson: They exiled him to the barren island of Saint Helena, off the west coast of Africa. There he had no more hope of escape.

Interpretation

Only years later did the facts of Napoleon's dramatic escape from Elba come to light. Before he decided to attempt this bold move, visitors to his court had told him that he was more popular in France than ever, and that the country would embrace him again. One of these visitors was Austria's General Roller, who convinced Napoleon that if he escaped, the European powers, England included, would welcome him back into power. Napoleon was tipped off that the English would let him go, and indeed his escape occurred in the middle of the afternoon, in full view of English spyglasses.

What Napoleon did not know was that there was a man behind it all, pulling the strings, and that this man was his former minister, Talleyrand. And Talleyrand was doing all this not to bring back the glory days but to crush Napoleon once and for all. Considering the emperor's ambition unsettling to Europe's stability, he had turned against him long ago. When Napoleon was exiled to Elba, Talleyrand had protested. Napoleon should be sent farther away, he argued, or Europe would never have peace. But no one listened.

Instead of pushing his opinion, Talleyrand bided his time. Working quietly, he eventually won over Castlereagh and Metternich, the foreign ministers of England and Austria.

Together these men baited Napoleon into escaping. Even Koller's visit, to whisper the promise of glory in the exile's ear, was part of the plan. Like a master cardplayer, Talleyrand figured everything out in advance. He knew Napoleon would fall into the trap he had set. He also foresaw that Napoleon would lead the country into a war, which, given France's weakened condition, could only last a few months. One diplomat in Vienna, who understood that Talleyrand was behind it all, said, "He has set the house ablaze in order to save it from the plague."

*When I have laid bait for deer,
I don't shoot at the first doe that comes to sniff,
but wait until the whole herd has gathered round.
Otto von Bismarck, 1815-1898*

KEYS TO POWER

How many times has this scenario played itself out in history: An aggressive leader initiates a series of bold moves that begin by bringing him much power. Slowly, however, his power reaches a peak, and soon everything turns against him. His numerous enemies band together; trying to maintain his power, he exhausts himself going in this direction and that, and inevitably he collapses. The reason for this pattern is that the aggressive person is rarely in full control. He cannot see more than a couple of moves ahead, cannot see the consequences of this bold move or that one. Because he is constantly being forced to react to the moves of his ever-growing host of enemies, and to the unforeseen consequences of his own rash actions, his aggressive energy is turned against him.

In the realm of power, you must ask yourself, what is the point of chasing here and there, trying to solve problems and defeat my enemies, if I never feel in control? Why am I always having to react to events instead of directing them? The answer is simple: Your idea of power is wrong. You have mistaken aggressive action for effective action. And most often the most effective action is to stay back, keep calm, and let others be frustrated by the traps you lay for them, playing for long-term power rather than quick victory.

Remember: The essence of power is the ability to keep the initiative, to get others to react to your moves, to keep your opponent and those around you on the defensive. When you make other people come to you, you suddenly become the one controlling the situation. And the one who has control has power. Two things must happen to place you in this position: You yourself must learn to master your emotions, and never to be influenced by anger; meanwhile, however, you must play on people's natural tendency to react angrily when pushed and baited. In the long run, the ability to make others come to you is a weapon far more powerful than any tool of aggression.

Study how Talleyrand, the master of the art, performed this delicate trick. First, he overcame the urge to try to convince his fellow statesmen that they needed to banish Napoleon far away. It is only natural to want to persuade

people by pleading your case, imposing your will with words. But this often turns against you. Few of Talleyrand's contemporaries believed Napoleon was still a threat, so that if he had spent a lot of energy trying to convince them, he would only have made himself look foolish. Instead, he held his tongue and his emotions in check. Most important of all, he laid Napoleon a sweet and irresistible trap. He knew the man's weakness, his impetuosity, his need for glory and the love of the masses, and he played all this to perfection. When Napoleon went for the bait, there was no danger that he might succeed and turn the tables on Talleyrand, who better than anyone knew France's depleted state. And even had Napoleon been able to overcome these difficulties, the likelihood of his success would have been greater were he able to choose his time and place of action. By setting the proper trap, Talleyrand took the time and place into his own hands.

All of us have only so much energy, and there is a moment when our energies are at their peak. When you make the other person come to you, he wears himself out, wasting his energy on the trip. In the year 1905, Russia and Japan were at war. The Japanese had only recently begun to modernize their warships, so that the Russians had a stronger navy, but by spreading false information the Japanese marshal Togo Heihachiro baited the Russians into leaving their docks in the Baltic Sea, making them believe they could wipe out the Japanese fleet in one swift attack. The Russian fleet could not reach Japan by the quickest route—through the Strait of Gibraltar and then the Suez Canal into the Indian Ocean—because these were controlled by the British, and Japan was an ally of Great Britain. They had to go around the Cape of Good Hope, at the southern tip of Africa, adding over more than six thousand miles to the voyage. Once the fleet passed the Cape, the Japanese spread another false story: They were sailing to launch a counterattack. So the Russians made the entire journey to Japan on combat alert. By the time they arrived, their seamen were tense, exhausted, and overworked, while the Japanese had been waiting at their ease. Despite the odds and their lack of experience in modern naval warfare, the Japanese crushed the Russians.

One added benefit of making the opponent come to you, as the Japanese discovered with the Russians, is that it forces him to operate in your territory. Being on hostile ground will make him nervous and often he will rush his actions and make mistakes. For negotiations or meetings, it is always wise to lure others into your territory, or the territory of your choice.

You have your bearings, while they see nothing familiar and are subtly placed on the defensive.

Manipulation is a dangerous game. Once someone suspects he is being manipulated, it becomes harder and harder to control him. But when you make your opponent come to you, you create the illusion that he is controlling the situation. He does not feel the strings that pull him, just as Napoleon imagined that he himself was the master of his daring escape and return to power.

Everything depends on the sweetness of your bait. If your trap is attractive enough, the turbulence of your enemies' emotions and desires will blind them to reality. The greedier they become, the more they can be led around.

The great nineteenth-century robber baron Daniel Drew was a master at playing the stock market. When he wanted a particular stock to be bought or sold, driving prices up or down, he rarely resorted to the direct approach. One of his tricks was to hurry through an exclusive club near Wall Street, obviously on his way to the stock exchange, and to pull out his customary red bandanna to wipe his perspiring brow. A slip of paper would fall from this bandanna that he would pretend not to notice. The club's members were always trying to foresee Drew's moves, and they would pounce on the paper, which invariably seemed to contain an inside tip on a stock. Word would spread, and members would buy or sell the stock in droves, playing perfectly into Drew's hands.

If you can get other people to dig their own graves, why sweat yourself? Pickpockets work this to perfection. The key to picking a pocket is knowing which pocket contains the wallet. Experienced pickpockets often ply their trade in train stations and other places where there is a clearly marked sign reading BEWARE OF PICKPOCKETS. Passersby seeing the sign invariably feel for their wallet to make sure it is still there. For the watching pickpockets, this is like shooting fish in a barrel. Pickpockets have even been known to place their own BEWARE OF PICKPOCKETS signs to ensure their success.

When you are making people come to you, it is sometimes better to let them know you are forcing their hand. You give up deception for overt manipulation. The psychological ramifications are profound: The person who makes others come to him appears powerful, and demands respect.

Filippo Brunelleschi, the great Renaissance artist and architect, was a great practitioner of the art of making others come to him as a sign of his power. On one occasion he had been engaged to repair the dome of the Santa Maria del Fiore cathedral in Florence. The commission was important and prestigious. But when the city officials hired a second man, Lorenzo Ghiberti, to work with Brunelleschi, the great artist brooded in secret. He knew that Ghiberti had gotten the job through his connections, and that he would do none of the work and get half the credit. At a critical moment of the construction, then, Brunelleschi suddenly developed a mysterious illness. He had to stop work, but pointed out to city officials that they had hired Ghiberti, who should have been able to continue the work on his own. Soon it became clear that Ghiberti was useless and the officials came begging to Brunelleschi. He ignored them, insisting that Ghiberti should finish the project, until finally they realized the problem: They fired Ghiberti.

By some miracle, Brunelleschi recovered within days. He did not have to throw a tantrum or make a fool of himself; he simply practiced the art of “making others come to you.”

If on one occasion you make it a point of dignity that others must come to you and you succeed, they will continue to do so even after you stop trying.

Image: The Honeyed
Bear Trap. The bear hunter
does not chase his prey; a bear
that knows it is hunted is nearly
impossible to catch and is fero-
cious if cornered. Instead, the
hunter lays traps baited with
honey. He does not exhaust
himself and risk his life in
pursuit. He baits, then waits.

Authority: Good warriors make others come to them, and do not go to others. This is the principle of emptiness and fullness of others and self.

When you induce opponents to come to you, then their force is always empty; as long as you do not go to them, your force is always full. Attacking emptiness with fullness is like throwing stones on eggs. (Zhang Yu, eleventh-century commentator on *The Art of War*)

REVERSAL

Although it is generally the wiser policy to make others exhaust themselves chasing you, there are opposite cases where striking suddenly and aggressively at the enemy so demoralizes him that his energies sink. Instead of making others come to you, you go to them, force the issue, take the lead. Fast attack can be an awesome weapon, for it forces the other person to react without the time to think or plan. With no time to think, people make errors of judgment, and are thrown on the defensive. This tactic is the obverse of waiting and baiting, but it serves the same function: You make your enemy respond on your terms.

Men like Cesare Borgia and Napoleon used the element of speed to intimidate and control. A rapid and unforeseen move is terrifying and demoralizing. You must choose your tactics depending on the situation. If you have time on your side, and know that you and your enemies are at least at equal strength, then deplete their strength by making them come to you. If time is against you—your enemies are weaker, and waiting will only give them the chance to recover—give them no such chance. Strike quickly and they have nowhere to go. As the boxer Joe Louis put it, “He can run, but he can’t hide.”