

My views on your research questions
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If power is defined as the ability to manipulate resources across space and time, to what extent can authority in your relationship with Akhil and Get Friday be re-distributed amongst a service where the typical use is one-way command?

There would be a low level of redistribution. There is a contract which binds Akhil to provide you with the service that you demand for. However, when he assigns a task to you, or tries to manipulate your resources, he has a lower level of power, since you are not bound by a contract. So, you remain the power centre in the relationship.

Akhil will experience a perceived sense of power in the relationship, which will in turn, substantially raise the quality of the work he does for you. This will be due to a increased sense of ownership of the tasks you assign to him.

Akhil however, does have a potential power, which I believe he does not realise. You have invested a lot of time and energy into your project. If he now refuses to be a part of it anymore, then the power balance will tilt a bit. However, it is highly unlikely that he will ever get to exercise it, as, if he refuses to co-operate, GetFriday will most lose your account. Therefore, GetFriday will apply pressure on him to continue providing the service to you.

The best way to reverse it towards a mutual collaboration is to give each other what you want. You want good quality work. What does Akhil want? Not the money - that goes to GetFriday. His needs are intangible - fun tasks, which gets him out of the mundane tasks he does every day, or a feeling of empowerment, which he might not be getting in relationships with other clients. It could also be a sense of involvement in a project being conducted on the other side of the world.

Will you will be able to alter the work conditions at GetFriday, through your relationship with Akhil? Highly unlikely. You are a most unusual client of sorts ☒. The vast majority of clients would highly prefer a one way relationship, where they are the power centre.

To make the relationship more personal and creative, you would need to engage with him outside work hours and communication channels. Thats when you would be interacting on a personal level, and not as a client. As long as the interactions are within work hours, and through the work communication channels like the work phone, work email etc, you always remain a client, primarily.

I feel you have already made the relationship quite creative, by taking apart the normal client-assistant relationship. By giving Akhil a sense of perceived power, you have made him creative in his work. Creativity is killed when people get monotonous. By changing the rules of the relationship, you have set his brain cranking. The creative thinking that he engages in for your tasks, will also overflow towards the tasks that he does for other clients. So, your tasks are essentially making him better at his job, giving him more confidence, more creativity and a different approach to work.