

## 3 Tricks for Power Like Tommy Shelby

### Description

Today we are going to analyze how Thomas Shelby builds his power in season 1 of Peaky Blinders. We'll also cover how you can use science to pull off some of the same moves in your life. Thomas answers the following questions about power.

**How can you be powerful like Thomas Shelby? Here are 3 of his power tricks analyzed.**

**1 How do you turn an enemy into an ally?**

**2 How do you turn someone into a spy who brings you valuable information?**

**3 How do you maximize leverage before a negotiation even starts?**

Keep in mind that there are many examples of great strategic moves that build his power in season 1. I've selected some of the more distinct ones so as to produce content that is as unique as possible from old videos.

On your climb to power you are sure to upset people, create enemies, or run into individuals with contrary goals. This video will also show how to deal with these situations and how it could actually be a good strategy.

### Context

Thomas Shelby has fixed a horse race in order to make his family make more money. This angered the local boss, Billy Kimber, who seems to be in charge of all things horse racing in the area. Billy Kimber has a much larger operation than the Shelbys, and many of the members of the Shelby family are confused as to why Thomas has poked the bear. It is possible though, that Tommy pissed Billy Kimber off on purpose so he could get his attention.

Billy Kimber brings his men down to question and potentially harm the Peaky Blinders. But before any violence erupts, Thomas Shelby makes a crucial power move, drawing on a source of power called information power. Information power is one of the [6 scientific sources of power](#). It is the ability to influence behavior based on the information you share with people.



Kimber and his “right hand man.”

Tommy has spies all over, some of whom have told him that Billy Kimber has a problem with the Lee family. The Lee family is another gang that has been plaguing race track profits for a while. Tommy uses this information to save his family's hides. He convinces Billy Kimber that he would be more valuable as an ally against the Lee family, presenting Billy Kimber with the idea that he is already feuding with the Lee's. Why would Billy kill an enemy of his enemy?

But why did Billy Kimber even want help dealing with the Lee family? Couldn't he have just handled the issue himself? Isn't it more dangerous for a gangster to allow another gangster onto his territory? Shouldn't a gangster always avenge themselves when their territory is violated?

The answers to these questions are another example of how Tommy uses information power. Tommy's spies also learned that Billy Kimber was having issues with enough manpower to deal with the Lee family. This meant that one of the things Billy Kimber would necessarily value was additional muscle. Had Billy not needed more muscle, Tommy Shelby would have been offering a need that his prospect did not have a desire for. While it was definitely dangerous to allow another gang onto their territory, Billy, or rather his agent, reasoned that Tommy Shelby was authentically willing to help since he already had an issue himself with the Lees. He did not suspect an even greater plan to back stab them since it seemed as simple as the Shelbys trying to make a quick buck by fighting people they were already willing to fight.

So we've established the importance of information power in persuading Billy Kimber to not harm the family. So how can you apply this yourself if you don't have a bookie business, a violent group of followers, or if you want to stay within the confines of the law?

Now that you know the backstory, let's get back to those original questions so you can become powerful like Thomas Shelby.

## 1. Learn to Turn Enemies into Allies

### Step 1:

The best way to apply this strategy is to first keep track of the issues and enemies people have. Watch our video on discovering what people want if you need specific techniques. In business, people often have issues and rivalries with other departments. Engineering is commonly at odds with sales for selling things that aren't part of the product. Sales is commonly frustrated with legal for constraining what they can say and elongating the contract process. Your coworkers often dislike people they perceive as better than them or in the way of their promotion. Even socially, groups of people often function like groups in a company. They have issues and alliances. Once you understand these issues and conflicts, you can move to step 2.

### Step 2:

Step two is to figure out some unique value you can bring to the table. Why would they team up if they can just handle it themselves? Perhaps you can add additional support or testimony to an argument they are making in a company meeting. Perhaps you know a flaw in the person's argument that others aren't aware of. I'd suggest keeping track of this in something similar to english parliament's "[dirt book](#) or whip notes." I've linked to a more detailed description below in the encyclopedia of informality, but basically this is a book of notes that leaders of political parties keep in order to more effectively persuade members. I'd specifically keep track of rewards people would want and punishments they would want to avoid. You might also keep track of the common behaviors and reactions people have to common situations. This is also another reason correcting people when they are wrong isn't always the best idea. Frequently you can note the issue and save it for later when you can use it to embarrass them more effectively.

### Step 3:



One of the Lee brothers.

Step three is to create an issue with the common enemy. You can do this by simply making your objections known. Thomas Shelby does this when his brothers start a fight with the Lees. While the fight could have been accidental, Tommy at very least took advantage of the mutual enemy when he offered Billy Kimber help. You can follow this advice by either debating the person in front of your team, or preferably by simply pointing out that you have reservations about their plans. A basic way to do this is to ask the person what potential disadvantages the plan has. Either they list problems or they don't name any. If they don't name any issues, you can point out how most plans have downsides, and that

it is scary that the person suggesting the plan doesn't recognize them. If they point out downsides, just reemphasize those issues.

Now, spring your trap. Like the Peaky Blinders, you might have to get the person's attention by doing something minor that will annoy them. Make sure this action does not cause so much damage that they would rather take you out than the common enemy. You can do this by holding up projects they need pushed through your department, or causing an issue at an important event. Generally you don't have to do this though. You can just meet with the person and explain how you can both work together. If the person has an issue with you, explain how you are more helpful as an ally, dealing with the common enemy with your unique skills. If you do it correctly, they will want help with the common enemy more than they want to cause you more issues.

When you present the issue, try using the behavioral economics of [prospect theory](#), or the idea that people weigh losses more heavily than gains. Frame the conversation in terms of what the person has to lose if they don't team up with you. For example, "I wouldn't want you to miss out on saving all this money if you don't pounce on this deal today."

Remember all the strategizing in these scenes were possible because Thomas Shelby had good information to use from his spies. So how do we find or create people who are willing to dig up and share critical information? Thomas Shelby gives a great example of this in the first few episodes of the season.

He has a war friend who has some mental issues. Unfortunately, this friend accidentally hurts someone important. For most people, this would be a tough position where they have to choose between maintaining their referent power, or the ability to influence due to liking and respect, with a loyal friend or the community. It seems like any decision here is a loss. But Tommy finds a way out.

Tommy fakes his friend's death, satisfying the community member's blood lust. He smuggles his friend out of town and into another area. He offers to pay his friend some money to 'help him out with bills.' This friend then sits in an important bar and gathers information for the Peaky Blinders.

In summary, enemies become allies through incentives. If you share a common goal with your current enemy, there is a chance they could become an ally. Tommy turns Billy Kimber into an ally by offering to fight the Lee family. Billy Kimber would rather see the Lees handled than punish the Shelbys. Thus, your enemy will let you off the hook if you can help them get something they want more than your punishment.

So now that we've answered the question how to turn an enemy into ally, lets jump to question number 2. This will help you become powerful like Thomas Shelby.

## 2. Learn to Create Spies

### Step 1:

Tommy did 3 important things that we can copy when creating a network of people who give us useful information. First, he performed a valuable favor for a desperate friend. Often desperate people value simple acts of kindness more than someone who is in a healthy situation. If you find someone

like this who you can help, they will often repay it tenfold and be very loyal. This is because of the scientific principle of reciprocity. A scientist did a [study](#) that looked at the various ways people were persuaded. One of them was reciprocity. The scientist found that people feel obliged to provide discounts or concessions to others if they've received favors from those same people in the past. Consider talking to people who have no friends, or help people get jobs who are just starting out in the industry. Incidentally helping people can also boost your reputation and referent power as well. But how do you know who are the right people to help?

### Step 2:

In order to know who is best to help, you need to select people who are talkative enough to share this kind of information with you. Try looking for people who are insecure yet want others to think they are smart. These people will often run their mouths about all sorts of things in order to show you how impressive they are. Try asking them a few basic questions about things they already have information on. If they aren't willing to share about how other companies interview, or they aren't willing to share what their neighbors were talking about in an old social meeting, consider helping someone else. With the right person, all it takes is a well placed question and they will spill the beans. Keep in mind that networking is often a numbers game. The more you practice this the better you will become at spotting people who enjoy being helpful. For those of you who are familiar with personality profiling, try looking for agreeable and extroverted people. They tend to be more open to sharing. But how do you keep a person giving you information on a regular basis? Won't most people return the favor once and then stop?

### Step 3:

Thomas Shelby solves this problem as well. In order to ensure repeated information flow, he continues to give his friend money. Can you see the usefulness of having a financially successful career so you can use the money to build your reward power? You can bribe people to continue to help you by inviting them to parties or giving gifts. The key here is to give them something they lack that you have an abundance of. This can be as simple as attention or compliments for some people, or as difficult as actual money for others. The key is to keep people dependent on you, like the [11th law of power](#) states. Green even mentions a common political blackmail tactic as a way to keep people doing what you want. Dig up dirt and threaten to release it if they don't help you. However, negative leverage, or coercive power should be a last resort as it generally burns bridges.

Finally we are going to cover a negotiation lesson that is guaranteed to improve your leverage if you can pull it off. Thomas Shelby is troubled by a police commissioner. Chief Inspector Campbell wants to force Shelby into giving up the location of guns that his crew came across. In order to compel Thommy to give up the guns, the Inspector, among other things, has beat up Tommy's brother and then asked for a meeting.

Now that we've answered question number 2, How do you turn someone into a spy, lets tackle question 3 so you can learn his tricks and can know how to become powerful like Thomas Shelby.

## 3. Learn to Maximize Negotiation Leverage





The Inspector

### Step 1:

Before the meeting is to take place though, Tommy does something incredibly important. He says that he won't go and negotiate a deal with Inspector Campbell until he has attacked the policeman back. Tommy doesn't want to go into the meeting in a defensive position, but in a position where the other side knows he is someone that should be feared.

In order to do this, Tommy figures out Campbell's weakness. The policeman would be in a worse negotiating position if his boss wasn't happy. The boss explicitly asked that everything stay out of the news. Tommy figures this out and launches a public bonfire, claiming that the Chief Inspector Campbell is disrespecting the King. This embarrasses Campbell's boss, and puts pressure on the Inspector to close a deal with Thomas Shelby quickly. It is only after this event that Tommy agrees to negotiate because he has sent a message that there are serious consequences if a deal isn't made.

If you have more access to resources, you can do anything from release negative press, increase price pressure, or stop performing favors to competitors before you go to negotiate. Some businesses purposefully stop servicing a customer before the new contract negotiation period to remind the customer how few other options they have. The key is to put the person in a desperate position where they need you more than before your action.

This happens all the time in politics where one side will release bad press before a meeting in order to get the other person to be more likely to commit to a deal. If you are the president and you haven't

passed any bills in the first year of your term, and your opponents release a smear article about how you never get anything done right before a big bill negotiation meeting, you will have less leverage because you will need to combat the image of not getting anything done. Now back to another important thing that we learn from the meeting between Shelby and Campbell.

You can do this in negotiations even if you don't have much power. Do this by ensuring you have a [BATNA](#). BATNA is an acronym for best alternative to a negotiation agreement. Part of the [game of preliminary negotiation](#) is to often trash your opponent's BATNA. If you can show them that you know they are in a worse position, you can often reduce your cost in the deal. This is because whoever needs the situation less is able to realistically threaten to walk away if more of their terms are not met.

A simple way to increase your leverage in this situation is to simply apply to many jobs at once and interview accordingly. If you are interviewing with many companies, all of whom are interested in hiring you, you have a stronger position. This is a simple way of getting a similar effect as 'striking back' before a negotiation. Tommy's BATNA was that he continued keeping the guns and launching political smear campaigns against the Chief Inspector Campbell. Try asking yourself how you can make their position worse if they don't take a deal with you? How can you make them see how willing you are to take another deal?

### **Step 2:**

Once at the meeting, Tommy shows some important negotiation moves. First, he again reminds Inspector Campbell what the consequence is if a deal is not struck. He also paints a picture of what rewards he could receive if he complies. This combination of 'carrot' and 'stick' is extremely effective neurologically. It appeals both to the fear and reward centers of the brain.

### **Step 3:**

Crafting a narrative where the people who comply are good and those who aren't are bad is an effective tactic. Tommy does this when he reminds Campbell that they could both be on the same side. Ask yourself how you can frame the discussion so that complying with you is a morally or socially good thing to do. This will immediately give you the high ground if they accept.

### **Step 4:**

Finally, when Campbell starts playing dumb, Tommy walks away. This is possibly one of the more important moves in this scene as it signals that Thomas doesn't have to negotiate. Because he is willing to walk away if any games are played, it signals to the other side that they should act in good faith. Had Tommy stayed and tried to persuade Campbell, he would have started putting himself in a weak position. He would have been seen as needing something from the Inspector, agreement. He didn't do this though, which signaled his position of strength. This is the same in sales and other persuasion situations. If you try too hard it can signal desperation. Why would you try to convince someone so hard if you didn't need them to agree? Only desperate people act like that.

Now I haven't even scratched the surface of negotiation techniques. If you are interested in more details about building leverage like Tommy Shelby does before and during negotiations, check out the link below. I've attached a [law review article](#) that covers force and persuasion based techniques that can be used in negotiation. It is fairly exhaustive. It covers everything from how to introduce scarcity

and competition to how to cherry pick elements of a deal to strengthen your position. Later I plan on doing a full series of videos on negotiation but you will have to make due with this article for now.

A quick note, If you've enjoyed the video so far and are interested in seeing a part 2, comment below or hit that like button. There are so many power moves in the Peaky Blinders I couldn't even fit a third of the first season's strategies into this video.

**So let's briefly recap. We've answered three questions about power so you can know [how to become powerful](#) Like Thomas Shelby.**

**First we discussed how to turn an enemy into an ally. Namely by finding a way to make yourself more useful alive than dead.**

**Then we discussed how helping the right people and then creating dependence will help you create spys.**

**Lastly, we saw the importance of not entering negotiations on the defensive, and we learned about the importance of a BATNA.**



Negotiation Scene

Additionally, we have upcoming scripts planned where we break down the science behind effective insults using the popular show Succession, and cover some power strategies in [house of cards](#). We also plan on releasing more 'science behind the laws of power' youtube shorts in anticipation of [Robert Greene's new book](#), which is being released soon.

If you want more Thomas Shelby, check out our personality profile we did of him [here](#).

## Category

1. Strategy

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