

MODULE #6: Types of Power for Leaders

Objectives

- Participants will recognize different types of power that leaders may have.
- Participants will learn techniques for building expert power among leaders.
- Participants will identify the techniques to build leadership skills.

Context



In examining a number of historical events, the different types of powers for leaders are salient. In many cases, excessive use of power has led to the most devastating tragedies committed by human kind.

Handouts & Resources Needed:

- Handout 6.1A: Examples for Leadership Power
- Handout 6.1B: Description and Examples for Leadership Power
- Handout 6.2: Techniques of Building Expert Power
- Sheet of paper – one for each participant
- Pen/pencils
- Journals – one per student
- Flit chart paper

Activity #1: Recognizing Types of Power Activity (30 min)

Procedure:

- Icebreaker
- Ask students to work in pairs to think about and write down at least five different types of power that leaders may have.
- Provide and review Handout 6.1A: Examples for Leadership Power.
- Ask students to work in pairs to identify at least one example for each type of power for leaders.

- Ask them to think about what kind of leader may have this type of power and who may have this type of power when he/she is in a leadership position.
- Provide and review Handout 6.1B: Description and Examples for Leadership Power.
- Ask students to compare their own examples with the examples provided.
- Debriefing

Activity #2: Recognizing Techniques to Build Expert Power Activity (30 min)

Procedure

- Icebreaker
- Ask each student to think about and list at least five techniques to build and keep expert power.
- Ask students to share and check their list with a partner.
- Provide and review Handout 6.2: Techniques of Building Expert Power.
- Ask students to list the techniques to build each type of commonly recognized leadership traits in the corresponding cells (Handout 6.2A). Encourage students to discuss if they agree with the list and why.
- Debriefing

Handout 6.1A: Examples for Leadership Power

Directions: Read the descriptions for each type of power that leaders may have, and then give at least one example for each type of power for leaders.

Type of Power	Description		Example
	From Leader Aspect	From Follower Aspect ¹	
Reward power	Reward power is power that a person has because he or she has control of the resources.	The target person complies in order to obtain rewards he or she believes are controlled by the agent.	
Coercive power	Coercive power is power that a person has because he or she has control of the punishments or demotions.	The target person complies in order to avoid punishments he or she believes are controlled by the agent.	
Legitimate power	This is power based on the position or title that one person may have.	The target person complies because he or she believes the agent has the right to make the request and the target person has the obligation to comply.	
Expert power	This is power based on some knowledge that a person may have that others may not.	The target person complies because he or she believes that the agent has special knowledge about the best way to do something.	
Referent power	This is power based solely on attractive characteristics that a person may have.	The target person complies because he or she admires or identifies with the agent and wants to gain the agent's approval.	

¹ Adapted from:

J. French & B.H. Raven, *Studies of Social Power*, Institute for Social Research, Ann Arbor, MI (1959). Available online Jan. 20, 2006 at: <http://www.apmp.org/pdf/fall99/54leadership.pdf>

Handout 6.1B: Description and Examples for Leadership Power

Type of Power	Description		Example
	From Leader Aspect	From Follower Aspect	
Reward power	Reward power is power that a person has because he or she has control of the resources.	The target person complies in order to obtain rewards he or she believes are controlled by the agent.	An example of this type of power may be a boss who has the ability to give raises to those he chooses for any reason he chooses. In many cases these rewards are given to those who perform at a superior level, and may go above and beyond what is expected of them.
Coercive power	Coercive power is power that a person has because he or she has control of the punishments or demotions.	The target person complies in order to avoid punishments he or she believes are controlled by the agent.	An example of this type of power may be a boss who can fire or demote someone. This power is normally expressed when someone is not working at a level that is consistent with everyone else.
Legitimate power	This is power based on the position or title that one person may have.	The target person complies because he or she believes the agent has the right to make the request and the target person has the obligation to comply.	Your principal has this type of power over you. You have to listen to him/her because he is the principal. In turn, the head of the school board has power over the principal because he is in charge of the decisions in the schools in the community.
Expert power	This is power based on some knowledge that a person may have that others may not.	The target person complies because he or she believes that the agent has special knowledge about the best way to do something.	A PhD who is asked to speak on a panel about a topic has expert power because he knows more about a specific topic than most others. Also someone who may be an "expert witness" at a trial has this type of power because he or she may be able to give knowledge about the events at hand.
Referent power	This is power based solely on attractive characteristics that a person may have.	The target person complies because he or she admires or identifies with the agent and wants to gain the agent's approval.	This type of power may be expressed because you like someone or think they are funny or good-looking. They have the ability to entice you into things because you are willing to respect them because of the fact that you are attracted to some quality they may have.

Handout 6.2

Techniques of Building Expert Power²

Expert power is essential because as a leader, your team looks to you for direction and guidance. Team members need to believe in your ability to set a worthwhile direction, give sound guidance and coordinate a good result. Taken together, if your team sees you as an expert, you will find it much easier to motivate team members to perform at their best. So how do you build expert power?

- **Gain expertise:** The first step is fairly obvious – gain expertise. Effective leaders gather two main types of information: 1) Background Information, and 2) Task-Related Information to identify problems to solve and techniques to use. They use the information to build their view of the world in which they operate and gain expertise for the techniques they have to perform.
- **Promote an image of expertise:** Since perceived expertise in many occupations is associated with a person's education and experience, a leader should (subtly) make sure that subordinates, peers, and superiors are aware of his or her formal education, relevant work experience, and significant accomplishments. One common tactic to make this information known is to display diplomas, licenses, awards, and other evidence of expertise in a prominent location. Another tactic is to make subtle references to prior education or experience (e.g., "When I was chief engineer at GE, we had a problem similar to this one").
- **Maintain credibility:** Once established, one's image of expertise should be carefully protected. The leader should avoid making careless comments about subjects on which he or she is poorly informed, and should avoid being associated with projects with a low likelihood of success.
- **Act confidently and decisively in a crisis:** In a crisis or emergency, subordinates prefer a "take charge" leader who

² Adapted from:

Mind Tools. Winning Expert Power – Lead From the Front. Available online Jan. 20, 2006 at: http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newLDR_04.htm

appears to know how to direct the group in coping with the problem. In this kind of situation, subordinates tend to associate confident, firm leadership with expert knowledge. Even if the leader is not sure of the best way to deal with a crisis, to express doubts or appear confused risks the loss of influence over subordinates.

- **Keep informed:** Expert power is exercised through rational persuasion and demonstration of expertise. Rational persuasion depends on a firm grasp of up-to-date facts. It is therefore essential for a leader to keep well-informed of developments within the team, within the organization, and in the outside world.
- **Recognize peer concerns:** Use of rational persuasion should not be seen as a form of one-way communication from the leader to subordinates. Effective leaders listen carefully to the concerns and uncertainties of their team members, and make sure that they address these in making a persuasive appeal.
- **Avoid threatening the self-esteem of peers:** Expert power is based on a knowledge differential between leader and team members. Unfortunately, the very existence of such a differential can cause problems if the leader is not careful about the way he exercises expert power. Team members can dislike unfavorable status comparisons where the gap is very large and obvious. They are likely to be upset by a leader who acts in a superior way, and arrogantly flaunts his greater expertise.

Handout 6.2A

Techniques for Leadership Traits

Directions: List the techniques to build each type of commonly recognized the leadership trait in the corresponding cells.

	Leadership Trait	Techniques to Build the Trait
Primary Leadership Characteristics		
	Management Knowledge	
	Energy Level	
	Dominance	
	Decision Making	
	Social Skills	
	Stability	
	Goodwill	
	Expertise	
	Compromise	

Mental Maturity	
Secondary Leadership Characteristics	
Delegation	
Reflectiveness	
Communication	
Authority	
Reward	
Discipline	
Competing	
Collaboration	
Avoidance	
Accommodation	

