

# 5 bases of power

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The Five Bases of Power The working environment contains different relationships. These relationships start from the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and trickles down to the basic manager employee functionality. Most relationships in the workplace are built through trust; however, trust is built through an entity of power. Power in the workplace can be an influential tool, but can be mislead as an entity of possessing complete control (Busch, 2008). Fortunately, when using power properly, it can build exceptional interpersonal and social relationships among managers and employees (Busch, 2008). There are five bases of power in the working environment: coercive power, reward power, legitimate power, expert power, and referent power.

**Coercive/Reward Power** Coercive power is a considered a personal power because it tends to remove rewards from individuals, and will initiate a form of punishment (Busch, 2008). Employees seek acknowledgement from their employers. When punishment becomes a part of the means to execute policy, employees can become rebellious. An employee is coerced to complete certain tasks. The coercive power seeks a positive outcome in a negative manner (Aguinis, 2001). This form of power creates a shift in employee behavior, which can cause flaws in productivity of the company (Aguinis, 2001). On the contrary, coercive behavior can also provide a positive result from the participant. Another personal power bases is Reward Power. Reward power is bases on the idea that one person has the capacity to provide reward (May-Chiun, 2011). In the working field rewards become directly related to the outcome of a participants work (May-Chiun, 2011). Individuals seek acknowledgement for doing a good job, and this power bases offers acknowledgement by removing negative influences and initiating positive incentives. Reward power enables managers micromanage

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the participant to ensure proper rewards are allocated (Aguinis, 2001). Next the formal entities of the five bases of power will be introduced.

**Legitimate/Expert Power** Legitimate power is a formal power that exhibits negative influences. It is based on the perception that of one person possessing the power to influence by allowing one person to ask employees to comply with company guidelines (Busch, 2008). When a manager is direct with an employee it can have a negative effect on the employee; causing negative interpersonal relationships, decreased job satisfaction, and resistance to comply with company initiatives (Teven, 2010). Another formal power bases is the expert power base. This bases of power is driven by the manager possessing certain skills, education, or training in the specific area (May-Chiun, 2011). Expert power is considered formal because it substantiates the managers because he or she is qualified (May-Chiun, 2011). Even though expert power is formal, the knowledge that the manager possesses brings trust between both parties, and begins to build a better interpersonal relationship.

**Referent Power** The final base of is referent power, and is considered as a personal power because it is established through an initial friendship, admiration of a successful individual, or having feelings of a similar likeness (Busch, 2008). Referent power gives individuals a personal source of reference (Teven, 2010). Studies show that the effectiveness of referent power increases by the similarities in personal goals, interests, and values (May-Chiun, 2011). Referent power strengthens manager-employee relationships because it is based on the trust, respect, and acceptance of the leader beforehand.

**Conclusion** In conclusion, there are five bases of power. Each possesses a different quality that makes it unique. There are three power bases referenced as personal: coercive,

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reward, and referent. Coercive power is established through negative circumstances, and generally produces an upset in the work environment. Reward power provides positive reinforcement for the subordinate by using rewards to in turn stimulate productivity in the workplace. Referent power is based on trust, respect, and acceptance of the leader before leader-subordinate positions, which will stimulate a productive workplace. The two formal base powers are expert and legitimate. Expert power is established through experience, education, or training in a specific area. This power gains trust in a leader-subordinate relationship causing positive reinforcement. Legitimate power, however can produce an unsatisfactory workplace because it is established through distrust of the leader because of the directness that the leader stimulates. The five bases of power are detrimental to the working environment. The five bases of power are used to stimulate behaviors in subordinates to produce productivity. References

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