

# Management legitimate power essay

[Business](#), [Management](#)



## **Management: Legitimate power**

Legitimate power arises when an employee is appointed to a position of authority and is classified as a non-coercive base of social power. Legitimate power increases when an employee is given more responsibilities in the chain of command. Legitimate power is conferred by other employees who are usually in a higher position of authority than their subordinates. Such legitimacy may be revoked by the original granters. Lee and Tui explained that legitimate power is dependent on relationships between social positions and not the personal qualities of role incumbents (2008). In a research conducted in Malaysia Lee and Tui reported that exercising legitimate power showed positive relationships when it came to improving supervision of employees (2008).

Transfer of legitimate power may involve delegation of responsibilities which allows role division between power holders and their subordinates in an acceptable way (Dijke & Poppe, 2007). For a manager to delegate, he must have power, and when the authority to make decisions has been delegated then there has been a transfer in legitimate power from the manager to the employee (Randolph & Kemery, 2011). The superior retains his power even after delegating his responsibilities because the subordinate remains accountable to him. Increasing the legitimate power of employees does not always increase their motivation.

According to Randolph and Kemery, legitimate power plays an insignificant role in the empowerment of employees. This is because employees perceive delegation of duties and the subsequent transfer of legitimate power as a norm within the organization. Similarly, subordinates are less likely to

change their individual behavior as a result of increased legitimate power. Other power bases such as referent power and reward power are more effective in motivating employees (Lee & Tui, 2008). Legitimate power tends to improve the level of autonomy among employees within an organization (Lee & Tui, 2008).

## **Summary**

Legitimate power is power that a manager or leader gets due to his position in an organization or company. This power is transferrable to subordinates through delegation of responsibilities. Power hierarchies in an organization are usually unstable because the most powerful individuals try to maintain their power while their subordinates try to increase it. Through delegation of power the manager retains his power while that of the subordinate increases.

Transfer of legitimate power should not be used as a method of motivating employees because available research has shown that it is not an effective method of doing so. This is because employees view such legitimacy as a norm within the organization. However, it increases the autonomy of an employee and must be followed up by supervision. Managers, who intend to motivate their employees should seek other proven methods such as offering rewards to those employees who take initiatives in the organization.

## **References**

Dijke, M. V., & Poppe, M. (2007). Motivations underlying power dynamics in hierarchically structured groups. *small group research*, 38 (6), 643-669.

Lee, K. L., & Tui, L. G. (2008). The consequences of supervisory power- the

contingent effect of age and length of service. *International journal of business and management*. 3 (370). 40-54.

Randolph, W. A., & Kemery, E. R. (2011). Managerial use of power bases in a model of managerial empowerment practices and employee psychological empowerment. *Journal of leadership and organizational control*. 18 (1). 95-106.