

Where does power come from management essay

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



Power is the capacity to influence the behavior of others. Power is a pervasive part of organizations life. It is used by managers and non managers. Power in the corporate sector is different from power in public administration. It is not necessarily the consequence of authority. A person may not have an authority but still he can yield power. Power is a status for the management to manage the organization. A manager influences his subordinates by use of his power. They manipulate power to accomplish goals and in many cases to strengthen their own positions. It is important to understand the way a manager uses his power for understanding the behavior of employees, because the method of using the power influences the organization behavior. It is essential to allow that much power which is helpful for maintaining a congenial atmosphere in the organization. A person's success or failure in using or reacting to power is determined largely by understanding power, knowing how and when to use it, and being able to anticipate its probable effects. Power is an important element in motivation. It is required to motivate individual or a group to work towards a certain end. Power has been defined in different ways by a number of scholars. Stephen P. Robin defined power as " the ability to influence and control anything that is of value to others". According to Max Weber, Power is " the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance". In the words of Jeffrey Pfeiffer defines power as " the potential ability to influence behavior, to change the course of event, to overcome resistance and to get people to do things that they would not otherwise do". Power is obtained through the possession and control of resources that are valued by another party and

which determine one organizational member's dependence indebtedness or allegiance to another. Power is dualistic in nature and has two faces - positive and negative. Positive power emphasizes groups' goals and concern for people. Negative power uses threats and punishments to get things done through others. Power is related to the contribution of the individuals to the organization and the rewards he expects for that contribution. Theorists feel that power should be spread across different levels of the organization instead of being concentrated in certain parts of the organization.

WHERE DOES POWER COME FROM?

Power originates due to interaction between people. Power is obtained in a variety of ways in an organization. Since power facilitates the organizations adaptation to its environment, the people and group with the organization that are able to assist in that adaption are the ones that will hold power.

When dependency is equal to the power exercised, then power is balanced but when power is greater than dependency or vice versa, then there is an imbalance. The party affected negatively by the imbalance will try to correct it by taking certain actions in some cases it is beneficial to the organization to maintain a power imbalance. People also react to power in different ways and use various strategies to obtain and hold power. Power strategy may be upward, downward or later.

DISTINCTION BETWEEN POWER AUTHORITY AND INFLUENCE

A person with a high need for power has the need to manipulate and lead others. Power itself refers to the ability of an individual or groups to bring about a change in some other individuals or group in some way. The person

possessing power has the ability to bring about a change or manipulate other people or groups. Power may or may not be legitimate, whereas authority is a source of power, and hence is legitimate. Authority has the willing acceptance of the power over whom it is exercised, whereas power is uni-directional. It may or may not be liked by the person over whom it is exercised. Authority is the promotion or pursuit of collective goals that are associated with group consensus, whereas power is the pursuit of individual or particularistic goals associated with group compliance. Influence refers to the ability to modify or change people in general ways like changing their performance and satisfaction; it is a broader concept than both power and authority. Although both power and influence are an essential part of leadership, influence is more closely associated with the function of leading than power. Another difference between power and influence is that power has more 'force' than influence. Power gives a person a right to change certain relationships within an organization. It has the ability to alter reality. Influence can only alter a person's perceptions about reality and their relationship in the organization. Therefore, the difference between power and authority is that authority has legitimacy and acceptance, whereas power may or may not. And influence differs from power in terms of scope: it has a broader scope than power. Though influence and power are different, the two are related and sometimes the terms are used interchangeably. There is a slight difference between authority and influence. While authority generally flows from a higher level to a lower level in a hierarchy, influence jumps level and in many cases may flow from a lower level to a much higher level. A manager's power in an organization may be measured in terms of ability to -

give rewards promise reward threaten to withdraw current rewards withdraw current reward threaten punishment to punish In this sense power is exercised not only to give benefit to a person's for behaving in a particular manner but also for withdrawing the benefit already given if he does not follow the commands.

SOURCES OF POWER

Power is different types depending on where it is sourced from and how it is used. Social psychologists John French and Bertram Raven identified five sources of power: legitimate power, reward power, coercive power, expert power, and referent power, which can be discussed in the details below.

LEGITIMATE POWER:

This power corresponds authority. When a person is lawfully entitled to exercise power over the other is called legitimate power. The influence has the authority to influence the behavior of the other person. A person's structural position within a formal group or an organization, more often than not, plays a very important part in determining his access to one or more of the bases of power. This is known as legitimate power and refers to the power a person receives because of his or her position in the formal organizational hierarchy. The person who has the legitimate power has the right to punish as well as reward other people. Thus, legitimate power embraces coercive and reward power. However legitimate power is broader in scope than both coercive and reward power. Legitimate power closely resembles authority and primarily includes acceptance by organizational members of the authority of the person's organizational position. Employees

feel the obligation to accept this power out of differences from the person's organizational positions. Legitimate power can be derived from three main sources. The cultural values prevailing in a society, organizations or group determine what is legitimate in the same. For example, in certain societies, legitimate power increases with age, and the older a person gets, the more he possesses. In some other societies, gender, job, or functional position may be the criterion for legitimate power. For example, engineer have more legitimate power in a company's 'operational' functions, whereas accountant has more legitimate power in 'financial' matters. People may derive legitimate power from an accepted social structure that confers legitimate power on power belonging to certain class or rank within a society or organization. For example, blue-collar workers who accept employment in a company accept the hierarchical structure and give legitimate power to their supervisor as soon as they accept employment. Legitimate power can also derive from a person's designation as an agent or representative of a powerful person or group. The chair person of a committee, the board member of a company, the union leader and elected officials hold this form of power.

REWARD POWER:

When a person has the power to give rewards to others for behaving or doing what the influence wants them to do, it is reward power. Since people can benefit by obeying the power of the person, they will fall in line. Reward power has its source in a person's ability to control the resources used to reward others. Potential rewards that are valued in an organizational context include pay increases, promotions, favorable work assignments, new

equipment, praise, feedback and recognition. Reward power gives manager the power to administer positive reinforcement to others, which encourage repetition of positive behavior. Reward power is diametrically opposite to coercive power. However, reward power arises from the ability to give a reward or eliminate negative factor from persons work sphere.

COERCIVE POWER:

It implies non physical punishments. The employee has the power to punish a subordinate for not carrying out orders or for not meeting requirements. Coercive power is based on fear. A person who has the power to harm another person's physically and psychologically, by threatening his job security or punishing him in some way, is said to have coercive power. It provides an individual with the means to physically harm, torment, humiliate or deny something to others. It makes employees strictly follow the rules, directives or policies of an organization. People pretended to work busily when the boss walks through that area, only due to fear of punishment, which the boss in a position to mete out. In this case, the boss has coercive power and hence can consciously or unconsciously coerces people to work. Organizational participants are usually coerced by punishments like reprimands, demotion or termination. Coercive power is negative in nature. The regular threat and use of negative sanctions creates feeling of hostility and resentment in employees and may be less functional in long run than the other basis of power, which are more positive in nature.

EXPERT POWER:

When a person has an expert knowledge of some kind or he is a specialist in a particular then one can influence the behavior of others. Expert power refers to the influence a person use as result of some special skills or knowledge that he possesses. The increasingly specialized nature of job has increased dependence on expert to accomplish goals. Expert is perceived to have specialized knowledge or understanding in certain well defined areas. A doctor, computer professionals, tax accountant, industrial psychologist and other such professional acquires power as a result of the specialized knowledge they possesses. In organizations staff specialist possesses expert power in certain specific functional areas but not in others. For example, an engineer has expert power in the field of production but not in areas like finance, human resource and so on. Another example could be a doctor has expert power on his patient. A production manager may yield influence on his subordinates because of his vast experience and expertise in a specific manufacturing field, not others.

REFERENT POWER:

Referent power is similar to charisma. It is based on admiration of one person for another and a desire to be like that person. The admiration can cause a person to change his behavior and attitude to resemble those of the person possessing the referent power. Referent power need not always be linked to a person's power in formal organization. Employees may respect, admire and try to emulate another person who may be a superior, peer, or even a subordinate. For example if individual ' X' admires and identifies himself with individual ' Y' than ' Y' can exercise power over' X'. However it

is always not necessary for ' Y' to know the power he has over ' X'.
Sometimes ' Y' can influence ' X' even without being aware of it.

Influence Tactics and Power:

One's influence tactic of choice depends on many factors such as intended outcomes and one's power relative to the target person. People typically use the exchange and rational appeal when parties are relatively equal in power, when resistance is not anticipated, and when the benefits are organizational as well as personal. Influence efforts intended to build others up more frequently lead to positive results than those efforts intended to put others down. Leaders who have only coercive or legitimate power may be able to use only coalition, legitimizing, or pressure tactics to influence followers. People usually use legitimizing or pressure tactics when an influence has the upper hand, when resistance is anticipated, or when the other person's behavior violates important norms. There is a strong relationship between the relative power of agents and targets and the types of influence targets used. People use ingratiation when they are at a disadvantage, when they expect resistance, or when they will personally benefit if the attempt is successful. Leaders with high amounts of referent power have built up close relationships with followers and may be able to use a wide variety of influence tactics. Leaders should pay attention to how they are influencing others and to why they believe such methods are called for.

THE ETHICS OF POWER AND POLITICS:

Both power and politics are dynamic concept and are a function of the interaction between different elements in organization. A lot of importance

has been given to the ethical dimension of power and politics in organization. It has been realized that the misuse of power and the illegitimate use of politics not only have adverse effect on organization but they are also unethical. It has already been explained that the basic difference between power and politics is that power is confined to formal authority, whereas politics exceed the authority sanctioned by one's own formal role. The use of power is non political as long as it is used within the boundaries of formal authority, policies, procedures and job description and is directed towards the accomplishment of approved organization goal. However power becomes political when it is used outside the area of established authority, policies, procedures, job description and organizational goals. It is not always easy to differentiate between ethical and unethical behavior. The ethical dimensions of an action vary from person to person and situation to situation. What may seem unethical in one scenario may be perfectly acceptable and even desirable in one scenario. It is very difficult to lay down standard of organization ethics and expect people to conform to them. The implementation of ethical standard is often difficult due to the ambiguity of standard and the subjective nature of ethical issues. However it can be concluded that when power or political behavior is used in an organization to harm the interest of the organization or of the people therein that behavior is unethical.

Power Balance:

Power is a function of dependency. When the degree of dependency of the target is equal to the degree of power exercised by the agent, then power is said to be balanced. When the agent exercise more power than the target's

dependence or vice versa, an imbalance power is occurs. As long as power is balanced, the relationship is harmonious. When the balance is lost, there is unrest and disharmony.

Balancing Imbalance:

When the power is imbalance, retaliatory action and unrest take place. For example, union-management relations are balanced as long as the power and dependency of both groups are matched. When an imbalance occurs, strike or lockouts take place. These methods are adopted by the parties concerned to restore the balance of power. In a situation of imbalance, the party which continuously experiences a loss in the relationship tries to balance power. There are several methods the party can adopt to restore balances: The party can withdraw from the relationship. The party can form an alternatives relationship with another party of equal or greater power. The party can form a coalition with another weak party to gain group power. The party can achieve a balance of power through status valuation. The greater the power needs of a person, the higher his dependency on his subordinates. Therefore, a powerful person who wants to maintain his power will avoid antagonizing subordinates out of fear that they shift their loyalty to others thereby causing a reduction in his status. The party can equalize power through regular and continuous interaction among them.

Maintaining Imbalance:

In some situations it is desirable to maintain an imbalance in power. Balanced power has the dependency to undermine authority, which may affect the achievements of organizational goals. Therefore, some

organizations make a conscious effort to maintain an imbalance. This is usually done by creating a psychological distance between people. For example, a person with legitimate power can be provided with a separate office, a separate wash room or other additional facilities. This allows the superior to maintain a distance from subordinates and thus exercise power effectively .

Conclusions:

From the above we can conclude that, the power plays a very important role in the running of organizations efficiently and effectively. People who ' run' the organization use power over people who ' work for' the organization to get things done by them. Power is obtained through the control of resources like money, physical assets, and knowledge. In order to use power to control the behavior of others, the power holder needs to legitimate that power. The legitimization process involves taking up certain duties and responsibilities towards the people over whom power is to be exercised. This ensures that the use of power is acceptable to the subjects. Some leaders use the coercive power to get work done by his subordinates, all the techniques that the leaders use the different power is for the betterment of both organization as well as the employees.