

# The five bases of power essay sample



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Power is said to be the ability of one individual to make another do what the other would otherwise not have done (Wrong, 1995). It can be wielded by anyone as will be seen in the case of Corporation A. There are five bases of power that will be discussed in relation with the corporation and the relationships they have in regard to each other. It is also not unusual for the bases of power to be dependent on each other and this will also be discussed.

The five bases of power are: coercive, reward, legitimate, referent and expert (Wrong 1995). The coercive power is based on the possibility of negative consequences resulting from certain behavior (Molm 1997). In Corporation A, there is a policy that employees are evaluated annually. The rating of the employees determines whether or not they get a bonus. Those with high rating get a bonus while those with low rating do not get any. The marketing manager shows coercive power by constantly reminding the employees of the evaluation and the consequences of high rating.

The reward power occurs when one is promised reward as a result of desired behavior (Molm 1997). In Corporation A, the reward power is demonstrated in the provision of a bonus to the employee with the best rating. Employee 1 works extra time and ensures that all the work is done in the right manner. He does this to be able to get the bonus that will enable him to go on a vacation that would otherwise not be affordable. The reward is the bonus and hence encourages work among the employees. In this scenario, the coercive and reward power are dependent on each other as one makes the other possible. The promise of reward for good performance and the lack of it for failure to get high rating work together.

Expert power is based on the fact that no other individual is able to do what that specific individual can do. The expert in the particular field then has expert power as can be seen in the case of Employee 2. Since he is the only one who can deal with the financial statements of the company, he is able to make a deal with the accounting manager in order to shorten his work-week. The company policy does not allow this for any other employee but in his case it becomes an exception thus demonstrating the expert power. If there were other people able to do his work, he would not have been able to make such an arrangement with the manager.

The legitimate power is based on the title and status of an individual (Wrong 1995). In the case of Corporation A, it has been demonstrated in various ways. The accounting manager exhibits legitimate power by agreeing to make a deal with the Certified Public Accountant that is not covered in the company's policies and procedures. Also, when Employee 3 is made the leader of his team without having a long tenure in the company it shows the legitimate power of the person in charge of the department. The decisions made are not based on any rules of the company but at the discretion of the particular individual as he or she deems best.

The last base of power is the referent power which is based on an individual's personal characteristic. The person wielding this power is said to be charismatic and has the ability to get people to do what he wants by simply airing his or her views. The person tends to be liked by most of the people around and due to this they tend to listen to him more as is demonstrated by Employee 3. This employee has not been in the company as long as some of the other people have and thus it would be expected that he

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gets a promotion after the rest have moved ahead. However, since he has a good personality and others listen to him, they implement an idea he comes up with although they have misgivings considering the company policies.

The employee's charisma makes the people do something they would otherwise not do. When the idea works, Employee 3 is given the position of team leader which would otherwise not have occurred considering his short term of tenure in the company. Although there is no stipulation that when one gives an idea and it works he or she will be promoted, in this case he is promoted. This is a reward for a job well done and consequently it encourages the other employees to become thinkers and come up with ideas that can help the company (Molm 1997).

In conclusion, one can comfortably say that in an organization environment, anyone can wield power but it has different bases. The different bases determine who can use it, when it can be used and the reason for using it. Some powers are used as an encouragement others as a deterrent while others are used to prompt some desired action. Also, some powers come from an individual's personality while others come from the position held at that particular time. The different bases of power interact to finally bring about the desired output from all the employees and in this way they form various relationships with each other as has been seen in the case of Corporation A.

## References

1. Molm L. D., 1997, Coercive Power in Social Exchange, Cambridge University Press, New York

2. Wrong D. H., 1995, Power: Its Forms Bases and Uses, Transaction  
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