

## Learning & development

### What is the source of your power?

**The concepts of power and leadership have been and will continue to be interconnected. While an individual may exert power without being a leader, an individual cannot be a leader without having power. We can define power simply as 'the potential to influence others.'**

In organizational settings, leaders must exert power to achieve individual, team, and organizational goals. Leaders must be able to influence their followers to achieve greater performance; their superiors and peers to make important decisions; and their stakeholders to ensure the vitality of the organization. A leader's effectiveness depends on his or her ability to influence superiors, peers and subordinates. Influence in one direction tends to enhance influence in other directions.

You cannot increase your influence or impact as a leader unless you understand the elements of power and build the power base you need to be effective in the domain in which you are working. Without power, there is no influence or leadership.

Broadly speaking there are two sources of power for leaders: organisational power and personal power. Personal power sources are, for example, knowledge power, expressiveness power and character power. Among the organisational power sources we find role power, resources power and reputation power.

The success of an influence attempt depends greatly on the manner in which your power is exercised. Effective leaders are likely to use power in a subtle, careful fashion that minimises status differentials and avoids threats to the target person's or persons' self-esteem. In contrast, leaders who exercise power in an arrogant, manipulative, domineering manner are like to engender resistance.

Taking power a step further, a key leadership task is to enable others to achieve their own sense of power and success, in other words to empower others. Leaders can maximise their own power and their own opportunities for success through empowering others or giving some of their power away.

Do you know your power sources? Do you know how to use them effectively?

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