



## THE SEVEN TYPES OF POWER IN THE WORKPLACE

Power is defined as the ability to do or act; the capability of doing or accomplishing something. All of us have some kind of power, but we have a tendency as individuals to want to be modest and say 'Oh me, no. I don't have any power. Somebody else has power.' But we all have some sort of power, but not all of us are comfortable with it. When you are able to get comfortable with the idea of having power, you are then able to take that next assignment or promotion that is sent your way.

**There are seven common types of power in the workplace:**

- **Coercive Power** – This is associated with people who are in a position to punish others. People fear the consequences of not doing what has been asked of them.
- **Connection Power** – This is based upon who you know. This person knows, and has the ear of, other powerful people within the organisation.
- **Expert Power** – This comes from a person's expertise. This is commonly a person with an acclaimed skill or accomplishment.
- **Informational Power** – A person who has access to valuable or important information.
- **Legitimate Power** - This comes from the position a person holds. This is related to a person's title and job responsibilities. You might also hear this referred to as positional power.
- **Referent Power** – People who are well-liked and respected.
- **Reward Power** – This is based upon a person's ability to bestow rewards. Those rewards might come in the form of job assignments, schedules, pay or benefits.

In the workplace, connection power is commonly used. This is the power of the people you know. Connection power is a type of power that is related to job title. It's bestowed upon you, based on who you are and where you work. Often executives have administrative assistants that act as gatekeepers. If you have a good relationship with the gatekeeper, then you are more likely to get an appointment or get the boss's ear. It is really important to identify who has those connective powers with others in a business in order to stake out who's on the buying committee, and who holds sway. You can get some sense of who has what kind of power by knowing who shows up to those meetings and who can toss things into the conversation.

Another power that is used often is information power. This type of power is becoming more important because we live in an age of technology and have a lot of data available to us in an instant. Information power is often earned within an organization because it might not have anything to do with your title, department or position that you hold. It could just be that people confide in you, or that you have great listening skills. The interesting part of information power is not necessarily always knowing, but how we get the information. Today we have so much information on the internet, it's not about our ability to know the information off the top of our heads but to be able to sort and find what we need when we need it.

Coercive power, seemingly destructive on the surface, can be an important power in certain situations, such as a crisis. In that case, someone needs to step up and take charge. As employees, we don't want to be told every time we engage with our supervisor or the C-suite to be told 'I'm the boss and that's why you need to do it.' A manager in an organisation should have to build a relationship with their employees, be that people who is offering them guidance and the tools for success.

What workplace power do you have?

*Adapted from Robyn Johnson, Expert Access Radio*

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