

Legitimate Power: How to Build Loyal Followers

Legitimate Power, also known as Earned or Respect Power, is a combination of respect, reputation and one's history. Reputation is the sum total of how you have conducted yourself in your professional and personal affairs. If you have shown respect, integrity and character in all your dealings, people will know it. Legitimate Power is the type of power an individual has when s/he is placed in special regard because of her/his honorable character. As a result of being honorable, other people trust and respect these individuals and willingly follow them. This type of power is earned through one's track record, stability and use of past power. It precedes a person and remains to influence others, even when the power-holder's physical presence is gone. Legitimate Power exaggerates strengths and can create an aura about a person that instills respect, and even awe.

But more than just reputation, this power is rooted in true influence. Respect Power is the hardest of all powers to gain. It must be earned one drop at a time, but it is also the longest lasting. Respect Power exerts a sustained influence over the audience long after the speaker has physically walked away. A persuader must have honor, integrity, character and trustworthiness and must engender respect to earn Legitimate Power.

Respect Power is based on having unquestionable honor, integrity and dependability. When someone possesses Legitimate Power, her basic character is without deceit or fraud. Rather, her character is based on the truth. Such a personal commitment to integrity is felt by those around her and creates a long-term loyalty toward and respect for that individual. When people perceive their leaders as legitimate, power is granted to those leaders. People instinctively trust legitimate leaders and are thus willing to be led and persuaded by them.

Parents and religious leaders often possess this type of power. Because of their reputation, people are instantly influenced by them, without needing to analyze their message or the persuasive situation. Reputation like this wields a magical power. With

one stroke of its wand, your good reputation can double your ability to persuade and influence.

Francis Bacon once said, “Knowledge itself is power.” Knowledge Power is earned Legitimate Power. It is based on the individual’s expertise in a certain subject, procedure or situation. People can be persuaded by you if they think you have more expertise in a given area than they do. For example, lawyers and doctors possess this type of power. People rely on their opinions, believe what they say and trust implicitly what they do simply because of the extent of schooling or experience they have. We accept the arguments and data of people we assume have knowledge, whether it’s real or perceived. Knowledge Power also includes experience, wisdom and intelligence.

Types of Knowledge Power: The Instant Impact of Knowledge

Informational Power – When you know something others need to know, you hold power over them. Informational Power is exerted when an institution’s or individual’s influence is based on the information it holds. Aristotle Onassis said, “The secret of business is to know something that no one else knows.”

Resource Power – If you have access to key persons, commodities, goods or services that are valued by others, you hold some power over them. As the saying goes, “It’s not what you know; it’s who you know.”

Expertise Power – When you have special skill sets, expertise or knowledge that others believe is relevant to their needs and which exceeds their own, they will do what you say and/or listen to your opinions.