

The Use of Power in Negotiation

Power increases your ability to negotiate and persuade. Obviously, however, this persuasive tool can also be improperly used. Manipulating others may get you the immediate results you're looking for, but they're not going to last. If you use manipulation to get your way, you won't have people's respect or friendship. Rather, they'll harbor animosity, resistance and resentment toward you. There are three major types of power that are used in negotiations: Legitimate Power—power that is rightfully earned and rightfully exercised, Authority Power—power that is based on external factors such as position or title and Psychological Power—power that is derived from playing off of another's psyche. The following paragraphs take a brief but closer look at these various types of power that are used in negotiations.

Legitimate Power

Legitimate Power is the hardest type of power to gain, during a negotiation. Legitimate Power continues to influence others even after you've walked away from the negotiating table and your physical presence is gone. Legitimate Power is often based on knowledge; that is, your expertise in a certain subject, procedure or situation. People can often be persuaded if they think you have more expertise in a subject area than they do. For example, lawyers and doctors possess this type of power. People rely on attorneys' and physicians' opinions, believe what they say and trust implicitly what they do because of the extent of schooling or experience they have. We accept arguments and data from the people we assume have accurate knowledge, whether it's real or perceived. Legitimate Power can also be based on your resources. 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."

Authority Power

Authority Power is based on how other people view your status in relation to their own, be that viewpoint real or perceived. For example, have you ever gone up to someone in a store who looked like an employee to ask her/him for help? Even if you didn't know for

sure that s/he was an employee, somehow s/he still gave you the impression that s/he was the one to approach for direction. That's an example of Authority Power based solely on appearance. On the other hand, your boss, the U.S. President and a police officer all wield real Authority Power by virtue of the positions they hold. Impressive titles are another way in which people hold Authority Power. When we hear "doctor" in front of a name, it automatically registers in our minds that the person is important, powerful and intelligent. We love to hear phrases like "two out of three doctors recommend" or "nine out of ten dentists use this product or service."

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