

Authority Power: Instant, Automatic Power

Authority Power is based on how other people perceive your authority. You have authority over others when they believe you have a greater title, control or strength over them. Authority allows those in power to intimidate or even force others to comply with them because of their status, position, background or rank. Police officers are excellent examples of this type of power. Whether it is their uniform, their title, their badge or their car that motivates you, you feel compelled to comply with cops based on their position and authority.

We can't be blamed for our natural urge to follow authority. That's because we have been taught since childhood to believe and follow proper authority. It all started when our parents taught us that disobedience to authority is wrong and that it has consequences. From a very early age, we are taught to listen to our teachers, our parents, political figures, etc. Even in church, we learn that strict obedience is what brings blessings upon us and makes God happy. As the biblical stories go, Adam and Eve were kicked out of the Garden of Eden and Jonah was swallowed by a whale because of disobedience. In contrast, Abraham was blessed for his willingness to follow authority and to sacrifice his son. Parents know more than children; God knows more than us.

Often, we submit to our authority figures in an effort to avoid pain and punishment. This desire to avoid unpleasant consequences is part of the reason why we hold such respect for authority—disobedience can have stiff penalties. Authority Power, if used improperly, can make us feel controlled or manipulated. By wielding this type of power, you may get the immediate results you're looking for, but they're not going to last and you're not going to have people's respect or friendship when all is said and done. Ultimately, this kind of manipulation will destroy cooperation and breed resistance. It will kill enthusiasm and in its stead stir up animosity.

Master Persuaders know how people handle the different types of Authority Power. In your persuasive efforts, understand that there are three ways in which people generally deal with Authority Power.

1. *Reliance* – They have complete confidence that the authority figure can do no wrong. They don't have to make decisions because the authority figure has made them for them.
2. *Indifference* – They are apathetic toward authority. They really don't care what the authority figure says or represents.
3. *Suspicion* – The opposite of reliance, suspicion is distrust of authority and resentment of anyone in charge of or wielding power over someone else.

Authority Power can be further subdivided into more specific categories. These are authority by Position, Uniform, Title, Public Opinion and External Characteristics. With the following examples, you will see that Authority Power can have a very motivating influence on an individual.