

# TOP 10 TYPES OF LEADERSHIP POWER



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# Top 10 Types of Leadership Power

## Top 10 Types of Power in Leadership

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In 1959, the social psychologists John French and Bertram Raven carried out a comprehensive study into leadership power.

In this work and its subsequent revisions, they identified **six bases of leadership power**.

These provide a **useful framework for understanding leadership power** and how to use it within the workplace.

Different types of power have varying levels of effectiveness. This is dependent on the situation as well as the people involved.

**All leaders** demonstrate at least one of these types at any time.

**Formal types of power** depend on the exertion of power through an appointed or elected position. French and Raven's examples are coercive, reward and legitimate power.

**Personal powers** are intrinsic to the person and are related to reputation, rather than the position held in a company – for example, referent, expert and informational power.

Further explanation of these is covered below.

## Traditional Types of Power

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# 1. Coercive Power

This type of power involves **forcing people to do something using threat or force**. The fear of negative consequences is what makes people act.

It can also be achieved through punishment, which means that someone will follow certain orders to avoid disciplinary action.

In a positive sense, this power sets **high expectations** and **can encourage innovation** when working with limited resources. Staff may feel that if they don't perform well, they risk reprimand, demotion or replacement.

However, this is the **type of power most often abused**.

It can create resentment and **job dissatisfaction**, leading to problems in the workforce.

It can only ever result in workers achieving the bare minimum. They will not be inspired to go above and beyond their duties to achieve anything more.

Staff will be reluctant to take ownership of their work and will not work towards developing their skills or competencies.

An over-reliance on coercion can lead to a high turnover of staff and poor working attitudes.

Nevertheless, this power can be deemed **necessary in extreme situations**.

In emergencies when action needs taking quickly and directly, the use of **coercive power** can be justified.

# 2. Reward Power

Considered the opposite of coercive power, reward power **encourages compliance through incentives**.

The desire to receive the reward encourages people to follow procedures correctly and meet objectives.

**Rewards** are often built into the fabric of organizations. For example, promotions, raises and bonuses are often used as rewards for meeting targets.

Simple praise, thanks and compliments are more personal, non-monetary rewards.

All rewards should be attainable for employees to strive for them.

This improves staff morale, introduces **healthy competition** and can boost company productivity.

Still, reward power may only be effective to the point the reward has been received. At that point, the drive and **motivation** to exceed performance is no longer there.

Additionally, it is also worth remembering that what motivates one employee may not motivate others.

Choose a **variety of reward types** to make sure they appeal to your workforce. For example, along with bonuses, include increased holidays, **flexi-time** or study breaks.

### 3. Legitimate Power

Legitimate power is linked to **the hierarchical structures that are in place** within an organization.

**CEOs**, company managers and supervisors all hold legitimate power. It is conferred as a result of status.

As a result, individuals beneath them in the structure recognize their authority and are obligated to comply with their instructions or orders.

With this type of power, it is important to explain the importance of carrying out certain tasks. When employees understand the value of an objective, they will carry out their duties more effectively.

This type of power is only effective as long as an individual remains in this formal relationship.

This is because **the power is linked to the position in the company, rather than the individual.**

## 4. Expert Power

This type of power is created when a leader holds a **specific set of skills that others do not possess.**

People will look towards an expert for information and guidance. Having highly developed skills and knowledge creates a sense of trust and respect.

This type of power is **independent of an individual's position.** It can be increased by focusing on strengthening and improving expertise.

However, its influence is specific to the particular area of expertise. For example, an expert in human resource management would not have this power in the field of marketing.

**Expert power must be used appropriately** or it can create misunderstanding. Experts

need to avoid arrogance and use more subtle ways to show off expertise.

Driving change and increasing company success can be achieved by using expert power effectively.

It is best used to **train and develop** the expert knowledge of other employees.

## 5. Referent Power

This power relates to **role models**. When people identify with a leader, they inspire respect and can influence others.

Respect is gained by a leader's ability to handle different situations. It can be earned through a track record of successful company projects.

Leaders who wield referent power create admiration in their followers.

As interpersonal relationships play a large role, this type of power can be developed by **improving interpersonal skills**.

One example is **social media influencers**. They are respected and liked by their followers, thus impacting the actions those followers take.

However, not everyone will identify and relate with the same leaders, meaning a leader may have power over some people in their team but not others.

Further, it can also take a long time to build up this type of power.

This means it is not one of the strongest powers to use in the workplace.

However, it is **the most beneficial power to use when dealing with autonomous colleagues**.



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## 6. Informational Power

This type of power was a later addition by French and Raven to the **main five power bases** described above.

Informational power is gained when a leader controls who has access to certain types of information.

It is often said that **knowledge is power**. If certain individuals have access to confidential information, they can hold power over others.

For example, if an employee holds files detailing forthcoming restructuring changes, they

will hold power over those whom the files relate to.

**This power only holds while the information is secure.** Once it has been revealed, the power is lost.

This power is best used when wanting to **build up influence**. Information should be shared to benefit the organization and employees.

## Additional Types of Power

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Although the ideas described by French and Ravens are very well known, \*\*other types of power have been identified in recent years.

These modern additions apply particularly to the **leadership styles** of today.

Such progressive leadership styles often focus on **developing individual employees**, alongside the wider goals of the organization. This increases innovation and creativity.

### 7. Connection Power

**A leader who is connected to influential people** will gain connection power.

This type of power can be achieved through **networking**.

If a person's connections are admired by others, they are likely to look towards them as a leader for guidance.

These connections could be potential investors or successful people in a related field. They assist a company with achieving its goals.



It is a useful power for **motivating staff** and inspiring them to achieve success.

## 8. Moral Power

Moral power relates to a **set of strong beliefs and values** held by a leader.

This **set of beliefs** inspires others and action is taken in alignment with these beliefs.

A leader who uses moral power will have a **clearly defined personal mission**. They act in ways that promote this.

By consistently acting according to their principles, leaders inspire trust and their example will be followed.

Moral power is used during acts of service. These inspire respect towards the leader, and employees seek to emulate these moral standards.

## 9. Charismatic Power

This type of power is **related to the personality** of the leader.

It is a persuasive power that is achieved when followers are attracted to the leader's confident and engaging nature.

Charismatic leaders inspire others to act through their natural warmth and **charm**.

People want to please this sort of leader in the hopes they will be the focus of the leader's positive attention.

It is a type of power that can be gained through a focus on interpersonal skills and engaging with an audience.

Charisma can be learned by practicing empowerment strategies and **developing self-confidence**.

It is useful for situations that require a team to work together to reach a potentially unachievable goal, where inspiration and hope are needed to counteract the apparent insurmountability of the challenge.

## 10. Empowerment Power

Great leaders **empower others to lead**.

They recognize the accomplishments of others and reward them for their success. This encourages others to be leaders in their own right.

Followers will then achieve their own success as a result of sharing the power of their leader.

As leaders help others to grow, **personal development** is a key focus.

These leaders will build on the key strengths and abilities of each team member.

This increases the team members' **job satisfaction** and commitment to their role, as they are perceived as valued members of the team.

## What Is Power in Leadership?

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# What Is Leadership?

**Leadership** is the ability to **influence others to work towards a common goal**.

Leaders are responsible for making decisions that affect organizations and employees.

To ensure success, great leadership requires a combination of qualities and all leaders share some **fundamental characteristics**.

These include:

- Effective **communication skills**
- The desire to influence others
- A vision of the big picture
- **Self-confidence** and determination
- Resilience and a growth mindset
- The ability to motivate people
- Honesty and **integrity**

Leaders are recognized as **people who take control of situations**. They direct others with confidence and possess the drive to continuously improve.

The **ability to get people to act** is a defining characteristic of a leader.

They can inspire, instruct and persuade others to take action towards a goal.

## Why Do We Need Power to Lead?

All leaders use their power to lead.

Power is necessary for leadership, because people will not follow a leader who does not exert some form of power.

Having the power to affect, influence and guide others creates compliance.

Leaders can wield this influential power for better or worse.

At best, leadership power is used to **drive positive change and create success**. This helps an organization develop and thrive.

Various **different types of power** have been identified.

Learning about these types and their potential impact is essential, as it leads to a deeper understanding of what makes an influential leader and how to get the most from employees.

## Why Does Power Matter for Leadership?

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Although power is necessary for leadership, **using it effectively can be challenging**. Certain workplace situations require **the effective use of particular leadership powers**.

### Implement Policy Changes

A leader needs to be able to **influence the behaviour** of their employees.

But without developing a relationship of trust, this can be difficult.

This can make it particularly hard to implement policy changes because **such changes can create resistance** within a workforce and lead to performance issues.

Changes can relate to operational policy change or employee policy change.

For example, initiating new software might require different operational systems. This can be a difficult time for staff whilst transitioning to the new system.

**Effective leadership reduces these negative impacts.**

One way a good leader might reduce policy changes' negative effects is to explain the goals of the company and what they are aiming to achieve with the changes.

This will encourage staff to understand the nature of any changes in terms of the bigger **strategy**.

## **Promote Shared Company Culture**

**Company culture** is the **set of values that define a company**, illustrated through its aims and objectives.

**An effective leader defines, demonstrates and encourages participation in the company culture.**

Using leadership power effectively helps to maintain and promote shared company culture.

This will benefit the organization, as staff will feel **satisfied** and be motivated to achieve success.

When staff are motivated by a shared set of values, **team-building** and a collaborative work ethic are encouraged.

## **Inspire Loyalty**

A powerful leader will inspire loyalty.

Loyalty to the company, as well as to colleagues, is a quality that can be nurtured in staff by effective and trustworthy leadership.

This will command respect and staff will feel a **sense of commitment** towards the organization. This will result in less misconduct and increased job satisfaction for staff.

## Empower Others

A good leader can use their power to empower their team.

Progressive leaders recognize the value of empowering their employees.

They will guide their staff towards making autonomous decisions and **taking responsibility for their own development** by, for example, developing staff competencies and providing training opportunities for them to increase their skills.

This boosts productivity, as staff are capable of making autonomous improvements within their role to increase success.

## Final Thoughts

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As a leader, it is important to be able to **differentiate between these different types of power**.

Effective leaders are **aware of their strengths** and how best to apply them within their organization.

This way they can identify which types would be useful for each situation to **achieve the best overall outcome** for the organization and employees.

Most leaders use a mixture of types of power.

Not all forms of power exert a positive influence. Consider carefully which type is most beneficial to the situation to avoid any negative consequences.

Competent leaders focus on developing their knowledge and abilities to use different types of power.

Although some powers are related to organizational positions, skilled leaders use their position to gain power in other areas.

A good leader seeks to **consistently improve their leadership skills** and adapt to using the type of power required by the situation.

Whatever power is used, employers should be mindful of the **impact on their employees** to create a positive and enthusiastic **working atmosphere**.