

Do You Rely on "Position Power" Too Often?

By Dr. John Drozdal

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There are two sources of power managers can use to influence others to get results. The first is the "position power" conferred when a person assumes a managerial role in the organization, at any level. It comes from the ability to control resources and consequences. The second is what we call "personal power." Personal power is earned through competence, credibility, something called likeability, and relationship building. One of the mistakes that newer managers—and even some more experienced ones—make is to rely too much on position power to get things done. Here's why that's a bad thing.

Think of the power a manager has as a bank account. When a person first gets promoted into a management role, there is an initial deposit into the "power" account that comes with the position. If a manager attempts to get work done through others by playing the position power card all the time (i.e., "do it or else"), they can drain the "power" account down to nothing. However, if a manager relies on personal power most of the time, he/she makes deposits to the power

account and can actually increase the ability to influence others. While position power becomes available when a person becomes a manager, earning personal power takes time.

Here are a few suggestions for increasing your personal power:

1. Knowledge is power. Really understand the business you are in so that when you call upon your employees to do something, they know you know exactly what you're asking them to do.
2. Credibility increases personal power. Your actions should always be consistent with your words – employees respect that.
3. Likeability does NOT mean you're everyone's friend. It means that you are approachable and open to feedback—and when you call upon others, they are more willing to do what is needed.
4. Relationships are everything. Understanding what your employees need to be successful, and going the extra mile to provide it, makes a huge difference in their eyes. ■

Dr. John Drozdal, Principal Consultant and President of The Drozdal Company, provides organizational development and training services to teach managers and workgroups how to get work done by and through others in a way that is both satisfying and effective. His recent clients include General Mills, Pulte Homes, The Nature Conservancy, Land O'Lakes, and Xcel Energy. In addition to starting The Drozdal Company in 1991, Dr. Drozdal's experience in organizational development includes more than 15 years as a practicing manager in both the public and private sectors, as well as a doctorate in educational leadership and an MBA. Contact Dr. John Drozdal at 822-1468 or jdrozdal@drozdalcompany.com.

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jdrozdal@drozdalcompany.com
www.drozdalcompany.com
Albuquerque, NM: 505.822.1468



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