

# INFLUENCING

## Up, Down and Across the Organization

Today's workplace is changing. As organizations shift from a structured top-down hierarchy to a more collaborative and team-centric dynamic, there is a growing demand for leaders at all levels. In this complex and evolving workplace culture, we are all leaders. And we all hold the power to motivate and inspire others to take action. Now more than ever, we need leaders with the skills to successfully collaborate across the business.

Leadership is the cumulative impact of an individual's attempts to influence up, down and across the organization, ultimately impacting business results by driving behavior change. Leadership training can provide leaders and managers with the tools to influence others and to help them appropriately cultivate and exercise their power to influence and affect change.

### UNDERSTANDING POWER AND INFLUENCE

As organizations strive to be more nimble and respond to changes at the speed of business, leaders are essential at all levels. While power often gets a bad rap in business, it can actually be a positive driver of influence. Whether power is formally granted to an individual by an organization or informally earned over time through workplace interactions, the ability to change or direct others' behavior is an invaluable attribute for leaders in an organization to possess.

The bases of power are a framework to understand the various ways influence attempts succeed or fail across different situations. In practice, attempts to influence the behavior of others typically relies on a combination of these seven sources (see sidebar), and they should be viewed as interdependent and a process of influence that occurs over time. In other words, influence should not be viewed as a one-time event but an ongoing journey toward behavior change.

By developing the skills leaders need to successfully drive behavior change, organizations are better prepared to

navigate today's complex business environment. Influence is an important part of effectively leading employees regardless of generational divides, cultural differences or technological mediation. Let's examine how to effectively influence and affect change across the organization.

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others to take action.**

### INFLUENCE ACROSS GENERATIONS

While there has been speculation that millennials have significantly different motivations in the workplace compared to older workers, the research study "Influence in Leadership Development: Bases of Power in Modern Organizations" reveals that influence is as important to leading younger workers as it is to leading their more experienced counterparts.

Across all generations of employees, referent power, information power and expert power were each rated above 70 percent when it came to likely reasons that attempts to influence succeed. This suggests that when a leader displays behaviors that garner respect and trust,

has access to important information, and is perceived to be a subject matter expert, attempts to influence the behavior of employees have roughly equal chances of being effective regardless of the age of the employees.

### INFLUENCE ACROSS GEOGRAPHY

Influence is important to managing employees regardless of where they're located. When attempting to influence the behavior of employees working remotely, where interactions primarily occur through phones and computers, legitimate power and expert power are the most likely sources of influence. In other words, influencing the behavior of people who are not co-located is based mostly on the title or role of a leader and their subject matter knowledge.

### INFLUENCE ACROSS CULTURAL DIVIDES

When attempting to influence the behavior of international employees, when interactions may be impacted by differences in culture or language, legitimate, referent and expert power are the most likely sources of influence. Interpersonal aspects signified by the earned trust and respect of referent power is vital to influencing across cultural divides. This employee group also responds to information power, suggesting that leaders are viewed as resources.

### INFLUENCE ACROSS THE BUSINESS

When analyzing influence across functional business units, influence skills are most heavily used in positions that involve a high degree of person-to-person interaction both inside and outside the organization. While influence training can benefit all functional areas across the organization, influence skills are most important to HR, sales, customer service and marketing departments. With so much at stake in today's competitive business environment, organizations need to ensure employees have effective communication skills when interacting with customers, clients and vendors.

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# BASES OF POWER

-  **Coercive** power is based on the perception that one can administer consequences for unacceptable behavior
-  **Connection** power is based on the perception that one is associated with important and influential people
-  **Reward** power is based on the perception that one can distribute rewards and recognition
-  **Legitimate** power is based on the perception that one's influence attempts and decisions are appropriate for someone with one's title or role
-  **Referent** power is based on the perception that one displays behaviors and personal characteristics that earn the respect and trust of others
-  **Information** power is based on the perception that one has access to information that is valuable to others
-  **Expert** power is based on the perception that one possesses subject matter knowledge, judgment and experience

### MOVING FORWARD

Whether it's up, down or across the organization, effective influence skills can enable leaders to positively influence the behavior of others, make strategic decisions, manage conflict and affect change. Leadership training on influence can be a powerful way to equip leaders with the tools to better understand why their own attempts to direct behavior succeed or fail. Armed with this knowledge, leaders can more effectively collaborate across the business and move the needle on organizational performance.

For more information, read the full research report on ["Influence in Leadership Development: Bases of Power in Modern Organizations."](#)

