



# The New Manager's Guide to Understanding Influence and Power

Part 10 in a 12-Part Series on Helping First-Time Managers and Seasoned, But Untrained, Supervisors Transition to Effective Leaders

*"Nearly all people can stand adversity, but if you want to test a person's character, give them power."*

—Abraham Lincoln

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## About the Supervisory Basics Article Series

The transition from an individual contributor to a supervisory or managerial role is one of the most critical and difficult career moves.

Representing the largest pool of management talent in most companies, supervisors prove critical to an organization's success. Companies that develop superior leaders in these supervisory positions can execute more effectively than their competition.

This article, ***The New Manager's Guide to Understanding Influence and Power***, is based on Module #10 from [The Supervisory Basics Series](#), a 12-Part Series on Helping Individual Contributors and Seasoned, But Untrained, Supervisors Transition to Effective Leaders.

The Supervisory Basics Series consists of 12 individual yet linked two-hour modules, delivered in leader-led or eLearning formats, helping managers understand the management behaviors and tactics required to ensure their own and their company's success. More information on The Supervisory Basics Series can be found at the conclusion of this article.



Listen to the Supervisory Basics Podcast Series: *Tips for Managers and HR Professionals on Helping Individual Contributors Transition to Effective Leaders*. [Available on iTunes](#).

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## Introduction

The two key resources supervisors and managers have for managing the performance of others is their time and their influence. This article will discuss influence – the ability to effectively motivate employees through the appropriate use of social power.

Social power is a person's influence potential. It is the resource that enables a person to induce compliance, or gain commitment from others. Appropriate use of social power by new managers establishes their character, integrity, and credibility. Without using social power appropriately, new managers can't manage effectively. The two sources of social power available to any manager or supervisor are position power and personal power.

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## Position Power

*Position power* is inherent in the title or position a new manager holds in the organization. It is power that is given to the leader by the organization. This power comes from the use of performance appraisals, formal rewards, discipline, job assignment, promotions or recommendations for promotions, and merit increases. The three elements of position power are: reward power, coercion power, and legitimate power.

Reward power is the ability to deliver positive consequences and remove negative consequences in response to another's behavior. Reward power includes the ability to promote, provide formal recognition, influence financial rewards, and assign duties.

Coercion power is the ability to mete out negative consequences and discipline. Coercion power includes invoking financial sanctions, demotions, making assignments, holding people accountable for performance, and recommending disciplinary procedures.

Legitimate power is given to the new manager by the nature of his/her position in the organization. It confers the authority on the leader to do things such as set standards, establish goals and objectives, and provide performance feedback.

Over-reliance on position power gains only compliance. However, without having or using position power wisely, accountability for performance is lost – creating an environment where poor performers work the system and high performers look for other opportunities.

*Commitment is the result of effective personal power.*

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## Personal Power

*Personal power* resides in the leader – his/her personal qualities. It is power given to the leader by others as a result of confidence in and respect for the leader. This power comes from establishing integrity, truthfulness, a sense of fair play, character, likeability, competence, expertise, and the use of information. Effective use of personal power results in commitment on the part of employees. If a new manager lacks personal power, his/her credibility and integrity are hindered – as is the ability to teach and coach.

The three elements of personal power are: expert power, referent power, and information power.

Expert power is based on the degree to which a person displays special or superior knowledge or skill as it relates to specific areas of expertise and to specific goals or objectives.

Referent power comes from the respect, integrity, and personality characteristics that others find admirable in a person. Referent power is based on characteristics of honesty, fairness, rapport, acknowledgement and character.

Information power relates to having information or access to information that others deem valuable. This power base is leveraged on two variables: the degree the valued information is not available anywhere else and the means by which a person doles out information.

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## Conclusion

Power is not a dirty word when it comes to management. It is a necessary skill that must be developed and sustained. If a new manager or supervisor is able to use his/her position and personal power effectively, the new manager will increase his/her influence potential over the performance of others, thereby gaining more respect, credibility and power within the organization.

The next article (article 11 of our 12-article series), *Coaching Style Flexibility*, will discuss the skills for effectively diagnosing performance and how to choose the most appropriate coaching style to address individual employee needs.

### Did You Enjoy This Article?

If you enjoyed this article, please [visit our website](#) to access other articles in this 12-part series on Supervisory Basics.

*“The fundamental concept in social science is power, in the same sense in which energy is the fundamental concept in physics.”*

–Bertrand Russell



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## About the Supervisory Basics Series

The [Supervisory Basics Series](#) is based on extensive analysis of the competencies required of transitioning individual contributors and seasoned, but untrained, supervisors. This series provides the knowledge, tools and skills to immediately establish a leadership role and helps participants understand how to avoid the typical traps of new supervisors and managers.

The Supervisory Basics Series helps managers understand the management behaviors and tactics required to ensure their own and their company's success. The result is managers establishing themselves in a legitimate position of power, inspiring superior performance and promoting open, effective communication.

Supervisory Basics also helps beginning managers avoid common new manager traps—lack of clarity in expectations, ineffective communications, not establishing personal power and failing to move from “doer” to leader. Such negative behaviors lead to absenteeism, low morale, and lost productivity and customer loyalty, as well as increased attrition.

The series consists of 12 individual yet linked two-hour modules, delivered in leader-led or eLearning formats. Companies can choose flexible implementation, including an integrated 3-day series, stand-alone sessions, mix and match, and external facilitator or train-the-trainer options. Participants will learn to build credibility, establish legitimate position power, earn personal power, “manage up,” understand legal basics and conduct purposeful workplace discussions.

[Download the brochure.](#)

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## About Impact Achievement Group

Impact Achievement Group is a training and performance management consulting company that provides assessments, coaching, story-based interactive workshops, and simulations for managers at all levels of organizations worldwide. Impact Achievement Group helps companies dramatically improve management and leadership competency for bottom-line results. Company experts Rick Tate and Julie White, Ph.D. are internationally recognized authorities in leadership development, human performance, customer-focused business strategies and workplace communications. [Visit the website.](#)