

Don't Get Tripped Up on Power . . . The 8 Cs for keeping power in prospective . . .

By Danita Johnson Hughes, Ph.D.

Leaders are found in almost every stratum of life - in companies, politics, and in social organizations such as families, groups of friends, etc. Leaders are powerful people because they have the ability to sway the attitudes, opinions, and actions of others. Leaders inspire, influence and achieve results.

Everyone has the capacity to lead. That is because everyone has the ability to influence others.

Developing the right leadership strategy for the people you lead is crucial to getting the results you desire. Therefore, it is important that you strengthen your skills to better influence, motivate, communicate and coach your people.

Contrary to what many might think, few people are born as leaders. Leadership is a skill that is developed over time, through practice and hard work.

Too often, being a leader and owning power can trip you up. Power in such cases can be misused or abused. This is often referred to as being on a "power trip." Power tripping is usually viewed negatively and can cause others to lose respect and appreciation for you as their leader. Consequently, it is wise to recognize, develop, and refine those personal characteristics that are the mark of a truly effective leader.

Here are the 8 Cs for gaining and maintaining power and for keeping power in its proper perspective.

§ **Character.** As a leader you will undoubtedly be confronted with competing demands from time to time. The ability to manage these demands with integrity, honesty. And selflessness becomes crucial at times like these. Being willing to sacrifice your success, your fortune, and even your life takes guts. Being unwilling to sacrifice your integrity takes character.

§ **Courage.** Martin Luther King, Jr. once said, "The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy." Courageous individuals take calculated risks. They hope for the best possible outcome but are prepared for a loss.



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§§ Commitment. Every day of your life you may face challenges. But commitment is the will and strength to keep forging ahead in spite of how many times you are knocked to our knees. It's the ability to accept setbacks as merely temporary inconveniences that get in the way and try to steer you off course. In the long run, however, unwavering perseverance gets you through.

§ Cautious Attentiveness. A good leader needs to be accurately informed. Be sure you have all the available facts before deciding anything. Carefully consider all options and their possible results before taking action. Thinking through the potential consequences of your decisions often prevents problems from occurring down the road. Having enough information is only part of the equation. When you have all of the information that is available to you, use your intuition to fill in what's missing.

§ Connectability. Having the ability to develop meaningful relationships with others is the most important quality a leader can possess. You gain power through relationships. Having the ability to understand and connect with others is a key component in forming positive interpersonal relationships. Developing relationships with key people will expand your sphere of influence, your access to resources, and your capacity to make things happen.

§ Contribution to the Welfare of Others. One of the greatest attributes of a good leader is your willingness to serve others. Many times people enjoy being in positions of power because of what they gain personally, not because they want to help others. However, service should come from the heart if it is genuine. Having the willingness to serve others and to put their needs and desires before your own is reflected in the attitude and actions of a good leader.

§ Creative Perception. Often referred to as vision, creative perception is essential to good leadership. Leaders have a passion for change. They are preoccupied with future possibilities. As a leader, you must be able to clearly articulate your vision in order to inspire and motivate others. Employees who are excited about the leader's vision and the direction of the organization become much more productive and willing to participate in the success of the organization.

Much popular literature on leadership is rife with contrasts between leadership and power. But to be an effective leader you have to exercise power to realize the results you are striving to achieve. Inherent in leadership is the ability to bring others along either through the power of persuasion, erudition or position.

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Because everyone has the capacity to lead, each of you is powerful in your own way. Simply defined, leadership is the ability to influence others to act and to motivate them to get things done. Individuals ascend to a position of leadership by exercising power in one of three ways:

Persuasive power is usually a result of your ability to make an emotional connection with others and through this connection manage to persuade their actions. Persuasive power is a reflection of your charisma, or ability to draw people to you.

Erudite power is that gained through extensive knowledge of a particular subject or an area of expertise. Erudite power is usually based on the acknowledgement of your intellect and/or academic accomplishment. People are drawn to this type of leader because they are deemed learned in a particular area.

Positional power is based on your ability to control and have authority over others by virtue of hierarchical order. Positional power is most frequently observed in employment situations where there are levels of employees from line staff through senior management. It may also be observed in politics where a person ascends to a position of authority through an election process or by appointment.

In most cases, you may ascend to a position of leadership as a result of a combination of these factors. Whether leadership is gained through personal qualities, erudition, position or a combination of these qualities, it involves influencing the actions of others.

Knowing who you are is the most critical element in becoming an effective leader. It requires looking through the lens of critical analysis. It's about being in control of yourself first, before you can expect others to follow your lead. It's about having self-confidence and being passionate about your values and beliefs. A good value system can help you to stay on course when the ship gets tossed in the storm.

About the Author:

Danita Johnson Hughes, Ph.D. is a healthcare industry executive, public speaker and author of the forthcoming "Turnaround." Through her work she inspires people to dream big and understand the role of personal responsibility in personal and professional success. In her first book, "Power from Within," Danita shares her "Power Principles for Success" that helped her overcome meager beginnings and achieve professional, community and personal success. For more information visit www.danitajohnsonhughes.com, or writer her at danitahughes@edgewaterstems.org.

