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Power and Social Influence

Groups use their power to influence behaviors by providing information on how to behave and exerting pressure to encourage compliance. Team members gain power from personal characteristics and their positions, and use a variety of power tactics to influence other members. The dynamics of power in teams is a major influence on leaders' behaviors, how team members interact, the impact of minorities, and the amount of influence members have on one another.

Empowerment is at the core of teamwork where members have been given power and authority over a team's operations. Within the team, members need to learn how to use their own power to work together effectively. Learning how to act assertively, rather than passively or aggressively, encourages open communication and effective problem solving.

Learning Objectives

1. Understand how conformity and obedience influence people's behaviors.
2. What are the different bases of power?
3. How does one decide which influence tactics to use?
4. How does having power change the power holder?
5. How does unequal power affect team interactions?
6. What makes a minority influential?
7. What is empowerment?
8. What problems does an organization encounter when trying to empower teams?
9. How do passive, aggressive, and assertive power styles affect a team and its members?

1. Definitions of Power and Social Influence

Social influence refers to attempts to affect or change other people. Power is the capacity or ability to change the beliefs, attitudes, or behaviors of others. We often think about power in terms of how individuals try to influence one another, but a group has collective power. Conformity occurs through influence from the group, either by providing information about appropriate behavior or through implied or actual group pressure. In addition, obedience occurs through influence from the leader or high-status person in the group.

There is an important distinction between compliance and acceptance. Compliance is a change in behaviors due to pressure or influence, but it is not a change in beliefs or attitudes. Acceptance is a change in both behaviors and attitudes due to social pressure. However, if individuals are repeatedly influenced to change their behaviors, they often internally justify the new way of behaving. Therefore, changing behaviors often leads to changes in attitudes.

Why do people change because of social influence? Social psychologists provide two main reasons for the effects of social influence: normative influence and informational influence (Deutsch & Gerard, 1955). Normative influence is change based on the desire to meet the expectations of others and be accepted by others. Informational influence is change based on accepting information about a situation from others.

Social psychologists have conducted several classic studies on power to demonstrate the basic characteristics of social influence and show some factors that affect the influence process. These studies show how a team influences the behaviors of its members and the power team leaders have over members.

Conformity

Asch's (1955) conformity studies show that even when group pressure is merely implied, people are willing to make bad judgments. The participants in these experiments were asked to select which line was the same length as a target line. Participants who worked alone rarely made mistakes. However, when participants were in a room with people giving the wrong answers, the participants gave the wrong answers 37% of the time. Only 20% of participants remained independent and did not give in to group pressure. The others conformed to group pressure even though there was no obvious pressure to conform (i.e., no rewards or punishments).

Follow-up studies using this approach to study conformity helped explain why people gave in to the group even when there was no direct pressure. For many of the participants, the influence was informational; they reasoned that if the majority were giving answers that were obviously wrong, then the participants must have misunderstood the instructions. Other participants went along with the majority for normative reasons. They feared that group members would disapprove of them if their answers were different. Later studies showed that nonconformists were rated as undesirable group members.

The level of conformity is affected by the group size and unanimity. A group of about five people shows most of the conformity effects. There is not much difference in conformity when using larger groups (Rosenberg, 1961). Unanimity is very important. Many of the conformity effects are greatly reduced with limited social support for acting independently (Allen & Levine, 1969).

These studies show the power a team has over its members. In these experiments, temporary groups set up in psychology laboratories were able to change what people believed and how they behaved. The impact on a team where members have ongoing relationships with one another is much stronger conformity. This is especially true when the team has a high degree of group cohesion; cohesive groups have more power to influence members (Sakuri, 1975).

Obedience

The Milgram (1974) obedience studies show that people are obedient to authority figures even when the requested behaviors are inappropriate. In these obedience studies, participants believed they were part of a learning experiment. They were asked to give an electric shock to a learner whenever the learner made a mistake. They also were told to increase the level of shock with each mistake. Nearly all participants were willing to administer mild shocks; most (65%) continued to administer shocks even after they had been informed that the learner had a heart condition or the learner had stopped responding, and they could see that the shocks being administered had increased to dangerous levels.

The level of obedience in these studies was influenced by several factors. The more legitimate the authority figure, the more likely people were to be obedient. They were more likely to obey when the authority figure was in the room monitoring their performance. Whenever possible, participants did not shock the learner and lied to the authority figure about it. The closer the

participants were to the victim (and could see or hear the victim's pain), the less obedience there was. Finally, when there was a group of people running the shock device, participants were less obedient if one other person refused to obey.

The important finding in the Milgram studies is that obedience occurs even when the authority figure does not have power to reward or punish participants. In most teams, the leaders are given limited power by their organizations. For example, team leaders usually do not conduct performance evaluations of members; evaluations usually are done by outside managers. Even without this source of power, the tendency of team members to obey authority figures gives leaders considerable power over team operations.

2. Types of Power

Team members use various types of power to influence one another and the team. The types of power that members possess can be examined in several ways. The study of bases of power is concerned with the sources of power, whereas the study of influence tactics examines how various power tactics are used.

Bases of Power

There are two types of power that an individual can have in a group or organization: personal or soft power, and positional or harsh power (French & Raven, 1959; Raven, Schwarzwald, & Koslowsky, 1998). Personal or soft power derives from an individual's characteristics or personality and includes expert, referent, and information power. Positional or harsh power is based on an individual's formal position in an organization. It includes legitimate, reward, and coercive power. Definitions for these bases of power are provided in Table 8.1.

The types of power are related to each other and often used together (Podsakoff & Schriesheim, 1985). For example, the more one uses coercive power, the less one is liked, so one has less personal or soft power. The more legitimate power one has, the more reward and coercive power one typically has. Because team leaders have less legitimate power than traditional managers, they often rely on expert and referent power to influence the team (Druskat & Wheeler, 2003).

The use of the personal sources of power is often more effective than the use of positional sources (Kipnis, Schmidt, Swaffin-Smith, & Wilkinson, 1984). One reason for this is that the targets of influence are more likely to

TABLE 8.1
Types of Power

Personal / Soft Power

Expert	Power based on one's credibility or perceived expertise in an area.
Referent	Power based on another's liking and admiration.
Information	Power based on the knowledge or information one has about a topic.

Positional / Harsh Power

Legitimate	Power based on the recognition and acceptance of a person's authority.
Reward	The ability to reward (reinforce) a desired behavior.
Coercive	The ability to threaten or punish undesirable behavior.

SOURCE: Adapted from French, J., & Raven, B. (1959). The bases of power. In D. Cartwright (Ed.), *Studies in social power* (pp. 150–167). Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

resist the use of positional power and are less satisfied with its use. Because of this, leaders typically prefer using expert power most often and coercive power least often. However, the use of expert power is limited. The fact that someone is an expert in one area does not make him or her an expert at everything.

Reward and coercive power can be used to influence people to do what is desired, but people do it only because of the reward or fear of punishment. The result is compliance but not acceptance. These strategies are useful for changing overt behaviors, but not for changing attitudes and beliefs; the influencer has to monitor the behaviors to ensure that results are forthcoming (Zander, 1994).

Teamwork should rely on the personal power of team members. Group decision making is better when people who are most expert or have relevant information to add dominate the discussion, rather than when people who have the authority to make decisions dominate. Cooperation is more likely to be encouraged by using personal power sources than by using threats

of punishment by team leaders. When team leaders rely on positional power to get their teams to comply with their requests, members are likely to feel manipulated and may resist.

Influence Tactics

Team members can use a variety of social influence tactics to influence one another. Descriptions of these tactics are presented in Table 8.2. Their use depends on the target for influence (e.g., subordinate, peer, superior) and the objective of the influence (e.g., assign task, get support, gain personal benefit) (Yukl & Guinan, 1995).

TABLE 8.2

Social Influence Tactics

Rational argument	Use of logical arguments and factual information to persuade.
Consultation	Seek a person's participation in the decision.
Inspirational appeals	Attempt to arouse enthusiasm by appealing to a person's ideals.
Personal appeals	Appeal to a person's sense of loyalty or friendship.
Ingratiation	Use of flattery or friendly behavior to get a person to think favorably of you.
Exchange	Offer to exchange favors later for compliance now.
Pressure	Use of demands, threats, or persistent reminders.
Legitimizing tactics	Make claims that one has the authority to make the request.
Coalition tactics	Seek the aid and support of others to increase power of request.

SOURCE: Adapted from Yukl, G. (1989). Managerial leadership: A review of theory and research. *Journal of Management*, 15, 251–289.

These power tactics vary by directness, cooperativeness, and rationality. Direct tactics are explicit, overt methods of influence (e.g., personal appeals and pressure), whereas indirect tactics are covert attempts at manipulation (e.g., ingratiation and coalition tactics). Cooperative tactics encourage support through rational argument or consultation; competitive tactics attempt to deal with resistance through pressure or ingratiation (Kipnis & Schmidt, 1982). Finally, some tactics are based on rational argument or the exchange of support, whereas inspirational and personal appeals rely on emotion.

People prefer direct and cooperative strategies. The most effective tactics are rational argument, consultation, and inspirational appeals (Falbe & Yukl, 1992). These are the more socially acceptable tactics and are useful in most situations. However, status differences in a group determine which tactics are used. Traditional leaders often use pressure and legitimizing tactics on subordinates, while subordinates often use rational argument, personal appeals, and ingratiation to influence leaders. Team leaders may try to reduce status differences in the team by using more cooperative influence strategies (Druskat & Wheeler, 2003).

3. Power Dynamics

The use of power changes the dynamics of the group process. Unequal power changes the way the leader treats other team members and the way members communicate with one another. Subgroups that disagree with the majority can have substantial influence on how the team operates. The level of interdependence among team members changes the power they have over one another.

Status and the Corrupting Effect of Power

Power is rewarding, so people with power often want more of it (Kipnis, 1976). It has a corrupting influence; people with more power often give themselves a higher share of rewards. It is easy for someone with power to give commands rather than make requests. Because powerful people get mostly positive feedback from subordinates, they begin to care less about what subordinates say and have an inflated view of their own worth.

Kipnis (1976) demonstrates the corrupting nature of power in studies on groups in business organizations and families. He documented a cycle of power where power leads to a desire to increase one's power. Table 8.3 shows how the cycle operates.

TABLE 8.3
Cycle of Power

- Access to power increases the probability it will be used.
- The more power is used, the more the power holders believe they are in control.
- As the power holders take credit, they view the target as less worthy.
- As the target's worth is decreased, social distance increases.
- Use of power elevates the self-esteem of the powerful.

SOURCE: Adapted from Kipnis, D. (1976). *The powerholders*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

One of the problems with this effect is that its impact is often unconscious. Over time, powerful leaders come to believe their subordinates are externally controlled, and therefore must be monitored and commanded by their leaders to get them to do anything. It is a self-reinforcing cycle. A team may try to deal with this problem by rotating team leaders. When leaders know they will eventually become just another team member, they are less likely to use controlling power tactics.

Unequal Power in a Team

Groups vary in the ways power is distributed. When groups have unequal power levels among members, there tends to be more mistrust, less communication, and more social problems than in more egalitarian groups. Groups with powerful leaders tend to have less communication and more autocratic decision making, thereby reducing the quality of team decisions.

Unequal power is often caused by status differences, which have an impact on team communication (Hurwitz, Zander, & Hymovitch, 1953). High-status members talk more and are more likely to address the entire group. Members communicate more with high-status people and pay more attention to what they say. Low-status members often talk less and are unwilling to state their true opinions if they differ from those of high-status people. Consequently, when high-status people speak, people either agree or say nothing, so high-status people have more influence in group discussions. This communication pattern does not lead to good decision making or to satisfied and motivated team members.

In theory, a team should have only equal-status communication, but this is not always the case. The team leader may assume a higher status than

the other team members. A team is sometimes composed of members with different levels of status within the organization. Team members should leave their external status positions at the door so that everyone on the team has equal status. However, it is difficult to interact as an equal with someone in one situation and be deferential in other situations.

When power is unequal because of status or other factors, a team can try to improve the situation by using group norms to equalize power and control communication. Norms level the playing field in a group. They equalize power by putting constraints on the behaviors of powerful members. For example, the norm of majority rule in decision making limits the power of the leader. The group may have norms that encourage open and shared communication, prevent the use of intimidation or threats, and value independent thinking. All these help reduce the impact of power differences in the group.

Minority Influence

Most of this discussion of power has focused on the impact of powerful people or pressure from the group majority. However, a group may contain individuals or subgroups that resist group pressure. A minority may resist the leader and group pressure, and eventually be influential in changing the group (Moscovici, 1985). The ability of minorities to influence the majority group depends on their consistency, self-confidence, belief in their autonomy, and relationship to the group overall.

Minorities become influential by sticking to their positions (Nemeth, 1979). When minorities are consistent, they make the majority think about its position. A group can put quite a bit of pressure on minorities to change, so it takes self-confidence to resist this pressure. Minorities must appear to be autonomous and able to make their own choices if they are to be influential. If the minorities are viewed as being supported or influenced by an outside group, their impact is reduced. Finally, minorities must appear to be part of the group. They are less effective if they reject the group or are always seen as dissenters (Levine, 1989).

It can be difficult to be a minority team member who disagrees with the majority. Because of the desire to be accepted by the team, individuals are often unwilling to disagree or even present an alternative view of an idea. When minority opinions have some support within the team, they are more likely to be expressed and accepted by the team (Ilgen et al., 2005). Teams that create a climate of trust and psychological safety encourage members to express their unique opinions.

An important value of a minority is its ability to stimulate team members to view an issue from multiple perspectives (Peterson & Nemeth, 1996). When a minority disagrees with the team's view of a situation, the team is

encouraged to rethink its position and generate more alternative views. The overall effect of this is to encourage more flexible thinking, which increases creativity and innovation. The minority may not get its way, but over time it will have a substantial impact on how the team thinks and acts.

Impact of Interdependence

Task interdependence is the degree to which completing a task requires the interaction of team members. Teams with high levels of interdependence are more likely to be effective if they have autonomy, or the power and authority to control how they operate (Langfred, 2000). In highly interdependent teams, autonomy allows team members to work together more efficiently, control their own interactions, and increase internal coordination. These actions help improve performance. In teams with low levels of interdependence, the team members are accustomed to working independently, so increases in communication and coordination do not help improve performance.

Interdependence may help a team perform better by changing the amount of power team members have over one another (Franz, 1998). Dependence in a relationship is one of the bases of power. Heightened levels of overall task interdependence are associated with increased personal power. The more team members need one another to complete a task, the more power each team member has over the group.

4. Empowerment

Empowerment in a workplace refers to the process of giving employees more power and control over their work. It is the shifting of power and authority from managers to employees. In one sense, empowerment is the core notion of teamwork. A team must have the power to control how it operates; this is what makes a team different from a work group. A team cannot operate successfully if a manager controls its internal operation, or if its external relationships are completely controlled by an organization.

The success of empowerment programs depends on the organization's willingness to share information and power with its employees (Hollander & Offerman, 1990). Leaders love the idea of empowerment in theory, but they primarily engage in command and control actions because that is what they are comfortable doing (Argyris, 1998). Delegating authority is stressful for team leaders because organizations typically hold the leader responsible for the outcome of the teamwork. Although they may feel discomfort delegating authority to a team, supporting empowerment leads to more effective team performance.

Team empowerment has four dimensions: potency, meaningfulness, autonomy, and impact (Kirkman & Rosen, 1999). Potency is the collective belief that the team can be effective. Meaningfulness refers to the team experiencing its work as valuable and worthwhile. Autonomy is the degree to which the team controls the way it works and experiences independence. Impact refers to whether the team's work is important for the organization.

Empowerment is a benefit both to the individuals and teams that are empowered and to their organizations. Employees who work in empowered jobs have increased motivation and job satisfaction (Ford & Fottler, 1995). Empowerment increases employees' confidence in their ability to perform a task. The ability to change how the team works encourages continuous improvements and innovation (Burpitt & Bigoness, 1997). Empowered teams provide better customer service because they are more willing to accept responsibility for handling customer problems (Kirkman & Rosen, 1999). Organizations benefit by having teams that function more effectively, have greater organizational commitment, and show increased acceptance of change.

Degrees of Empowerment Programs

The amount of empowerment a team possesses depends on the actions of external leaders, the responsibilities given to the team, the organization's human resources practices, and the social structure of the team (Kirkman & Rosen, 1999). External leaders encourage team empowerment by allowing the team to set its own performance goals and letting the team decide how to accomplish those goals. When teams are given more responsibilities for production, customer service, or quality improvements, they experience more empowerment. Human resources policies may give the team more control over staffing, performance evaluation, and training to promote empowerment. Increased participation in team decision making promotes empowerment.

Organizations use a variety of approaches to promote empowerment, ranging from simple changes (e.g., suggestion boxes for employee input) to work teams, to fully empowered self-managing teams (Lawler, 1986). Although these programs have features in common, they differ in what is shared and the breadth of involvement activities.

Sharing information is the minimum requirement for empowerment. However, for a team to feel fully empowered, the power to make and implement decisions is necessary. Without some power to act, employees have little incentive to continue to improve the way their team operates.

A second dimension of analyzing empowerment programs is the breadth of empowerment activities. Most empowerment programs give team members control over job content (i.e., the task and work procedure they perform) but not over job context (i.e., goals, reward systems, and personnel

issues) (Ford & Fottler, 1995). For example, quality programs may allow employees to make changes to improve the quality of their work operations but may not allow employees to influence personnel decisions. By contrast, at the Saturn automobile plant, which uses empowered work teams, team members control their work processes, deal with external customers, hire new team members, and conduct performance evaluations.

Successful Empowerment Programs

Although research shows that empowerment can be effective, few organizations are willing to make the transition because of their beliefs about power. If power is viewed as a limited commodity, giving power to a team reduces managerial power. This ambivalence about power makes managers reluctant to empower teams (Herrenkohl, Judson, & Heffner, 1999). However, when teamwork programs are successful, everyone in the organization gains in power.

One of the main problems with empowerment programs is resistance from managers and supervisors (Lawler & Mohrman, 1985). Managers are often told to empower work teams under their supervision, but they are held responsible for how the team performs. This is why surveys show that although 72% of supervisors believe that empowerment is good for the organization, only 31% believe that it is good for supervisors (Klein, 1984). Although some supervisors support empowerment, many are concerned about loss of status and lack of support from upper management.

Resistance from supervisors and managers may be handled in a number of ways (Klein, 1984). Supervisors need to be involved in the design of the empowerment programs. The roles of supervisors should be evaluated, and their new responsibilities and authority should be clearly defined. Often supervisors need additional training in teamwork skills to prepare them for their new roles as team leaders. Additional training has a secondary benefit in that it demonstrates the organization's commitment to its supervisors.

5. Application: Acting Assertively

People express power through their behaviors. They may act passively, aggressively, or assertively (Alberti & Emmons, 1978). Their emotional tones and the ways they confront problems define these power styles. Assertiveness is both a skill and an attitude (Jentsch & Smith-Jentsch, 2001). When team members act assertively, they show their willingness to be independent and accept responsibility for their actions.

The use of these power styles has important impacts on communication in teams. For example, teamwork problems are one of the chief causes of major airline accidents. Accidents happen when crewmembers are unwilling to communicate problems to their superiors. This lack of assertiveness in a team is a major problem for airline crews, medical teams, and police and firefighting teams, which is why assertiveness training is a standard element in training for action teams (Cannon-Bowers & Salas, 1998).

When people talk about power styles, there is some confusion whether the styles are an element of someone's personality, a behavior, or something in between. Power styles are like personality traits; some people adopt preferred styles and use them in most situations. However, most people change styles depending on the situation, and people can be taught how to use particular styles. This suggests that power styles are more like behaviors than personality traits. Table 8.4 presents an overview of these power styles, their impacts on teams, and situations in which they often are used.

TABLE 8.4
Power Styles

	<i>Styles</i>	<i>Impact</i>	<i>Use</i>
Nonassertive/ Passive	Polite and deferential; avoid problems	Resentment and confusion	Dangerous situations; unequal status
Aggressive	Forceful and critical; focused on winning	Satisfaction and withdrawal	Emergencies; unequal status
Assertive	Clear and confident problem solving	Satisfaction and trust	Most situations equal status

Nonassertive/Passive. The nonassertive or passive style is polite and deferential. A sweet, pleasant, or ingratiating emotional tone is added to one's communication. A person using the passive approach tries to avoid problems by not taking a stand or by being unclear about his position. By being evasive, the person using this approach is trying not to upset or anger anyone by disagreeing. The person's desire to be liked by others is based on his personal insecurity or fear of the situation.

The goal of the passive approach is to win approval and be liked. Unfortunately, this style does not work well. Passive people often feel stressed and resentful, in part because problems never seem to go away. The receivers of passive communication often have mixed responses. On the one hand, they get their way; on the other, they are uncertain what the passive communicator really believes, and lack respect for him or her.

The passive approach is appropriate in some situations. When a conflict becomes highly emotional, a passive response may defuse the situation. When interacting with a person of higher status, a passive response may be expected from a subordinate. Acting aggressively toward the boss may be an inappropriate or dangerous tactic. There are situations in which being assertive is too risky.

Aggressive. The aggressive style is forceful, critical, and negative. A negative emotional tone is added to the communication so that it appears more powerful. A person using the aggressive approach deals with problems and conflicts by trying to win and refusing to compromise. The underlying emotions of the aggressive style are anger, insecurity, and lack of trust. In some ways, this is similar to the passive style, which is why people sometimes swing back and forth between passiveness and aggressiveness without ever being assertive.

Use of the aggressive style is often rewarded. In many situations, people give in to people who are acting forcefully, in part because of a misapplication of the rule of reciprocity. People may let someone have his or her way if it is important to him or her, because they expect to get their way in things that are important to them. What the aggressive person does is act forcefully in all situations. There is a cost to the aggressive style. People on the receiving end of the aggressive style feel resentment, act defensively, and try to withdraw from the situation.

The aggressive style can be appropriate, as in problem or emergency situations requiring forceful action. It can be a valuable approach for dealing with blocked situations where progress is stalled. If there is resistance and change is vital to the group, aggressiveness may be the appropriate response.

Assertive. The assertive style uses clear and confident communication. No emotions are added to messages. Assertiveness is communicating openly with concern for both others and oneself. It is taking responsibility for one's own communication. The assertive person takes a direct problem-solving approach to conflicts and problems. The goal is to find the best solution, so the person is willing to listen and compromise.

Although they are not always successful, assertive communicators are generally satisfied with and relaxed in their performances. The assertive style shows respect and encourages trust in others and open communication in a team. High self-esteem and trust in the group underlie the assertive style.

The assertive approach is appropriate in most situations in which people are interacting on an equal basis; therefore, it should be the most typical type of communication within a team. The absence of the assertive approach is a sign of unequal status differences that are disrupting communication, or unresolved conflicts that are creating a defensive communication environment.

Use of Power Styles

Teams are more productive when their communication is primarily assertive (Lumsden & Lumsden, 1997). Both passive and aggressive styles create resentment and inhibit open communication. Teams may adopt unproductive power styles for several reasons. For example, power styles trigger other power styles. An aggressive style triggers a passive response, whereas an assertive style triggers an assertive response. Assertiveness is a power style used among people with relatively equal power or status; passiveness and aggressiveness are power styles used among people with differing statuses or levels of power.

Differences in power styles are often attributed to personality, gender, or racial differences. This explanation is rarely true and gets in the way of improving team communication. For example, women often act more passively in business teams, causing some men to assume that women are more passive. Kipnis (1976) shows that this stems from organizational power, not gender. When men and women have equal power in a situation, women are no more likely to act more passively.

Assertiveness is primarily a reflection of the distribution of power in a group. To encourage assertive communication, the group needs to reduce power differences among members. In an organization, people work in a hierarchy that gives everyone different amounts of power. When people are working in a team, however, they need to treat fellow team members as equals.

Encouraging Assertiveness

Assertiveness is the power style most appropriate for teamwork. The primary key to encouraging assertiveness is to equalize power among team members. However, equalizing power might not be enough. People develop habits in communicating, so it may be necessary to provide them with training in assertive communication (Alberti & Emmons, 1978). Assertiveness training programs use a number of techniques to encourage better communication in teams:

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1. **Active listening:** Active listening is summarizing and repeating a speaker's message to ensure that it is understood. This technique clarifies the message, shows respect and attention, and encourages more communication.
2. **Positive recognition:** Learning how to give others positive recognition reduces the need for manipulative power tactics. Too often, high-status people criticize what they do not like but never acknowledge what they like. Positive recognition acknowledges someone's work and helps encourage more of what is desired in the performance.
3. **Clear expectations:** Learning to state expectations clearly is another communication technique that encourages assertiveness. People often misinterpret behaviors as inappropriate or resistant when they are really caused by not understanding what is desired. Clarifying expectations lets everyone know what the issues are.
4. **Saying no:** For people who overuse the passive style, learning how to say no to inappropriate requests is an important skill. Passive communicators often feel guilty when they turn down requests. This encourages them to agree to do something and then passively resist doing it.
5. **Assertive withdrawal:** Being assertive is not always the right response, so people need to know when not to participate. When situations become too emotionally heated or threatening, people need to learn how to send a clear message of their desire to postpone or terminate conversations.

Assertiveness is a situation specific behavior (Jentsch & Smith-Jentsch, 2001). The willingness to be assertive depends on the situation and the individual's relationship to the other people involved. People may be assertive in social or personal situations, but not in work situations. They may be assertive with friends, but not with strangers or business associates. This is why it is important to conduct assertiveness training in environments where assertive behavior will need to be applied.

Summary

Power is the ability to change the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors of others. Groups have power because they can influence members by suggesting how people should behave. Groups also exert social pressure to get members to conform to group norms. Group leaders have the power to influence others through obedience to authority.

Power can be analyzed by examining where it comes from and the types of techniques that are used. Group members gain power through personal bases (e.g., being an expert) and positional bases (e.g., having authority delegated

by the organization). Influence tactics can be based on encouraging others or trying to control others. People prefer to use personal power bases and cooperative tactics because these approaches are less likely to create resistance.

The use of power by groups has several important dynamics. Power tends to corrupt its users. People with power tend to use it and take personal credit for the success of their groups, thereby encouraging them to use power more often. Unequal power in teams caused by status differences among members disrupts group communication. High-status people talk more, people tend to agree with high-status people, and low-status people become reluctant to state their true opinions. Minorities in groups may be influential if they are consistent, self-confident, and autonomous. By resisting the influence of the majority, minorities focus their group's discussion on their positions. Interdependence among team members increases their power to influence one another.

One of the core notions of teamwork is empowerment. To be effective, teams need power, authority, and responsibility to control their own behaviors. Unfortunately, organizations often have trouble sharing managerial power with teams. Empowerment programs may range from simple information-sharing with team members to development of self-managing teams. Successful empowerment programs must deal with the perceived loss of power by supervisors and managers by incorporating them into the teams' activities.

Team members may act in a passive, aggressive, or assertive manner. These are personal power styles. Although there are situations in which acting passively or aggressively is appropriate, in most group situations assertiveness is the best approach. Assertiveness encourages clear communication and a rational approach to problems, but is disrupted by unequal status in the group. There are several techniques for training group members to act more assertively.

TEAM LEADER'S CHALLENGE—8

You are the manager of a technical services team that provides support services for other organizations. Over the past year, you have been trying to make the transition to a more self-managing team. Now you call yourself the "team leader" rather than the manager. As part of the transition, the team now makes decisions about scheduling, partnering, and other task assignments. Team meetings where employees passively listened to instructions have been replaced by team discussions and group decision making. You have worked hard to encourage team members to speak up at meetings, and they are contributing more now.

At today's meeting, a team member suggested a new way to organize work practices. You told the team you didn't like the idea because you tried a similar plan in the past and it did not work well. Another team member ignored your explanation and complained that you were stifling innovation and were unwilling to share power with the team.

Should the team leader allow the team to make a mistake in order to learn?

What is the best way to handle team members who challenge the leader's authority?

How much power sharing (or empowerment) is appropriate for a work team?

ACTIVITY: USING POWER STYLES—PASSIVE, AGGRESSIVE, AND ASSERTIVE

Objective. Team members may use three different power styles. The nonassertive or passive style is polite and deferential. This approach tries to avoid problems by not taking a stand or by being unclear about one's position. The aggressive style is forceful, critical, and negative. This approach deals with problems and conflicts by trying to win. The assertive style uses clear and confident communication. The assertive person takes a direct problem-solving approach to conflicts and problems.

Activity. Observe the interactions in a team or a group discussion of the Team Leader Challenge. Write down examples of passive, aggressive, and assertive behaviors you have observed. Using Activity Worksheet 8.1, note the frequency of team members acting passively, aggressively, or assertively. An alternative activity is to break into groups and have individuals take turns using one of the three power styles during a group discussion. Participants should analyze their own and others' performances according to their perception and reactions to each style.

Passive behavior: _____

Aggressive behavior: _____

Assertive behavior: _____

ACTIVITY WORKSHEET 8.1

Observing Passive, Aggressive, and Assertive Power Styles

	<i>Team Members</i>					
	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>
Passive						
Aggressive						
Assertive						

Analysis. Which power style did the team use most often? Did certain team members adopt a similar power style for most communication? Was the team's communication dominated by assertive or by passive or aggressive communication? Did the leader primarily use the assertive style?

Discussion. What triggers the use of a power style? Is it personality or team characteristics? How would you encourage the team to engage more in equal-status assertive communication?

