

## **The Continuum of Power Series**

### **Part 2: Are conventional forms of 'leadership' power available to mediators?**

by John Crawley

Some concepts of leadership and power are interesting to explore in the light of mediation, as a mediator could be seen as a leader in each conflict with the parties as potential followers.

Using French and Raven's model<sup>1</sup> there are five types of leadership power:

- Reward power
- Coercive power
- Legitimate power
- Referent power
- Expert power

#### **Reward Power**

This type of influence is created when the leader is able to offer a reward to his followers for completing tasks/behaving in a certain manner. This type of power needs to be used carefully to prevent followers becoming accustomed to rewards and refusing to complete routine tasks without a reward. Generally rewards should not be offered, to follower employees to complete duties which are a normal part of their role. This is because as an employee they are under a contractual obligation to complete these tasks and they are already rewarded for this through their salary. The other reason why rewards should be offered carefully is that frequent use can reduce the impact or influence that offering a reward initially had on the follower. Followers will soon tire of the reward especially if the reward is small. *Could this be used in mediation?*

#### **Coercive Power**

This is the opposite of reward power because this power is based on the leader having control over what happens if followers do not act as required. If followers do not undertake the action required, the leader will impose a penalty. Penalties take a variety of forms including withdrawal of privileges, job losses, verbal abuse, and delayed or loss of promotion. Coercive

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<sup>1</sup> French, J. P. R. Jr., and Raven, B. (1960). The bases of social power. In D. Cartwright and A. Zander (eds.), *Group dynamics* (pp. 607-623). New York: Harper and Row.

power requires followers to believe that the leader has the ability to impose the stated penalty. Also the penalty has to be something that the followers do not want to have imposed on them. For example, a penalty resulting in coffee being banned is unlikely to influence a tea drinker. Coercive powers should be used carefully; overuse can lead to unhappy employee followers. Unhappy followers can be negative or unmotivated; they may resign or adopt a “work to rule” attitude. Work to rule is where employees refuse to undertake any duties (or adopt working practices) that are not stated in their contract. *Could this be used in mediation?*

### **Legitimate Power**

This is the power that a leader has when the followers believe that the leader has “a right” to instruct them and that they have an obligation to follow instructions. Sometimes legitimacy power is created by the leader’s job title (such as captain, doctor, or area manager), combined with the follower’s belief that the job title gives the leader the right to give them orders. *Could this be used in mediation?*

### **Referent Power**

This is created when the followers believe that the leader possess qualities that they admire and would like to possess. The followers identify with their leader and attempt to copy their leader. As referent power is dependent on how the follower views the personality of their leader, a leader will not have referent power over every follower they lead. Some leaders will have referent power over just a few, whilst others such as Ghandi have lead millions through their personality and charisma. *Could this be used in mediation?*

### **Expert Power**

As the title suggests a leader has expert power when the followers believe that the leader has “expert” knowledge or skills that are relevant to the job or tasks they have to complete. Often an experienced member of the team or staff in an organisation can have expert power even though they are not a supervisor or manager. *Could this be used in mediation?*



This article is 2 out of 5 in this series.

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CMP Resolutions work to Close, Manage and Prevent disputes at work through skills development, mediation and investigation services.

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