

## CHANGE & RESISTANCE: USING MAPS OF POWER

### Quick Points: An overview in 60 seconds

A few weeks ago I was asked how I started a project that might involve significant levels of change, particularly for members of a management team. Was it possible to predict from the outset who might be “onboard” and who might be “offboard”?

The approach that I have used for years is to map where individuals get their power from and how that power source might be affected by the project or intervention.

It is critical to understand that generally, individuals have six sources of power. As early as possible in the project I try to identify which source(s) are relevant to individual team members and whether or not that source will be positively or negatively impacted. If the source of power will be diminished, I will start to plan how I will work with that individual to find new sources that are relevant to both the individual and the organisation.

### Mapping Power

My main concern when starting to work with management teams is to understand where *power* emanates from both at a group level and, most importantly, at an individual level. I want to understand how my intervention will affect the distribution of power at both these levels.

To do this I use a framework that I learnt early on in my management training days that describes six sources of power (French and Raven, 1960):

*Power Source #1: Physical Power.* It can be found more frequently than expected in organisations. Some people can be physically intimidating, highly vocal or just “difficult to deal with”.

*Power Source #2: Position Power.* The power that comes from a position (typically in an organisation's hierarchy – the job title). It may have taken years for a manager to have reached this position. This is the power to control people through orders, rules and procedures. Remember, titles are important to people.

*Power Source #3: Reward Power.* The ability to give rewards for “jobs well done”.

*Power Source #4: Referent Power.* The power that an individual gets by being associated with another (usually more powerful) person. Being the CEO's life-long friend would be an example. I use this approach to see how members of a team cluster together. You could call this “buddy power”.

*Power Source #5: Expert Power.* Power through owning some unique and historically valuable knowledge or expertise. Usually built up through years of work in an organisation or industry. *Expert power* is usually a problem area that must be thoroughly understood before interventions are made. Remember that expert power usually reflects the life-long labours of an individual – *take it away and he or she may have nothing*. In my experience, individuals will seek to defend this source of power at all costs. In recent years, technology has threatened many traditional sources of expert power and will probably continue to do so.

*Power Source #6: Information Power.* Sometimes, but not always, associated with #5. This person is the gatekeeper to information that the organisation needs to function.

This is a useful framework to think about how you will start to work with a team.

Before working with a team in a formal workshop or boardroom style session, I like to have a series of informal one to one meetings.

This helps me to do four things:

1. Map each team member's sources of power (remember that there can be more than one source of power for an individual).
2. Identify how each member's sources of power will be affected by the project, intervention etc.
3. Map power inter-actions and sub groups within the overall team.
4. Build personal relationships – an important platform to help individuals deal with power threats.

### A Practical Tool

I will now set out a very simple approach to map power distribution and, most importantly, to identify if team members will be positively or negatively impacted by the project or intervention.

Name:

Position:

| Power Source:            | Reliance: |   |   |   |   | Perceived Impact: |    |    |    |    |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|--------------------------|-----------|---|---|---|---|-------------------|----|----|----|----|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| <i>Physical Power</i>    | 1         | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | -5                | -4 | -3 | -2 | -1 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| <i>Position Power</i>    | 1         | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | -5                | -4 | -3 | -2 | -1 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| <i>Reward Power</i>      | 1         | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | -5                | -4 | -3 | -2 | -1 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| <i>Referent Power</i>    | 1         | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | -5                | -4 | -3 | -2 | -1 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| <i>Expert Power</i>      | 1         | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | -5                | -4 | -3 | -2 | -1 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| <i>Information Power</i> | 1         | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | -5                | -4 | -3 | -2 | -1 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

“Reliance”, as the name suggests, indicates the degree to which an individual relies upon this source of power. Score from 1 – 5 where 1 = “little or no reliance” to 5 = “total reliance”.

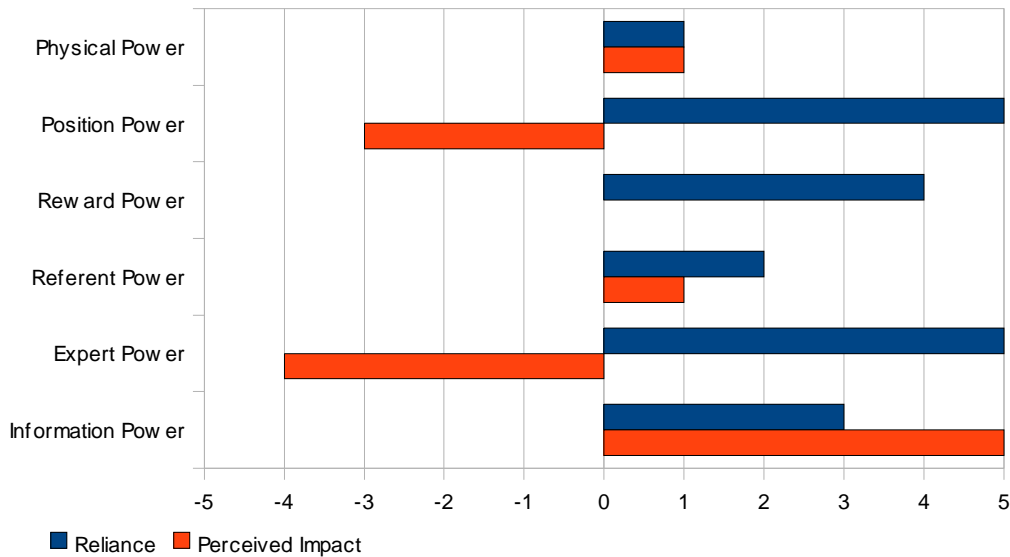
Then score the perceived impact that the project or intervention will have on each power source ranging from -5 = “major, negative impact – potentially removing this power source” through 0 = “no impact” to 5 = “major, material reinforcing impact”.

In my experience, the power source to focus most upon is “Expert Power”. Typically, change and information technology projects can materially (negatively) impact a base of expertise that may have taken years to build up.

Information and position power sources are others to look out for too.

In this illustration (“Joe’s profile”), we can see that both position power and expert power are *really* important to Joe but both could be reduced. However, the project could improve flows of information to Joe. This could enable Joe to build a new source of expertise – a topic to be explored in one to one sessions with Joe.

**Illustration 1: Joe's Profile**



Now, I use this analysis to:

- *Help individuals make the transition. This will usually involve before, during and after support sessions with individuals. This is why the pre-intervention one to one sessions are so important – they help you to start the construction of a personal helping relationship.*
- *Predict and deal with objections.*
- *Identify areas that are best dealt with on a one to one basis as opposed to in group discussion. A group workshop is not the place to overtly threaten a power source – without at least prior preparation.*

You can also use the output of these initial one to one sessions to map the power “sub groups” by looking for “Referent Power”. This frequently shows up in discussion when other teams members’ names are mentioned usually as “heroes” or “champions” (or even “villains”).

**References**

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.

## Finally

I hope that you have enjoyed this briefing.

You can find more on the website or e-mail me using the link below. I enjoy personally helping businesses - some of the work I undertake includes:

- § Forward looking business scenarios – what are your future challenges?
- § Facilitating board level strategic reviews, with a particular emphasis upon the definition of tomorrow's competitive environment
- § Design and implementation of Balanced Scorecard performance measurement systems
- § Research to help identify what potential capital providers will look for in your business plan
- § Training: Strategic Thinking, Scenario Planning, Performance Measurement and Strategic Change Workshops.
- § Product portfolio assessment. Helping the business to define the optimal product portfolio – balancing future competitive conditions with the probability of achieving future planned performance
- § Communication programmes
- § Organisational audits – assessing the innovative capability of your organisation

Best regards,

*Robert Davies*