



THE
POWER
WITHIN

How to Gain Power
& Influence at Work
and in Life

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	5
Why Power is a Good Thing	7
The Obstacles to Gaining Power	10
The Personal Characteristics You Must Cultivate to Gain Power	14
Tips for Becoming More Powerful.....	20
What Do You Have to Offer Your Friends and Enemies?	26
Convey Power With Your Behavior and Words	31
Conclusion	34

INTRODUCTION

You're familiar with the idea of power at work and in life. You might believe that you'll never have any power. Perhaps it's because of one of these reasons:

- I don't know the right people.
- I didn't attend the right school.
- I didn't have the right college major.
- I'm too shy.
- I'm too nice.

But these aren't true limitations. They may be obstacles to overcome in some circumstances, but these obstacles can be bested by those with the skills and motivation to do so. Even with a disadvantaged starting point, you can become powerful within your workplace and throughout the rest of your life.

Yes, anyone can become powerful – even you!

THE POWER WITHIN

However, it's necessary to work hard and be persistent, intelligent, strategic, and possess a willingness to be very assertive from time to time.

The key to becoming powerful is the development of these skills and their intelligent application.

WHY POWER IS A GOOD THING

Most people have an aversion to power. They believe that power includes the obligation of greater responsibility or the necessity to be unkind and manipulative. Neither is true.

Everyone should want more power for several reasons:

1. **Those with power live longer and healthier lives.** Those with less power tend to live shorter and unhealthier lives.
 - Those with lower-level careers are more likely to smoke, drink excessively, have poor dietary habits, and die from heart disease.
 - Status and power can play an even larger role in health. **Many studies demonstrate that the amount of**

authority one has at work is a strong predictor of mortality.

- The ability to control your environment is soothing. When negative circumstances are outside your influence, you feel helpless and anxious.
- Being on the bottom rung of the ladder is bad for your health!

2. **Power is good for your bank account.**

Those with power have bigger, better, and more opportunities to generate financial wealth. Power and influence go together. When you have power, you can influence others. Used properly, influence leads to wealth.

3. **Having power gives you choices.** You have more employment opportunities, more control over your life in general, and more ability to get things done. Power provides a foothold to leadership. Your

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power grows exponentially when you can lead others successfully.

There are many advantages to having power. There are few negatives to having power, if you wield it responsibly. **There's a saying that the average person wants to be wealthy, and the wealthy person wants more power.** The drive to acquire more power has practical implications, but there are also ego-related issues, too.

Many people feel better about themselves when they have more power.

How far you wish to take your quest for power is up to you.

“What makes Superman a hero is not that he has power, but that he has the wisdom and the maturity to use the power wisely. From an acting point of view, that's how I approached the part.”

– Christopher Reeve

THE OBSTACLES TO GAINING POWER

You have fewer obstacles than you think. A few of the obstacles are outside of your control, such as competition. There's no point in worrying about those. **The obstacles that are under your control are up to you to manage.** These obstacles are easy to understand, but not easy to deal with.

There are only two obstacles preventing you from having more power in your life:

1. **Incorrect beliefs.** Those that have trouble increasing their level of power have at least a few faulty beliefs. You can't play the game if you don't understand the rules. The most significant faulty belief is that the world is fair and just.
 - Most of us believe that we are deserving of more power. In our

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minds, all we must do is perform well at work, be kind, and we'll eventually get the power we deserve. This isn't true. Do you generally like the powerful people at your workplace or dislike them?

- By believing the world is fair, you ignore the potential traps in your environment that can limit or destroy your career. Just because you're playing by a set of moral rules, doesn't mean everyone else is, too.
- Psychologists believe the need to believe the world is fair is rooted in the need for control. **When you believe the world works in a kind manner, you're allowing yourself to believe that you have control over the world with your behavior.** But this need for certainty can result in disaster.

2. **The other significant obstacle is yourself.** Assuming you're like 99% of the population, your worst enemy is yourself. You'd accomplish all kinds of amazing things if you could just get out of your own way. The level of power you enjoy in your life is no exception. You can become incredibly powerful, but you present yourself with certain obstacles.
- Most of us naturally avoid struggle. Struggle is uncomfortable, and anytime you struggle, you may fail. You like to feel good and have a high opinion of yourself, so it's natural to avoid struggle. Unfortunately, power can require struggle.
 - **It's easier not to try than it is to try and fail.**
 - Everyone has a unique way of viewing himself and protects that image at all costs. If you see yourself as a "nice

THE POWER WITHIN

person,” you’ll tend to do nice things, for example. Do you see yourself as someone powerful or as someone that’s destined for power? If not, gaining power will be challenging.

You can change your life and gain all the power you could ever want. **Your primary obstacles are your lack of understanding and your lack of self-control.** Both are under your control to change. In fact, these two obstacles are just about your only two obstacles for anything you want in life.

*“You have power over your mind - not outside events.
Realize this, and you will find strength.”*

- Marcus Aurelius

THE PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS YOU MUST CULTIVATE TO GAIN POWER

Those with power have certain characteristics, just like those that are great parents or excellent entrepreneurs.

Developing the appropriate characteristics will aid you in your search for power.

You might feel negatively about a few of them, but keep an open mind. You might come to view them in a new light.

Develop the characteristics that are shared by those with great power:

1. **The willingness to create and tolerate both conflict and discomfort is crucial.**
There is a lot of information on the

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negative impact that bullying-type behavior can have on the workplace. There is also a lot of evidence that some behaviors that cause discomfort are highly effective.

- The average employee is very reluctant to engage in any sort of conflict, because it makes them feel uncomfortable. Difficult people and circumstances are viewed as something to avoid at all costs.
- If you can learn to tolerate conflict and discomfort, it creates a huge advantage for you. That doesn't mean that you must be overly aggressive and disrespectful. It does mean that **if you're willing to passionately state your case and hold your ground, you'll be successful in getting your way more often than not.**

2. **Having confidence has several advantages.** You'll often have to deal with others that don't know your reputation, accomplishments, or job title. They'll take cues from your level of confidence.
 - Confidence is an important component of charisma and magnifies your ability to lead and influence others.
 - Consider your coworkers that lack self-confidence. How are they treated? How are their careers going? How would you rate their social lives?
3. **Self-development.** Developing yourself enhances your skills and teaches you more about yourself.
 - **Read regularly.** You can read about your industry, leadership, social skills, or anything else that would facilitate

THE POWER WITHIN

your quest for power.

- **Assess yourself each day.** What did you do well? What did you do poorly? What changes can you make?
 - **Learn new skills.** Public speaking, body language, and networking are just a few useful topics.
4. **It helps to be ambitious.** Becoming powerful requires time, effort, energy, work, and consistency. Having ambition is required.
 5. **Focus and specialize.** It's easier to increase your level of power if you're an expert in your field. The more focused your area of expertise, the easier it is to become the go-to expert.
 - Focus also includes your daily activities. Are you spending your time effectively? Are you creating as much impact as

possible? **Determine the most important 20% of your possible activities and place at least 80% of your time and attention there.**

- Focus is such rare commodity that you can gain a lot of traction over your competition by harnessing the power of focus.

6. **The ability to read others accurately.**

How well do you know those around you? Can you predict how they'll react to a particular request? Can you tell with a high degree of accuracy how someone is reacting to you? Can you read the emotions of others? This is an important skill if you want to influence others.

*“Nearly all men can stand adversity,
but if you want to test a man’s character, give him power.”*

- Abraham Lincoln

THE POWER WITHIN

TIPS FOR BECOMING MORE POWERFUL

While power is something cultivated over time, there are several tactics you can begin to use immediately.

Incorporate these ideas into a long-term strategy.

Any short-term gains in power are easily lost. Keep a long-term perspective, but get started today.

You can build power quickly with these techniques:

1. **Keep your eyes open for unique opportunities.** Maybe your department needs someone to liaise with the finance department. This might be an excellent opportunity to make new connections, fill

a unique roll, and gain insight.

- You can also create your own opportunities. What improvements can you make at work? How can you provide a solution that simultaneously helps you, too?

2. **Know the department that matters the most.** As an example, Coca-Cola creates many of the raw ingredients that are used in the production of their soda. Another department procures raw materials from outside sources, such as corn syrup. Another department produces and bottles the actual soda.

- However, the various departments that fulfill these roles aren't the true source of power at Coca-Cola. Marketing and sales run the company. You'll never become the CEO of Coca-Cola without being in marketing and sales.

THE POWER WITHIN

- Know where the power lies within a company. The best way to do this is to examine the resumes of the people at the top, particularly the CEO.
 - Know the salaries in your company. **The department with the best salaries for experienced employees is often the department with the most power.**
3. **Consider where you will thrive.** The powerful department might seem to be the best choice. However, most of the competition lies there, too.
- A less influential department might be a better choice in the early part of your career. For example, rising in the IT department at Coca-Cola might be relatively easy. Then you could move to a company that specializes in IT and you'll already have a head start on your career.

4. **Understand that likability is overrated, at least where workplace success is concerned.** The average person believes that more people will help you if you're nice. But that's not true in many situations. It's true when you and the other person have an equal amount of power.
- It's not true in the workplace. Toughness and negativity have been found to influence how competent people believe you are. **Being likeable at work undermines how competent you appear to others.**
 - When you're tough, people would rather join you than oppose you. Psychologists believe this is due to the desire to avoid your wrath and be close a power center, you.
 - The other people in power don't care about how much they like you. They're

THE POWER WITHIN

much more concerned with what you can do for them.

5. **Remember that people forgive easily.** It's human nature to forgive. Avoid worrying about stepping on a few toes. You'll do yourself more good than harm. You'll be forgiven and still gain power.
6. **Stand out.** Get noticed. You could ask for a meeting with your vice-president or the CEO. Most of your coworkers are trying to avoid standing out.
7. **Be willing to break a few rules – for good reasons.** Those who follow all the rules rarely get into trouble, but they rarely excel, either. Have you ever looked through a stack of resumes when trying to hire someone? They all look the same after a while.
 - The same is true of employees. When a manager looks at his employees, his

THE POWER WITHIN

overwhelming opinion is that they're all essentially the same. No one stands out.

Obviously, you can put these ideas into action today. **Be brave enough to stand out and break a few rules.** Those that want to blend in don't become powerful. Your courage is an important component. Be brave!

“The older I get, the greater power I seem to have to help the world; I am like a snowball – the further I am rolled the more I gain.”

- Susan B. Anthony

WHAT DO YOU HAVE TO OFFER YOUR FRIENDS AND ENEMIES?

To have real power, you must have the ability to make your friends happy and your enemies miserable.

Why do politicians have so much power? **They can help their friends and punish their enemies.** They have unique resources.

How can you use this fact to your advantage? What can you do if you don't have a job with considerable power or a large budget?

Develop the resources you need to increase your influence:

1. **Build your resources.**

THE POWER WITHIN

- **Now is a good time to put on your happy face and make some friends at work.** Remember, being nice works with people on your level. So, offer compliments, attend after-hours get-togethers, attend birthday parties, and go to out to lunch with colleagues. Reach out to those in other departments, too.
- **Offer to help.** Your boss probably has some mundane work that you could do for her. The same might also be true for her boss.
- **Join professional organizations and contribute.** Contribute to the newsletter or help with the website. Consider being an officer.
- **Join prominent local charities.** Your city has a charity that attracts all the local bigwigs in your town and their spouses. It might be a food bank or the

THE POWER WITHIN

city zoo. Look at the board members of your local charities. If it reads like a “Who’s who” of your city, you’re on the right track.

2. **Build your social network.** Having the right friends and connections can help your goal to become more powerful. There are countless opportunities to make more business and social contacts.
 - Attend all company functions and introduce yourself to those you don’t know.
 - **Stay in touch.** You’ve lost track of most of the people you’ve known in your life. Stay in contact with those you know, socially and professionally.
 - **Ask important people for advice.** Others love to give advice and feel closer to those to whom they give advice.

THE POWER WITHIN

- Again, make use of charities and professional organizations for networking opportunities. Introduce yourself.
 - **Recognize the time constraints you have.** Networking and maintaining that network is very time consuming.
3. **Position yourself properly within your social network.** It's not just how many people you know and how important they are. Your position within that network matters, too.
- **Be a source of communication.** Be the person that people ask for advice. If someone has a question, will they contact you or someone else? Can you position yourself between departments at work? When departments talk to each other, try to ensure that the

THE POWER WITHIN

information passes through you.

As you gain more power, you have more to offer your friends, and a bigger stick to hold over your enemies. **Your resources are key.** Build a strong social network and position yourself accordingly. Always consider what you have to offer others. The more you can do for them, the more they'll be willing to do for you.

“Because power corrupts, society's demands for moral authority and character increase as the importance of the position increases.”

- John Adams

CONVEY POWER WITH YOUR BEHAVIOR AND WORDS

When you look and sound like a powerful person, you'll be perceived as having power and gain many of the benefits of being powerful. **The way you act and speak affects how others view you.** Most people don't give these two important issues enough consideration.

Use your actions and words to your advantage:

1. **Dress the part.** Avoid dressing like your peers. Dress like the person that already has the job you want. Dress like you're more powerful and people will believe you're more powerful.

THE POWER WITHIN

- Consider others aspects of your appearance, too. This includes your hairstyle and facial hair.
2. **Be willing to express anger.** Studies have shown that people willing to show anger are viewed as stronger and more powerful. Interestingly, **sadness and regret are associated with weakness.**
 3. **Stand and walk tall.** If you're powerful and confident, you won't make yourself smaller. You'll move with authority and make yourself seen. Maintain a posture that denotes power.
 4. **Stay calm.** Powerful people aren't easily flustered. Even if you feel compelled to respond to someone quickly, take your time and compose yourself. Powerful people take all the time they need and maintain control over their emotions and mental states.

5. **Interrupt others and don't allow others to interrupt you.** People with power are comfortable interrupting others. They also stop people from interrupting them.

6. **Learn how to influence others with your words.** Can you tell a good story? Can you inspire others to act? Can you change someone's emotions with your words? Can you make others believe you and follow you?

You teach others how to treat you. **Ensure that you're teaching them to treat you as an authority.** Present yourself in a way that convinces the people around you that you're important and in charge. Put the focus on yourself and build these important skills.

“One of the reasons people hate politics is that truth is rarely a politician's objective. Election and power are.”

– Cal Thomas

CONCLUSION

Depending on your starting point, increasing the level of power you have over your career and your life can be quite easy or quite challenging.

Even if you're starting your first job, you can build your power and authority. These strategies are easy to implement – with practice.

It isn't necessary to be one of the super humans you read about in history books. The bookstores are filled with autobiographies of the most powerful people in the world. You don't need to do anything that impressive to dramatically improve your lot in life.

Does playing the power game sound unappealing to you? Have you tried it? If you must be at work all day, you might as well make the most of it. The benefits go beyond the workplace. It carries over to your everyday life, too.

THE POWER WITHIN

To start, assess your situation and create a plan. What skills do you need? Who are the important players? What resources do you currently have at your disposal? What is your path to the top? Start tomorrow to use these tips and gain power in your life. You and your family can benefit greatly.