

Meyer's Management Models

39. Tree of Power

What types of power can I use and what are the sources of this power?

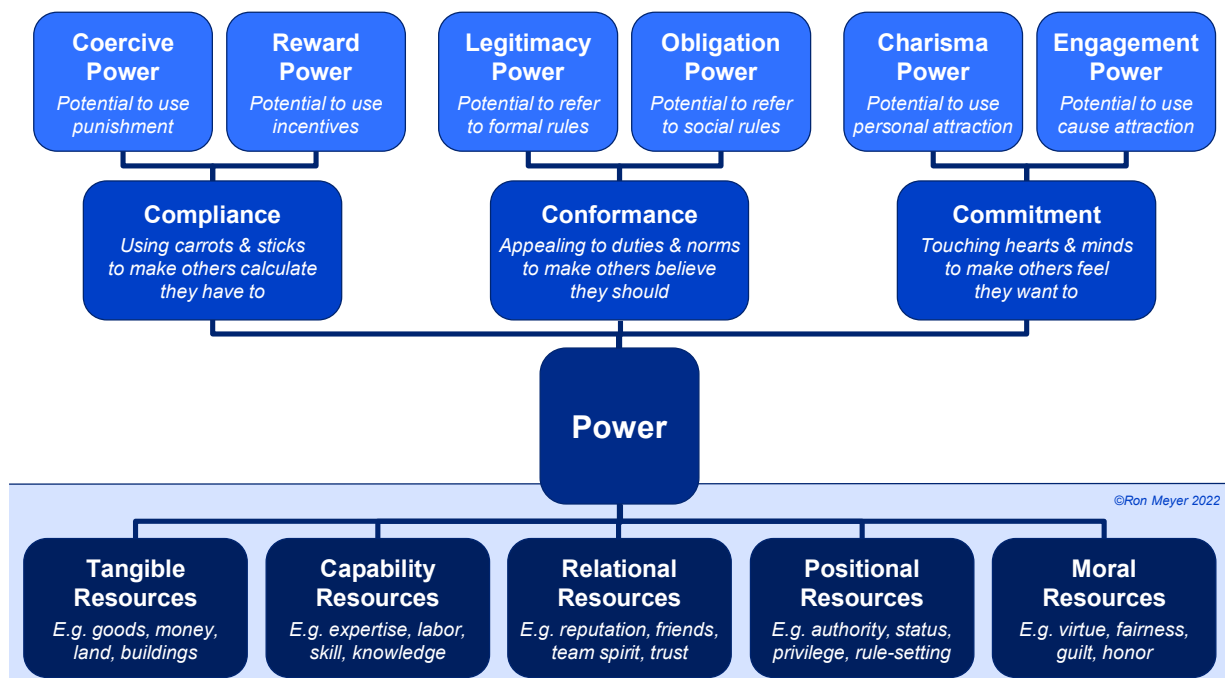
Key Definitions

Power is the capacity to cause an effect – the potential to make things happen. Individuals can have power, but so can groups, organizations, and countries. Using power can lead to its depletion, but can also cause it to grow, depending on the circumstances.

The amount of power that people have depends on the resources to which they have access (*power sources* – the roots of power), but also on the way they make use of these resources (*power approaches* – the branches of power).

Conceptual Model

The *Tree of Power* model uses the metaphor of a tree to explain how different types of power (*fruits*) grow out of different approaches to power (*branches* or *shoots*) and are fed by different sources of power (*roots*). The key message is that acquiring resources is necessary, but not sufficient to become powerful. Power results from how the resources are used to influence people. The three different approaches to exerting influence – *compliance*, *conformance*, and *commitment* – lead to very different (and complementary) types of power. Having a portfolio of all six types of power makes people more powerful and gives them the flexibility to use the most effective form in each situation to achieve the effect they wish to realize.



Key Elements

The tree of power consists of roots, shoots, and fruits. The five roots are the following:

1. **Tangible Resources.** Power can stem from access to physical items, such as food, shelter, land, money, and machines. Data as tradeable resource also belongs here.

2. **Capability Resources.** Power can also be rooted in access to valuable abilities, such as skill, expertise, insight, creativity, proactivity, and manual labor.
3. **Relational Resources.** Power can also be derived from interpersonal relations, such as friendships, alliances, confidence, reputation, and team spirit.
4. **Positional Resources.** Power can also spring from someone's formal or social position, such as decision-making authority, rule-setting mandates, other privileges, and status.
5. **Moral Resources.** Finally, power can arise from having what is ethically good on your side, such as virtue, honor, respect, justice, rights, and someone else's guilt.

These roots are drawn underground, to symbolize how they feed the tree. Above ground, the six types of power (fruits) grow from three different approaches to power (shoots):

- A. **Compliance.** Power can be exerted by using carrots (benefits) and sticks (punishment) to make people calculate it is in their interest to go along with the other's wishes. This approach is about obedience – making sure people feel they “must” comply. The two types:
 1. *Coercive Power.* Using the negative threat of punishment to force compliance.
 2. *Reward Power.* Using the positive lure of benefits to buy people's compliance.
- B. **Conformance.** Power can also be exerted by appealing to people's sense of responsibility to behave properly, in accordance with duties and rules. This approach is about following the norms – getting people to feel they “should” conform. The two types:
 3. *Legitimacy Power.* Pointing to formal rules to get people to play along.
 4. *Obligation Power.* Pointing to social expectations to get people to play along.
- C. **Commitment.** Power can also be exerted by winning hearts and minds, getting people to buy in to what is being requested of them. This approach is about attraction – getting people to “want” to commit because they like what the other is asking. The two types:
 5. *Charisma Power.* Using attraction to you as a person to influence.
 6. *Engagement Power.* Using attraction to a cause or organization to influence.

Key Insights

- **Power is not a dirty word.** No one can function without power. Power is the capacity to cause an effect and therefore crucial for getting anything done. To be a leader, you need to have sufficient power to sway others, so considering how to build up and use power is important. That some people misuse their power shouldn't give power a bad name, but just be a warning that power is a tool that can be used in positive and negative ways.
- **Power is widely misunderstood.** French & Raven's 'model' from 1959 is probably the most commonly used framework about power, but it is no more than a checklist mixing up power sources and power types. It is time to retire this framework.
- **Power is rooted in access to resources.** All types of power require access to a variety of resources. These can be clustered into five categories: tangible, capability, relational, positional, and moral resources. Yet, resources are not power, only the sources of power.
- **Power can be exerted in three ways.** The five types of resources can be applied in three fundamentally different ways – the approaches to power. Resources can be used to trigger compliance (getting people to calculate they *must*), to encourage conformance (getting them to believe they *should*) or to win commitment (getting them to desire they *want to*).
- **Having a portfolio of power types is useful.** Each approach to power bears fruit to two power types, resulting in a repertoire of six different forms of power. Being able to flexibly use all six, depending on the situation, greatly enhances a person's effectiveness.

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Insightful Tools to Kickstart Your Thinking

Publication Schedule

<i>July 2019</i>	<i>Mind the Gap Model</i>	<i>Change Management</i>
<i>August 2019</i>	<i>Digital Platform Map</i>	<i>Digital Strategy</i>
<i>September 2019</i>	<i>Interaction Pressure Gauge</i>	<i>Interpersonal Interaction</i>
<i>October 2019</i>	<i>Revenue Model Framework</i>	<i>Revenue Model Typology</i>
<i>November 2019</i>	<i>House of Engagement</i>	<i>Organizational Engagement</i>
<i>December 2019</i>	<i>Confidence Quotient</i>	<i>Trust Building</i>
<i>January 2020</i>	<i>Competition Tornado</i>	<i>Competitive Strategy</i>
<i>February 2020</i>	<i>11C Synergy Model</i>	<i>Corporate Synergy Management</i>
<i>March 2020</i>	<i>Leadership Fairness Model</i>	<i>Leader-Follower Interaction</i>
<i>April 2020</i>	<i>Strategic Agility Model</i>	<i>Strategy Process Approach</i>
<i>May 2020</i>	<i>Control Panel</i>	<i>Corporate Control Dimensions</i>
<i>June 2020</i>	<i>Rising Star Framework</i>	<i>Talent Management</i>
<i>July 2020</i>	<i>Strategy Development Cycle</i>	<i>Strategy Process Steps</i>
<i>August 2020</i>	<i>7I Roles of the Corporate Center</i>	<i>Corporate Organization</i>
<i>September 2020</i>	<i>Storytelling Scripts</i>	<i>Leadership Communication</i>
<i>October 2020</i>	<i>Strategic Bets Framework</i>	<i>Strategic Decision-Making</i>
<i>November 2020</i>	<i>Rebound Model of Resilience</i>	<i>Organizational Resilience</i>
<i>December 2020</i>	<i>4C Leadership Capabilities</i>	<i>Leadership Competences</i>
<i>January 2021</i>	<i>Digital Product Model Dial</i>	<i>Digital Strategy</i>
<i>February 2021</i>	<i>Digital Distribution Model Dial</i>	<i>Digital Strategy</i>
<i>March 2021</i>	<i>Empowerment Cycle</i>	<i>Employee Empowerment</i>
<i>April 2021</i>	<i>Innovation Box</i>	<i>Innovation Approaches</i>
<i>May 2021</i>	<i>Knowledge Sharing Bridges</i>	<i>Best Practice Sharing</i>
<i>June 2021</i>	<i>Followership Cycle</i>	<i>Leader-Follower Interaction</i>
<i>July 2021</i>	<i>Everest Model of Change</i>	<i>Change Management</i>
<i>August 2021</i>	<i>Fruits & Nuts Matrix</i>	<i>Priority-Setting</i>
<i>September 2021</i>	<i>Powerhouse Framework</i>	<i>People & Organization Strategy</i>
<i>October 2021</i>	<i>Strategy Hourglass</i>	<i>Strategy-Making Steps</i>
<i>November 2021</i>	<i>Disciplined Dialogue Model</i>	<i>Interpersonal Communication</i>
<i>December 2021</i>	<i>Team Building Cycle</i>	<i>Team Building Process</i>
<i>January 2022</i>	<i>Market System Map</i>	<i>External Analysis Framework</i>
<i>February 2022</i>	<i>Strategic Alignment Model</i>	<i>Business Level Strategy</i>
<i>March 2022</i>	<i>Creativity X-Factor</i>	<i>Creativity Enhancement</i>
<i>April 2022</i>	<i>Organizational System Map</i>	<i>Organizational Analysis</i>
<i>May 2022</i>	<i>Corporate Value Creation Model</i>	<i>Corporate Level Strategy</i>

June 2022	Change Manager's Toolbox	Change Methodologies
July 2022	Sustainable You Model	Personal Sustainability
August 2022	Value Proposition Dial	Business Level Strategy
September 2022	The Tree of Power	Organizational Power
October 2022	Psychological Safety Compass	Team Dynamics
November 2022	Strategic Action Model	Strategy Process
December 2022	Corporate Management Styles	HQ Management
January 2023	Reasoning Routines Model	Thinking Skills
February 2023	Activity System Dial	Value Creation Analysis
March 2023	Customer-Centricity Circle	Organizational Design
April 2023	New Learning Curve	Personal Learning
May 2023	Partnership Distance Model	Interorganizational Relations
June 2023	Needs Radar Screen	Motivation Analysis
July 2023	New Pyramid Principle	Presentation Approaches
August 2023	Stakeholder Heat Map	Stakeholder Management
September 2023	Embedded Identity Model	Personal Awareness