

RELATIONAL LEADERSHIP™

Leading from Where You Stand: Creating Opportunities for Leadership

WHY THIS> WHY NOW?

In moments of crisis we often highlight the decisions and leadership of those with formal positions and titles. Yet it's often the smaller acts of leadership that get us through these times. By cultivating leadership from team members at *all* levels, we act as multipliers, instilling agency and responsibility and enhancing our ability to make lifesaving decisions in real time.

Leadership is fundamentally the stewardship of power.

Leadership in crisis can either exacerbate conflict and disfunction on a team, or it can create more camaraderie, trust, and resilience. At PCP, we cultivate Relational Leaders who are aware of their power and harness it to create greater opportunity for shared leadership on their teams.

This isn't just about formal positions and titles we may or may not hold. Leadership comes in the myriad of ways we influence others and take agency, the small moments we make decisions that impact those around us.

WHAT IS POWER?

We define power as both the agency or ability to act in a particular way freely (self-determination), *and* the ability to direct or influence the behavior of others (governance). When we hold power, we are seen, heard, and valued for our perspectives and opinions.

Though some power is bestowed by authoritative roles we hold, much of the power we harness is informal: it is not immediately visible or officially assigned. Some forms of power are predetermined by our society and culture; others can be grown and developed over time. We all have more power than we may be aware of, and we are all capable of leading from where we stand.

TYPES OF POWER

WHERE INFORMAL POWER ORIGINATES



Expertise power is that power you gain from experience, training and study. It may give additional weight to your opinion or perspective. Deferring to those with seniority is a common manifestation of expertise power.



Relational power is all about "who you know." Sometimes called *referent power*, this power is gained from connections with others and the information tied to these relationships. This information allows you to leverage the strengths and weaknesses of others, to get buy-in on ideas, and to push agendas forward.



Systemic power refers to one group's ability to establish and directly benefit from institutions, laws, customs, and policies, and to access resources and decision-makers. Essentially it is the ability to establish the standard by which everyone else abides. These customs become so deeply entrenched in society that we assume that they are inevitable and correct. Individuals who belong to socially dominant groups benefit from systemic power, regardless of whether they are aware of it.



Majority power stems from being surrounded by people from a similar community or identity. This could be a socio-political identity like race or gender, or it could be based on shared history/experience/training. Whereas systemic power travels with you wherever you go, majority power is situational.

RELATIONAL LEADERSHIP: HOW WE USE POWER

Relational Leadership™ is an approach to leading that cultivates authentic relationships to achieve connection, common vision, and interdependent action. It asks us to look at dynamics between individuals as well as the system as a whole. As leaders, it's important to recognize our power and how we can build it, while also considering how we can best leverage that power in productive and helpful ways.

COERCIVE POWER (POWER OVER)

Compliance through force or control of decisions through punitive or fear-based methods.

This power is wielded top-down, so hierarchy becomes extremely important and the leadership of others is viewed as a threat to one's own (zero-sum).

SHARED POWER (POWER WITH)

Compliance through agreement and collaboration with opportunities for independent action and innovation.

This power is generated from all team members, promoting vulnerability, help-seeking, and acknowledgment of gaps. The leadership of others is viewed as a strength to help the overall success of the team/mission (win/win).

APPLYING THIS TO YOUR TEAM

How can we start leading from where we stand? Those who have formal positions of authority may have the greatest opportunity to implement change immediately, but everyone on the team can help lift up moments of informal leadership around them.

1. **Recognize the power you have in different contexts.** Start to notice when it feels like your voice may be heard more loudly than others. When might you have more experience or knowledge than others? What about the connections you've built? Are there moments when your demographic may have the majority?
2. **Explore ways to build on that power and display informal leadership.** Consider your own leadership. How might you harness the power you have to take agency in your position or share your opinion in a way that resonates more loudly? Are there certain topics or circumstances that you can more heavily weigh in on?
3. **Use your informal leadership to amplify the voices of others.** Consider how you can create opportunities for others, recognizing and highlighting their own power and finding ways to foster it.

"You've been here longer than anyone else on the team and you always offer such relevant insights to our organization."

"I'm so impressed how often the team comes to you for advice. You've really developed some strong relationships."

"Your department is twice as big as the others and yet I noticed you aren't represented on the decision-making board. Perhaps we could bring this up together and..."