

INFLUENCE AND PERSUASION

Power and Dependence

French & Raven · Pfeffer · Kotter · Emerson

PAPER 02 / 03

A Furtherance reference compendium on the intellectual traditions behind organisational design, leadership, execution, and culture.

IN THIS PAPER

Influence has a structural counterpart: power. This paper covers where organisational power comes from and how it operates – as bases a person holds, a political capability, a response to dependence, and ultimately a relationship. The question it answers: what actually determines who can get things done in an organisation?

French and Raven name the sources of power; Pfeffer treats its acquisition and use as a practical skill; Kotter reframes the manager's world as one of pervasive dependence; Emerson supplies the relational logic beneath them all – power is the flip side of someone else's dependence.

French & Raven *Bases of Social Power, 1959*

Social psychology · the sources of power

CORE THESIS

Social power derives from a small number of distinct **bases**. Some flow from a person's **position**, others from the **person** themselves – and the latter tend to produce commitment rather than mere compliance.

FRAMEWORK

Base of power	Rests on
Reward	The ability to give valued outcomes
Coercive	The ability to punish
Legitimate	Formal position and the right to require
Referent	Identification with, and admiration for, the person
Expert	Valued knowledge and skill
Informational	Control of information and its logic

METHODOLOGY

A conceptual taxonomy from social psychology, later extended and widely operationalised.

SIGNIFICANCE AND CRITIQUE

The foundational classification of power, still the standard teaching model. The critique: the bases overlap in practice, and the framework describes sources without explaining their dynamics.

Jeffrey Pfeffer *Managing with Power, 1992*

Organisational power and politics · Stanford GSB

CORE THESIS

Power is **essential** to getting things done, and it is acquired and exercised through political skill rather than granted by position alone. Pfeffer's account is deliberately realistic: those who are squeamish about power tend to be ineffective at implementing even good ideas.

FRAMEWORK

Source of power	How it is built
Control of resources	Command budget, headcount, information, access
Coping with uncertainty	Solve the problems others cannot
Centrality	Sit where the work and the network flow
Allies and reputation	Cultivate relationships and a record of delivery

METHODOLOGY

Organisational research and case analysis of how power is actually won and used inside firms.

SIGNIFICANCE AND CRITIQUE

An unusually candid corrective to the sanitised leadership literature, taking organisational politics seriously as a fact of life. The critique: it can read as Machiavellian, and its embrace of power makes some readers uncomfortable.

John Kotter Power and Influence, 1985

Leadership and management · dependence

CORE THESIS

The modern manager's defining problem is **dependence**: they rely on many people – peers, superiors, outsiders – over whom they hold no formal authority. Effective managers therefore build **power and influence beyond their position** to close the gap between what they are responsible for and what they can command.

FRAMEWORK

Idea	What it means
The dependence gap	Responsibility exceeds formal authority
Influence without authority	Build power laterally and upward, not just down
Managing your boss	Treat the boss relationship as one to actively manage
Leadership vs management	Coping with change vs coping with complexity

METHODOLOGY

Observation and research on managerial work and how effective managers operate.

SIGNIFICANCE AND CRITIQUE

Reframed the manager's job around dependence and influence rather than command, and made “managing upward” a legitimate skill. The critique: it is largely descriptive of what effective managers do.

Richard Emerson Power-Dependence Relations, 1962

Sociology · the relational theory of power

CORE THESIS

Power is not a possession but a **relation**: A's power over B equals B's **dependence** on A. That dependence rises with how much B values what A provides, and falls with the number of alternative sources B has. Power is therefore always reciprocal and structural.

FRAMEWORK

Determinant of dependence	Effect on the other's power
Value of the resource	The more B needs it, the more power A holds
Availability of alternatives	The more options B has, the less power A holds
Balancing operations	The weaker party acts to reduce its dependence

METHODOLOGY

Sociological theory, later the basis of resource-dependence and network-exchange research.

SIGNIFICANCE AND CRITIQUE

The rigorous relational foundation beneath the other three – especially Pfeffer's resource lens. The critique: it is abstract, and translating the elegant logic into specific organisational tactics takes work.

Synthesis

Contribution	Power is...	Key idea	Register
French & Raven	A set of bases	Six sources of power	Foundational taxonomy
Pfeffer	A political capability	Acquired through skill	Candid / applied
Kotter	A response to dependence	Influence without authority	Managerial
Emerson	A relation of dependence	Power = the other's dependence	Sociological theory

FOR THE OPERATOR

Power is the bases you hold (French & Raven), the political capability to use them (Pfeffer), a response to pervasive dependence (Kotter), and, at root, a relationship of dependence (Emerson). For the operator, the practical instruction is Emerson's: your influence is set by who depends on you, for what, and with what alternatives – so manage dependence deliberately rather than relying on title. The next paper turns power and influence into applied persuasion and dialogue.