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EIGHT SOURCES OF POWER¹

1. **Position power (authority).** Positions confer certain levels of formal authority (i.e., professors assign grades and judges decide disputes). Positions also place incumbents in more or less powerful locations in communications and power networks. It helps to be in the right unit as well as the right job: a lofty title in a backwater department may not mean much, but junior members of a powerful unit can have substantial clout (Pfeffer, 1992).
2. **Information and expertise.** Power flows to those who have information and know-how to solve important problems. It flows to marketing experts in consumer products industries, to faculty at elite universities, and to superstar conductors of symphony orchestras.
3. **Control of rewards.** The ability to deliver jobs, money, political support, or other rewards brings power. France and Italy were among many countries rocked in the early 1990s by scandals involving political bosses who kept themselves in power by controlling patronage, public services, and other payoffs.
4. **Coercive power.** Coercive power rests on the ability to constrain, block, interfere, or punish. A union's ability to walk out, students' ability to sit in, and an army's ability to clamp down all exemplify coercive power.
5. **Alliances and networks.** Getting things done in organizations involves working through a complex network of individuals and groups. Friends and allies make that a lot easier. Kotter (1982) found that a key difference between more and less successful senior managers was attentiveness to building and cultivating links with friends and allies. Managers who spent too little time building their networks had much more difficulty getting things done.
6. **Access and control of agendas.** A by-product of networks and alliances is access to decision arenas. Organizations and political systems typically give some groups more access than others. When decisions are made, the interests of those with "a seat at the table" are well represented, while the concerns of absentees are often distorted or ignored.
7. **Framing: control of meaning and symbols.** "Establishing the framework within which issues will be viewed and decided is often tantamount to

¹ Bolman, L.G., and Deal, T.E. *Reframing Organizations*. 1997. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. pp. 169-170.

determining the result.” (Pfeffer, 1992, p. 203.) Elites and opinion leaders often have substantial ability to define and even impose the meanings and myths that define identity, beliefs, and values. Viewed positively, this provides meaning and hope. Viewed cynically, elites can convince others to accept and support things not in their best interests. This can be a very subtle and unobtrusive form of power: When the powerless accept the myths promulgated by the powerful, overt conflict and power struggles may disappear.

8. **Personal power.** Individuals with charisma, energy and stamina, political skills, verbal facility, or the capacity to articulate visions are imbued with power independent of other sources. This can include various types of influence, such as ingratiation, exchange (quid pro quo), and personal appeal.