# Persuasion Power
## How to Get It, Use It & Keep It
### By Michael E. Rega

*Organizational leaders understand the power levers that create change, enhance careers and drive results.*

Within organizations, many OSH professionals are given tremendous responsibility but minimal positional power. The end result is often unnecessary delay, lack of efficiency, or a message not acted on that could lead to dire consequences for OSH professionals and their organizations.

Based on years of organizational and behavioral research by industry experts such as Robert Cialdini, Sally Fuller, Jeffrey Pfeffer and Daniel Pink, power is a discussion of what actually is happening in organizational behavior as opposed to what we think is happening. This article explores how to get things done through others, achieve business results and rise to leadership positions. Some believe that good work and dedication are the main drivers in the success of a professional career, but recent data strongly suggest otherwise.

This article also uncovers modern organizational power and suggests that instead of the power structure being a mystical free-for-all, it is orderly and predictable. A distinction is made between the historic understanding of organizational power and the future of this fast-moving and often confusing topic.

### Gaining Persuasion Power

Organizational leaders understand the power levers that create change, enhance careers and drive results. Successful personal power creation is action, not position. OSH professionals can learn how to enhance their organizations by uncovering and demonstrating principles of personal power. Five sources of organizational power exist that anyone can properly use to gain influence with peers. The power tools discussed in this article will help maximize effectiveness and grow personal organizational value.

*Collaboration*

Many elements influence people but perhaps the strongest instinctual drive is the need to be associated with a group. It may not matter what the group stands for, how it behaves or who its leaders are. The most important thing is to belong. Evidence suggests that people's group need is traced ancestrally to when humans banded together to form tribes to hunt, mate and survive. Harnessing that simple human requirement is what all great groups do.

In modern business circles, it is a proud description to say you work for Apple, Google or any high-flying successful organization of the past decade. Outside the world of business, the U.S. military spends tremendous effort branding its services, so much so that most retired service members describe themselves, even late in life, as former Marine or ex-Navy.

*Performance*

Understanding group mentality as described in Table 1 is key to capturing the power of the group and implementing that power into whatever group a person belongs to (e.g., civic, academic, religious, family business).

Deep understanding of what makes a group perform well is a power-enhancing skill. As we go through life, some may be members of groups or teams that, for whatever reason, were miserable. They may have even delivered the work, won plenty of games or successfully implemented a new concept, yet still the members' dissatisfaction was palpable. In contrast, opposite situations have likely happened to all of us. Despite horrible results or losses, members bond and have a positive group experience.

The important component to build group power is to first understand the task to be completed, then build the group based on the qualities (inputs) that use an interdependency model. Most business graduate programs are based on this model. The end results speak for themselves. An M.B.A. is the most popular graduate degree in the world and beyond degree completion, more than 83% of B-school graduates report a posi-

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TABLE 1
## Power Performance

| Inputs | Process | Outcomes |
|---|---|---|
| Size | Roles | ✔Performance |
| Member characteristics | Norms | ✔Satisfaction |
| Goals | Member relations | |
| Task | Leader behavior | |
| Accountability | Participation | |
| Reward structure | Cohesion | |

*Note. Adapted from UNC Executive Development, www.execdev.unc.edu.*

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tive or very positive experience. Power exists in understanding how group power is implemented and whether it is a college basketball coach or a project manager, wielding that power effectively can change careers.

## Motivation

After one has power, keeping that power becomes an interesting task. Frank Underwood, a character in the TV show *House of Cards*, says, "Money is the McMansion in Sarasota that starts falling apart after 10 years. Power is the old stone building that stands for centuries, and I cannot respect a person who does not understand the difference." A pessimistic quote from a calculating, and at times, evil character. Yet consider what he is actually saying. Building and keeping power can be a career-enhancing decision while chasing a paycheck may be a good job and a poor career move.

## Leverage Relationships

Sustaining organizational power requires persuasion mastery. The willingness of others in an organization is an essential key to long-term power keeping.

Pfeffer's groundbreaking research discovered that one of the greatest influencers of organizational status is being spoken about positively when not present. This is how legends are made. Daniel Boone, Wild Bill Hickok and Jesse James were larger-than-life figures because of the power of enhanced storytelling. People spoke about these legends when they were not present, and it elevated their status beyond belief.

Professionals can leverage relationships by:
- accelerating influence;
- in networks, identifying what you can do for others;
- when being thanked, not releasing;
- identifying benefits for the person doing the task.

## Persuasion Model

Finally, there is the massive power of persuasion. The oldest and perhaps still best example of a persuasion model was crafted originally by Socrates and later put to text by Plato, his stu-

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dent. In Socrates's day, orators were powerful people who were feared by governments. Orators such as Socrates could change the course of history, alter people's thinking and change the fabric of society. Although Socrates paid the ultimate price for his persuasion, we can learn a great deal from his model.

It is a six-step model that has stood the test of time, and although the names of the steps change occasionally, the core meaning has not altered for centuries. The stages can take weeks or months depending on the complexity of the persuasion.

However, if one traces major North American social change, the stages in societal progression are recognizable, such as antismoking, the use of seat belts in automobiles and low-fat diets. Even the passing of the Affordable Care Act followed Socrates's brilliant model:

1) Preliminary rapport: The power of liking.

2) Comparison illustration: The power of normative, group behavior.

3) Suggestion: Simply put, the power of suggestion.

4) Explanation: The analytical cost/benefit of any kind of change.

5) Confirmation: Proving that the concept actually works and normative.

6) Commitment: A powerful self-persuasion method.

Most persuasive people have mastered forms of this model and know how and when to deploy it. Generally they intertwine the power of storytelling to deliver the model as is the case with Martin Luther King Jr.'s 1963 "I Have a Dream" speech. That speech resonates because King had the entangled storyline, which gives the speech an amazing punch. The Power Storytelling sidebar lists factors of powerful storytelling to keep in mind.

### Conclusion

This article is meant to capture the finest and most modern components of power and make them useful for modern organizations. Anyone can learn, master and deploy power for the benefit of the organization, themselves, their teams and society.

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## Power Storytelling
Following are serveral factors of powerful storytelling to consider.

**Break Stories Into Acts**
- introduce the situation;
- intensify the situation;
- resolution (good or bad).

**Common Themes**
- quest;
- David and Goliath;
- fish out of water (stranger in a strange land);
- rags to riches;
- revenge.

**Passion Is Key**
- flavor of words;
- face and body.