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Power vs. Perception: Ten Critical Characteristics of Self-Empowerment for Leadership



By Mary Anne Kochut

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Position Power vs. Personal Power

Position Power	Personal Power
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Power bestowed by institution• Level• Protocol• Supported by policy• Sanctioned• Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Comes from within self• Persuasive• Respect• Charisma• Type of person you are• Knowledge• Experience• Connections/Network

What Do We Mean by "Power?"

The early scene from the movie "The Devil Wears Prada" where the lead character, Miranda arrives at the office comically addresses the issue of how the use of "power" can impact the entire culture of an organization. Everyone was "walking on eggshells" and attempting to avoid who would be the "target of her wrath" that morning. While this is a Hollywood movie, it does demonstrate how one person's use of their "power" can impact an organization.

The first thing that needs to be explored is what is meant by "power" and authority. There are two types of power that is exercised in society, whether in the corporate world, government, academia or the family. They are: Position Power and Personal Power.

Position Power is bestowed by the institution. It is indicated by level, or title, i.e., president, vice president, director, manager, supervisor, police officer, professor, teacher, mother, etc. These titles command certain protocols and are supported by policies, sanctions and authority within the systems of the institution – whether it's a large corporation, the military, government agency, educational institution or family.

Personal Power is given by others. It comes from within the individual; in the way he or she attempts to influence or persuade others to accomplish tasks and the respect he or she conveys towards other people. It's based on an aura of "charisma," their personality or the type of person they are; as well as their knowledge, experience and connections. We know what this is when we experience it in our interactions with other people, i.e., "that doctor has a nice 'bedside manner,'" "that salesperson has a 'bad attitude,'" etc.

One kind of power is not better than the other and everyone has both kinds of power. The challenge is that some people are more comfortable with one kind of power than the other. This has nothing to do with gender but is more related to the individual person's comfort zone. What happens is that the individual exhibits behaviors based on the type of power they are most comfortable with. This is fine in situations where those behaviors are appropriate for the situation. It can create problems, however, when the situation calls for behaviors that are from the least-comfortable form of power; and that is where problems can arise.

The key is balance: Balancing position and personal power. It means drawing upon the appropriate "power" for the situation at hand and being able to recognize or "diagnose" the situation and which way is best to respond.

Power vs. Perception: Ten Critical Characteristics of Self-Empowerment for Leadership

Resiliency: The 10 Critical Characteristics of Self-Empowerment

Introduction to Resiliency Model: Much of the work that has been done on Change Management in recent years is rooted in the Kurt Lewin theory of “un-freeze, change, and freeze.” What this means is that a “system” (or an individual) is “frozen” into its processes, (habits), etc. When the time comes to institute a “change,” the system is then “unfrozen” and the change (new process/behavior) is instituted; then the “system” is then “frozen” into place again. This theory worked well into the middle of the 20th Century. However, my view is that towards the end and into the Technology Age of the 21st Century this theory doesn’t work as well because it assumes that the new “change” will have a chance to “freeze” into place again. With the speed of technology, communications and Globalization, multiple changes are occurring simultaneously and a system doesn’t get the chance to “freeze” into the new process(s). However, organizations and leaders are continuing to operate out of the original mindset.

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Continuous Change

Developing “resiliency” from the multiple impacts of these multiple changes occurring simultaneously is a key element in self-empowerment. The Ten Characteristics of Self-Empowerment are built into the Resiliency Leadership Model. It can apply to one’s business or personal life.

What does “resiliency” mean? According to Merriam-Webster resiliency is:

1. The capability of a strained body to recover its size and shape after deformation caused especially by compressive stress.
2. An ability to recover from or adjust easily to misfortune or change.”

Both of these definitions can apply to resiliency. As leaders we need to look at how we recover from the “compressive stress” of continuous changes we experience in both our professional and personal lives. What kind of strain does it apply to our bodies? How do we handle stress? What happens to our disposition and our attitude when plans have to change or unexpected events or emergencies occur? How do we adjust to and deal with the changes that occur in daily life?

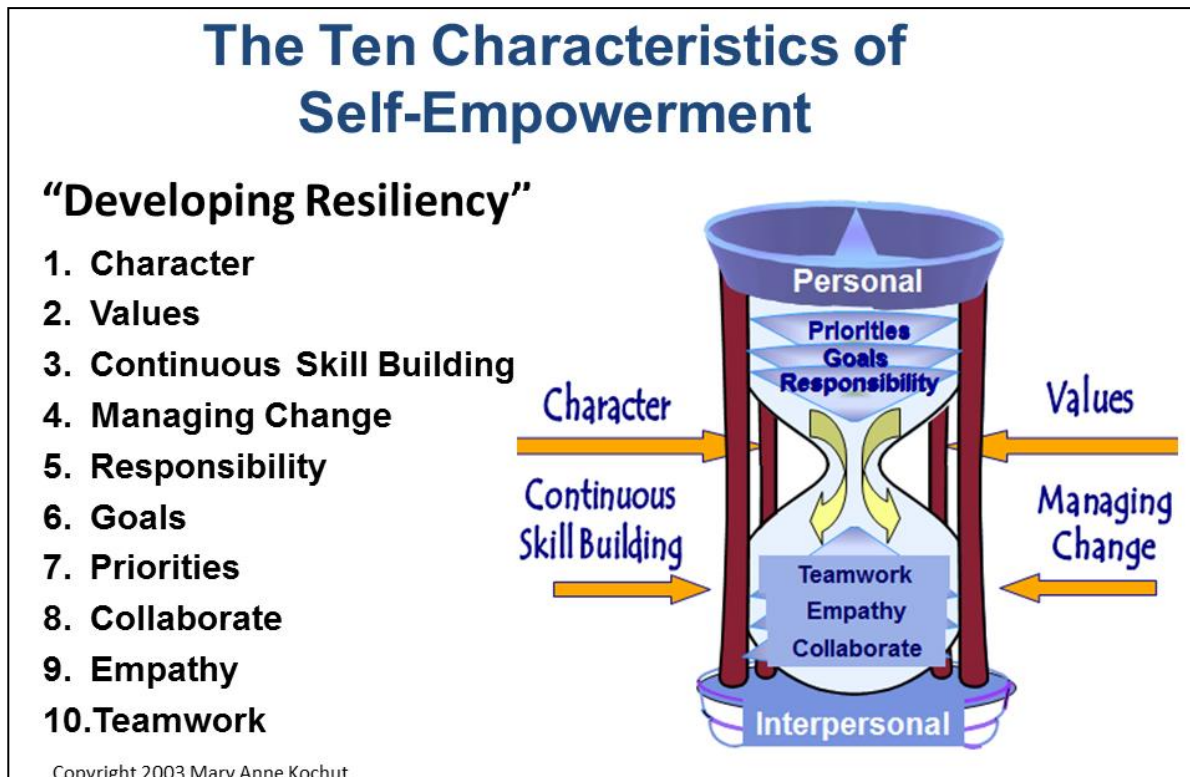
Power vs. Perception: Ten Critical Characteristics of Self-Empowerment for Leadership

Resiliency Hourglass Model

Because of the multiple “hats” that must be worn in the workplace, family, etc., leaders, are expected to be able to “do” and “have” it “all” and multitasking is a critical skill for anyone to master in the 21st Century. Developing the resiliency to recover from the constant “hits” coming in from all directions related to all of these roles is the critical component needed to survive and thrive in this constantly changing environment.

Hourglass Definition: To present the model, the metaphor of an hourglass is used. An hourglass is defined as an instrument for measuring time consisting of a glass vessel having two compartments from the uppermost of which a quantity of sand runs into the lower one in an hour. I chose an hourglass as the representative of the model for several reasons:

1. An hourglass can only do its job as a result of constant change because;
2. The sand inside is always being shaken up, as the hourglass itself has to be turned upside down in order for it to function.



Resiliency Hourglass: Each part of the model represents a particular characteristic and the associated behaviors or needed skills related to it. The two parts of the inner hourglass consist of a vessel that is held together by an outer frame. Without this frame, the hourglass would not function because the glass would not stand upright.

Power vs. Perception: Ten Critical Characteristics of Self-Empowerment for Leadership

Resiliency Wheel

All these characteristics and skills are overlaid into the Resiliency Wheel and are a critical part of the development of self-empowerment. They are at the center of the wheel and function as the “spokes” that support the entire wheel. The outer part of the wheel; or “where the rubber meets the road” represents behaviors needed to engage in to develop and maintain self-empowerment; scout, educate, build allegiances and grow.



Scout:

This means to continually “scout” the environment and be aware what is happening around us. Where are new opportunities?

Educate:

As a result of “scouting” certain areas may be identified in which “education” is needed to keep up with changes in society or technology; new skills to be learned, either personal, interpersonal or technological

Build Allegiances

This is the continued networking; or fellowship with other people. In her book, *The Secrets of Savvy Networking*, Susan Roane says, that “Networking is a reciprocal process, an exchange of ideas, leads and suggestions that support both our professional and our personal lives.”

Networking is a reciprocal process, an exchange of ideas, leads and suggestions that support both our professional and our personal lives. There is also a spirit of sharing that transcends the information shared. The best networkers reflect that spirit with a genuine joy in their ‘giving.’”
Susan Roane

“You can get everything in life you want if you will just help enough other people get what they want.”
Zig Ziglar

This is accomplished by reaching out and getting to know people. Get involved by joining professional, business and networking groups... do volunteer and pro-bono work. One of my favorite motivational speakers of all time is the late Zig Ziglar who is known for the quote: “You can get

Power vs. Perception: Ten Critical Characteristics of Self-Empowerment for Leadership

everything in life you want if you will just help enough other people get what they want.” This quote is the foundation of networking.

Grow

This means that we are always open to additional and growth and development; professionally, personally and also spiritually. One of my favorite quotes for many years is by Ray Kroc, who founded

***“As long as you're green, you're growing.
As soon as you're ripe, you start to rot.”***

Ray Kroc

the McDonalds franchises. He said: “As long as you're green, you're growing. As soon as you're ripe, you start to rot.” I heard this quote very early in my career and it has stayed with me all these years. Whenever I would find myself

starting to get too “comfortable” in any situation, I’d remind myself that no matter how much I know; if I’m going to succeed in developing self-empowerment, I need to be open to new growth. I need to continuously be open to growth and developing myself to continue growing in self-empowerment; and it’s the same for all of us.

The characteristics of empowerment; the skills and traits that make up the Resiliency Hourglass Model support all of these behaviors. For us to develop self-empowerment we need to learn and exhibit all of these skills and behaviors.

At first, this can seem extremely overwhelming, and almost impossible. However, once we begin to put these skills and characteristics into practice, after time they become part of our routine and then become simpler.

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Summary

Self-empowered leaders know and understand this and understand how critical continuous learning is to their role as leaders and that everyone — team members, colleagues, clients, etc., are learning together and from one another.

Self-empowerment is a simple, though complex process. In all reality, however, it is really common sense, but more of an organized common-sense approach to the process.

Interdependence

All of these critical characteristics of self-empowerment for leadership function interdependently of each other. Self-empowerment comes with the knowledge of oneself and recognizing that he or she can successfully move forward towards the accomplishment of his or her goals.

But, like anything worth working for, the rewards in the end can be great... greater satisfaction and greater accomplishments as we become “unstoppable” in achieving our goals!

Just like when all the sand flows through to the bottom portion of the hourglass vessel, the hourglass is then shaken up and turned upside down again, and, just like in real life, the transformation process starts over again.

Self-empowerment is a simple, though complex process. In all reality, however, it is really common sense, but more of an organized common-sense approach to the process. However, the implementation is not an easy process. But, like anything worth working for, the rewards in the end can be great... greater satisfaction and greater accomplishments as we become “unstoppable” in achieving our goals!

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Training Solutions and Programs

Leadership

- Leadership: Building Self-Empowered Teams
- Resiliency: Successfully Navigating the Waves of Change
- Finding the 25th Hour: The Power and Secrets of Time Management
- Power Leadership

Coaching

- Speak-EZE... Coaching for Effective Public Speaking
- Coaching For Self-Empowerment

Communications

- Myers-Briggs (MBTI): A Self-Empowerment Journey Exploring Personality Type
- The Art of Listening: A Silent Path to Self-Empowerment
- Email Etiquette: Self-Empowered Communications via Electronic Media
- Professional Writing Skills: Self-Empowerment Through the Written Word
- Interpersonal Communications Skills: The Pathway to Self-Empowerment
- Speak-EZE: Self-Empowering Tips and Techniques for 'Painless' Public Speaking