

# Expand Your Influence to Maximize Motivation

You are the leader of your group or department because that position is delegated to you by the organization. You might be called a “formal” leader. But often others function as “informal leaders” for smaller groups. When you recognize these informal leaders, you can use their power and influence to enhance the results and productivity of the group.

Although informal leaders are not designated by the organization, they frequently wield extensive power and influence because of their ability to help other team members satisfy needs and reach goals. They are automatically sought out for advice and help when a colleague experiences a problem. They often are outstanding team members with common sense and loyalty to the company. They can contribute a great deal to your success when you delegate to them and help them develop their abilities even further.

Occasionally, however, informal leaders are troublemakers who seek followers to satisfy their own desire for power and glory. They may work against the goals of the organization. Still other informal leaders are competent and possess a great deal of undeveloped potential. Whether they become an asset or a liability to your department depends on your ability to help them find a constructive way to satisfy their needs for personal growth. Otherwise, they may become disgruntled troublemakers, or may move on to another job in an attempt to cure a vague dissatisfaction with the work situation.

In a department or work group of any size, smaller groups begin to form along the lines of common needs and desires. You can often observe these groups during breaks or lunch time. Workers enjoy being together because of similar interests, problems, work, or other factors. You can antagonize informal leaders and their followers and see productivity sabotaged, or you can harness the power of informal groups to increase productivity.



In an atmosphere where people are motivated to produce at their peak, a great deal of friendly competition evolves. Usually 10 to 15 percent of the people produce significantly more than anyone else because of their superior abilities. Respect and look to these outstanding individuals as leaders, for they are prime candidates for accepting delegation. Not only will they perform well whatever tasks you assign, but they also encourage among the other team members an attitude favorable to accepting delegation. Because of the influence of this outstanding person, other team members are also willing to learn new jobs and accept new responsibilities.

In contrast, people who feel mistreated and fearful may distrust high producers. They fear that management expects everyone to produce at that high level. Groups of disgruntled individuals sometimes follow an informal leader in using various pressures to force the top producer down to a lower standard. Derogatory terms are powerful demotivators when applied to those who exceed group standards. One of the worst punishments of all can be rejection by other team members. In

such situations, you need to identify their informal leaders and find a way to neutralize their power. These leaders may be people with high potential whose basic needs and goals are not being met. As a leader, you are responsible for knowing these people well enough to discover their unsatisfied needs and helping them motivate themselves to become productive.

Directing the energy of these groups into constructive work can turn the force and authority of informal groups into a benefit for the organization. **You can enhance your career success by reinforcing your formal authority with appropriate action to fulfill these leadership functions:**

- Acceptance by the group. A leader is trusted by the group members to have genuine understanding and empathy for their problems.
- Risk taking. A leader takes whatever risks might be involved in expressing group grievances to management and seeking solutions for them.
- Communication. The leader contributes to the security of the group by providing information. The informal leader may provide inaccurate information based on rumors. You are, in contrast, a channel for accurate information and thus give employees the feeling of security they need.

Using these powerful strategies expands your influence and encourages maximum motivation among your team members.

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