



***“Nearly all men can stand adversity;  
but if you want to test a man’s character, give him power.”  
Abraham Lincoln***

## Power and the Myth of Control

Power. The very word itself moves people to cringe or rejoice, for its application has created atrocities and victories. Through power, individual actions have produced profound and lasting results.

A unique noun, power is not only accessible to all *persons*, it is used in many *places*, and is a *thing*, a concept organizations explore at length. The dictionary spans its description as the ability to perform effectively, to the sixth group of angels in the hierarchical order of nine.

Power is exercised through both position and personal influence. Comprised of legitimate, reward, coercive and connect types of control, position power is basic authority. We gain legitimate power through titles we are *given*. Using the power vested in us as presidents, managers, doctors, etc., we have the ability to influence the behavior of others.

A leader can reward employees for effective performance, as well as coerce them into necessary actions. Connect power is the old “being in the right place at the right time with the right people”. As evidenced in our world, all types of power can be used appropriately or destructively. While position power is awarded, it can be taken away through its misuse.

Personal power consists of expert, information and referent influencers. It is *earned* through learning and honing our skills, and by gaining the knowledge required for our success. While it can’t be taken away, it can be misused.

What about the power of trust and respect? What are some of the actions and behaviors of someone you admire? More than likely, this person has earned Referent power with you because they are honest, respectful, trustworthy, and authentic.

Referent power allows us to use all other types of power more effectively and does not require that a person possess any position power. It is derived – and *earned* – through consistent and constant application of personal integrity.

The myth of control is exposed when those with Referent power achieve their ends, for control is an illusion. When we surrender our need to control, our Referent power expands exponentially.

Therefore, could it be possible that people who have Referent power *are* that sixth group of angels in the hierarchical order of nine?

© 2006, Intellectual Architects, Ltd.