



2. TIP SHEET 1: INFLUENCING VOLUNTEERS

WHERE DOES YOUR POWER COME FROM?

Power refers to your ability to get someone to do what you want them to do or to make sure things happen in a particular way. There are several different ways that you can establish power in your volunteering group, and each one has a different effect on compliance and commitment.

Position power comes from the things that you as a leader can offer to your volunteers, such as rewards or recognition. Solely relying on a position power leads to short-term compliance and makes it difficult to influence volunteers over a long period of time.

TYPES OF POSITION POWER	
REWARD	Rewarding people for doing what you want them to do.
COERCION	Punishing people for not doing what you ask.
LEGITIMACY	Influencing through a position of authority. "I'm the leader, therefore you must do as I say."

Personal power comes from your personal qualities and the way you are viewed by your volunteers. Using this type of power creates long-term influence and commitment from your volunteers.

TYPES OF PERSONAL POWER	
EXPERT	You are the source of specialist knowledge or information.
REFERENT	People admire you and want to identify with you.

INFLUENCE TACTICS

Influence tactics are strategies that volunteer leaders can use to change their volunteers' attitudes, values, or behaviours. Below is a list of the three most effective and least effective tactics for influencing volunteers. The effectiveness of these strategies are dependent somewhat on the basis of your power. Below are examples of each tactic in action and how they relate to the power bases outlined above.





THREE EFFECTIVE INFLUENCE TACTICS

Consultation

A leader wants to implement a change in the functioning of the volunteering group that will impact all volunteers. At a training night, they describe to the volunteers why a change is needed and some potential ideas for change. Afterwards, they ask for everyone's opinions about the proposed changes or alternative ideas they may have to tackle the problem. Volunteer feedback is taken onboard by the leadership team who decide on a final solution. The outcome is then shared with the volunteers.

*This tactic is more effective when you have **reward** power (when your volunteers view their contributions being used or implemented as a form of reward for their efforts).*

Rational persuasion

A leader notices that one of their volunteers is not using a piece of equipment properly. They clearly explain to the volunteer why it is important to use it a particular way and the safety implications of not doing so, making sure that the volunteer thoroughly understands why it is important to comply.

*This tactic is more effective when you have **expert** power (when your volunteers see you as a reliable information source).*

Inspirational appeal

A volunteer has been reluctant to take on a role that the leader believes they would be very good at. The leader tells them how valuable their contributions are, reminds them of all of the times they have performed aspects of the role well in the past, and makes sure they know that they will have all of the support they need in the role.

*This tactic is more effective when you have **referent** power (when your volunteers look up to you and want to identify with you).*

THREE INEFFECTIVE INFLUENCE TACTICS

Pressure

A leader is frustrated with a volunteer who has been taking too long to do some equipment maintenance. They keep asking every couple of minutes if the volunteer has finished yet and why it's taking so long, and they then threaten the volunteer with not being able to participate in an upcoming training exercise if they don't complete the maintenance in a given time frame.

*This tactic is used by leaders who rely on **coercion** as a base of power (when you punish your volunteers for not doing what you asked).*

Coalition

A volunteer insists on doing a task a particular way, despite the leader giving them clear instructions to do it differently. The leader pulls in other members of the leadership team to pass on their instructions to the volunteer in the hope that they will listen to someone else.

*Leaders who lack **expert** power sometimes find themselves using this tactic.*

Legitimizing

A volunteer disagrees with the way the rostering system is set up and wants changes to be made. The leader tells them that if they don't like it, that is too bad. That is what the leadership team have decided, and it is consistent with the policies and procedures of the volunteering group, so it will stay as is.

*Leaders who use this tactic rely on **legitimacy** as a power base (when you are influencing through your position of authority).*

