

Powers of the Project Manager

PMI's current *Examination Content Outline* and *PMBOK® Guide*, 7th edition both emphasize mutual respect and cooperation on projects, an empowered team, and servant leadership on the part of the project manager. But there are many ways to describe management and leadership, and there is no one right way to lead or manage that fits all situations or all project managers.

That said, understanding the following traditional types of power can help you on the exam:

- **Formal (legitimate)** This power is based on your position. Example: "I understand you disagree. However, after careful evaluation, I believe my decision is in the best interest of the team, and this is what we are going to do."
- **Reward** This power stems from the ability to give rewards. Example: "I understand that you want to participate in the acceptance testing of this project. Because of your performance, I will assign you as part of that team."
- **Penalty (coercive)** This power comes from the ability to penalize team members. Example: "If this does not get done on time, I will remove you from the group traveling to the customer meeting."
- **Expert** This power comes from being the technical or project management expert. Example: "This project manager has been successful on other projects. Let's give her a chance!"
- **Referent** This power comes from another person liking you, respecting you, or wanting to be like you. It is the power of charisma and fame. Example: The most-liked and respected project manager in the organization says, "I think we should change the content of our standard project charter."

Note: The best forms of power are expert and reward. Penalty power is generally the least effective. Formal, reward, and penalty are powers derived from your position in the company. Expert power is earned on your own.