

Project Management Plan: Expert Judgement

PMGT 614 Week 6 Blog

Power, Authority, Responsibility, and Accountability

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Analyze the relationships between power, authority, responsibility, and accountability

Welcome to my Week 6 Blog!

This week, I've decided to tackle the mandatory requirement of analyzing the relationships between power, authority, responsibility, and accountability. The relationship between these concepts is often clouded by how an organization defines and relates these concepts to one another.

Power, is the ability to cause or prevent action (Power, n.d.). This simple definition implies that power must stem from ones abilities, competence, or qualification. Does this mean that power is something given, or something one takes? In all actuality, it could mean both. The fundamental difference between the two is that power given usually comes with a level of authority, responsibility and accountability, while power taken does not necessarily give the one in power any authority, nor does it hold the one in power accountable or responsible for their actions.

Often used interchangeably, authority and power have very distinct differences. Authority is an externally granted right to command, while power is something innately derived, a quality rather than a relationship on an organizational chart (Knutson, 1996). The questions now becomes, who has authority, and where does it comes from? Authority can come from formal and informal sources. Formal sources, such as job titles or descriptions give, by their very description, the authority to accomplish assigned tasks and responsibilities. Does this mean that authority and responsibility are the same? No, it means you have been given the authority to accomplish your assigned duties or tasks.

Responsibility and authority go hand-in-hand. Authority is given from management above, to subordinate below, while responsibility rests with the subordinate, and flows from the subordinate up to management. In our day-to-day lives, we all have our assigned tasks and duties. For me, these tasks are outlined in my job description and come with the authority to ensure their completion.

Lastly, we come to accountability. Accountability is the process by which we are all measured. Assigned responsibilities and the authority to accomplish those responsibilities is one thing, but failure to accomplish assigned responsibilities may result in actions against the employee(s) in question. Accountability is the key when measuring how well an organization or its employees perform.

When thinking about my own organization, I think about the board of directors and their decision to select a new chief executive officer (CEO). Their power and authority give them the ability to hire a new CEO and impart upon them, the power, authority, responsibility, and accountability to ensure the organizations objective(s) are met. The CEO is now in a position to delegate measures of authority, responsibility, and accountability throughout his/her organization in support of their mission. It is important to understand that the relationships between each of these concepts must be maintained in order to ensure organizational success.

Reference:

Knutson, J. (1996). Responsibility, accountability, authority – but what about power? *PM*

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