

Chapter 3

Abuse of Power

ABSTRACT

The person that abuses power finds him or herself facing a dilemma. That person must choose between gaining benefits at the cost of harming the person they are abusing or self-restraining their handling of power and avoiding harm to others, as they sacrifice any possible gains or enduring a reduction in personal benefits or even oftentimes a loss. Fear of unemployment makes workers generally want to protect their jobs and definitely avoid any confrontation with their boss, which may lead to enduring power abuse in silence. The abuse of power practice is common, since managers have the opportunity to take advantage of their subordinates for their own benefits. What really varies is the level of acceptance and the treatment that must normally include means and ways of protection and punishment. This chapter explores abuse of power.

INTRODUCTION

Abuse of power is the act of using one's position of power in an abusive way. Abuse of power may be realized where hierarchies present; in governments, in economic systems, in the workplace, and in families. Power can be defined as the ability, or capacity to exert one's will on others by virtue of their social position, physical strength, wealth, technology, weapons, or trust that others confide in the person.

Power abuse is usually under-reported. In family owned firms meaning that there are favorable chances for a normal employee to be directly supervised and monitored by the owner of the company who control punishment and appraisal.

BACKGROUND

When you were made a leader you weren't given a crown. You were given a responsibility to bring out the best in others. For that, your people need to trust you. And they will, as long as you demonstrate candor, give credit, and stay real. – Jack Welch

ABUSE OF POWER: DEFINITION AND DILEMMA

Abuse of power is a phenomenon that has existed since people have occupied positions of power. While the nature of man, whether good or evil has been constantly debated, there is no doubt that those in positions of power have tended to abuse

it more frequently than should happen. Abuse of power is not apparent in just one period of time or in one region of the world, but throughout both, and in hundreds of varying degrees and contexts.

In order to define it, we must define its component terms individually and outline the situations in which it may exist. Power can be defined as the ability, or capacity to exert one's will on others by virtue of their social position, physical strength, wealth, technology, weapons, or trust that others confide in the person. The abuse of power would then occur in the situations where this power is unjustifiably or improperly used to exploit or harm other, or through lack of taking action, allows for exploitation and harm to occur. Given this explanation, it becomes apparent that with any ethical dilemma, it is extremely easy for there to be a component that has to do with the abuse of power, often in the business world, it is the abuse of power that brings forth an ethical dilemma for others. Even in cases where there is an issue of truth and loyalty, or justice and mercy, they are frequently the results of someone transgressing a boundary that they should not have, and this can only be done through the abuse of power, or trust that they have. Environmental issues can even be considered as examples of abuse of power, whereby the corporation that has the ability to stop harming both people and the environment, does not. That is to say, almost any issue contains an element of abuse of power.

In the developed countries there are laws and regulations that have existed; these regulations in their present formula provide merely for straightforward principles of the veracity and transparency and an enormous challenge rests in emerging these principles to discourse the explicit features. Yet In Lebanon, major monopolies are a very good example of abuse of power. The suppliers of electricity via private generators are a lucid model of abuse of power through monopoly in almost all Lebanese territory. For some people, power can be a real power trip. They enjoy the feeling of control over both people and information. That

is why they tend to keep secrets, hiding much of their thinking regarding people and their performance, and reserve their knowledge about the company and its future. But it drains trust right out of people. You know that old saying "The fish rots from the head". It's mainly used to refer to how politics and the abuse of power filter down into an organization, but it could just as easily be used to describe the effect of a bad attitude at the top of any team, large or small. Eventually everyone's infected.

GENERAL HISTORY

Outside of the business world, there are thousands of examples of power abuse all throughout history. Nero burnt half of Rome when he believed that there was a plot on his life. The great pharaohs of Egypt portrayed themselves as gods and were worshipped solely because of their position. The conquistadors used their superior military skill and technology to conquer and suppress the Aztecs. Henry VIII of England broke away from the Catholic Church and beheaded all who opposed him to secure a male heir to the throne. Abraham Lincoln suspended Habeas Corpus and rendered the American constitution useless. Mao Zedong, Stalin, Hitler, Mussolini, all oppressors, using whatever they could to benefit their own party and country above all else. Nixon and Watergate scandal as well as McCarthy and the red scare also are all examples of abuse of power. While these may be the most flagrant cases, abuse of power can exist on a much smaller and less visible day-to-day scale.

When it comes to abuse of power in a business context, the abuse of power has been intricately linked to historical events in each era. In the 1960's and during the Vietnam War a strong anti-war sentiment existed leading to many employees having adversarial relationships with their employers. At the same time in the US, the war for African American civil rights was still being waged, further

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