

What is a personal power base, and what is (or has been) your plan for building one?

A personal power base is a concept obtained and acquired through “doing” the job well, meaning the power comes from the expertise gained through actively performing the role and the credibility received through the trust built over time. It is improved by a person’s own interpersonal, communication, and leadership skills. This is a contrast to the power that is granted to a person simply by their title and roles within a facility. My current plan to gain and improve my personal power base has been to simply perform my role at the best of my ability and to always return with an effective answer if I do not personally know the answer. It is a concept that is gained over time and effort.

Have you had any experience with having to rebuild it because of a position change or change in practice location?

What was that experience like?

Yes, I have had to rebuild my personal power base before. Previously, I spent years working as a correctional nurse and had built a fairly sturdy personal power base through my years of dedication in my role. One example of this is when an inmate was having chest pain, and I was doing an EKG. I was able to simply shake my head and the Lt. on shift knew he needed to go to the hospital because I had proven over the years that I do not send people out without a good reason. This was trust and credibility gained through time. About two years ago, I left my position in corrections and moved to a case manager role, an area in which I had zero experience. After the change in position and location, my personal power base was at ground zero, but I have spent the past two years attempting to rebuild what I previously had. It was overall a very humbling experience. When I was in corrections, I was often the only nurse in the building, so my expertise was taken as law with both inmates and security. In the hospital setting, I’m surrounded by others who have vast areas of medical knowledge.

Empowering others is reciprocal in nature. What does this mean?

Empowerment is a positive feedback loop. The more you essentially pour into other people, the more they return in kind. This means the more trust, resources, and autonomy you invest in those you work with, the more they are going to contribute to the overall success of the unit and the organization. Recognizing accomplishments creates more positive outcomes.