

## RELATIONSHIP AUTHORITY: HOW CAN YOU USE IT?

**Relationship authority can often be more influential than the formal exercise of power.**

A formal leader may get compliance with their instructions, but if their followers don't feel fully committed they may look for an early opportunity to change leaders.

The informal leader of a network may have few people directly under their control, yet exercise huge influence because others trust their lead to coordinate activity and take good decisions.

In a high-level negotiation, it may be the formal leader who signs the contract, but first they need deputies who develop trust and work out mutually acceptable outcomes with their opposite numbers.

**To build your relationship authority, might you:**

- find out where others are coming from and what success looks like for them?
- look for ways that you can help them achieve their objectives, without compromising your own?
- be curious about their personality and what type of approach will get or lose their attention? Do they respond best if they see something in writing before a discussion? Do they expect a lot of detail or switch off after the headlines?

**It pays to build trusting relationships with key people before you need to make big requests of them. For example:**

- where you rely on a team or network, can you use 1-1 s and group sessions to get to know how they tick and to build confidence in a shared purpose?
- where you have key stakeholders, can you find an opportunity to introduce yourself early in the relationship, and gain insight from others who know them?
- If there are multiple relationships to build, can you share responsibility for them across your team?

**How might you further build your relationship authority?** This Prompt is the third in a sequence of four on authority. The final one will look at how you “show up” as someone who conveys authority.