

The Power Gradient Toolkit

Power gradient is a term to describe the difference in power between two individuals. The difference can be real, such as the difference between a chief executive officer and a manager. It can also be a perceived difference, such as the one between an experienced team member and a newly graduated individual in the same department who both have the same function.

It has been proven repeatedly in many industries, including healthcare, that a larger power gradient corresponds to a greater chance for error. At the bedside, errors can result in safety events that can cause harm or even death to a patient. In addition, large power gradients decrease team member retention, innovation, and shared opportunities for operational improvements. Such decreases ultimately have a negative effect on the success of the organization.

Given the critical significance of addressing the power gradient, I have partnered with Reliability for Life Group (R4L) to develop a toolkit to assist leaders of all levels in reducing the power gradient. It is written as a supplement to chapter 6, “Breaking Down the Power Gradient.”

Inside the toolkit you will find the following:

- A list of key concept definitions related to the “power gradient” topic
- An introduction highlighting the effects and consequences of steep power gradients, including an outline of a three-tiered comprehensive framework (Organization, Leaders, Team Members) for breaking down the power gradient
- Six calls to action. Activities supported by researchers, field engineers, and healthcare practitioners to reduce the power gradient in an organization. Simple tools are aligned within each of the six calls to action to start your journey toward breaking down the power gradient in your organization

The toolkit can be used in several ways:

- As a resource for your leadership team to gain situational awareness of the impact of power gradients
- As a snapshot, highlighting where your organization is with each call to action and what to do next—or as a blueprint to guide you in choosing your next priorities
- As an orientation piece for new leaders
- As a refresher for your leadership team

The electronic version of the Power Gradient Toolkit can be found at www.R4LG.com.