

Empowerment: Define It. Create It. Delegate It. Coordinate It. (1,013 words)

It is sometimes difficult to keep up with the trendy terms, the technical jargon, and the buzzwords. Here's a new one: empowerment. The keys to empowerment include defining what empowerment is, creating an empowerment culture, delegating properly to assure empowerment, and coordinating empowerment with engagement.

Define Effective Empowerment: What is empowerment? What I have found is if you ask five different people that question, you will probably get five different answers. But there are some common themes concerning empowerment. Empowerment refers to processes, activities, or measures designed to increase the degree of autonomy and self-determination in people and departments in organizations. Empowerment also supports employees gaining knowledge and developing skills that will allow them to overcome obstacles in their personal and professional lives.

If we consider organizational theory, empowerment often refers in general to processes and procedures for giving workers greater discretion, resources, and control, in order to serve both the customer and the organization better. Overall, empowerment involves approaches that promise more participation, responsibility, and independence. So, the bottom line is trust, because empowerment involves the allocation of duties, the delegation of authority, the assignment of responsibility, and the creation of accountability.

Crafting opportunities for empowerment will go a long way in keeping employees and keeping them engaged. Empowerment can be just a concept. How about making it a reality? Get in the conversations and describe the observable behaviors that will support empowerment.

Create an Empowerment Culture: It takes consistent effort to create an empowerment culture. No matter what your position or title, there are things you can say, and things you can do, to support the creation of a work environment that is empowering. Here are some ideas. Demonstrate your appreciation for each other's unique personal and professional value. In your words and actions, be kind when people make mistakes, and be helpful in assisting them with getting back on track.

Invite coworkers in on the planning of tasks and activities, ask for their input, and consider their suggestions. They have probably noticed over the years a few ways things could be improved. Engage in conversations about the organization's mission statements, value statements, and codes of conduct. Openly discuss whether these are just slogans or important guidelines to be considered when setting goals and measuring results.

Trust that your coworkers' intentions are good. Communication is a two-way street, if we have questions about expectations, we should be free to ask, without ridicule or humiliation. It is more important to get the communication clear and the job done well,

rather than waste energy worrying and wondering what to do.

Share whatever information is available so coworkers can make thoughtful decisions and have successful outcomes. Finally, recognize others' hard work, attention to quality, and team spirit. Creating an empowering culture takes time, but it is worth every minute. Clear and measurable targets, active listening and involvement, collaboration and cooperation, sounds pretty empowering to me.

Delegation Supports Empowerment: Job enlargement, job enrichment, and job rotation can enhance employee retention. Delegation may be required and can be empowering. There are a number of good reasons to delegate. The most important reason is because it demonstrates trust. The act of delegation shows that we have trust and confidence in each other. This explicit demonstration of support for each other leads to better interpersonal relations.

Delegation also helps others develop personally and professionally. It stimulates employees to expand their job capabilities and knowledge. It helps them develop their decision-making skills. Delegation also enhances commitment. With this newfound autonomy and independence, people are much more likely to embrace a decision that they have personally made or at least participated in defining.

Here are some elements to consider with delegate and empowerment. Does your organization's culture tolerate risk? Support employee growth and development? Seek a high degree of autonomy for employees? If the answers to these questions are yes, then delegation can feed empowerment.

Consider your perception of your coworker's competence. Is this person capable, trustworthy, and motivated to assume greater responsibility? If so, delegate. What a nice compliment. Also, how important is the decision? Consider the level of risk involved if the delegation isn't as successful as you planned. Consider a demonstration, then some participation, before the delegation. Delegation can improve decision-making, enhance commitment, and improve relationships because it demonstrates trust. Consider your organization's culture concerning tolerance for risk. Consider your coworker's level of competence and the importance of the decision. Delegate and watch empowerment take hold.

Coordinate Empowerment with Engagement: According to businessdictionary.com, empowerment is the practice of sharing information, rewards, and power with employees so that they can take initiative and make decisions to solve problems and improve service and performance. Empowerment is based on the idea that giving employees skills, resources, authority, opportunity, motivation, as well as holding them responsible and accountable for outcomes of their actions, will contribute to their competence and satisfaction.

Employee engagement is the emotional connection an employee feels toward his or her organization, which tends to influence his or her behaviors and level of effort in work

related activities. The more engagement an employee has with his or her organization, the more effort they put forth. Employee engagement also involves the nature of the job itself. Do employees feel mentally stimulated? Is there trust and is there open communication between employees and management? Can employees see how their own work contributes to the overall organization's mission and performance? Is there opportunity for growth within the organization? What is the level of pride employees have about working, or being associated with the organization?

Engagement and empowerment are related. Engagement increases productivity, improves performance, lowers turnover, and attracts talent. Empowerment is the fuel and employee engagement is the fire. Empowerment provides the structure and the means for employee engagement to flourish. If we trust each other, work collaboratively in solving problems, and create a supportive communication environment, there is a good chance that employee engagement will follow.

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