



Leadership Essentials

# Empowering

Leaders demonstrate ownership by delegating appropriately



**“To achieve true empowerment, you have to allow employees to unleash their own power. As a result, they will be able to empower themselves.”**

Mohasseb, S. (2020)

### Leading an Empowered Team

Heathfield (2017) identifies ten important principles for leading people in a way that reinforces employee empowerment, accomplishment and contribution:

<b>Demonstrate that you value people</b>	Have regard for your team. Facial expressions, body language and your words express what you are thinking about the people that report to you
<b>Share leadership vision</b>	Help the team feel they are part of the bigger picture, include them in the planning on the product/service and department
<b>Share goals and direction</b>	When possible include the team in goal setting at department level; they can add value, knowledge, ideas and experience. Progress on goals should be measurable and observable
<b>Trust people</b>	When the team receive clear expectations, they relax and trust you, focusing their energy on accomplishing work and not worrying and second-guessing
<b>Provide information on decision making</b>	Make certain that people have, or can gain access to, all the information needed to make thoughtful decisions
<b>Delegate authority and impact opportunities, not just more work</b>	Don't just delegate the dull work; delegate meetings and opportunities to influence and work on interesting projects that people and customers notice. Your team members will develop new skills and grow
<b>Provide frequent feedback</b>	Provide feedback so that the team know how they are doing. People deserve constructive feedback, so they can continue to develop their knowledge and skills
<b>Solve problems: don't pinpoint problem people</b>	When a problem occurs, ask what is wrong with the work system that caused the team to fail not what is wrong with the people
<b>Listen to learn and ask questions to provide guidance</b>	Provide a space in which people will communicate by listening to them and asking questions. Ask their opinions and trust their judgements
<b>Help employees feel rewarded and recognised for empowered behaviour</b>	Basic needs of employees must feel met for employees to go above and beyond what is expected. Recognition plays a big part

Empowerment requires a culture of trust and appropriate information and communication systems. It is the leader's responsibility to ensure a culture of trust exists that invites opinion and fosters innovative ideas.

When employees are empowered, their confidence levels can increase, creating happier workers and increased productivity.

However, some team members may confuse empowerment and being able to make their own decisions with having the authority to do whatever they want; interpersonal relationships within the team may then suffer and conflict arise, making for a toxic work environment.

That is, empowerment does not mean that managers abdicate responsibility and delegate all decision-making; employees must still be held accountable for their decisions: 'Organisations must prepare their employees for the responsibilities that would fall upon them in the organisation's quest to achieve employee empowerment. For employees to feel like their decisions matter, they need to feel accountable for the decisions they make on an on-going basis.' HDR Connect (2019)

For successful employee empowerment, the basic needs of employees in the workplace must feel met. Keeping staff informed of changes within the company and providing training in all processes can give them a sense of empowerment. Providing interesting tasks and new challenges can give a sense of empowerment to the individual. Providing resources and enabling others to realise personal development options can also aid motivation and recognition plays a big part in this so that team members will want to voluntarily give extra effort in the work place.

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HDR Connect (2019)

### Empowerment through Delegation

By delegating work, a leader is expressing confidence in and acknowledgement of, the ability of an individual or team to complete work to the required standard within the required timeframe and for team members to make their own decisions and choices for this to be achieved successfully.

This does not mean leaving team members feeling isolated and with no support:

**“ Many managers think delegating to others and empowering them means leaving them alone to make decisions; but successful empowerment requires involvement, it means being hands on, just not directive – playing the role of inspiring coach and servant leader and providing guidance and guardrails, but not making the decision. This looks very different from “laissez faire” hands-off leadership styles.**

De Smet et al (2020)

The authority you delegate to your team members gives them permission to carry out assigned tasks. Depending on the level of delegation, this trust can both empower and motivate. For example, you could give authority to the team member to make decisions but require them to report back immediately. Alternatively, you may require that the team member reports back at defined intervals when decisions are made and thereby maintain a greater level of influence and control over the task at hand. Coppock (2007) advises that when someone wants to talk to you, it is important to clarify whether they require **Support, Advice, Information** or a **Decision**.

## Top Tips of Empowerment

Facilitate a work environment in which you:

- Value and show appreciation for your team members

Trust your team members to do the right thing, make the right decisions and choices

- Ask the team for their input on the overall plans, so they will own the direction

Share by delegating and agreeing acceptable outcomes which means that your team can then work with less supervision

- Let the team member demonstrate what they know and build trust in their judgement

When they bring you a problem to solve, ask your team members, "What action or steps do you recommend?"

### References

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## Dimensions of Leadership

The Institute of Leadership's Dimensions of Leadership offer, often elusive, insights into great leadership. This is not a static representation but an evolving description of the complex nature of leadership activity.

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