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Initiating Achievement Through Empowerment

No matter how ambitious, talented, or self-disciplined you are, at some point it becomes necessary to involve other people in achieving results and building effective productivity. Empowerment is the means for accomplishing these goals. Empowerment is the creation of a motivational climate that releases power, resources, and responsibility to each team member to foster maximum involvement, commitment, and desired results. Empowerment extends productivity beyond the organizational skill and knowledge of one person; it is the art of enabling others to take action.

Empowerment is an essential building block in win-win, interdependent human relationships, regardless of your position and responsibilities. Allow others to make more decisions, and they bring more commitment to any corporate endeavor. Impart a degree of ownership to others, and they become involved in your vision and action plan. This is true in sales, education, customer service, management, manufacturing, and any other field. Empowerment allows anyone striving for personal and professional productivity to move forward.

Because it is the essence of true leadership and influence, empowerment achieves results and progress through the commitment and involvement of others. In the past, only leaders were allowed to control information flow and decision making, taking full credit for results. Today, however, it is widely recognized that all team members can make valuable contributions and share in both credit and responsibility for outcomes. Empower those who are in the best position to take action by giving them the direction, knowledge, and authority they need. Handled correctly, empowerment multiplies your efforts as well as your vision and goals. Communicate to your team members your respect through delegating some of your traditional authority and power to them.

Empowerment takes many shapes and forms: self-directed work teams, asking for ideas, turning over leadership of meetings, delegation of training responsibilities, flextime policies, surveys, cross training, and other methods encouraging participation. These strategies are tools for empowerment.

Recognize the expertise of all team members and unleash their creativity. In today's diverse, internationalized, information culture, top-down autocratic control is obsolete; mutual respect, reasonable delegation of authority, and mutual commitment to organizational goals are the hallmarks of an effective organization.

Give employees the responsibility to adapt, respond, and take advantage of opportunities. Experimentation and innovation must occur regularly to keep up with a world characterized by information and technology change. Consumers increasingly demand instantaneous service, faultless quality, and low prices. To address these demands, train team members in more than procedures; help them to understand the spirit and missions of their work. Even temporary workers need information and training to function as empowered, dynamic team members.

The Benefits Of Empowerment

High quality service is one of the significant results of an empowered team. Because empowered team members are well-informed, well-trained, and vested with the necessary authority, they are able to seek ways to satisfy customers without being forced to wade through mountains of bureaucracy and red tape. Empowerment can be the spark of progress, with many tangible and intangible benefits, including:

- ◆ Retention of creative, skilled people as they participate and share in the success of the group,

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- ◆ Decreased waste and inefficiency as people closest to situations take initiative,
- ◆ Ideas captured in time to respond to market needs,
- ◆ Unique competitive advantages derived from maximizing the talents of all individuals in the organization,
- ◆ Increased high payoff time for upper management, and
- ◆ Improved morale as group members become emotionally and intellectually involved in projects.

Initiating the process of achievement through empowerment can take longer than imposing an agenda upon others. However, once people experience the fulfillment that comes through empowerment and involvement, they are eager to adapt and make full use of their potential. They recognize the many personal benefits they reap as the organization succeeds and their responsibility and effectiveness expand through empowerment.

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