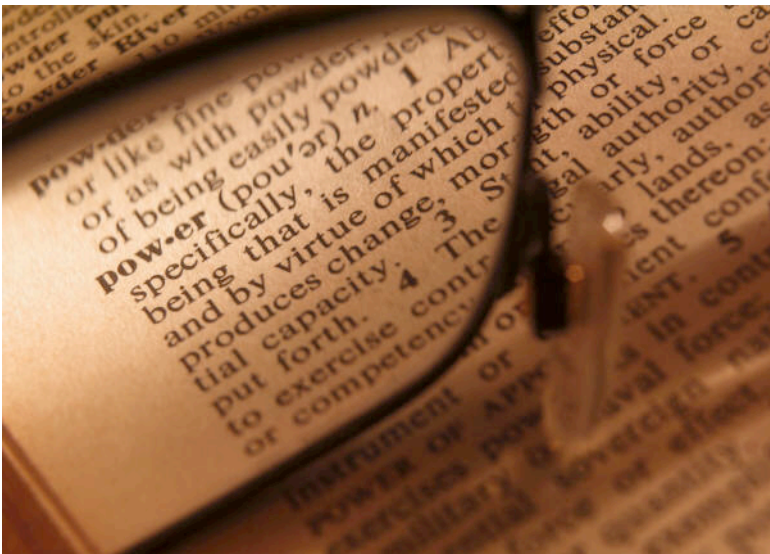


# Empowerment

Five Steps that Develop a  
High-Involvement,  
High-Performance  
Workforce



Number 1 in the *Problem Solver Series*™

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## The Purpose

"By surrendering control to the employees you gain control over the business."

The purpose of this booklet is to:

1. Provide understanding about the concept of Empowerment
2. Present a model you can use to develop Empowerment in your company.

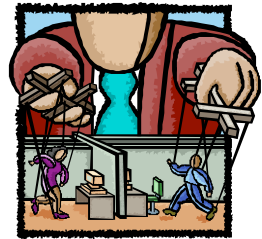
## The Benefit

This booklet will enable you to:

1. Understand Empowerment
2. Encourage Empowerment
3. Benefit from Empowerment

## The Situation

Empowerment is one of the most difficult and essential elements to developing a high-involvement, high-performance workforce. It is difficult because it requires allocating responsibility by releasing some portion of control to your employees. It is essential because it is a proven method for engaging your workforce in the business. By surrendering control to the employees you gain control over the business.



## The Definition

A good definition of empowerment is *the authority and the ability to take independent action, within well defined parameters, which will actively influence the outcome.*

A group cannot be empowered. Empowerment takes place on an individual level. It is relative. Empowerment depends on the situation and the “ability” of the individual. A wise manager does not empower an employee until the employee has shown that he/she understands the effects of his/her actions on the success of the company and has demonstrated the ability to perform appropriately.

## Get the Systems in Place

The process of empowering the workforce requires systems that provide information and which encourage understanding, learning and practice.



## Time for Introspection

You will get the most value out of this booklet if you take a few moments to internalize the information by answering the following questions.

Empowerment requires information, understanding, learning and practice.

- ❖ *On a scale of 1 to 10 with 1 being the lowest, how well do the majority of your employees understand the company’s strategy? The business plan? Their role in helping achieve success?*
  
- ❖ *What information would improve your employees “line-of-sight” to the company’s goals? Be specific in your list.*

## A Five Step Strategy for Empowerment

Empowerment requires an implementation strategy. The following 5 steps have proven successful in creating a culture of empowered employees, focused on improving the value of the business.

## 1. Clearly Define the Outcome

In terms of Empowerment, clearly define what the organization wants, and why.

- What: “We want employees to have the ability (skills and expertise) and authority (permission) to make decisions and take action within clearly defined job parameters with the intention of achieving the company’s objectives and to understand & accept responsibility for the outcomes of those decisions and actions.”
- Why: *Insert your mission statement here.* The purpose of empowering the workforce is to enable it to better fulfill the mission of your company.



### Time for Introspection

Take a moment to answer the following questions:

- ❖ *Why do you want empowered employees? How important is it to you? What value will it bring? Be specific*
- ❖ *What type of empowerment do you want for your company? Be specific.*
- ❖ *Do you have a mission statement? If not, you must develop one.*

## 2. Provide Management with the Skills

It is essential to help all levels of management develop the ability to allocate responsibility and release control. This requires education, training and may require individual coaching.



## Time for Introspection

Take a moment to answer the following questions:

- ❖ *Which managers in your company will support empowerment?*
- ❖ *Which managers will resist it?*
- ❖ *How will you overcome resistance? How will you show your support for the empowerment process? Make a list and be specific.*

## 3. Develop Your Employees

Empowerment, on an individual level, is accepting responsibility and acting accordingly. To develop an empowered workforce it is necessary to grow people's capacity to assume more responsibility. This requires education and training that develops key skills.

Some key skills and the training necessary to develop them are provided in the following list.

- Critical thinking skills
  - Goal Setting
  - Problem Solving
  - Decision Making
  - Risk Analysis
- Performance analysis & feedback skills
  - Real-time data collected locally
  - Analyzed locally
  - Real-time data acted upon locally
- 1) Action Planning Skills
- Coaching Skills
  - Relationship skills



- **Influencing Skills**  
 People are empowered if they have the capacity to be a compelling force on the actions of others for the betterment of the organization. Some tactics that will help your employees develop the capacity to produce effects on the outcome by influencing others are listed below.
  - Understand the line-of-sight of other individuals or groups
    - 1) Cross-function ScoreCard alignment matrix discussions
  - Group dialogue to understand the shared destiny. Connect career, professional or financial aspirations with the aspirations of the organization.
    - 1) Incentive pay system
    - 2) Performance evaluation system
    - 3) Personal development plans
      - (a) Develop a knowledge, skills and abilities matrix
    - 4) Merit increase system
    - 5) Career path/promotion levels/growth opportunities



## **Time for Introspection**

Take a moment to answer the following questions:

- ❖ *From the information you just read, make a list of tactics that currently exist for the:*
  - *Leadership group*
  - *Middle managers*
  - *Front line managers and supervisor*
  - *General workforce*
- ❖ *Now make a list of the tactics that need to be developed for each group.*
- ❖ *How do you plan to develop these tactics? Be specific and prioritize the list.*

## 4. Develop a Common Understanding

Empowerment is only effective when everyone has a common understanding of the concept, the performance objectives and their part in the effort. Empowerment relies on a well defined set of Values that are subscribed to by all.

Beliefs and values create a sense of identity and clear expectations. They become the moral criteria by which decisions are made and prioritized. It is essential that the members of the group hold similar values. To nurture the proper values, we must develop a common mind-set around shared responsibility.

- Empowerment requires the personal value of Self-Responsibility! It requires self-choice; the belief that one can change if one chooses to change. It requires one to accept responsibility for one's actions, feelings and beliefs and understand that they are the foundation of one's behavior. It requires the desire and ability to determine and direct one's actions and thoughts.
  - Tactic: Conduct an *Understanding Our Values* workshop to encourage and develop understanding and personal acceptance and commitment.

Develop and communicate a unifying explanation of what your business is about. This “purpose” gives everyone direction and a way to evaluate the quality of their decisions.

- Develop line-of-sight to the purpose, vision, mission, incentive ScoreCard objectives, and values as the basis of decision making.
  - Tactic: Conduct an *Understanding Our Mission* workshop. Mission-based decision making develops a common focus on mutually serving a clearly identified purpose.
  - Tactic: Conduct an *Understanding Our Customer* workshop that develops an understanding of and relationship to your customers' needs and expectations.

Reality Check: Not every employee will respond well to empowerment. Be prepared to address this issue.

- Accomplishments are a foundation of empowerment. As such it is important to recognize progress and identify role models. We can begin to empower the workforce through activities such as:
  - Identify and celebrate Role Models. Develop a method for employees to see and share success stories/examples
  - Celebrate accomplishments
  - Document examples of empowerment
  - Recognition programs and demonstrations of appreciation for contribution.



## **Time for Introspection**

Take a moment to answer the following questions:

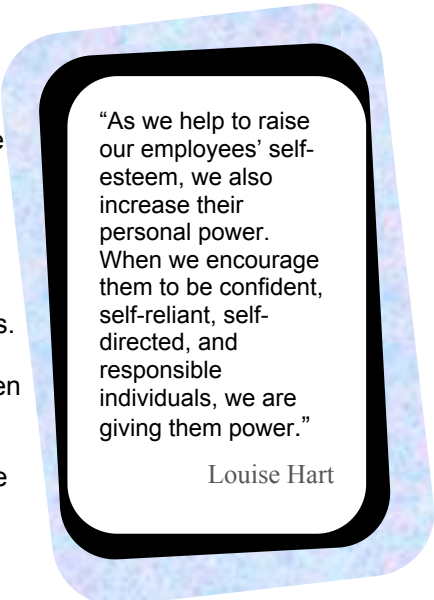
- ❖ *What values does your company currently support? Do your employees understand them? How are they emphasized in the workplace?*
- ❖ *What values should be added?*
- ❖ *Does your company have a unifying focus? What is the vision of what you want it to be? Do the employees understand it?*
- ❖ *What do you currently do to show recognition for participation and contribution?*
- ❖ *What could you do?*

## **5. Establish Accountability**

Empowerment without accountability is a recipe for chaos. Accountability is that aspect of responsibility where results and outcomes are discussed. Accountability is a form of trust and trusting people empowers them.

There are several proven tactics that can be used to develop accountability.

- Define and clearly communicate expectations for all roles.
  - Examples are: purpose of the role, customers served by that role (internal and external), the deliverables provided to those customers. This list is often developed during the design stage when developing an incentive ScoreCard™
  - These expectations and role descriptions should be incorporated into Individual position descriptions
- Develop and communicate department statements
  - Develop statements of purpose, mission, and service level agreements for each department.
- Responsibility charting
  - Identify a list of responsibilities for each role within the department as it applies to the department and company mission statements.
  - Create *Action Plans* to increase individual responsibility
- Authority matrix: a robust Empowerment tool
  - Define the decision-making authority for each position.
    - 1) Over what? When? Under what circumstances?
  - Develop criteria for expanding this authority
  - Build skills and experience to expand the authority
  - Authorize the authority and expand the matrix
- Develop processes that enables employees to practice and apply their empowerment
  - Participate in important decisions
  - Cross-functional interaction and influence
  - Self-directed work teams



“As we help to raise our employees’ self-esteem, we also increase their personal power. When we encourage them to be confident, self-reliant, self-directed, and responsible individuals, we are giving them power.”

Louise Hart



## Time for Introspection

Take a moment to answer the following questions:

- ❖ *Do your employees clearly understand what is expected of them?*
- ❖ *How do you measure performance on a company, department, team and individual level? Be specific*
- ❖ *Do you have a list of Value Drivers for your company?*
- ❖ *How often do you discuss the performance of these value drivers with your employees?*

## Summary

Empowerment is part of a culture of partnership where each employee thinks and acts like a business partner.

In this workplace culture you invite employees to participate in a high-involvement, high-performance environment. In order to engage them it is essential to provide the appropriate rewards.

Take a moment to answer the following question:

- ❖ ***What rewards will employees receive for embracing this change to Empowerment? What's in it for them?***

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