

EMPOWERMENT



DEFINITION

- the giving or delegation of power or authority; authorization; the giving of an ability; enablement or permission
- the process of becoming stronger and more confident, especially in controlling one's life and claiming one's rights

Joseph Juran defined empowerment as “*conferring the right to make decisions and take action.*”

In Business:

The act of transferring portions of the decision-making process, as well as the authority to implement decisions, to employees. The extent to which empowerment can be given depends on the developmental maturity of the organization and its various groups. It also depends on the level of understanding of the group. That's why education is so vital in organizations that empower their people.

Empowerment is based on the idea that developing employees skills, resources, authority to act, opportunity, coaching, motivation, as well holding them responsible and accountable for outcomes of their actions, will contribute to their competence and satisfaction. An engaged and empowered workforce will then result in increased customer delight and overall productivity.

Theory of Empowerment in Business:

Simply stated, the closer we bring people to managing their own work, the more valued they feel and productive they become, and the greater their sense of job satisfaction.

Essential Elements of Empowerment in Business:

- Leadership
- Capabilities
- Ownership
- Problem-Solving
- Decision-Making
- Authority
- Accountability
- Responsibility
- Supporting Infrastructure
- Participation

EMPOWERMENT

EMPOWERMENT IN ACTION

There's something significant to be learned from organizations that are synonymous with exceptional customer service driven by empowered employees. See below for a sampling of such organizations, and click on the related links for inspiring stories of how they've put empowerment to work and are reaping the benefits as a result:

- JetBlue: "just alright doesn't fly here"
JetBlue employees are empowered to go the extra mile... whether [offering a free movie](#), or [extending elite status](#)
- Four Seasons: "[excellence meets innovation](#)"
- Ritz Carlton: "[we are ladies and gentlemen serving ladies and gentlemen](#)"
- Zappos: "[deliver WOW](#)"

HOW TO EMPOWER PEOPLE AND BUILD TRUST

- Ask people for their input. Include people in a decision-making process
- Encourage open communication
- Listen and provide feedback
- Ask questions
- Provide management support
- Mentor
- Provide access to data
- Foster collaboration
- Set clear goals and create growth paths
- Stretch each person's capabilities and develop leaders
- Don't micromanage
- Provide on-going training
- Forgive mistakes and praise effort
- Pay people what they're worth and provide them with a pleasant place to work
- Encourage happiness and believe in your employees

BENEFITS OF EMPOWERMENT IN THE WORKFORCE

- More productive employees who feel especially appreciated
- A more engaged workforce
- Focus on the customer / improved customer service
- Clearly defined boundaries
- Better, faster decisions
- Increased trust at all levels of the organization

RHYMES WITH

Retirement. Feeling empowered and a little lucky after doing such a stellar job of helping create an engaged and proactive workforce, Sue decided to take advantage of early **retirement**, head to Vegas, and bet some of her saving on the ponies. Hey, why not? YOLO!

FAMOUS QUOTES ON EMPOWERMENT

"Our belief is that if you get the culture right, most of the other stuff, like great customer service, or building a great long-term brand or empowering passionate employees and customers, will happen on its own."

Tony Hsieh, Zappos

"It's not the tools you have faith in. Tools are just tools —they work or they don't work. It's the people you have faith in or not."

Steve Jobs, Apple

"Start with why customers will never love a company until the employees love it first."

Simon Sinek, author

"People want guidance, not rhetoric; they need to know what the plan of action is and how it will be implemented. They want to be given responsibility to help solve the problem and the authority to act on it."

Howard Schultz, Starbucks

