

NUGGETS OF KNOWLEDGE

Leading By Empowerment

How often does your organization give employees responsibility without a clear direction or an understanding of the expectations?

This can, and most often will, result in low productivity, confusion, and lack of results, that creates low morale and possibly high turnover. However, employees that are empowered will produce amazing results in the workplace and usually do it with a great attitude and enthusiasm. When leaders and managers empower effectively, they don't give up authority and responsibility completely; rather, they share these elements with the employees. They help the employees reach new heights and further their career. **A key to successful empowerment is to clearly communicate your expectations, establish clear boundaries of authority, and create an action plan for results.**

Leader Guidelines For Empowering Employees

Include Employees In The Direction Of Your Company: This includes a part in the strategic planning phase, writing goals and objectives and the implementation of the goals with a specific timeline. Let your employees help determine the timelines and rewards for completion of the task. **Get your employees onboard at the beginning.**

Be Clear In Your Communication: Be sure employees understand what you are asking for. Ask them to recap the conversation, listening for gaps in what you said and what was repeated back. Address any gaps immediately.

Use Their Ideas: How much time do you spend listening to your employees' ideas and suggestions? Ask for their input in how they would go about completing a project. Let them do it their way if the result will be satisfactory to you.

Demonstrate Your Trust: Determine what resources they need before they start the project and clear the way for the resources to be available. Resist checking in on every detail, but have controls in place so they know when they should check with you.

Match Their Interests With Your Needs: Meet with your employees on an ongoing basis and learn what they want and need. Do not wait for the year-end performance evaluation. When possible, assign tasks that will allow them to grow and take on additional responsibilities. Create an environment where employees would feel comfortable reaching out for guidance.

Give Realistic Timelines: Determine together a realistic timeline. Be specific as to when a project is due, don't say, "Return this to me as soon as possible." If you need it by a certain date and time, say so clearly.

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To Lead Others,
Walk Behind Them

--Lao Tzu

"Don't tell people how to do things, tell them what to do and let them surprise you with their results."

- George S.
Patton

"A leader is a dealer in hope."

- Napoleon
Bonaparte

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Leading by Empowerment (cont'd)

Establish Priorities: It is helpful for employees to know which pieces are the most important to you. Make certain that they know what needs to be done first and why.

Coach, Don't Manage: Coach your employees to success. This means listen, ask questions, offer strategic advice, and always give direct feedback.

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It's Not The Difficult People, It's The Difficult Behavior

It's a human tendency to identify people as being difficult or easy to get along with and that affects how we interact with them. **The question is - are some people difficult or is it their behavior that bothers us?**

How Labeling People As 'Difficult' Causes Problems

Most, if not all of us, talk about difficult people. We think: "Oh, that's John again, why is he always a pain in the", or "Why is Mary so darned stubborn and difficult all the time." We tend to characterize (or label) people and put them into boxes or categories.

If you do that, it's not a character flaw on your part, but a way of trying to simplify the world. In fact our brains are wired to do this automatically. Brains are wonderful information reduction and labeling machines. They classify, label and organize information to make our lives easier.

Labeling People Can be Counterproductive!

Although our brains tend to label people as difficult, it's not the best way to think about difficult situations. If you label a person as difficult, you are more likely to create more difficult situations with that person, since you will be expecting bad things to happen.

Unfortunately, while our brains do this labeling almost automatically, the process makes dealing with difficult people ... well ... more difficult. Here's why. **When you label a person** as difficult (or stubborn, boring, untrustworthy), **you use that label to predict their behavior and actions in the immediate and long-term future.** In other words, you use the labels to create expectations on your part about how the person will behave. In one sense that's not necessarily bad. Predicting difficulties can help us prepare. In another way it's really bad.

When we have negative expectations about someone based on a label, we act differently than with someone about whom we have positive expectations. When we label a person difficult and have poor expectations about the person, we are more likely to:

- Be quicker to interpret their actions as negative
- Be more likely to have strong emotional reactions to them
- Treat them more abruptly
- Expect less from them

All of these factors can create difficult situations with someone when no difficult situation is actually present in the first place. In other words, **your expectations and labels of people can cause you to create exactly what you believe will happen—a self-fulfilling prophecy situation.**

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Define Success

Make it clear to your employees what constitutes success and how they should measure their achievements. Goals must be realistic. The people who do the work, for example, must set project schedules. People will accept a “bottom-up” deadline they helped set but they’ll be cynical about a schedule imposed from the top that doesn’t map to reality. **Unachievable goals weaken an organization.** At my company, in addition to regular team meetings and one-on-one sessions between managers and employees, we use mass gatherings periodically and e-mail routinely to **communicate what we expect from employees.** If a reviewer or customer chooses another company’s product over ours, we analyze the situation carefully. We say to our people, “the next time around we’ve got to win. What will it take? What’s needed?” The answers to these questions help us define success.

- Bill Gates, Microsoft

Jerrold HR Solutions: Turning Potential Into Performance

Jerrold HR Solutions is a company that focuses on helping clients discover their untapped potential and turn that potential into performance. By “partnering” with our clients to identify their individual needs we customize processes that enable them to develop a substantial competitive advantage needed for their future success.

We work with companies in all or some of the following areas: executive & management development, goal setting, leadership, time strategies, sales development and improving communications, allowing our clients to improve profits through empowering their people. As for our individual professional clients we focus on all areas of career management guiding them toward the fulfillment of their goals and thereby ultimately arriving at their desired created vision.

Motivational Quotes

“When people share values, when you build their self-esteem, and when they are getting their needs met, they will basically knock down walls for you.”

- J. Robert “Digger” MacDougal

“It is a funny thing about life; if you refuse to accept anything but the best, you very often get it.”

- W. Somerset Maugham

What lies behind you and what lies in front of you, pales in comparison to what lies inside of you.”

- Ralph Waldo Emerson

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