

EMPOWERMENT REQUIRES LEADERSHIP FACILITATION NOT DELEGATION

By David Stewart

A Guide for Leaders to help set Employee Empowerment up for Success.



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*Empowerment does not mean the abrogation
of responsibility*

- Warren Buffett

Times of economic uncertainty provide an opportunity to renew and refresh team engagement and the empowerment of team members. Any rebound out of COVID will require team members to be focused on market trends, opportunities, risks, and changes to consumer spending behaviours. At the centre of this dynamic will be a need to empower and re-skill staff. This does not happen by accident or by a leader demanding staff suddenly become accountable. It requires a planned and sequenced approach.

WHAT DOES EMPOWERMENT EVEN MEAN?

According to the Oxford Dictionary – there are two main definitions of empowerment

1. Authority or power given to someone to do something
2. The process of becoming stronger and more confident – especially when controlling one’s life and one’s rights

Both definitions are relevant and applicable to this article. The key is to link empowerment with accountability, as this ties to commitment. **Being responsible for something means you can delegate it, being accountable for something means you own it!**

Empowerment & Accountability are joined at the hip

WHY EMPOWER ANYWAY?

Empowering others is the most rewarding and challenging task any leader undertakes. But it requires a sustained and systematic coaching and facilitation approach – not ad-hoc attempts or motivational speeches. Building the confidence and competence of staff to step up and be more empowered is a key responsibility of leadership.

Empowerment will:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve staff engagement • Build succession plans • Inspire and motivate team members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance job satisfaction • Build team culture and chemistry
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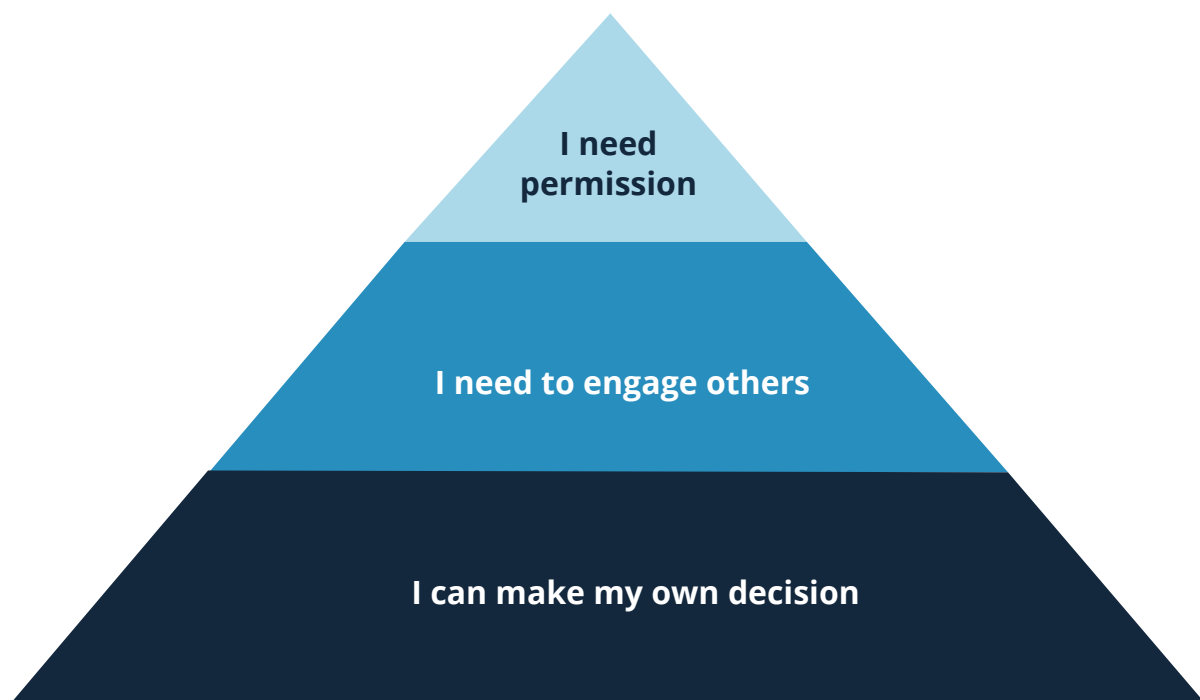
Empowerment Requires a Leader to set it up for success from the outset

THE FIVE TYPES OF EMPOWERMENT FOR LEADERS TO CONSIDER

Thumping the desk and demanding staff to “step up and be accountable” is a sure way to demotivate staff and set any empowerment process up for failure. Before getting started on any empowerment journey, **there are five types of empowerment to consider:**

1. **Decision Making Empowerment:** There is always a learned default behaviour to decision making. Essentially there is a triage of three levels of decision making:

- Decisions a person can make on their own
- Decisions that need engagement with others
- Decisions that need approval



A person needs to be clear on their decision-making triage and what potential scenario fits where. These can be broken into four categories of decision making:

<p>A</p> <p>Ad-hoc Decisions that arise periodically – If predicted and known a person should be able to make a decision – if unexpected and unknown it is likely they will need some form of affirmation or approval</p>	<p>B</p> <p>Strategic or Big Decisions with major consequences, with unclear right or wrong choices – will require both the engagement of others and approval from more senior leaders</p>
<p>C</p> <p>Frequent Decisions that require broad collaboration as it will directly impact others, and necessitates team alignment and understanding</p>	<p>D</p> <p>Delegated Decisions that can be assigned to a person or a team that has the skills and training to deal with – inline with any upfront brand promises or team values</p>

2. **Educational Empowerment:** People should be encouraged to lead their own learning experiences – this will highlight their appetite to learn and develop themselves and their areas of interest. Learning is everything you do – it is not a right, nor a quest to do as many courses as humanly possible. The transfer of learning requires a safe environment to practice, rehearse and apply new-found skills and attributes. Any learning and development expectation must align with the needs and future direction of the organisation, evolving skills and competencies to do the work, and the personal needs and motivations of the individual.

The 70-20-10 Approach to Adult Learning:

<p>70% on the Job</p>	<p>70% of all learning occurs on the job. This requires encouragement for trial and error, train – test – apply methodologies, experiential learning approaches. This is where empowerment is required</p>
<p>20% Via a Colleague</p>	<p>20% of all learning occurs through peers, colleagues, and other team members. This includes shadowing, observing, and collaborating with colleagues and learning to apply in their own setting. This includes train the trainer and buddying approaches to Education</p>
<p>10% Via Formal Training</p>	<p>This is the traditional approach to learning, be it in a classroom setting, online courses, instructional manuals, and the like. This type of learning is best applied to highly technical tasks and skills, or compliance requirements</p>

3. **Financial Empowerment:** This involves the financial authority levels any one person can make, before it requires delegation or the input from someone else. This is a governance good practice – but authority levels need to be clear, consistent, and not require micromanagement. A financial authorisation and approval making process should be simple, known and transparent to all, and reviewed regularly.
4. **Defining & Measuring Success:** What success looks like, day in and day out should be transparent, understood and reported on. What gets measured gets done. This should link to who owns what part of the success. Do not confuse inputs with outcomes. Any outcome is a result of many inputs – and it is these which need to be clearly defined, assigned, and measured. It is the inputs (particularly behavioural) that define success – which need to be known, agreed, and understood.
5. **5. Prioritisation Is Key:** When empowering someone, they need to understand where to focus their time and energies and be aware of key risks to look out for. This will help provide context to time management, key meeting schedules, agenda setting and where to focus time and energy over the course of a given day or week. It is always easy to focus on what is urgent – a key learning is to understand what is important.

EMPOWERMENT = CONFIDENCE + COMPETENCE + PERMISSION:

*When All is Said and Done – Empowerment Comes Down to
Confidence – Competence – Permission*

Ultimately empowerment will always align with levels of performance. If a leader does not have confidence in a person's ability to perform at the required level, the leader will not provide empowerment permissions – indeed it is more likely they will have a tendency to micro-manage.

Confidence, Competence and Permission are three coaching dynamics a leader needs to pursue to facilitate empowerment and accountability. Let's break this down.

BUILDING CONFIDENCE:

The key element in any empowerment quest is to ensure a person feels they have what it takes to undertake and be accountable for what is being asked of them. There are many dynamics and variables to work into the psyche of any person, but a “positive shaping” coaching dynamic has proven to be one of the most effective ways of developing someone’s confidence. This includes:

Adopt the 5:1 Feedback model

- Catch a person doing things right – to affirm correct behaviours and approaches
- Provide positive feedback from other sources – especially great outcomes and lived experiences
- For every one negative piece of feedback (critical learning) given – then provide five pieces of affirming (positive) feedback to help fuel confidence

Debrief and Measure Success

- Important to capture, showcase and measure what success looks like – this will provide a “feel” for what expectations are and what is acceptable performance, and how it is achieved
- Early on, sit in and observe meetings, interactions and decision making, where you can observe a person “in action.” Then debrief with them what went well, suggestions for improvement and express your confidence in them

As a Leader, Role Model the 4 E’s Early on in the Empowerment Process:

Engage	Say thank you. Make the time to check in with them. Ask how they think they are developing and improving. Give them open access to ask questions and share concerns any time.
Equip	Do not solve their problems. Instead enquire what they think the solutions to problems are, so they can equip themselves with the solution or the right approaches. Important to equip the person with the knowledge and learning to solve problems, not the instructions on how to implement a solution.
Excite	Be excited. Being enthusiastic and supportive of a person you are trying to empower is important. Your energy is infectious. It is important to symbolise the significance of a person stepping up in their career and what it means to them and the team.
Encourage	Have a crack! You must encourage and insist the people you are looking to empower actually have a go. The easiest option is to always snap back and default to the status quo. Highlight your expectation that people attempt to step up. Encourage creative thinking and new ideas.

BUILDING COMPETENCE:

In the early days of any empowerment process, expect mistakes – it is part of the learning and discovery process. Skill acquisition takes time and effort. The old saying is true... it takes 10 hours to learn something new and 10,000 hours to master it! Building competence will require both instructional learning and, trial and error.

Start by Setting Up for Success:

- Set clear boundaries, responsibilities, deadlines and clearly identify any early warning signs to look for and what to do
- Provide a safe environment to learn, practice and rehearse new skills
- Commence with delegating some tasks that allows you to provide oversight and supervision
- As their competence levels increase, the level of supervision needed should decrease
- Be clear about what success looks like and what your vision for them is

Unlearn Learned Behaviours:

There is always learned behaviours. The status quo must be challenged. Three tactics to adopt to help unlearn learned behaviours include:

1. **Move from telling them what to do – to asking questions on what they would do**
(now you are coaching)
2. **Create a “Stop & Start” list**
 - What behaviours and actions to STOP
 - What behaviours and initiatives to START
3. **Adopt an “It’s your call policy!”** If they don’t have a solution, then they are part of the problem!

Identify 3 Skills to Acquire and 3 Behaviours to Adopt: People can only remember three things at a time. So be clear to identify the primary skills and behaviours required in order to master a new role

Three Key Skills to acquire via:

- Traditional training programs (face to face or digital)
- Shadowing & observing colleagues and their approaches and techniques
- Practice and apply – you only need one crate of glasses to learn how to pull a beer – but it requires a time and place to practice this

Three Behaviours to adopt via:

- Role modelling the desired behaviours
- Role playing different scenarios and “what if” settings
- Real time practice (in both simple and challenging circumstances)

GIVING PERMISSION:

Empowering a person requires a leader's words to be supported by their actions and behaviours. The symbolism of what a leader does and does not do is critical in the early stages of empowerment discovery. **Saying that someone is empowered, and then stepping in and assuming control when things get difficult is the surest way to kill empowerment.**

HERE ARE SEVEN TIPS TO DEMONSTRATE THAT YOU HAVE GIVEN PERMISSION:

- 1. Stop doing the role or task you have empowered someone else to undertake.**
- 2. Measure the success and effectiveness of performance.**
- 3. Schedule time to meet and debrief how they are performing.**
- 4. Officially announce to others what it is they are responsible for**
- 5. Formally change role descriptions, objectives, and titles**
- 6. Stop making Decisions & Start asking Questions.**
- 7. Be aware of how you act and behave as the "Head Coach"**

There are Four Leadership Styles that take place during the empowerment process:

- **Micro-management:** This is OK in the early days of empowerment, provided its focus is around how the person is leading and stepping up – not assuming their role..... This style soon has to stop!
- **Helicopter Managing:** To oversee and assure the person you are empowering to demonstrate you trust them, but do not interfere or undermine their new authority (praise publicly – instruct privately)
- **Positively Coach:** To demonstrate and affirm you are confident they have what it takes, and they are making the right decisions and actions.
- **Cheer Lead:** When you see they are competent, and you are confident in their ability to step up and be accountable.

Sailors need to experience both rough and smooth seas to become competent.

I PERFORM BETTER UNDER MICROMAN- AGEMENT SAID NO ONE EVER

FINALLY

A CHECKLIST FOR A LEADER AIMING TO EMPOWER SOMEONE:

- Demonstrate trust in the people being empowered
- Communicate a clear vision of what future performance looks like
- Initially talk and sweat the detail – little things are important early on
- Encourage people to have a go – attempt they are being asked to step up to
- Understand mistakes will occur early on – expect and coach this – don't blow a fuse!
- Initially, check-in regularly to get a sense of how they are going (walk around)
- Run regular periodic debriefs and explore how they think they are going – what might be a check-in for you will be a learning experience for them – builds self-awareness
- Encourage them to explore their creative and innovative thinking
- Show appreciation for their efforts
- Stop and actively listen to their thoughts, concerns and how they think they are going – this will turn into key coaching moments – without them, empowerment will not take place

Empowerment is a journey of learning & development, not a demand for someone to step up and be accountable!

***NOW IT'S OVER TO YOU. GOOD LUCK! AND REMEMBER
"FACTA NON VERBA, DEEDS NOT WORDS"***



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