

Growing Greatness:

Series of Articles to Cultivate Truly Outstanding Leaders

4 Keys to Employee Empowerment

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4 Keys to Employee Empowerment

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No matter what your business, your employees are the backbone of your company. When they're happy and productive, sales will flourish. However, if employees feel dissatisfied or as if they're lacking control, their discomfort will come across to your customers. As a result, your business may suffer. In order to keep your company on track, you need to empower your employees for optimum performance and greater job satisfaction.

But what exactly does it mean to empower your employees? Empowerment means making people feel valued by involving them in decisions, asking them to participate in the planning process, praising them, and continually providing adequate training and support. It's giving your employees the opportunity to contribute to the company's overall success. When you allow your employees to think independently and assist the company, they will respond with increased work effort and greater efficiency. Following are four keys to employee empowerment that can help your company grow.

1. **Involve your employees in the decision-making process.** In many companies, important decisions regarding the business come from senior level management. While this is a prudent approach to ensure the company's overall success, many times these decisions directly affect the lower level employees. If the final outcome of the decision is a less than positive one for the employees, often they feel mistreated and unappreciated.

You can keep morale high and empower your employees by involving them in business decisions that directly relate to them. For example, if your company is considering a dress code change, allow your employees to voice their opinions on the new dress code and offer suggestions for portraying a more professional image. This does not mean you have to follow every decision your employees make; it simply offers them an outlet to feel a part of the team and a contributor to the company's overall success.

Employees who are not given the opportunity to make decisions tend to become passive and lethargic. Although they may perform tasks and meet expectations, they do so without that spark of enthusiasm and excitement that brings meaning to what they do and to what your customers see.

2. **Involve your employees in the planning process.** In corporations across United States, self-directed work teams meet regularly to brainstorm ways to save money and work more efficiently. They take an active role in the goal-setting and planning process for the company as well as themselves. By doing so, they are not only becoming empowered, but they are also learning their own capabilities and limitations.

Whenever possible, allow your employees to take an active role in planning the company's future. Instead of simply declaring a new sales goal your employees need to reach, ask your sales team to come up with their own realistic monthly goal and a plan to reach that number. Then you and your team can analyze the goal to make sure it's feasible and attainable.

By allowing your employees to be an active part of the planning process, they know their input matters to the company's bottom line. Additionally, they'll be more apt to strive to meet the goal if they know they set it themselves and laid a plan to reach it.

3. **Offer praise freely.** When was the last time you praised an employee for a job well done? In too many companies, management inadvertently neglects to offer praise on a regular basis. As a result, many employees are left to wonder how their performance rates. Without such guidance they can easily become apprehensive about their job requirements and how to handle challenging situations. In order to empower your employees and develop a sense of competence and confidence, praise them for their performance, encourage them to take risks and acknowledge their accomplishments, no matter how small. This is particularly important when employees are beginning to work on new tasks or when an employee moves into a new job description.

When your employees know they are doing a good job, they will want to repeat the process again and again. They'll also be more willing to try new ideas and challenges in order to meet your customers' needs. The result will be motivated employees who are eager to help the company grow.

4. **Provide continual training and support.** If you want your employees to feel confident of their abilities, they need the proper job training and support. Many companies offer an introductory training period when a new employee comes aboard, but then that training stops after a certain length of time. Unfortunately, most job responsibilities are continually evolving as the company matures, and employees are left without the skills they need to complete their newly assigned tasks.

Employees should always be encouraged to ask for assistance and support. If your employees feel intimidated to seek out training, they can become frustrated with their job and lose interest. Let your employees know that asking for help is not a sign of weakness; rather, it is a sign of strength. When your employees come to you for help, be sure not to turn them away with comments such as, "You still don't know how to do that?" Instead, ask, "Where are you having problems? What can I clear up for you?" When your employees know they can get the assistance they need, they'll be empowered for greater job efficiency.

When you empower your employees, you create an environment where people are encouraged to explore, discover, take risks and develop trust. You enable your employees to succeed by providing them with the means, opportunity and capacity they need to excel. The result is growth, innovation and satisfaction. You employees will feel important, they'll convey those feelings to your customers through improved service and ultimately greater sales. So if you want your company to grow to new heights, begin by empowering your employees to help attain goals. Empowered employees will always rise to the occasion, do the best job possible, and help you compete in the global marketplace.

About the Author

Karen Lawson, PhD, CSP, is an international consultant, executive coach, speaker, and author. She has built a successful organization and management development consulting firm working with Fortune 500 companies as well as small businesses. Dr. Lawson specializes in cultivating outstanding leaders who enable their organizations to outperform the competition. She conducts seminars on [Leadership](#), [Business Communication](#), [Business Ethics](#), [Team Building](#). For a complete list of her products and services, contact Lawson Consulting Group, Inc. at 215-368-9465 or at www.LawsonCG.com.

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