



HUMAN RESOURCES ▶ TEAM BUILDING

# How to Empower Your Employees

## Free Employees to Think and Act

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Employers and employees both have unrealistic perceptions about what empowerment is and how it's supposed to work in real-time. Empowerment is the process of enabling or authorizing an individual to think, behave, take action, and control work and decision-making about their job in autonomous, independent, self-directed ways. It is the state of feeling self-empowered to take control of your destiny.

## Empowerment in the Workplace

Empowerment is feeling in control of your work environment and that you have permission to make decisions in the areas you control and are responsible for in your job.

When thinking about empowerment in human relations terms, try to avoid thinking of it as something that one individual does for another. This mindset is one of the problems organizations have with the empowerment concept. People think that someone, usually



Consequently, the reporting staff members wait for the bestowing of empowerment, and the manager asks why people won't act in empowered ways. This bestowing and waiting has led to general unhappiness, mostly undeserved, with the concept of empowerment in many organizations. Don't let that happen in your organization. Your best success will result from empowered employees taking action—not waiting for permission.

## How to Think of Empowerment

Think of empowerment, instead, as the process of an individual enabling himself to take action and control work and decision making in autonomous ways. Empowerment comes from the individual.

The organization has the responsibility to create a work environment which helps foster the ability and desire of employees to act in empowered ways. The work organization has the responsibility to remove barriers that limit the ability of staff to act in empowered ways.

Think, too, of empowerment as an employee philosophy and strategy that organizations benefit from adopting. Empowered employees, who are operating within an organization's strategic [framework](#) that [includes mission](#) and [goals](#) increase the productivity and effectiveness of the workplace.

They are enabled to perform their jobs more efficiently and effectively without feeling as if they are waiting for a decision, waiting for direction, and waiting for permission to act. They become more responsible and accountable when self-direction is the norm.

[Employee involvement](#) and participative management are often used to mean empowerment. They are not interchangeable. Each describes a different characteristic of an effective workplace.

## Getting Out of the Way of Employee Empowerment

Empowerment is desirable management and organizational style that enables employees



The company's [management style](#) should involve sharing the goals, sharing each employee's expectations and framework with the employee, and then, getting out of the way while employees were empowered to set goals, accomplish their objectives, and determine how to do their jobs.

The empowered organization operates in a team-based structure in which each development team has the authority and autonomy to determine the features and capabilities of their product. They did this in conjunction with the overall technology leadership and with serious input from the marketing team.

## Empowerment Examples

Empowerment in the workspace can take many forms as can be seen in the following examples.

### Releasing Control

The manager of the Human Resources department added weeks to the process of hiring new employees. They required their staff members to obtain a manager's signature on every document related to hiring a new employee. Consequently, documents sat on the manager's desk in a pile until he had time to review them. Hiring slowed and other departments wondered if they would ever fill that vacant desk.

The time problem was brought to the manager's attention and the fact that their action impeded empowered behavior. The manager fostered empowerment by telling employees they no longer needed his signature unless the hire involved extraordinary circumstances or an executive position.

### Frankly Stating What You Need

John empowered himself to discuss the career objectives he wished to pursue with his supervisor. He told his supervisor, frankly, that if the opportunities were not available in his current company, he would move on to another company.

Mary took charge of her career by fueling her sense of empowerment when she developed a [career path plan](#), met with her manager to ask for her assistance to achieve it, and set goals for its accomplishment in her [performance development plan](#).



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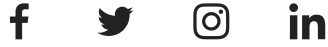
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