



Bergstrom-Elder Consulting Group

BLUEPRINTING BUSINESS SUCCESS

## **Empowerment- not a single initiative, but a climate to strive for.**

Does your current reward system encourage empowerment? Are your people being used appropriately? Can you really trust your people to make decisions that affect your bottom line? How much real authority do you want your people to have?

If you've ever asked yourself these questions, you may be thinking about making the change to a more empowered workforce where the people closest to your customer can make decisions that affect your customers and your business. Empowerment is more than just delegating a project or two, it's a genuine opening up of the creative power of your team members. It's based on the belief that employees abilities are frequently underused (they are) and that given the chance and responsibility, people want to make a positive contribution (they do).

Empowerment is about:

- Allowing your team members to do their job
- Encouraging them to take responsibility for customers' experience
- Letting those closest to the customer make the decisions they feel are right, and supporting them in those decisions
- Eliminating unnecessary bureaucracy- you know those 5 hour meetings to make a decision about whether or not you should hire another technician for the service department. The bottom line is that your Service Manager should be able to make a case of whether or not to hire a new technician in a matter of 10 minutes if he or she has been empowered to be responsible for the success of the department. This leads into a whole different article on metrics and understanding how to measure productivity in your organization but I'll save that for a later date.
- Encouraging and **helping** your team members to put their ideas for workplace improvement into practice. Remember, your people will have great ideas but may need some help from you to implement them. If there are hurdles, and there will be, you must help your teams to get over them.

### **So how does "empowerment" work?**

- ✓ First you must decide for yourself what level to empower your team and what you expect to get out of it. You must communicate to everyone what your goals

are for the company and how changing the organizational climate to be more empowered will help everyone to achieve breakthrough success.

- ✓ Recognize that some barriers may include an unreceptive culture or managers who fear that empowerment means losing control or staff who fear having more responsibility. Once you have identified the barriers they will be easier to break down.
- ✓ Set boundaries. Clear levels of responsibility must be communicated to everyone so that confusion can be kept to a minimum. If you decide that your customer service representatives will be allowed to handle all customer credits up to a maximum of \$50, then set the level, communicate it to everyone and then reinforce it in practice.
- ✓ Know your staff. Investigate talents so that you are using your greatest assets effectively. Don't assume someone doesn't have the ability- ask them first.
- ✓ Lead your people. Empowerment doesn't work if you don't walk the talk. If you have given someone the authority to make decisions, let them do it. Guide them, support them and encourage them. Make sure your door is open so that your team members can ask questions, especially in the beginning when everyone will be tentative.
- ✓ Set the framework for a wildly successful "empowered" culture by openly praising those who step up to the plate and by privately re-directing those who don't. In the end if your people don't wish to work in an organization that supports empowerment and accountability- they will move on and that's OK.

Don't be afraid to give your teams the chance to take care of your customers and help you grow your business- that is after all why you hired them isn't it?

Looking for more ideas to achieve breakthrough success? Contact a consultant with the BEC Group to learn about ways to improve your bottom line. Dan can be reached at (734) 730-8110. Or via email at [BECCGroup@comcast.net](mailto:BECCGroup@comcast.net)