# Accomplish Goals with Empowerment

By Paul J. Meyer

Empowerment of people is the overall goal of leaders within organizations today. Far from being a fad, empowerment of workers at all levels is a means of coping with challenges and problems. Empowerment means not so much giving people power but recognizing the power they have and unleashing it to help the organization operate more effectively. To maximize empowerment of people, many of the traditional principles of power and authority are as applicable as they ever were.

Authority and power are so closely allied that it is difficult to discuss one without also discussing the other. Leadership authority is often difficult to define precisely, but this definition fits most situations: *Authority is the right vested in a position to accomplish the goals of the organization through supervision of the time and effort of other people, and the enhancement of organizational productivity through motivation.*

Authority, then, implies that you have a right to direct the activities of the group. Power, on the other hand, is based on the relationship leaders typically develop with the members of their team: *Power is influence, derived from the respect and trust developed by an individual, and is based on relationships developed with others.*

From the dawn of recorded history, the right to exercise authority has been tied to ownership – ownership of land, property, or the means of production. Authority derived from ownership is delegated to leaders with the expectation that they will use that authority to further the interests of the owner. Thus, authority is inherent in your role as a leader.
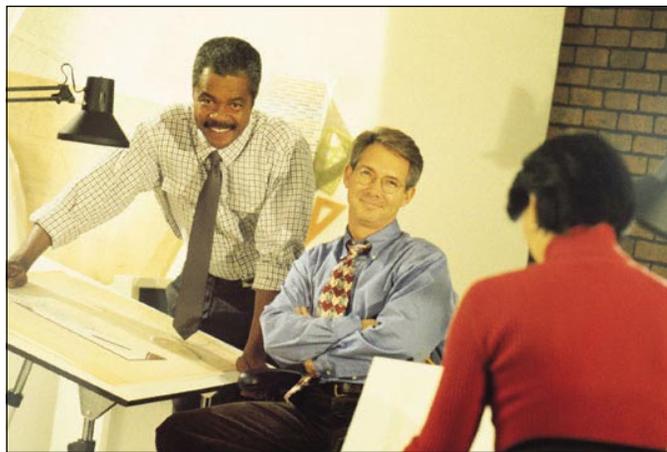
Authority's companion is power. No matter how much authority top leadership delegates to you, the ability to enforce that authority comes essentially from you. No one else can give you that ability – it comes from within. That ability is what we call power. While power can be withheld or prevented by top leadership – or even by a union contract – it cannot be automatically granted by executive order or via e-mail. It is possible for leaders to have authority because of their title but to lack any real power to exercise it. Lack of power may be a result of the leader's own personal qualities, or waning influence may stem from unrealistic constraints imposed by top leadership.

Power is built over a period of time through multiple

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complex actions and reactions between you and your team members. It is primarily a function of your personal competence and credibility. While power is sometimes tenuous and fluctuating, it does tend to grow and stabilize as you demonstrate your integrity in its use.

Power and authority are extremely important because they provide you with a practical means for achieving organizational goals through leading the effort and productivity of other people.

Increase Your Effectiveness

To increase your effectiveness as a leader and to increase the resources available to you in your position within the organization, make the most of your power and authority. The goals you are pursuing in the career area of life are highly important, and they are advanced through the authority and power you exercise. Be sure that your career goals include specific goals for personal growth and development. Authority and power are derived directly from your personality and competence, and are enhanced by your personal growth.

Authority and power, wisely used, are never dissipated. They are enhanced by practice and personal growth. A leader who uses authority and power skillfully finds that team members are less likely to resort to personal power plays or to develop opposing blocks of power. Instead, team members are motivated to work cooperatively with others.

Both authority and power are most effective when they are least evident. In fact, authority has failed when power must be used to enforce it. When your authority is respected and fully recognized, you are able to function without invoking the use of power. You can, by your authority, give a direct order; but if, instead, you make a request accompanied by an explanation, you build a reserve of goodwill and respect. Team members then feel inclined to follow your suggestions and honor your requests without the need for an overt exercise of your authority.

The best use of authority and power is to use them to motivate team members and help them grow. Your authority gives you the right to work with people in ways that will enhance their contribution to the organization as a whole, while your power enlists their cooperation. As you help

"Creativity is an even finer art than pure inventive genius. It is a conceptual skill, the willingness to innovate, to try the untried, and to see the usual in unusual ways, and to relate the normally unrelated."

team members identify their own personal goals, you can demonstrate to them that increasing their productivity will enable them to move closer to their personal objectives.

The Choice of Leadership Is Yours

You may lead a rich, full life or a shallow, empty existence. But whatever you gain from life is largely a matter of choice – your choice. You are free to choose whatever you want to do or to be. Your greatest power is the power to choose your own destiny. The reality of the power that comes from your freedom of choice becomes evident when you understand the unalterable principles under which this freedom works.

Choice is a talent that must be developed. The power of choice can be developed. If you are reluctant to make choices and decisions because you fear failure, you may choose to play it safe and miss experiences that could lead to making better choices. Good decisions are based on prior decisions.

You must choose for yourself. Because no two people are exactly alike, no one can make a completely satisfactory choice for someone else. When you allow others to make your choices, you hand over to them your destiny and rob yourself of your birthright.

The choice determines the consequences. You may select any action you choose, but once you make a choice, you must accept the consequences. You can use your freedom of choice to make whatever changes of habit or attitudes are necessary for developing personal leadership and self-motivation.

Give your choices time to yield results. Today's habits are the result of choices made long ago. Tomorrow's habits will be the result of the choices you make today.

Encouraging Other People

Encouraging other people is the key to increasing productivity to achieve the goals of your business. A well-planned, continuous training program is one of the most effective ways to motivate and empower team members and to achieve improved results through their activities.

Whether you call it orientation, development, or training, a comprehensive program for helping people use more of their potential to do their best on their jobs is vital to their success, to the success of the business, and ultimately to your success as a leader.

As those you lead develop new skills and talents, and as new people come into your group, consider reassigning some duties so that workers can always use their best skills. When those you lead learn new skills and new procedures, they are worth more to you and to the organization. It's a positive result all the way around.

Table of Contents

Lead by Your Example

While no two leaders possess exactly the same personality or leadership style, effective leaders generally demonstrate similar characteristics. They frequently exhibit a contagious enthusiasm for life, a genuine concern for others, an enhanced clarity of purpose, and a firm commitment to the achievement of worthwhile, predetermined goals. The magnetic force of effective leadership is a tool which draws on the ability to arouse in followers a desire to be *like* the leader—or to possess some of the admirable qualities and personality traits seen *in* the leader.

Effective leaders bring out the best in their team members. To do so, they employ leadership traits which can be divided into three major areas: attitudes, behavior, and people skills.

Effective leaders build a diverse group of people into a smoothly functioning team. Sometimes the people in an organization all work hard, believe in the purpose of the organization and are loyal, but the organization fails to achieve its goals. Team members may all possess a similar vision of the organization's ultimate goal, but they move along different paths in working toward its achievement. The people involved are not working as a team. Teamwork emphasizes improved interpersonal relationships; it makes use of the participation of the team members in planning and in carrying out actions in a partnership for success.

To help the people work as a winning team, effective leaders are like quarterbacks who call the plays, while each team member fulfills an assigned role. If the quarterback's only direction is to urge the players to score on this play, efforts are uncoordinated. Confused players are quite likely to decide to execute different plays, and the team never scores. But when each one fulfills a specific, assigned role, the organization functions as a team and the goal is reached.

Effective leaders help each team player receive the proper assignment, ensure the team member knows how to execute the task, and are committed to producing measurable and appropriate results. Consequently, effective leaders hold each team member accountable and provides feedback to support continued success.

The demand for effective leaders is heard throughout the business world, and the rewards are unlimited. Effective leaders often have the ability to make decisions, to set goals, and to achieve a level of success far above the average. But achievement through leadership is always based on sound planning and persistent effort in addition to knowledge and skills. The development of those skills and the cultivation of the knowledge and attitudes required to use them is the basis for becoming an effective leader.

Perform and Produce for Maximum Success

In almost every workplace, the terms "production" and "performance" are heard. In some situations, performance and production may mean the same thing. But in most cases, a vast difference exists between the two. *Production* deals with what, and *performance* deals with how. *Production* focuses on the output of an organization, and *performance* deals with how the organization is productive.

Both production and performance are essential terms to understand. You cannot adequately measure team performance or individual efficiency without them. Without adequate measurement, there is neither an easy way nor a sure way to tell if the organization is continuing to grow and move forward. That is why understanding these terms is vitally important to organizational success.

Measuring Your Productivity

Productivity is output divided by input. For example, if a team's output brings to the organization twice the revenue required to produce it, the team might be considered highly productive. Of course, if an organization expected a 10:1 return on its input investment, merely doubling that investment might seem hardly worthwhile.

Performance measurements are highly dependent on the work environment and the previous experience of the organization. If a team or organization sees mediocre productivity as the norm, peak productivity might be more of a surprise than anything else. Conversely, if the team is known throughout the organization for high productivity, anything less than that standard of excellence might raise eyebrows among members of the leadership group.

Additionally, performance standards vary depending on the nature of the organization's business. For example, if the company generates revenue by delivering a service, the measure of performance is far more important than the measure of productivity. If the company delivers a product, on the other hand, productivity is probably more important than performance.

Leaders and managers recognize two primary methods of measuring performance: team performance and individual performance. Team performance involves a calculation of revenue earned, divided by the number of team members. High team performance involves a balancing act between managing costs and increasing output.

While team performance is a valuable measuring tool, each team member is still responsible for a portion of the organization's monthly revenue. For that reason, most organizations attempt to measure individual performance as well. While team performance is often easily calculated, team member performance may be more difficult to judge because it requires a more subjective rating: capacity times commitment. Capacity is a measurement of capability, rated on a scale of 1 to 10, with 5 as the average. Capabilities include intelligence and experience. Commitment, on the other hand, is made up of an attitude, motivation, and initiative. All these factors focus on the ability to generate action and produce something for the team and the organization.

Measuring individual performance with the formula, capacity times commitment, means that a team member with a low capacity and high commitment can still perform well. However, a team member with high capacity and low commitment may not necessarily be a model of peak performance.

You Can Do It Attitude

Think of your own innate potential for making a contribution to the organization. On a scale of 1 to 10, where would you rank yourself on the use of your potential? If you increase the percentage of your potential that you actually use by just 10 percent, you may find that you can improve results by 50 to 100 percent. This is known as the multiplier effect –adding to the percentage of your potential you normally use will multiply your productivity and enhance your performance.

Leaders and organizations understand that increased usage of individual potential also increases the productivity of the organization. The challenge is to effectively utilize team member potential.

This is because increasing the utilization of team member potential is something only team members can do; the organization can only encourage the effort. Team members who have learned to use more of their innate potential are referred to as self-motivated.

Each of us is filled with abundant potential. But it is somehow easier to see the abundance in the world around us than recognize the abundance of potential within ourselves. In fact, most people barely scratch the surface of the talents, abilities, and powers that lie within them. The need for continuous improvement is why it is so important for you and your team members to rise to a new level of excellence.

Train Your Team to Excel In All They Do

Maintaining a motivational climate sets the scene for maximizing the talents and abilities of the individuals who compose the organization. People who are motivated, who maintain a positive attitude toward the organization and their role in it, and who are enthusiastic about their work look for opportunities to grow and develop. They want to grow in personal effectiveness, in career standing, and in job productivity. The most effective impact a leader can make on the "bottom line" – the place where all productive effort must eventually be evaluated – comes through helping team members develop and utilize more of their full potential.

People grow personally and gain in productivity in a climate conducive to personal and professional development. Growth is further accelerated in a work environment that offers the freedom to try new ideas, to fail and try again, and to learn from experience. Individual team member results are maximized through intelligent supportive leadership.

Discovering everyone's best qualities can be a complicated process. Talents and abilities are sometimes unrecognized even by one who possesses them. Develop a variety of techniques for discovering individual strengths:

Tests. Some qualities can be measured by tests, but others can be discovered only in practice. For example, a test can show whether prospective administrative assistants can spell, but not whether they will be at work on time every day. A performance test can show whether machinists can correctly set up and operate a drill press, but not whether they will consistently remember to wear safety glasses. It is fairly easy to test objective knowledge and skills, but much more difficult to test such intangibles as attitudes, judgment, and motivation. Tests are valuable in identifying individuals with the foundation or training needed as a starting place for development of the special skills required by the organization. Tests, however, must be clearly designed to produce specific information, and they must be given and interpreted by a qualified administrator.

Interview. An employment interview is just the first of many possible interviews. Asking questions about job experience is an excellent tool for discovering what a person does best and enjoys most, as well as what new skills that individual might be able to learn. Periodic performance reviews are excellent opportunities for finding out more about people, inquiring about their desire for advancement, and hearing their ideas. Reviews indicate the direction of the team member's personal development. Informed, perceptive listening is the key to learning about people. Interviews may range from a few odd minutes standing in the hallway to a structured meeting discussing a current project.

Observation. The most accurate tool for discovering the true qualities of people is observation. Watch what people choose to do first, which items are always completed on time, and which ones are always late. Notice what causes one person's eyes to light up with interest while others groan audibly. See what people do with pride and care, and notice which projects are thrown hurriedly together. Observe personal interactions to identify natural leaders. Using each person's leadership potential may call for some reorganization. It may demand reshuffling duties, areas of authority, and accountability. Some individuals will initially dislike the changes that trickle throughout the organizational structure when such realignment takes place, but the final result is profit – profit through more productive people, through systems that operate more smoothly, and through bottom-line impact.

Training for Growth and Renewal

Even though a team member has been selected and initial orientation provided, the task of training has just begun. People – like their attitudes, skills, and interests – are never static. They either grow and develop or stagnate and deteriorate. A person who is productive today will be producing substandard work five years from now unless regular and continuous learning takes place. This is true for people at every level of the organization.

A systematic training program brings several benefits to the organization. Well-trained, knowledgeable people are always available for needed tasks. Morale remains high because people know they are appreciated and considered valuable to the organization. And, individuals become more productive – personally and as a group.

Managing Your Time Well for Success

Your success as an effective team leader and coach requires a wide range of skills, but one of the most important is how you manage your time. The effectiveness of the activities in each hour of the day – not the number of hours you work – determines the results you and your work group accomplish.

Study Your Time Use

Becoming more aware of the need for more effective time management is the first step toward maximizing time use. Develop creative ideas that fit your own job situation. These basic strategies can benefit everyone:

◆ Control accessibility to you. When you have important work to do, close your office door to discourage interruptions. The "open door" concept means only that people should be able to get your help – to "open your door" – when necessary. But an office door standing open invites people to stop and chat for a moment. If it is closed, they assume you are busy and think no more about it. Many leaders work in modular work stations or other open areas, so a closed door is not possible. Find a system that works in your situation to set boundaries yet provide reasonable accessibility. An additional technique is to simply tell people the times you prefer to be available to them and the times you prefer to spend on other work.

◆ Make "appointments" with yourself for completing your work. Block off appropriate time periods on your calendar and consider them "appointments" to do important work. Protect this time just as you would a meeting with the person you report to or an appointment with an important client. Callers may be told that you are not available but will return their calls after a certain time.

◆ Control interruptions caused by telephone, e-mail, and fax. If you have a receptionist or assistant who answers your telephone, ask this person to hold your calls and give your messages to you all at one time. Reserve a particular time during the morning and again during the afternoon to return all telephone calls. If you have a person to answer your telephone, teach this individual how to recognize important calls that should be put through immediately and how to handle other callers politely and still protect your time. If you answer your own line, do not let it control you. Allow your voice mail or answering machine to pick up if you are in the middle of focused work; you can return the calls when you come to a more convenient stopping point. Using e-mail or faxes may also minimize time spent on the telephone. Avoid the temptation to respond to e-mail, faxes, or voice mail as soon as you know about them. Your telephone, faxes, and e-mail are tools to help you reach your business goals; use them to your advantage.

◆ Keep the time required for meetings to a minimum. Consider using a meeting planner for the best use of time spent in meetings. For each meeting, send out information on the agenda ahead of time so people will come prepared. Invite only those who actually need to be present to achieve the purpose of the meeting. Send others a copy of the minutes or a memo and do not waste their time by asking them to attend. Start meetings on time, and stop them on time. If more time is needed on important issues, set a date for another meeting. Ignore late arrivals as much as possible, and keep the meeting progressing. When attending meetings run by others, be sure to know the agenda in advance so you are prepared to contribute appropriately.

◆ Focus conversations on actions and results. While friendliness is important, there is wisdom in keeping conversations short. Focus on actions, not on philosophizing and socializing. Self-control in conversations prevents counterproductive excuse making, self-pity, gossip, "paralysis of analysis," or criticism. There is power in being brief.

◆ Cut out unnecessary paperwork and e-mail. Make memos, letters, and e-mail concise, to the point, and clear. Use written methods of communication only when a written record is needed or whenever you consider them the most effective method to communicate in a particular situation. Handle paper flow efficiently. Set a goal to handle each piece of paper only once. If you have an assistant, dictate or write an answer, attach a note on how to handle it, send it to the file, or read and discard it. Place items that relate to specific projects, meetings, or later events in an appropriate follow-up file so they will be at hand when needed.

◆ Learn and use the principles of behavior modification: • Identify a behavior you want to adopt. • Make a personal commitment to develop it. • Plan small actions to practice using the new behavior. • Choose ways to reward your success. • Check progress regularly.

Seek the Motivation from Within to Succeed

People in leadership positions often speak of the need to "motivate" people, meaning that you do something to get them to work harder. In one sense, no one ever "motivates" anyone else. Real motivation is internal; it comes only from within. But with a better understanding of the principles of human motivation – the desires and situations that move people to action – you, as a team leader, can create a climate that encourages the development of motivation and maximizes individual and team performance.

Self-motivation does not develop in a vacuum; rather, it is generated in the context of a comprehensive, continuous training and development program. When your team members experience the exhilaration of improving their skills and abilities, their self-motivation increases. In turn, they desire to grow and develop as individuals. A comprehensive training and development program is the foundation for improving the self-motivation, and thus the overall productivity of your organization.

An "exchange system" – the mutual giving and receiving of effort and benefit – supports a climate for maximum motivation. The exchange system establishes a relationship in which each contributes something to satisfy the needs of the other. The organization's requirements for effort and productivity are met by team leaders and team members. In turn, the needs of team leaders and members are met by the organization. This fair exchange between an organization and all its people is as old as organized society.

When you and your team members develop success attitudes to both improve on-the-job performance and increase work satisfaction, you are using the exchange system at its best. People act to gain a benefit or to avoid a loss. Because understanding and insight precede change, talk to your team members and listen to them to find out their needs and ambitions. Understanding what benefits they seek to gain and what losses they desire to avoid enables you to improve on-the-job performance and increase work satisfaction even more.

Making a Plan for Motivation

If 20 people report to you, you need 20 motivation plans. Since motivation depends on individual needs and is developed internally, any effort you make to encourage the development of motivation must be done on an individual basis.

How well do you know the people you count on to get your work done? Could you read the list of names and say with certainty what each person needs to be better satisfied on the job? Resist the temptation to say, "They all want a raise." Of course, not one in a thousand would turn down a raise, but some employees might be less satisfied after the raise – not better satisfied. To be self-motivated, people must feel worthwhile and productive. A raise is not a motivator when it is awarded merely because the employee has managed to stay on the payroll for another year. Such a raise is seen as a function of the passing of time – not as an indication of individual merit. Use some of these techniques to encourage the development of self-motivation in employees who have a need to feel productive:

◆ Delegate a task, stating clearly your confidence that the individual can successfully accept this new responsibility.

◆ Take note of some action demonstrating initiative and express your appreciation for that action.

◆ Find ways to let the rest of the organization know who is doing a good job; post the name and/or picture of the person on a departmental bulletin board or print an accolade in the monthly newsletter.

◆ Make it a point to speak personally to those who have been absent as a result of illness or vacation. Tell them how glad you are to see them back and how their presence contributes value to you, the client, and the organization.

◆ Ask team members for their suggestions about how to solve problems that arise. Even though you cannot use all suggestions, you communicate respect when you ask for suggestions and seriously consider them.

◆ Learn about the families of your team members. Compliment them on the achievements of their children when you see reports in the newspaper, or inquire about the health of a family member who has been ill.

◆ Use visual reminders to build pride and cooperation among the members of the team. For example, if you are in sales, hang a poster that tells how many days the team has met or exceeded the sales quota. Update the graphic daily. Whatever the goal of the team is, a way to track progress can be devised which will encourage the development of self-motivation.
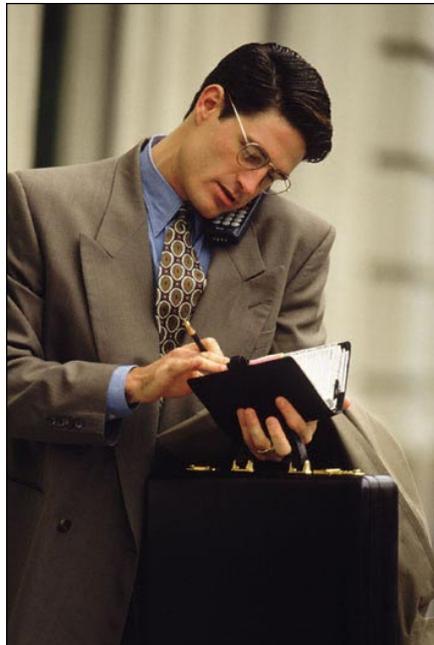
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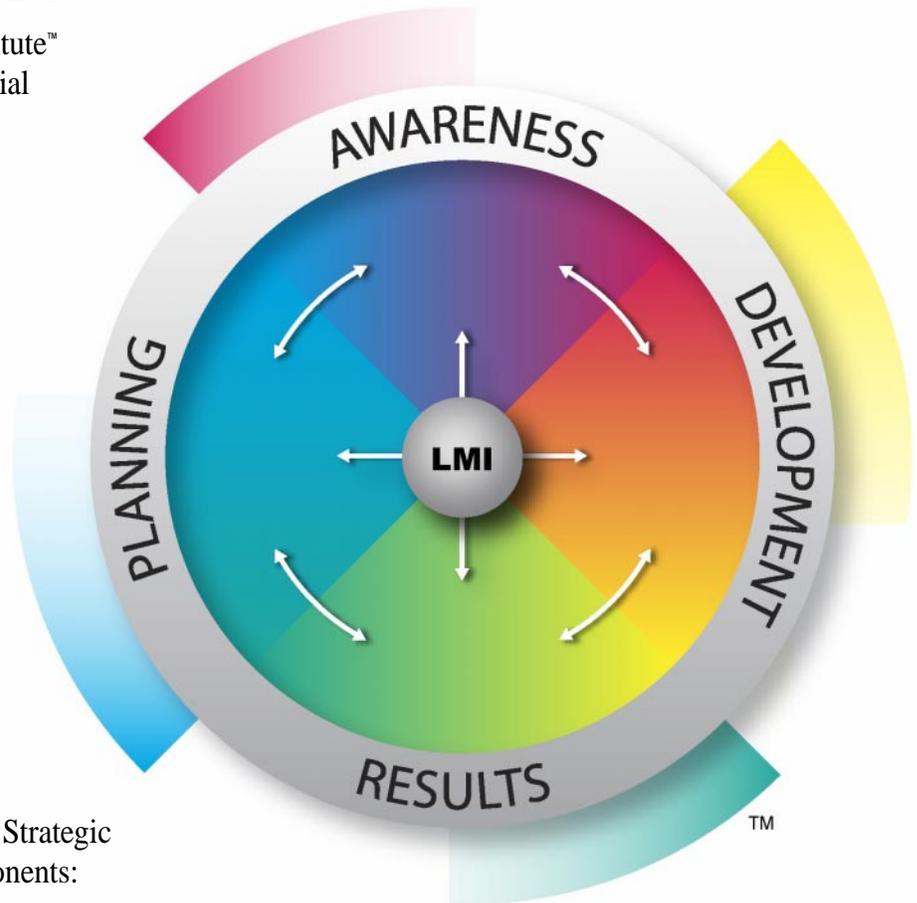
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