

Role of Employee Empowerment in Organizational Development

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Abstract

Employee empowerment is a management strategy that aims to give **employees** the tools and resources necessary to make confident decisions in the workplace without supervision. **Empowerment** is a long-term, resource-intensive strategy that involves significant time and financial investment from the organization's leaders. This paper attempts to define empowerment, importance and its impact on employees in the organisation.

Key Words: Job Enlargement, Job enrichment, Training, strategies, etc.

Introduction

People talk about employee empowerment in many different ways, but the basic theme remains: give your employees the means for making important decisions, and making those decisions the right ones.

The results, when this process is done right, are heightened productivity and a better quality of work life.

Employee empowerment means different things in different organizations, based on culture and work design. However, empowerment is based on the concepts of job enlargement and job enrichment.

Job enlargement: Changing the scope of the job to include a greater portion of the horizontal process. **Example:** A bank teller not only handles deposits and disbursement, but also distributes traveler's checks and sells certificates of deposit.

Job enrichment: Increasing the depth of the job to include responsibilities that have traditionally been carried out at higher levels of the organization. **Example:** The teller also has the authority to help a client fill out a loan application, and to determine whether or not to approve the loan.

As these examples show, employee empowerment requires:

1. Training in the skills necessary to carry out the additional responsibilities.
2. Access to information on which decisions can be made.
3. Initiative and confidence on the part of the employee to take on greater responsibility.

Employee empowerment also means giving up some of the power traditionally held by management, which means managers also must take on new roles, knowledge and responsibilities.

It does not mean that management relinquishes all authority, totally delegates decision-making and allows operations to run without accountability. It requires a significant investment of time and effort to develop mutual trust, assess and add to individuals' capabilities and develop clear agreements about roles, responsibilities, risk taking and boundaries.

Objectives of the Study

1. To know the importance of Employee Empowerment.
2. To understand various strategies which should be used for employee empowerment.
3. To study various steps to empower employees.

What does an empowered organizational structure look like?

Employee empowerment often also calls for restructuring the organization to reduce levels of the hierarchy or to provide a more customer – and process–focused organization.

Employee empowerment is often viewed as an inverted triangle of organizational power. In the traditional view, management is at the top while customers are on the bottom; in an empowered environment, customers are at the top while management is in a support role at the bottom.

Empowerment has become necessary due to the following reasons:

1. Time to respond has become much shorter.
2. First-line employees must make many decisions.
3. An employee feels much more control in their life since authority is given to individual decision-making.
4. There is great untapped potential among employees, which can be revealed through empowerment.
5. The investment in employees can improve productivity, which can reduce the costs.
6. Individual employees experience a feeling of self-esteem, self-efficacy and self-confidence
7. Employee empowerment also helps in making employees more self-reliant.
8. It allows independent decision-making by the employees.
9. Empowerment of employees helps a firm to assign different projects to hone the competence of employees
10. More freedom given to employees can be utilized for taking judicious decisions.

11. Assigning proper authority can improve the organizational effectiveness.
12. Independent decision-making can improve self-confidence among the employees.
13. It can boost up the morale of the employees.
14. The overall efficiency of an organization can be multiplied due to empowerment of the employees.

Strategies that should be used in Employee Empowerment

Employee empowerment is a means by which individuals are given the authority to analyze situations autonomously and take proactive decisions. This instills a sense of ownership towards the company in the employees. This attitude of the employees can go a long way in driving the business forward. I have identified six means of empowering employees in a workplace. Let's take a brief look at them.

1. Providing the necessary skills to do the job: Employees can't do the assigned tasks if they don't have the necessary skills to do it. It is important for an organization to assess the gaps between the current and required skills. Training must be provided to the employees to bridge the skills gap. Therefore, if you want an empowered workforce, employees need to be trained in the right skills.

2. Granting sufficient authority: The second method of empowering employees is to provide them adequate authority to decide on how to complete their tasks. They need to be given the authority to complete the task in any manner they choose to accomplish; as long as it confirms to the broad guidelines set by the organization. Others in the organization should be aware that they have not only the responsibility but also the authority to complete the chosen tasks.

3. Articulating the vision of individuals' job: It is important that employees have a clear idea about the outcome and where their task fits in the overall scheme of things. It empowers them with a broader perspective of the organization's overall mission, vision, goals and strategic plans.

4. Providing adequate information and resources: Employees have access to all the information they require to make decisions. Therefore supplying information and allocating the required resources empower the employees to perform better in their job.

5. Building employees' confidence: According to the expectancy theory, if employees believe that they can achieve a certain result, they are more likely to be successful in doing the same. The various ways to boost employees' confidence include:

- Providing growth opportunities to the employees by giving them more challenging tasks. This demonstrates that you value your employees and their personal development.
- Exhibiting greater trust and support in the employees' ability to accomplish a work assignment.
- Encouraging cross-learning so that employees benefit from each other's skills and knowledge.
- Acknowledging and rewarding the employees for their accomplishments.

6. Guiding with positive feedback: Providing positive feedback about the tasks done and guiding employees about best practices gives encouragement to the employees. It also helps employees to stay on the right track and develop professionally.

Steps to Empower Employees

- Identify the reasons of empowerment: Upper management starts the empowerment process. They must identify the reasons and benefit to relinquish authority and decision making power to lower levels of the organization.
- Choose employees to empower: Employees must want to be empowered. Some employees are unwilling to accept additional responsibilities and decision-making power regardless of potential rewards. They need skills to make correct decisions and accomplish additional responsibilities.
- Provide role information: The management must be define the role and assigns responsibilities, authority, and decision making power to meet company and department goals and also define boundaries to clarify decisions employees will and will not make. Also, specify performance criteria and rewards for outstanding achievement.
- Share company information: the management share the information relating to organization issues. Explain company vision and values, clarify priorities, share some sensitive information, list facts people have and need, share good and bad information, and view mistakes positively and teach decision-making and problem-solving skills it help people to understand the need for change.
- Provide training to employees: Teach them the basics of cost and revenue. Open financial books and inform employees of the situation so they can feel more related to the company. Let employees decide how to handle clients, and give them discretionary power when deciding what to spend in order to mend a certain problem.

- Inspire individual initiatives: An inspired employee is a highly productive resource to a company and department. Management should take initiation to motivate the employees through rewards.

Conclusion

Employee empowerment is a philosophy associated with real benefits for an organization. Its underlying principle of giving employees the freedom, flexibility, and power to make decisions and solve problems leaves an employee feeling energized, capable, and determined to make the organization successful. As a result of these management practices, quality of work increases, employee satisfaction increases, collaboration increases, employee productivity rises, and organizational costs decrease. All of these benefits enable an organization to achieve a competitive advantage and to bolster its bottom line.

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