

Employee Empowerment in Different Sector

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Abstract

Employee empowerment starts with the concept of strategic fit between people, tasks, technology, information processes, rewards and organization structure for which all must be in alignment before the organization can work efficiently. Employees with strong organizational commitment are emotionally attached to the organization and have strong desire to contribute significantly towards organizational success. This leads to increased competitiveness, accountability, risk taking, highly innovativeness, low wastage, and the desire to improve overall job performance. Moreover, increased individual commitment and commitment to work groups or teams improves team performance, interpersonal interaction, and enhances individual performance and degree of satisfaction. Empowerment thus inspires change and increases the level of workplace commitment which increases the degree of individual employee commitment and helping for achievement of organizational goal.

What is Employee Empowerment?

Employee empowerment as the name implies, involves giving powers to employees. It enables employees to set their own goals and to solve work related problems by themselves which are within their purview and authority and finally to make decisions autonomously. By empowering employees, a leader does not renounce his/ her own power- instead he/ she shares with others.

The aim of employee empowerment is to increase employee's responsibility, morale and quality of life. It has been observed that when an employee is vested with more authority, he tends to be more productive, confident and loyal.

The three keys to employee empowerment include:

1. Sharing of Information: Sharing all the relevant information with employees in a transparent manner is the first key to employee empowerment. Leaders willing to share information earn the trust and commitment of their employees.

2. Giving Autonomy within Boundaries: Employees should be given autonomy to do their jobs in a manner they deem fit. However, they also should be aware of the boundaries within which they need to function so that organizational interests are not compromised. Once employees are clear about the parameters of autonomy, they can plan the best possible ways

to function in a given situation. Authority installs a sense of responsibility and employees are more likely to act responsibly while doing their tasks.

3. Encouraging Self-Managed Teams: In the past, as a part of the old hierarchy, there were a few employees who took responsibility to solve a problem in an organization. Therefore, these employees had control over the organizational process. Today, employee empowerment necessitates replacement of this old hierarchy by self directed teams wherein the team members are offered greater flexibility in terms of managing projects and resolving issues. Each team consists of a group of employees who share the responsibility for the entire process. They plan and manage the work accordingly from its beginning to the end. As a self-managed team, they share the leadership and take decisions and handle conflicts as a team.

Employee empowerment provides employees adequate resources and opportunities to deliver the best output. With empowerment, it helps them understand stages of group development and the kind of leadership it requires to allow teams to function as desired.

Definition of Employee Empowerment

Employee empowerment is giving employees a certain degree of autonomy and responsibility for decision-making regarding their specific organizational tasks. It allows decisions to be made at the lower levels of an organization where employees have a unique view of the issues and problems facing the organization at a certain level.

Theoretical Approaches to Empowerment

Three theoretical approaches have been used to study empowerment: socio-structural perspective, psychological approach, and the critical perspective. The socio-structural perspective focuses its attention on developing or redesigning organizational policies, practices, and structures to give employees power, authority, and influence over their work. The psychological approach focuses on enhancing and enabling personal effectiveness by helping employees develop their sense of meaning, competency, self-determination, and impact. The critical perspective challenges the notion of employee empowerment and argues that efforts to create empowerment may actually lead to more, albeit less-obvious, controls over employees.

Objectives of the Study

- What are the reasons for understanding employee empowerment?
- To study the top principle followed in employee empowerment.
- Why employee empowerment important in different sector.

Understanding Employee Empowerment

Empowerment of employees is often treated as a by-product of the employee experience that a company provides. But it is high time that companies relook their processes and focus at creating measurable impacts in the field of empowerment to retain their best talent.

As we move ahead in the 21st century, the concept of empowerment—and its subsequent impact have become a vital aspect of the human life cycle. A key motivator in today's age, it often finds a certain degree of lip service when it comes to corporations today 'empowering' individuals and enabling them to be better decision makers. One of the key reason that ensures that both HR professionals and managers end up treating empowerment as another corporate jargon is due to the lack of clarity the word bestows upon those responsible for people management processes.

People discuss and understand employee empowerment in different ways; often contextualizing empowerment to their company culture and business needs. But irrespective of these variations, the basic understanding—and the end in mind—should remain the same: give your employees the means for making important decisions, and work with them to ensure that such 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” writes American Society for Quality. **In the context of evolving employee experience, it states HR can realize the dream by ensuring the fulfillment of the following two categories:**

Job Enlargement: Changing the scope of the job to include a greater portion of the horizontal process.

Job Enrichment: Increasing the depth of the job to include responsibilities that have traditionally been carried out at higher levels of the organization.

Self-sufficiency

In efforts to empower employees, the role of both HR professionals and managers become important to enable employees to take better and more effective decision. The first step towards this is to ensure that employees are self-sufficient. This helps employees become more independent while allowing employers and managers to deal with greater business issues as they know and trust their employee to perform effectively. With the shift in workplace dynamics bringing in more remote workers and employee preferences around concepts like work from home evolving, one finds the need to empower employees growing

as only then can the company ensure that their employees are able to build themselves and take better business decisions. Self-sufficiency in most cases forms the bedrock of most employee empowerment programs and ensuring their effectiveness. This can be done in the following ways

Identify strengths and create meaningful job roles

Technology today has helped the entire workplace to get connected and perform like an integrated unit; with one part of the organization effortlessly communicating with the other. By leveraging such technologies to collect data and identifying strengths of their employees helps managers to understand the core competencies of their employees better. Once a manager identifies a person's strengths, the employee can be given roles and responsibilities that make the best use such strengths. But this also includes the management reshuffling job roles that help employee increase their competency levels. By helping employees chart their own growth journeys, HR professionals and managers alike can determine the next best course of action that can amplify employee contribution. This becomes crucial for the overall empowerment. Giving employees roles that fit their individual strengths leads to efficiency and organizational success.

Streamline Processes and Procedures

When an organization is structured properly, employees know where to turn to for what they need. When a manager sets up policies, procedures, and processes to effectively manage a team, employees don't need to constantly come to the manager since they already know what to do. By creating clear, well defined 'rules of engagement' within the workplace, managers enable their employees to take decisions on their own. It also reduces the chances of error in decision making as clear guidelines are established, helping build trust and confidence in the long run. HR professionals can also integrate such activities in the onboarding learning experience so that every new employee trains to become self-sufficient in their role.

Establish smaller teams and enable access to knowledge resources

Setting up smaller teams helps employee create social bonds among each other and as a result work more focused manner towards one common goal. Managers are usually aware of this and use this option in times of high delivery needs. But what smaller teams also do is to allow employees to support each other and foster independence and self-sufficiency in their way of working. By creating a strong bond with each other, and having the freedom to take collective decisions helps employees to learn and grow more within the organization. Smaller teams provide a good environment for meaningful work.

Building Trust

Building trust, along with enabling self-sufficiency, are vital for empowering individuals within the company. It is for both managers and HR professionals today to trust both their employees and their recruitment and candidate mapping processes so as to not probe each and every action of their employees. An employee is bound to function more effectively if he/she is trusted upon by the managers and leaders alike. Be free in creating a check-in processes but the idea of empowering individual employees also goes hand in hand with the culture of allowing employees to gain an agency over their work by allowing them to learn from their mistakes and enabling them to customize and create their own 'mini' ways of working. One way of doing this is by allowing employees to craft their own jobs.

Building trust from a manager's perspective also involves, at times, taking a step back from the trap of micro-management that managers often fall a prey to. By helping managers to reduce their time spent on micro-management and instead give inputs when really needed by the team, HR professionals help employees to build their talents within their organization. There are, however, exceptions where employees might need a time of support and guidance. But by creating a culture where employees are trained and have access to knowledge resources along with management's trust HR professionals ensure employees become empowered and self-sufficient, capable of taking better decisions and exploring their full capacity to perform in the workplace.

A culture that while promoting self-sufficiency also fosters interdependence and trust within team members is successful in helping the team members grow. Empowerment is often thought of as being able to figure it all out on your own. But rather, in an organizational sense, it means creating the abilities to be able to use your friends, co-workers, and environment continuously and consciously advance your own and common goals together.

Top Principles of Employee Empowerment

These are the ten most important principles for managing people in a way that reinforces employee empowerment, accomplishment, and contribution. These management actions enable both the people who work with you and the people who report to you to soar.

1. Demonstrate

That You Value People Your regard for people shines through in all of your actions and words. Your facial expression, your body language, and your words express what you are thinking about the people who report to you.

Your goal is to demonstrate your appreciation for each person's unique value. No matter how an employee is performing on his or her current task, your value for the employee as a human being should never falter and always be visible.

2. Share Leadership Vision

People feel that they are part of something bigger than themselves and their individual job. Do this by making sure they know and have access to the organization's overall mission, vision, and strategic plans.

Better? Include employees in the actual planning on the product and department level and ask for their input on the overall plan. They will own the direction and surprise you with their commitment and competency.

3. Share Goals and Direction

When possible, involve employees in goal setting and planning. They add value, knowledge, ideas, insight, and experience that you won't find on your senior team. At the very least, involve them in goal setting on the department level and share the most important goals and direction for your group.

With the help of your employees, make progress on goals measurable and observable, or ascertain that you have shared your picture of a positive outcome with the people responsible for accomplishing the results.

If you share a picture and share meaning, you have agreed upon what constitutes a successful and acceptable deliverable. Empowered employees can then chart their course without close supervision.

4. Trust People

Trust the intentions of people to do the right thing, make the right decision, and make choices that, while maybe not exactly what you would decide, still work. When employees receive clear expectations from their manager, they relax and trust you. They focus their energy on accomplishing, not on wondering, worrying, and second-guessing.

5. Provide Information for Decision Making

Make certain that you have given people, or made sure that they have access to, all of the information they need to make thoughtful decisions.

6. Delegate Authority and Impact Opportunities Not Just More Work

Don't just delegate the drudge work; delegate some of the fun stuff, too. You know, delegate the important meetings, the committee memberships that influence product development and decision making, and the projects that people and customers notice.

The employee will grow and develop new skills. Your plate will be less full so you can concentrate on contribution. Your reporting staff will gratefully shine - and so will you.

7. Provide Frequent Feedback

Provide frequent feedback so that people know how they are doing. Sometimes, the purpose of feedback is reward and recognition as well as improvement coaching. People deserve your constructive feedback, too, so they can continue to develop their knowledge and skills.

8. Solve Problems: Don't Pinpoint Problem People

When a problem occurs, ask what is wrong with the work system that caused the people to fail, not what is wrong with the people. Worst case response to problems? Seek to identify and punish the guilty.

9. Listen to Learn and Ask Questions to Provide Guidance

Provide a space in which people will communicate by listening to them and asking them questions. Guide by asking questions, not by telling grown up people what to do. People generally know the right answers if they have the opportunity to produce them.

When an employee brings you a problem to solve, ask, "what do you think you should do to solve this problem?" Or, ask, "what action steps do you recommend?" Employees can demonstrate what they know and grow in the process.

Eventually, you will feel comfortable telling the employee that he or she need not ask you about similar situations. You trust their judgment.

10. Help Employees Feel Rewarded and Recognized for Empowered Behavior

When employees feel under-compensated, under-titled for the responsibilities they take on, under-noticed, under-praised, and under-appreciated, don't expect results from employee empowerment.

The basic needs of employees must feel met for employees to give you their discretionary energy, that extra effort that people voluntarily invest in work. For successful employee empowerment, recognition plays a significant role.

Importance of Employee Empowerment in Organizations

Organizations today understand that in a knowledge-driven economy, speed in taking decisions, efficient methods of functioning and innovative ideas help them gain an edge over competitors. It is with this view point that organizations are adopting a strategy of employee empowerment. **The important factors that drive organizations towards employee empowerment are to:**

Encourage Creativity and Innovation: By empowering their employees, organizations value their contribution. This encourages employees to work towards meeting organizational objectives. They develop creative and innovative ideas that might improve the systems and processes. Employee initiation and creativity helps organizations to innovate and improve their processes.

Increase Productivity: It is true that empowered employees are more productive as they are free to make decisions, act quickly without wasting time and work as a part of self-managed teams. Naturally, a team of empowered employees working collectively are more successful in improving the productivity of the organization.

Align Goals of Employees with those of the Organization: Empowerment provides employees a clearer view of organizational goals and strategies. They understand their role and value the autonomy given to them. Employees are satisfied and display enthusiasm towards their jobs and align their goals with organizational goals.

Help in employee retention: Being part of an organization, where employees are given autonomy in the way they work and function, is fulfilling. It also helps them in developing their skills and knowledge as they need to shoulder increased responsibilities. Employees see value in being part of such an organization and remain loyal towards it.

Organizations need employees who take initiatives and function as partners working towards achieving organizational goals. Employee empowerment is one of the ways for organizations to ensure employee engagement and commitment towards meeting mutual objectives.

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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