

# Achieving Results

A Black Diamond Associates Publication

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## Employee Empowerment

The concept of employee empowerment is an important one in any corporate team environment. To empower is to enable; it allows employees to feel they have some say in the company's direction and purpose, which can make the employee more committed and productive in the long run. Empowerment can mean a variety of things in different contexts, but basically



consists of those activities and practices that help employees feel confident, capable, and in control of the outcome of not only their daily routine, but also of the projects with which they are involved. The delegation of tasks to particular individuals, teaching employees to focus on specific, reachable (if occasionally difficult) goals, keeping in mind the golden rule, and coaching employees regularly are all ways that a manager can effectively empower his or her employees.

The basis of effective employee empowerment is supportive communication. This requires the manager to provide assistance appropriate to the problems faced by the employees, to carry out the assistance competently, and to provide information or express concern in a way that does not embarrass the recipient or cause them to lose face. Treating the employees the way you want to be treated is essential, as is coaching the employees when necessary.

If coaching is important, adequate training is even more so. Employees who lack training in their duties will feel uncertain, at least at first, and this can hamper both empowerment and the productivity that comes with it. One should not mistake education for training; education is a generalized background that prepares an

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A s s o c i a t e s

Employee empowerment is a term that gets tossed around a lot. Most leaders want to have an empowered workforce, yet they often mistake empowerment with dumping (a.k.a. throwing the employee to the wolves) or dictating (micromanaging every step in the process). Effective empowerment is neither.

If creating an environment of effective employee empowerment is important to your strategic objectives, Black Diamond Associates can help. We offer a portfolio of solutions that help organizations develop their talent and processes to achieve desired results.

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*Lead, follow, or get out of the way.*  
– Thomas Paine

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employee for their career. Training prepares an individual for the specialized aspects of a particular task.

Delegation is another key aspect of empowerment. The manager cannot accomplish every task in a project, and to attempt to do so would be a mistake on his or her part. Aside from the inevitable micromanagement issues, symptoms of a team with delegation problems includes team members who lack initiative, asking the manager's permission before they do even the smallest tasks; insufficient time and/or motivation to complete projects within a set timeframe; missed deadlines; work done on nights and weekends; and team members who present problems but never offer any solutions. The manager can cure these problems by taking advantage of the natural talent and experiences of the individuals in their workgroup. After sizing up the team members, the manager should hand off tasks to the appropriate individuals in the group so that the project can be completed on time. Making the individuals responsible for the completion of their tasks within a certain set time will stimulate them to succeed. Delegating still requires that the manager monitor the progress of their team members, but this function can be easily combined with regular coaching.

In a similar vein, a manager should set goals for his or her employees. The goals should be reasonable, although they may be difficult. It would be unreasonable to expect a sculptor to produce ten new statues a week when it takes him two days to craft a single statue. That way lies frustration, poor productivity, and an erosion of the sense of empowerment. The intelligent manager takes the worker's abilities into account; a more reasonable expectation would be five statues every two weeks, and maybe, if the sculptor is incentivized and empowered properly, he can eventually graduate to producing three or four statues per week. If necessary, an action plan should be devised and maintained, specifying exactly what goals must be completed, when they must be completed, and who is completing them.

Successful empowerment also means that employees should be rewarded for meeting goals or otherwise producing successful results. If they put in significant effort and receive no recompense beyond their ordinary salary, that's a signal that their contributions are not appreciated; as a result, they won't try as hard next time. The rewards need not be large; even something as minor as a pat on the back and a few words of praise may be enough for many employees.

*"Tell me and I forget. Teach me and I remember. Involve me and I learn."*

— Benjamin Franklin: statesman, scientist, and writer

## 21st Century Women's Leadership Program

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- Increase the profitability and productivity of the women in your company
- Recognize women leaders within the corporation
- Leverage diversity

The 21st Century Women's Leadership program is offered in a variety of formats. For information contact Mary Owens at 813-654-0748.