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## How To Empower Individual Team Members

Since individual team members have to be empowered for the group to take action, a team leader needs to know how to empower another person.

A team leader can begin by using the 4 Leadership Strategies (S1 - Directing, S2 - Problem Solving, S3 - Developing, S4 - Delegating), as outlined in the --month-- issue of *Process Quality News*. To empower team members, leaders have to:

- Give clear directions and clarify expectations (S1, Directing)
- Delegate meaningful assignments (S4, Delegating)
- Stay in touch with and provide support to team members, helping them make their own decisions (S3, Developing)
- If necessary, be prepared to make timely decisions based on team members' input (S2, Problem Solving)

Not all team members should be treated the same way however. When team members take on new assignments, leaders need to:

- Provide explicit, detailed directions and expectations (S1, Directing)
- Limit the time members have to work alone (S4, Delegating)
- Limit the number of decisions that team members must make (S3, Developing)
- Concentrate on identifying and correcting problems (S2, Problem Solving)

In contrast, when team members handle familiar assignments, leaders need to:

- Provide limited directions that give team members more flexibility in how they achieve the mission (S1, Directing)
- Give team members lots of time to work alone (S4, Delegating)
- Support team members' decision-making responsibilities (S3, Developing)
- Rarely make decisions themselves (S2, Problem Solving)

Unless each team member knows what is expected, analysis won't result in action. If team members can't get the support they need or timely decisions made for them when they get stuck, they are not likely to accomplish their objectives.

## Survey:

**14 companies, noted for their superior customer service, reveal how they train, develop & motivate frontline employees**

- New employees begin with an extensive orientation that involves meetings with senior management to demonstrate their commitment, and visits to various departments to encourage inter-departmental communication.
- Employees receive periodic, on-going training that transcends the traditional problem solving, listening, and inter-personal skills training other companies offer. They might receive training in public speaking, selling, stress management, how to handle specific customer populations or unique situations.
- Employees are empowered to make decisions. They are provided with information, skills, and tools so they can respond knowledgeably to customers' questions.
- Employees are sent to other departments for training to ensure they fully understand the company's philosophy, culture, and operations. This fosters teamwork while providing contacts and resources for helping solve customers' problems.
- Employees are involved in departmental planning processes. This shows their opinions are valued and gives them an opportunity to provide solutions that managers have not considered. It's satisfying and rewarding finding ways to make jobs easier or more productive.
- Some companies use their other front line employees to do some of the training. This lends credibility to the information presented, enriches the employee-trainers' job, & demonstrates their experience is highly valued.
- One company produces a newsletter in which front line employees take turns writing. This provides a welcome break from answering phones and familiarizes everyone in the company of current issues and activities.

## Give Employees Needed Information

*Industry Week* magazine asked several workplace motivation experts about the best ways to motivate workers. Did they suggest higher wages? Big bonuses?

No! Coming in No. 1 was "Give employees the information they need to do a good job."

**THERE IS NO END TO THE QUALITY JOURNEY.** Once a task is done right, the next step is to continuously work on it for further improvement. As you improve, so does your competition.