

## EMPOWERMENT MEANS NEVER SAYING “NO”

To a tremendous extent, a company's prospects for success rest on its empowered employees. Thus it's critically important to ensure that our employees know and trust what empowerment means for our company.

Giving your employees the freedom and power to satisfy the needs and demands of your customers ends up benefitting everyone. Creating happy, empowered and fulfilled employees is the first key step to creating the kind of “over-happy” lifelong customers your company needs.

When you empower your employees to make informed decisions at their individual level of responsibility, experience shows that they will use their talents and skills to maximize your company's opportunities.

*“As we look ahead into the next century, leaders will be those who empower others.” – Bill Gates*

“Empowerment” means that every employee will be required to make rapid decisions in the customer's favor. It's important that we are honest and sincere in our efforts to serve our customers, and the only way we can do so is by empowering our employees to make those customers happy – quickly, and to their complete satisfaction.

In my book, *Empowerment: a Way of Life*, I reveal four important challenges that all businesses face today. They are:

1. **Many executives don't trust the customer.** They believe the customer is trying to take advantage of them – and the employees feel the same way.
2. **We don't trust our employees.** We pay them as little as possible, and we demonstrate no confidence in their ability to make sound decisions. We believe our lying, cheating customers are out to take advantage of our incompetent employees.
3. **When you empower your workforce, you don't need as many managers and supervisors.** The managers might not be enthused about losing their precious power, and maybe they won't be thrilled about the threat of losing their jobs. On the flipside, it's why they'll be extremely motivated to make sure their team members are making great decisions for the customer and the company.
4. **Very few employees are praying for empowerment.** In the present company atmosphere, it's seen as far too risky.

The first rule of superior customer service is “Never Say No.” Those employees who always seem to know how to make good things happen – who always find a way to say “yes” and get things done – are priceless assets for your company. Give your employees the tools and trust to work for the benefit of the customer. Empowerment is NOT about breaking the rules, it's about bending them to keep the customer

happy. It's making fast decisions on the spot in the customer's favor.

**Hyatt Hotels treats each customer differently.** They know their best customers, and they work hard not to charge them more, but to give them more. From the outset, they're eager to randomly cover a bar tab, offer a free massage, and comp services they could otherwise charge for. If they did it in a corporate, by-the-book way, it would feel insincere and would fail. But if they empower their employees to be truly, genuinely generous, it cannot help but succeed.

**Three words that can kill an organization: “Not my job.”** Empowered employee can make a decision on the spot in the customer's favor instead of working their way through a long list of paralyzing rules to figure out what they can do.

**Give your employees the authority to take action!** No one should have to go “higher up” to get permission to help a customer. Empower everyone to break the rules and have input and control over their work. When people call your company with problems, the first employee who answers the phone should be able to resolve the issue to the customer's complete satisfaction.

**What Are You Building?** In a world that's addicted to mediocrity and always racing to the bottom, you'll just lose if you try to join the herd. The best way to win is to start racing to the top by adopting empowerment as a most-valuable tool. When the customer wins, you win.

Understand what your customers value, then figure out how empowerment can improve the quality, speed, and cost of delivering that value. It's a lot cheaper and faster to empower your people to use their best judgment, than to press them into a rule-based mold that strangles their initiative. But empowerment only works if you hire the right people and reward them for having the right attitude.

I've always been passionate about empowerment, and I continue to preach it every chance I get. It's a tool that all successful companies use to deliver exemplary service to everyone who walks through the door.

Your empowered team will drive your business and crush your competition.

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