

EMBOLDENING AN EMPOWERED TEAM

Here's a saying of Lee Iacocca's that I love:
"Lead, follow, or get out of the way."

LEAD

As a former president of Ford Motor Company, Iacocca took over Chrysler when it was tottering toward bankruptcy. He asked Congress for a loan, arguing that if Chrysler filed for bankruptcy the government would end up spending more on unemployment compensation than on keeping the company in business. The loan was granted, and within a year Iacocca announced Chrysler's first profit in many years.

During the Chrysler turnaround, Iacocca brought the convertible back into fashion and introduced the minivan.

By leading with his characteristic style, Iacocca inspired – emboldened – his people with the confidence to behave in a particular way. He steadily encouraged them by letting them know that they faced no opposition. They began to spend time growing, and learning about their ability to turn the company around to make a profit, pay off its debt, and become a member of an *empowered team*.

In 1983 Chrysler paid the government back its \$1.5 billion in loans, and in 1984 it posted profits of \$2.4 billion, more than in the previous sixty years combined. How did he accomplish all of this? *He emboldened his people to be empowered.*

As I travel the world, I am astounded at the lack of Empowerment. This is only surpassed by the mythical beliefs executives hold regarding their own commitment to empowering their employees. It's the one thing they constantly harp on as being important – they don't feel their employees will follow through and take the needed steps to make empowered decisions.

ATTRACT FOLLOWERS

"Become the kind of leader that people would follow voluntarily, even if you had no title or position. Conduct a personal assessment and ask yourself, 'Would I follow me?'" – Brian Tracy

If you've set yourself up as a leader, you need to hire people who aren't afraid to stand out, and who aren't afraid to follow you. Unfortunately, most systems are set up to hire those who merely fit in.

Leaders recognize the need to attract followers. Followership is key to understanding leadership. To follow, people must feel confident in the direction the leader is headed. To generate this level of confidence, the leader must clearly communicate the overall direction and the key outcomes desired.

The definition of "Empower" is to *give power or authority to, or to authorize (embolden)*. In the workplace, empowered employees have the power and authority to make quick, informed, on-the-fly decisions to help a customer, move a project forward, or solve a problem. When you embolden employees who are empowered to do their part in accomplishing the stated objectives, they have the right framework they need to guide their own actions.

GET OUT OF THE WAY AND EMBOLDEN EMPOWERMENT

Good leaders recognize that for their followers to perform most effectively they need to understand the big picture. The good leader also knows that their job is to remove barriers that may have a negative impact on their success – not to micromanage how the employees accomplish their work, but to communicate not just the overall direction, but any information their followers need to carry out their responsibilities.

The employees need to know why the organization is pursuing the current strategies. Mostly, they need the assurance that their leader has confidence in their ability to perform and produce the desired outcomes.

"Leadership is the art of getting someone else to do something you want done because he wants to do it." – General Dwight Eisenhower

Leaders who embolden their empowered people also understand that while money is a motivator, so are praise, recognition, rewards, a thank-you, and noticing individual contributions. Speaking directly to an employee about the value their work provides for the organization is a key source of inspiration for the empowered employee. You can't provide a raise in pay without company profitability, but you absolutely must share the rewards and praise if the organization is doing well.

The actions you take every day at work are powerful beyond your wildest dreams. Make sure your actions are inspirational and will call out the best from your employees.

Embolden your employees to be empowered and...get out of the way.

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