

Empowering Employees at the Workplace

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Abstract

In today's global corporate environment of fast-paced innovation, fierce competition, and diverse inventiveness, employee empowerment is essential. Employee empowerment encourages worker autonomy, boosts worker self-esteem, and allows for universal authority and responsibility sharing. Employee empowerment proposes that treating people with respect, providing them with guidance, assistance, recognizing their contribution and involving them in decision-making process, leads to better and more productive workplace. Employee empowerment is accomplished by raising employees' self-efficacy and reducing decision-making and problem-solving times, all of which are vital to the company's long-term viability. Therefore, it is obvious that granting employees greater power and responsibility within a corporation promotes employee empowerment, a vital element of effective management and organizational performance. The goal of the present paper is to address some of the most significant aspects of employee empowerment and elaborate certain examples of employee empowerment policies and practices of a few world-famous companies.

Key words: Employee empowerment, motivation, autonomy

I. Introduction

Employee empowerment aims to enhance individuals' self-esteem by providing them with the necessary resources, guidance, and opportunities to participate in organizational planning and decision-making processes. Additionally, it recognizes and incentivizes their contributions and achievements. The concept of employee empowerment gained popularity and started to resemble a movement or trend during the 1990s (Abrahamson, 1996, Block, 1987).

The process of empowering workers involves giving them the freedom to decide for themselves and fostering an environment where everyone is accountable for their own job. It permits universal authority and responsibility sharing, fosters worker autonomy, and raises worker self-esteem. An empowering organization places a major emphasis on the idea that each member needs to be involved, have the required knowledge, and have some autonomy in order for the organization to function properly. Employee empowerment is critical in today's global corporate climate characterized by fast-paced innovation, intense rivalry, and different ingenuity. By giving employees more autonomy to increase their sense of self-efficacy and by cutting down on the time required for making decisions and solving problems, it helps firms thrive while making them more efficient and productive. Effective management and organization depend heavily on employee perceptions of empowerment, which rise as authority and control are distributed throughout the company.

(Ergeneli, et al., 2007). According to various authors (for example, Ripley & Ripley, 1992; Spatz, 2000; Gresley, 2005; Moye, et al, 2005; Alves et al, 2020; Ongori & Shunda, 2008, Liden, et. al., 2000; Spreitzer, 1995; Sparrowe, 1994; Spreitzer, et al., 1997, Jung et al, 2021), through employee empowerment, an organization may be benefitted with regard to the following aspects (Ripley and Ripley, 1992; Spatz, 2000):

- Reduced absenteeism, tardiness, and turnover rates among staff members;
- Increased employee commitment, trust, and loyalty, which fosters a more cohesive work environment;
- Increased employee motivation, which produces a more proactive, productive, accountable, and responsible workforce;
- Increased employee participation with more transparent feedback provision;

- Increased initiatives towards creativity and innovation, which boosts long-term sustainability and competitiveness

II. Literature review

Several scholars, advisors, and professionals in the field of management have examined, assessed, and investigated the concept of employee empowerment. A few theoretical aspects of employee empowerment are explained in this section.

II.a. Employee Empowerment – the definition

Employee empowerment provides employees the freedom to decide for themselves and the confidence to take the initiative (Wong, 2023). Employee empowerment entails giving front-line employees access to information about the organization's performance, specifics about performance-based rewards, knowledge that promotes comprehension and enhances organizational performance, and the power to make decisions that impact the organization's performance and direction (Bowen and Lawler, 1992). As it boosts their motivation, empowerment is defined by Thomas and Velthouse (1990) as assigning lower-level personnel greater responsibility. Spreitzer (1995) identified four cognitions that can be used to measure an individual's internal task drive: meaning, competence, self-determination, and influence. These ideas show how a person feels about their line of employment. Employee empowerment, according to Smith and Mouly (1998), is the process of granting employees the power to decide swiftly and correctly. Brymer (1991) defined employee empowerment as the process through which managers give front-line employees in a corporation more authority and sway. The process of boosting members of the organization's sense of self-efficacy by determining the root causes of helplessness and removing them through both official organizational procedures and informal channels of effective information dissemination is known as employee empowerment, according to Conger and Kanungo (1988).

II.b. Elements of employee empowerment

Employee empowerment consists of three elements (Fracard, 2006):

1. **Style:** Empowered workers run their own businesses and demonstrate cooperation. Employees are accountable and liable for the decisions they make at work.
2. **Skills:** Trained in communication and problem-solving methods, empowered staff members possess these abilities. They highlight problems and criticize inefficient policies.
3. **Staff:** Organizations that enable their people also enable their employees. When enabling leaders, an empowered culture, and empowering management techniques function as the catalysts, employee progress is expected.

Three essential elements for empowering include (Beth, 2012)

Clarity: Defining goals and expectations is the first step. Without a clear idea of the desired results, people are unable to progress in their jobs. A manager's role shifts from closely supervising staff to holding them accountable for results when they are granted more authority. Managers should set clear policies and have regular meetings to go over them to make sure everyone knows what their obligations are.

Support. Empowering someone is to support them by removing any obstacles and providing them with the resources they need to succeed. Managers empower their employees by attending to their requirements. This means that in addition to giving people the time, resources, and motivation they need to reach their goals, proactive steps to remove roadblocks to success must also be made.

Autonomy. Helping someone is eventually allowing them the freedom they require to finish their task. The finest thing a manager can do is assign authority once staff members understand their roles and have the resources, they need to fulfil them. Trusting staff to do duties as they see appropriate is essential to maintaining a healthy work environment.

II.c. Types of employee empowerment

Employee empowerment may be of three types (Suominen, et al., 2005):

1. Verbal Empowerment: The first concept relates to the freedom to voice one's opinions. For linguistic empowerment to occur, decision-making must be engaged.
2. Behavioral Empowerment: This refers to the ability to work in a group setting with others to identify problems and suggest solutions.
3. Outcome Empowerment: This type of empowerment requires the capacity to identify and address the root causes of issues as well as to enhance and modify work practices in order to boost organizational efficacy.

II. d. Factors affecting Degree of Empowerment

There are several moderating elements that can impact the effectiveness of employee empowerment initiatives inside an organization. They are as follows (Spreitzer, 1996, Hamed, 2010):

Role ambiguity: Companies need to be clear about what is expected of their employees in order to avoid miscommunications and dissatisfaction when tasks are not performed.

Span of control: Since managers, like the preceding group, regulate a lot of their conduct at work, employees under managers with little power are not as naturally driven as employees under managers with considerable authority.

Social Support: A person's family and their participation in the organization are two of their main sources of support. This strengthens one's perception of personal authority and makes it easier to communicate socially with significant organizational stakeholders. Increased sentiments of influence and autonomy are a reflection of this.

Access to information: Work planning, productivity, competitive analysis, firm strategy, and other areas suffer from deficiencies in organizational resources (cash, labor, raw materials, workers, equipment, space, time, and labor) and information. These deficiencies lead to dependence and helplessness.

Participative Environment: Individual initiative and participation will be appreciated more highly in a participatory organizational context than boss control and instructions from an authoritarian leader.

II.e. Benefits of employee empowerment

Busara (2016) enumerates the following significant benefits of employee empowerment for businesses:

1. Empowered employees perceive themselves as significant contributors for the success of the organization. The employees are the real owners of the business activities. The employees demonstrate a high level of commitment to achieving the company's goals. Any changes that take place inside an organization are to be implemented by its employees. The implementation of organizational transformation is facilitated by employee empowerment.
2. Giving staff members additional responsibility encourages a feeling of unity and belonging inside the organization. An organization's empowerment approach satisfies acceptability and ownership, two basic human needs (Greasley et al., 2005).
3. According to Moye et al. (2005), empowered people actively participate in creating their own futures and find fulfilment and joy in their job.
4. Organizational structures with fewer levels of administration facilitate improved communication and quicker decision-making.
5. Higher management should concentrate more on strategic matters and establish a structure for allocating everyday activities.
6. Provides an environment that is favorable to the application of modern management strategies, such as Total Quality Management (Ongori and Shunda, 2008).
7. To increase staff loyalty and decrease turnover, sick leave, and absenteeism (Ripley and Ripley, 1992; Spatz, 2000).
8. It gives employees motivation, which enables them to operate more productively.

II. f. Guideline for employee empowerment

Following are the major steps towards employee empowerment (Hamed, 2010, <http://www.GrowingGreatness.com>):

1. *Employees in decision-making* – If workers fail to perceive that they make tangible contribution to the organization's performance, they become less motivated. It negatively affects customer relationship and customer retention. Companies can empower staff members by incorporating them in choices that directly affect the company. For instance, if the business decides to bring flexi-work schedule, staff members might be able to voice their opinions and provide recommendations for a more feasible schedule.

2. *Employees and their role in empowerment* – Effective employee empowerment is largely dependent on the process of carefully selecting which individuals to empower. Employees ought to aim for more power. Some workers refuse to take on more accountability or decision-making power, even when there are possible advantages. To do extra work and make informed decisions, they require specific talents. Meeting departmental and organizational goals also requires top management to clearly define staff positions and give authority, decision-making power, and duties.

3. *Share organization information* - Businesses should help employees adopt a positive mindset, communicate both positive and negative information, explain the organization's mission and core values, set priorities, and hone their decision-making and problem-solving skills, according to Blanchard et al. (1999). The opportunity for employees to actively engage in the planning process would increase transparency regarding the management's expectations of them.

4. *Inspire individual initiatives* - Businesses should support employees in creating a culture of ownership, helping people to become self-disciplined, setting clear expectations and goals, and maintaining a positive work environment (Fracard, 2006). Establishing communication channels that facilitate constructive criticism, encouragement, and staff member recognition is imperative for management to foster employee empowerment, instil a sense of competence and confidence, encourage measured risk-taking, and acknowledge minor yet noteworthy achievements.

5. *Provide continual training and support* – As a company expands, job titles and responsibilities may alter, making it impossible for employees to take on newly assigned duties. Training must therefore be a continuous endeavor. Generally speaking, it's a good idea to grant requests for help and support with training and development made by employees. In an atmosphere that promotes worker autonomy, individuals may be inspired to embrace the need for training without reservation.

The process of Employees' Empowerment have several steps (Busara, 2016):

1. Get authority. The empowering process is initiated by higher management. They have to be prepared to cede control of the organization's leadership and decision-making authority to other members.

2. Choose which staff members should have increased authority. Employees ought to aim for more power. Even when presented with possible advantages, some workers are unwilling to take on more accountability and decision-making authority. To make more judgments and complete more activities, they require specialized talents.

3. Go into great depth about the roles. To achieve departmental and organizational goals, upper management delegated authority, decision-making power, and tasks to individual employees. In order to provide clarity, it also establishes boundaries.

4. Share organization information- Blanchard et al. (1999) state that companies must assist employees in communicating information that is accurate as well as inaccurate, identify when adjustments are necessary, and have a positive outlook on their errors. Develop your decision-making and problem-solving skills, explain the company's mission and core values, and set priorities. 5. Education of employees: Fracard (2006) makes the case that businesses ought to provide onboarding training. Even seasoned and knowledgeable current employees need to be trained. Continuous training should be used consistently because it is vital to a company's success.

6. Inspire individual initiatives - An engaged employee is a great asset to the business and division. Companies should cultivate a supportive environment that includes coaching, openness to challenges, and tolerance for failure. Additionally, they should establish clear expectations and standards, promote self-discipline, and reinforce the notion that each individual has a sense of ownership by dividing work into smaller performance units and assigning tasks to decentralized teams. (Fracard, 2006).

III. Empowering employees: putting into practice

This section highlights a number of initiatives taken by globally reputed MNCs towards employee empowerment policies and practices.

III.a. Employee empowerment through social media in Unilever

Workforce to Use The principles of Unilever, a multinational consumer goods corporation, guide its operations. It is especially crucial to identify talent among current employees who share the company's vision, given its purpose-driven culture. Employees are encouraged to use social media and are empowered to take on the role of firm brand ambassadors. Using their networks, they disseminate content about Unilever via blogs, thought leadership pieces, and even business news. LinkedIn Elevate has being utilized as a platform for the same reason.

One of the keys to Unilever's success is their strategy of always giving employees new information and reminding them of the value of sharing. Elevate data gives them a thorough understanding of the information that appeals to workers and their networks, which forms the basis of their content strategy. By using Elevate platform, employees manage the data better in regard to reputation measurements like profile views and connection requests. This ensures that the information they receive is pertinent to them. Elevate is enhanced with new features every month to provide employees who want to show off their Unilever with an improved product and user experience (<https://business.linkedin.com/content/dam/me/business/en-us/elevate/Customer/case-study/LIUnileverCaseStudy.pdf>)

III.b. Ownership with responsibility at Whole Foods

Whole Foods is a nation-wide chain of gourmet organic and natural-food stores, which promotes empowerment among employees through the concepts of ownership, autonomy, diversity and teamwork. The key to the success of Whole Foods is its empowered, motivated, and entrepreneurial employees.

The first step to enabling people to think and act like Whole Foods owners with freedom. Each store operates independently, attending to the demands of its local clientele, purchasing goods from nearby suppliers, and monitoring its own profit margin. The ten or so separate teams that make up a store's organizational structure are those for produce, groceries, cheese, prepared meals, and so on. The team hierarchy then goes up: the six regional presidents of the corporation are a team at the top of the apple cart, followed by the team leaders of each store, each region, and each store. The concept of such small teams acts as a powerful tool for creating peer pressure to remain loyal to the team members and archive target. Full-time employees receive welfare advantages in exchange for their contribution, including health insurance, a 20 percent goods discount, and a gain-sharing program that allows employees to share in departmental savings (<https://epicworkepiclife.com/whole-foods-a-disciplined-democracy/>).

III.c. Empowering and recognizing talent at Microsoft

Talented employees and a growth-oriented culture are the main strength of Microsoft. Microsoft believes in continuous development and in the process, it encourages the employees to experiment with the innovative ideas. The company adopts strategically aligned programs that collectively produce a unique portfolio for the talented employees. Competitive pay structure ensures equitable role-based remuneration while promoting pay for performance, a global performance and development strategy that complements company culture, and special benefits that make the employees happy.

Diversity and inclusion are two major cornerstones of Microsoft's business strategy. Microsoft believes that diversity brings more creativity in the performance. Every Microsoft employee strives to include others by fostering an inclusive work environment, advocating for global structural change in the workforce and workplace, and taking personal responsibility for diversity.

In order to make the training more than just a formal instructional strategy, Microsoft provides several types of training, which are custom-made for the employees. Examples include the following:

- Personalized, integrated, and relevant learning opportunities on Microsoft Learning and LinkedIn Learning.
- In-the-classroom learning and sharing with learner boards.

- On-the-job “stretch” opportunities for advancement.
- Coaching on career development through ongoing manager connections.
- Customized manager training to enhance coaching and mentoring skills.
- New employee orientation covering a range of topics including company values, culture, and Standards of Business Conduct.

(<https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/corporate-responsibility/empowering-employees>)

III. d. People power at google

By utilizing its workforce and allowing ideas to spread, Google has been maintaining an innovative pipeline. It seeks to create an environment where people may work together creatively to produce ideas. a "Googlegeist" survey that solicits opinions on hundreds of subjects before assigning volunteer teams of staff members from across the entire company to address the most urgent issues. The company tries to have multiple channels for expression, recognizing that different people, and different ideas. Examples of such channels include:

Google Cafés are meant to spark conversations about work and play and to encourage staff members to communicate with one another and with teams.

Direct emails can be sent to any corporate executive.

Google Moderator, a tool for innovation management, allows anyone to ask questions during tech seminars or company-wide meetings, and then attendees can vote on the questions they want addressed. Moderator allows users to look up previously submitted queries, concepts, or recommendations. They can also start a new series where ideas are asked and arranged by meeting, topic, or event. They can also vote on ideas, questions, or proposals and view the total number of votes received thus far.

TGIF: Google’s weekly all-hands meetings, where employees ask questions directly to the company’s top leaders and other execs about any number of company issues.

Google Universal Ticketing Systems, or ‘GUTS’, which is a way to file issues about anything, and is then reviewed for patterns or problems.

‘FixIts’, 24-hour sprints where Googlers drop everything and focus 100 percent of their energy on solving a specific problem;

Internal innovation reviews, which are formal meetings where executives present product ideas through their divisions to the top executives; and a wide range of surveys.

(<https://www.forbes.com/sites/laurahe/2013/03/29/googles-secrets-of-innovation-empowering-its-employees/?sh=737833e857e7>)

III.e. Empowerment through transparency at Volvo

The Volvo Group fosters a courteous and safe environment that allows employees to feel free to be who they are at work, including being open about their sexual orientation. In the company’s Code of Conduct it is clearly outlined that discrimination based on “who you are”, including your sexual orientation, is unacceptable. The company believes that the employees should feel supported and this would enhance the harmony at work. V-EAGLE, Volvo Group’s global LGBTQ+ network is an initiative towards achieving this philosophy and is a first in the industrial technology sector. To encourage employees to communicate, improve understanding, and foster diversity in the workplace, the network provides support to employees and has produced a manager's handbook. People's personal and work lives frequently intersect. Therefore, transparency can increase productivity by fostering better relationships among coworkers.

Volvo employees meet their coworkers at the coffee machine to begin their workweeks. They discuss their weekends with colleagues. This fosters a more relaxed environment that improves productivity and team spirit (<https://www.volvogroup.com/en/careers/working-at-volvo-group/diversity-inclusion-stories.html>).

III.f. Gender equality and women empowerment at Nestle

Nestle makes a special effort to retain gender parity in its leadership and workforce. The Senior Leader Development Roadmap, which consists of the Senior Executive Program, Senior Leaders Development Assessment Center, and Corporate Mentoring Program, offers career counseling and support. Consequently, a greater number of women than ever before hold administrative jobs, including senior management roles. By

providing detailed strategies for resolving gender issues by 2025, the Nestlé Salient Issue Action Plan for Gender Equity, Non-Discrimination, and Non-Harassment aims to increase awareness of gender concerns and demands.

The company adopted various policies towards inclusivity and other sensitivity issues, such as, Policy Against Discrimination, Violence and Harassment at Work, and so on. Nestle supports new parents and have rolled out Global Parental Support Policy. All primary caregivers in the company have the right to a minimum of 18 weeks of paid leave to care for new children. Secondary caregivers also receive four weeks' minimum leave.

Nestle maintains its accountability towards its employees by addressing its commitment to offer equal pay for equal work between men and women. The company conducts an annual Global Equal Pay study and, in response to its findings, takes appropriate measures to end systemic pay disparities and the underlying causes of them. Nestlé was acknowledged by the Bloomberg Gender Equality Index for its advancement of women's equality in the workplace and transparency in gender reporting.

(<https://www.nestle.com/sustainability/people-communities/women-empowerment>).

IV. Conclusion

Studies and management experts have shown that companies must adapt in order to become more inventive, creative, and employee-friendly in today's workplaces. These changes must come through empowerment, incentive, and independence. Empowerment spurs change and raises workplace engagement, which in turn boosts personal commitment and aids in the company's goal-achieving. But it's important to keep in mind that genuine values—like employee empowerment—and their application count for more than just official paperwork. The empowerment concept should therefore start at the top of the organization and work its way down to the lowest levels of the hierarchy.

Businesses are finding it difficult to stay in operation in the face of constantly contracting marketplaces and unstable market circumstances. Stated differently, organizations that consciously strive to enable their workforce will progressively establish a competitive edge that is essential for enduring, sustained commercial prosperity. The highly skilled staff members of the organization view empowerment as a means of fostering creative expression and optimizing self-actualization, which has implications for people management. As driven employees are more committed to and able to relate to the company's mission, vision, and goals, empowerment helps retain talent and, as a result, succession planning. Ultimately, this puts the business in a strategic position for greater commercial viability by fostering self-sufficiency and continuing the development of the critical leadership process.

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