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The Impact of Training Methods and Leadership Skills on the Role of Empowerment in the Workplace

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**THE IMPACT OF TRAINING METHODS
AND LEADERSHIP SKILLS ON THE
ROLE OF EMPOWERMENT IN THE WORKPLACE**



Rae J. DeLaney, B.S.

A Culminating Project Presented to the Faculty of the
Graduate School of Lindenwood College in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirement for the
Degree of Masters of Business Administration

ABSTRACT

Given the dynamic nature of the business environment, companies must never make the mistake of thinking that strategies that have been proven successful in the past will be effective for all time. They need flexibility, speed, responsiveness and openness to new technology to deal with uncertainty.

It is imperative the managers create an atmosphere of empowerment. By giving employees the responsibility and the authority to get things done their way, employees will feel as if they are valued and trusted employees. To encourage employee empowerment, management must make available training and leadership seminars that will encourage and stimulate employee empowerment.

The purpose of this study is to review the current state of employee empowerment as it relates to various training methods and leadership skills and determine if there is a positive correlation between empowerment, training, and leadership.

The survey was conducted to determine if the issue of employee empowerment has propagated to lower levels of management. The primary goals of this study was to determine the state of

implementation of employee emmpowerment programs in ATCOM organizations and the degree to which this implementation has advanced.

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Dedication

I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to my parents, Jewel L. DeLaney and the late Robert L. DeLaney. As a child, my parents instilled the values of excellence, determination, and perseverance. With their unselfish love, support, and encouragement, I was able to complete this project.

My heartfelt thanks is also extended to my brother, Dr. Juels R. DeLaney and my sister, Robyn J. DeLaney-Morton. Your words of wisdom often enlightened and encouraged me while completing my project.

Thank You!

Love Always,

Rae

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Empowerment

The idea of empowerment has been around for hundreds of years. First used as a legal term for granting authority, empowerment has evolved into a term with many uses and meanings (Klose 5). The concept of empowerment began to surface in the 1960's. During that time period, empowerment was considered to be a motivating factor that would help minorities rise above their poverty. It was believed that empowerment would deliver this depressed segment of the population from its problems (5).

Not long after the 1960's, the use of the term empowerment emerged with management practitioners. It was not until the mid-1970's when management practitioners began to use the term empowerment in the business setting (6).

Today, the idea of empowerment evokes interest with managers and the business world. Indeed, the general concept of employee empowerment has become a tool to stimulate organizational efficiency.

Employee empowerment has been in existence in many business organizations for many years. For instance, Federal Express uses an interactive video training system that allows employees to learn at their own pace. At Minnesota's Shott Transformers, time clocks were removed allowing employees to be responsible for their own work hours as long as customer service and productivity were not effected (6).

In addition to examples of employee empowerment cited in the literature, there are numerous statements used to define employee empowerment. Unfortunately, this vast variety of definitions poses a critical problem for the development of a meaningful dialogue on the concept of employee empowerment. Without a solid definition, it is very difficult to gain understanding and communicate an idea.

Employee empowerment is defined by some as a relational concept, whereas others may classify employee empowerment as a motivational concept. In his work, Klose states the relational concept of employee empowerment implies that employees will be granted more authority. He defines relational empowerment as:

To empower, implies the granting of power--delegation of authority. (8)

Others define employee empowerment as a motivational concept. Employees are empowered by enhancing their feelings of personal efficacy. (Personal efficacy is the level of empowerment individual's feel in their lives.) Klose states motivational empowerment as being:

A process of enhancing feelings of self-efficacy among organizational members through the identification of conditions that foster powerlessness and through their removal by both formal and organizational practices and informal techniques of providing efficacy information. (8)

Another group defines employee empowerment by indicating a list of specific things that empowered employees should be able to do.

Empowerment involves giving employees the flexibility to use their judgement in serving customers, training to support their judgement, and a sense of ownership in customer satisfaction mission. (8)

The definition of employee empowerment is critical because it will determine how it is measured and what can be said about it.

Certainly, the definition must be practical and understandable (Klose 10). If the concept is defined in such a manner that its operationalization becomes impractical, then the concept is worthless. Organizations and managers are not interested in a concept that cannot be easily related and measured in the real world.

A new universal employee empowerment definition must maintain the flavor of what has gone before. Employee empowerment's definition must be generic enough to apply to varied workplaces, yet structured enough to be clear and concise. After various discussions and revisions, the following definitions emerged:

Employee empowerment is the degree to which employees feel they can be both proactive and reactive to the situations surrounding their job. (9)

Empowering employees is the process in which employees are brought to feel they can be both proactive and reactive to the situations surrounding the job. (9)

On the contrary, employee empowerment presents many issues that do not present the cure all for organizational ills. Houston and Talbott remark that while studies suggest that delegation of authority is

critical to organizational effectiveness, worker empowerment programs do not always succeed (16). Some factors that undermine such programs are:

1. Management resistance to efforts to change the hierarchical, chain-of-command managerial approach.
2. Failure of top management to see the program through to its completion.
3. Management abandons all efforts to empower workforce when things become difficult.
4. The unwillingness of some employees to assume responsibility for their work. (16)

On a more positive note, employee empowerment can be advantageous for many organizations. Coleman states, employee empowerment can be utilized to deal with the increasing demands of consumers, improve an organization's competitive edge (29). While Perry indicates, employee empowerment fosters customer satisfaction, and boost profits (1).

Consequently, organizations are optimistic that employee empowerment will be more likely advantageous. Coleman further remarks that by involving employees in the sharing of authority, information, and responsibility, management will create employees

who feel empowered with a sense of influence, competence, meaningfulness, and choice (29).

Training

Empowering teams create self-directed work groups that improve quality, productivity, and participation. Self-directed work teams have been called the productivity breakthrough of the 90's (Wellins 5). Many organizations today are moving away from the traditional work team and toward the self-directed work team (empowered team). This change is taking place because more people realize that empowered teams provide a way to accomplish organizational goals and meet the needs of our changing work force (6).

In addition Mark Becker states, " Empowerment starts with training-that you can't expect to get an empowered work force unless you explain exactly what you mean by 'empowered' and then train people to do whatever it is you want them to do differently" (35). Mr Becker further remarks that empowerment requires consistent communication, modeling, and support from the top (35).

According to Wellins, the primary reasons senior line managers give for their organizations' movement toward self-directed teams are:

- improved quality, productivity, and service;
- greater flexibility;
- reduced operating costs;
- faster response to technological change;
- fewer, simpler job classifications;
- better response to new worker values;
- ability to attract and retain the best people. (11)

Organizations that acquire and retain capable work forces will ultimately possess teams that offer greater participation, challenge, and feelings of accomplishment.

However, once an organization has chosen employees that they feel are responsible enough to become a part of the self-directed teams, they must provide proper training. Training, as defined by Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, is the process of teaching by instruction so to make fit, qualified, or proficient (1239). Ultimately, organizations which understand that the key to success driven employees is proper training of self-directed work teams will notice improvement within the companies overall structure.

Wellins indicates that most training for teams can be organized into three categories:

1. Job skills;
2. Team/interactive skills;
3. Quality/action skills. (169)

Job skills encompasses all the technical knowledge and skills team members need for success on the job. These may include operating a press, loading software, troubleshooting equipment, processing claims, or interpreting statistical process control charts. With empowered teams, these skills also can include knowledge of the organization's budgeting process, an overall understanding of its business, and the ability to make appropriate capital equipment requests (164).

Team/interactive skills include all the interpersonal and communication skills team members need to be effective in their new roles. The team structure demands that these skills be considerably more sophisticated than in traditional operations. Some of the interactive skills require for team effectiveness include handling

conflict, meeting leadership, negotiating requirements with suppliers and customers, and influencing other (164).

Quality/action skills involves identifying problems and making improvements. In most teams, members are expected to take the initiative to make continuous improvements, whether this means suggesting ways to reduce cycle times or diagramming the causes of a particular nonconformance (165).

After an organization categorizes the skills employees need, an appropriate training method must be chosen. As Fowler stresses in his article, training can be most effective if the method selected for a particular session is most appropriate for the situation (36). As a general guideline, trainers should evaluate training methods based on the subject matter, trainees' learning styles, unit of costs of possible methods and outcomes required in terms of knowledge, skills or attitudes (36).

The effectiveness of any training event is influenced by a variety of factors. Have the desired outcomes been defined? Is the level of training appropriate for the trainees? Do the trainees understand the purpose of the event and how it relates to their work (37)?

Other aspects must be considered. What are the trainees' most effective learning styles? People differ in how they best learn. Some need to understand concepts before they try new skills; other learn best by plunging straight into a practical activity. Furthermore, training methods should be categorized by group training methods and individual training methods.

Munger list group training methods as:

- lectures;
- group discussions;
- role-playing;
- films and videos;
- case studies;
- management games;
- outdoor training. (55)

He then classifies individual training methods as:

- planned reading;
- text-based open learning;
- IT-based open learning;
- coaching and mentoring;
- on-the-job-training. (55)

Leadership

Organizations face the challenge of changing leadership roles as they implement empowered teams. There are numerous models that present a new look at expectations and roles for leaders in organizations that are moving toward teams and empowerment.

One of the more interesting models perceived by the authors Manz and Sims states that effective leaders, or supervisors, lead others to lead themselves (1). Some of the behaviors they propose include the following: leaders teach members to set goals for his/her own work efforts, practicing work activities through mental or physical rehearsal before performing them; and observing and gathering data about one's performance. The author states that key is that supervisors encourage and coach others to internalize and self-manage much of the control that was previously imposed by supervisors and managers (1).

Jessup presents three "hats" that leaders must wear in team-based organizations: administrator, coach, and adviser. The administrator helps the team to meet its objectives through goal setting, problem solving, and other group processes. The coach focuses on

helping the team develop as it matures. According to Jessup, the “job of the coach is to eventually eliminate the coach” (81). The adviser provides the team necessary technical support, being careful to convey the skills and knowledge team members need to make their own decisions (81).

As teams assume more responsibilities, the group leader usually takes on new challenges. These might include operating in a larger organizational arena and assuming many functions previously performed by middle managers. Consequently, these new challenges or changes in responsibilities require role-clarity to be addressed (1)

Some organizations provide explicit role expectations for different phases of team development. Organizations may plan to involve leaders in all team functions during the first year of transition, then gradually diminish the leaders’ involvement for the years to come (2).

Wellins further remarks that as teams progress along the empowerment continuum, the leader’s role with the team shifts from direct to indirect involvement. During this period, it is important to provide leaders with new responsibilities to replace those that have

shifted to the team. The leader might be assigned more teams to coach or might take on a portion of the responsibilities formerly held by higher management (131).

There are a number of ways to help establish clarity between the roles of the team and the leaders. Many organizations hold frequent role-clarity sessions that allow group members to negotiate the functions for which they will be responsible, as well as the methods of measuring success in each function (132).

Other organizations use a similar method called responsibility charting. With this method, group members work together to list their responsibilities and then decide who handles each one by assigning codes or checkmarks to the chart (134). As Wellins states, this process should be used frequently at first while teams are learning to handle more leadership responsibilities (134).

There are five points that should be addressed as special leadership issues are addressed with the organization:

1. Tenure and replacement of team leaders.
2. Sources of candidates for team leader positions.
3. Tenure and replacement of group leaders.

4. Team leader and group leader performance evaluations.
5. Compensation of team leaders. (135)

It is crucial that organizations provide leadership support and training during the transition phase of role-clarity. Every effort should be made to retain the same group of leaders while going through the change process. Emotional support and coaching are a must (135).

Training is also a key to successful transitions. This training should focus on new leadership skills, the nature of the teamwork, workplace redesign, and the “ins” and “outs” of the self-directed team concept (136).

Some other team tips toward changing leadership roles are:

- involve managers and supervisors in the changing processes;
- recognize and reward leadership that encourages teamwork and empowerment;
- have realistic expectations about the pace of change;
- delegate responsibility when teams are ready.

(141)

The purpose of this study is to review the current state of employee empowerment as it relates to various training methods and leadership skills and determine if there is a positive correlation between empowerment, training, and leadership.

Chapter II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Given the dynamic nature of the business environment, companies should never make the mistake of thinking that strategies that have been proven successful in the past will be effective for all time. They need flexibility, speed, responsiveness and openness to new technology to deal with uncertainty.

As stated in the article Management Decision, “Implementing a new management philosophy based on a renewed business strategy requires empowerment” (21). This means giving direction and support to people while allowing the authority and flexibility required to accomplish tasks. The organizational hierarchy has been flattened, bureaucracy has been replaced with empowerment, and the scope of incentive and reward systems has been broadened (21).

As Kleiner indicates, management experts claim that another factor crucial to business survival is organization and employee involvement (Kleiner 7). This requires not only strong leadership at the

top of the organization, but also employee empowerment to promote the development of leadership qualities at all other organizational levels. The presence of leadership at all levels will create an organization that is able to adapt, learn, and innovate (7).

In addition, Kleiner remarks that some organizations strive to promote survival in the business world through committed management teams, employee empowerment, and operating process supported and improved by technology (26) Management has recongnized the definite need to adapt itself to a changing environment, and to provide employees with a vision of service quality. Flynn concludes that this vision of service quality will be relected by employees who can think and do so for themselves, who thrive on teamwork, who have a satisfying work/life balance (66). Ulitimately, the vision of service quality will eventually lead to service excellence, which ulimately ends with the organization being profitable (Kleiner 27).

Moreover, service excellence is achievable by utilizing leadership skills and employee training programs. A combination of developing skills, on-the-job knowledge, and internalizing

organizational goals are factors that are necessary to introduce employees to the concept of empowerment (28).

Klose further comments that American business is being forced to change the way it handles employees. The days of the autocratic leader and subservient employee are no longer always appropriate (45). Businesses are beginning to realize they must utilize all of their valuable resources, including the creative abilities of its employees.

Consequently there is a new class of managers called "Organizational Emancipators" that are in charge of liberating organizations (46). Their basic duty is to untie the hands and remove the blindfolds of their employees. Organizational emancipators allow the employees to be empowered by encouraging them to participate in an exciting and viable organization (46).

Organizational emancipators understand that effectiveness is limited when supervisors must continually answer and solve employee problems. As a result they have found organizational performance to be enhanced when employees are allowed to handle the situation surrounding their jobs (47).

As Klose observes, the first step in becoming an organizational emancipator is learning to manage yourself (48). Self-management involves knowing one's skills and developing them effectively. Only after developing an understanding of yourself will it be possible to fully understand and empower others (48). Thus, managers that are able to understand their own level of empowerment possess an important step in understanding how empowerment affects others.

Secondly, an organizational emancipator must work to develop anticipatory skills. Anticipatory skills entail:

1. projecting consequences, risks and trade-offs;
2. actively seeking to be informed and to inform;
3. proactively establishing working relationships. (49)

Each of these skills is necessary if an organizational emancipator hopes to successfully empower employees.

It is essential for an organizational emancipator to understand the difficulties with relinquishing power-both with themselves and with those in the organization (50). Since society places a tremendous value on power and being powerful, organizational emancipators must be able to let go of power and cope with the pain that is sometimes

associated with the loss. Porter states that many front line supervisors find it difficult to promote employee empowerment because it is painful for them to relinquish the powers of knowledge (5). Therefore upper management must carefully delineated the first line supervisors's job function with the new work team concept or they may actively or unconsciously sabotage the process (5).

The next step in the empowerment process was obtaining the necessary resources to empower employees. Organizations must provide newly freed employees with resources required to do their job efficiently and effectively (52). These resources consist of:

1. training;
2. education;
3. equipment;
4. facilities;
5. time. (52)

Each resource must be provided in proper proportion to ensure success. Moreover to build a successful organization by using these resources, the company must commit capital since the empowerment process is not free (52).

Another key component of being an organizational emancipator was being a leader. Leading by example was one of the most powerful traits an organizational emancipator can possess (55). Demonstrating the benefits of the empowerment process through personal testimony allows employees to see the benefits of the process first hand (55).

Consequently, if the empowerment process is not legitimately embraced by the emancipator, employees will become skeptical and question the true benefit of committing to the process (56). In addition, organizational emancipators must hold on to values and become reliable and consistent. This statement is supported by a study stating that people would much rather follow individuals they can count on, even when they disagree with their viewpoints, than people they agree with but who shift positions frequently (Bluestone 8).

Although, the ability to assert leadership is essential for employee empowerment, the managers must first acquire a clear idea of the results that are expected from a situation. Acquiring a good knowledge of the work and the work context, they proceed to analyze the situation to determine the requirements of work, methods, procedures, and schedules (Mali 34). The manager analyzes people for

attitudes, needs, concerns, strengths and weaknesses, with both sense and sensitivity (34). Indeed, the leadership role that is to be developed should both change and manage the relationship between work and people.

Sayles found that leaders manifest their distinctive position by periodically encouraging to all subordinates to be responsive (33). Such simultaneity is essential to both reinforcing the position of leaders and accomplishing the goals of the group (33.)

Furthermore, leaders actively encourage the bringing up of problems and requests. They remain responsive to requests for aid, assistance, and comiseration. Indeed, they are highly likely to be willing to devote the time and to have the requisite social and/or technical skills to satisfy these demands. Better yet, leaders can provide both organization and technical "fixes" that aid the other employee (35). Leaders do more than give information and aid, they also dispense adjudications that resolve conflict and stalemates and relieve pent-up tension among employees (40).

Still, leaders must demonstrate ability and credibility. Superior ability, whether it be technical skills or organizational skills, give

leaders the expertise needed to perform successfully. Their skills and knowledge should entitle them to the position. Leaders are expected to know the “rules of the game”, the norms, expectations, and values of the organization (55).

Managers have the option of using several different leadership styles. Each style has benefits and drawbacks. As a result, understanding the needs and ambitions of employees allows for the selection of a leadership style to optimize employee empowerment levels (Klose 53). In many cases a manager may have to use different leadership styles for different employees and work groups (53).

The authoritarian style of management is considered by many to be the traditional style of management. All decision making authority for an organization is to be positioned at the top and those at the organization’s lower levels are responsible for doing (60).

In addition, mentoring is a style of leadership similar to an apprenticeship. While mentors do not maintain strict authoritarian control over employees, they are still the primary decision makers. Mentors work to make employees self-directed and skilled employees. An employee who has been managed by a mentor should ultimately be

able to complete all aspects of a job without asking questions or permission. However under a mentor, employees may not be encouraged to be innovative or find new methods of doing their job (62).

Klose's use of the term coach is to describe a business leader is relatively new. A coach is someone who has an ongoing, committed partnership with a player/performer and who empowers that person or team, to exceed prior levels of play/performance (Bluestone). Coaches are less likely to pass judgement on the performance of an employee, but instead provide constructive feedback. Coaching is a very effective leadership style for motivating employees and improving organizational efficiency and output (63).

Klose also mentions that work teams can fall anywhere on the free rein to authoritarian continuum. The level of commitment management must allow a team in order to function autonomously determines where on the continuum they fall. However, because of their nature, most teams fall somewhere around the participative region of the continuum (67).

Free rein leadership is a leadership style which focuses on staying completely out of the way of employees. Under free rein form of leadership employees are allowed to do whatever they think is necessary to be successful. This type of leadership is not appropriate for most organizations, but it is used to extent with certain types of professionals (lawyers, doctors, consultants, etc.) (70).

Finally, participatory management consist of allowing employees sthe opportunity to provide input into the decisions made in an organization. The degree to which management actually listens to what employees say determines where this type of leadership falls on the free-rein authoritarian continuum. Participatory management is an excellent way to improve organizational efficeincy, provided employees are trained and willing to participate (64).

Similarly, Nilson indicates that training plays an important part in developing a productive workforce (1). Training methods are directly related to productivity, quality, motivation, and communication (1). Indeed, training is one major approach to helping people control or manage change. This happens because training is designed to lead the trainee to master new knowledge, attitudes, and skills (3).

Mwabo studied one of the most important theories surrounding lessons learned in training. This model is based on three main assumptions:

1. People learn best when personally involved in the learning experience.
2. Knowledge has to be discovered by each individual if it is to mean anything or make a difference in behaviour.
3. Commitment to learning is highest when individuals are free to set goals and actively pursue them within a given framework. (39)

Given that trainers elect to follow the experiential learning model, their goal will be to design training programs which meet the needs of the trainee in relation to organizational goals.

Who needs training? Everyone will need training at some point in their career. This is because over time organizations change, techniques, equipment, and knowledge change, and people change. At some time employees will need to know new information, acquire new skills, and develop new attitudes to successfully master the change in

their work environment (39). Although training contributes to motivating employees by focusing both on what is best for the individual and what is best for the company, training also contributes in a major way to the quality and effectiveness of each process involved in doing a job. Nilson comments that good training is designed around the specific tasks of a specific job (9). Its success is measured by how well a person can do those specific tasks after training. Well-trained employees will be capable of doing better-quality work, and for many people the personal satisfaction of doing a good job is a powerful motivator to do an even better job in the future (10).

There are a few basic guidelines for managing training principles. Nilson further suggests to get the trainee involved by:

- maneuvering the trainee into the position of having to ask many questions;
- reinforce the trainee's insights with compliments and positive feedback;
- get the trainee to rethink an incorrect response by leading him step by logical step through diagnostic exercise;

- encourage trainees to think aloud and to solve their own problems;
- avoid telling adult learners what to do. (15)

It is important to use a hands-on approach whenever possible. Let trainees try out new equipment, make mistakes, and learn in their own time. It is important to realize that each person's experience base regarding the new equipment will vary and some learners will learn faster than others because of that difference. Respect trainees as individuals who already possess great amounts of knowledge and skills (15).

Further, individual and work-environment characteristics are important to trainees' preparation for training, to knowledge and skills acquisition during training, and to subsequent transfer of training to the job (Mwambo 38). The traditional view of training encompasses the following three features:

1. A formal and systematic assessment of training needs.
2. The use of appropriate training methods to deliver content based on needs.

3. A comprehensive evaluation of the program using several different evaluation criteria and strategies (38).

Although this perspective is quite useful, the focus is often too narrow. The emphasis is on training-specific features and excludes consideration of factors outside the training domain that may influence the effectiveness of any training effort (39).

In particular, a five-phase strategy for redesigning training curricula developed by Elwood Holton III and Curt Bailey was introduced to restructure the current training program for a particular utility company that was being researched. The training project was divided into a five-phase project:

- job analysis;
- task analysis;
- the development of performance objectives;
- the development of a training matrix;
- course development. (Haskins 42)

The job analysis phase created a list of potential tasks for each job in the company. The team used industrywide generic tasks, site procedures, equipment lists, and information provided by subject

matter experts (SMEs). The team then assigned each task a number and clustered similar tasks within a series of numbers (44).

The tasks were incorporated into a job-survey questionnaire administered to employees within a specific department. Respondents rated each task on importance, difficulty, and frequency of performance. Next, the redesign team analyzed the data using customized software and reported a decision tree. The tree indicated requirements for each task: training, no training, and retraining. The primary criterion for whether a task required training was its importance rating (45).

The second phase is called task analysis. In this phase, two SMEs analyze each task to identify the necessary skills, knowledge, and abilities required for job performance (47). Data included the work conditions in which a task is performed, cues on initiating and terminating a task, standards for performance, consequences of inadequate performance, safety considerations, human interfaces, criticalness, and necessary tools and equipment (47).

At the performance objective phase, the redesign team identifies all tasks, task elements, and skills that are then clustered into groups.

The clusters are then coded and incorporated into lesson plans that include performance-based objectives (50).

During the training matrix phase, the team designs a training matrix on which it groups similar lessons into training courses and assigns each a course number (51). Consequently, the team clusters basic-level performance objectives into courses on fundamentals and cross-reference each task or skill to its corresponding lesson plan, performance objective, and course number (51).

Lastly, phase five designs course materials based on performance objectives (52). All course materials such as work books, handouts, and on-the-job training guides-were reviewed by technicians, SMEs and in-house trainers (52).

This particular training project is an example of why there is a need to develop training tools and processes that are structured to correspond to a specific industry related job performance. Within this particular example, the utility company had more positive outcomes to overshadow the missteps (52).

Most organizational benefits are obvious. However, concept of empower empowerment is faces several barriers. For example, Kent

comments that managers can resist empowering those beneath them for fear of loss of power. Supervisors can also keep vital information from getting to those needing it, for reasons ranging from paranoia, to their own disorganization (20).

Personal accountability is also critical. As in the traditional delegation process, authority must be accompanied by the obligation to use the authority responsibly. Inappropriate or insufficient accountability will keep both management and their employees from taking the risks associated with empowerment (20).

More importantly, Flynn concludes that the concept of empowerment is not supported by existing labor laws. Most labor laws are inappropriate for today's business environment because they were passed in the 1930s and 1940s when the popular thinking was that employees and employers had conflicting interests and could not achieve a cooperative relationship (66).

For human resource practitioners of the 1990's, working around these outdated laws to develop employees for the modern marketplace can be a very frustrating exercise. For instances, the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 makes it very difficult for companies to offer

flexible work schedules (68). The National Labor Relations Act of 1935 hinders employee empowerment initiatives because it bans employers from working with nonunion employee groups to discuss employment issues (70). Eventually, if organizations are going to evolve into the 21st century, they will have to be governed by laws of the 21st century.

Survey

In August of 1997, an employee empowerment study was conducted by the Department of Defense Employee Empowerment Committee. The Employee Empowerment Committee (EEC) is a vehicle to voice and enact employee changes and improvements designed to benefit the Defense Megacenter in St. Louis, Missouri.

The first order of business for the EEC was to explore the definition of employee empowerment. After careful analysis of the concept of employee empowerment, the EEC concluded that employee empowerment is recognized as an important tool in developing a work force focused on producing high quality products. The products are

produced in an effective manner with an environment fostering highly motivated staff sharing ownership of processes and given authority to act in the best interest of the organization with the ultimate goal achieving customer satisfaction.

The highest level of management in the ATCOM organization believes in the principle of employee empowerment as demonstrated in the quotation below taken from the words of General Emitt E. Gibson:

Empower people. I will empower leaders and managers to accomplish their duties. I expect leaders and managers to empower their subordinates. In return, I expect people to accept responsibility, provide our customers professional support and products, and always do what is legally and morally right. (ATCOM 1)

In light of the emphasis placed on the implementation of employee empowerment within the ATCOM community, it does not appear that the program has propagated to lower levels of management or developed in ways that offer the greatest benefit to the overall good of the organization. In 1996 a survey was conducted among ATCOM

employees which contained four questions relevant to the issue of employee empowerment. The four questions were:

1. Does my supervisor encourages innovation and listens to my ideas for improvement?
2. In my organization we are encouraged to become involved in improving our work?
3. I have the authority to make changes within my area of responsibility that enable me to work mor efficiently?
4. My supervisor gives me the authority to speak for my organization at meetings? (ATCOM 3)

The results of the survey indicate that therre was no notable increase in the overall improvement in the perception of empowerment and the survey suggests that a small growth in discontent in the areas of employee empowerment had developed. Additional evidence suggests that little has been accomplished in the implementation of employee empowerment programs throughout ATCOM. Personal contacts and experience of team members with coworkers has strengthened the author's opinion that although many persons will claim to have authority and responsibility to carry out job functions with autonomy,

there is no demonstrable program of employee empowerment fully operative at ATCOM.

Two committees, each having charters of function given in the appendix of this report, act to process new ideas or incorporate changes into the way in which business is conducted or the way in which employee affairs are treated. The Employee Empowerment Committee (EEC) consists of a group of twelve nonsupervisory personnel who meet every two weeks to review new ideas and recommendations. Members of this committee are rotated every four months with one third of the group being replaced at that time, thereby giving each serving member a one year tenure. This committee acts as a filter for recommendations and passes along ideas sanctioned by the collective voice of the EEC. The Executive Steering Committee (ESC) comprised of Division chiefs and the Director makes final judgement on the recommendations, insuring that all issues related to Civilian Personnel Office and union policies are in accord and that the recommendation is in the best interest of the Megacenter. These two committees involve all levels of management and provide a composite view of the goals of the ATCOM.

In summary, the following problem statement can be made.

Since the early 1990's the notion of employee empowerment has been advocated as a means for: 1) improving the overall quality of products and services; 2) increasing the efficiency of office operations; and 3) generally strengthening the morale of the work force through shared involvement in the affairs of the organization. Surveys have suggested that the full potential of empowerment has not been realized and that in some cases, a digresskon to less satisfaction in the workplace is occuring with a possible degradation in service delivery.

Statement of Hypothesis

To examine this situaltion, the author advances the hypothesis that empowerment programs with the organization have not been fully or effectively implemented, and a strategy for data collection to test this hypothesis will be developed and executed. Data collection will include the DMC-S that will serve as a benchmark of a well structured empowerment program that has been in place for several months. The assessment will focus on the worker level and measure the ability of

the employee to more effectively and efficiently carry out job functions as a result of changes brought about by empowerment. In addition to evaluating possible deficiencies in current programs, a major goal will be providing recommendations for increasing awareness of empowerment and formulating guidelines for its implementation.

Chapter III

SELECTIVE REVIEW AND EVALUATION OF RESEARCH

Background

ATCOM is an organization that consists of three core centers:

- Research, Development, and Engineering
- Acquisition
- Integrated Material Management.

These centers support nine aviation and troop support product lines and provide matrix support to the Program Executive Office, Aviation.

Although the majority of the workforce resides in St. Louis, MO, there are ATCOM organizations and Program Managers located in California, Pennsylvania, Virginia, New Jersey, Washington D. C., and Illinois (ATCOM 4).

The ATCOM workforce embodies a diverse workforce comprised of individuals from many ethnic backgrounds including African American-25%, Hispanic-2%, Native American-1%, Asian-Pacific Islander-1%, and Caucasian-71%. The core workforce consists

of Engineering, Logisticians, and Acquisition leaders; the civilian grades range from Senior Executive Service to GS-3 (ATCOM 6).

The educational background and experience levels vary widely within the organization. About 45percent of the employees have Bachelor's or higher degrees.

In addition, the products and services offered by ATCOM are:

1. Spares;
2. Technology Generation;
3. Development and Acquisition of Systems;
4. Science and Technology;
5. Foreign Military Sales.

They maintain a technology base of approximately \$64 million, process 202,758 requisitions, manage 33,801 secondary items, process 100,000 pages of changes to technical manuals, manage a depot of maintenance program, and provide onsite technical and engineering support to the field army through 154 Logistics Assistance Representatives located at world web sites (ATCOM).

Objective of Survey

The survey was conducted to determine if the issue of employee empowerment has infiltrated to lower levels of management.

Ultimately, ATCOM strives to develop employee empowerment programs that offer the greatest benefit to the overall good of the organization. The primary goals of this study were to determine the state of implementation of employee empowerment programs in ATCOM organizations and the degree to which this implementation has advanced.

Survey

In the fall of 1996, a survey was conducted among ATCOM employees which focused on the issue of employee empowerment. Only non-supervisory personnel was randomly interviewed. Military and contract personnel were excluded. The telephonic method of survey was selected as the means to gather data that would form the basis of recommendations arising from this study. A telephonic communication was selected for a variety of reasons. First, the time involved in the data collection phase was limited. Secondly, it was felt that a better cross section of the ATCOM

community could be reached. Third, voice communication offered the advantage of gathering comments or clarifying questions for the interviewee.

Three metrics were applied to the question in the survey. These metrics will determine the results of the following questions:

1. Are there any employee empowerment programs in existence at the present time?
2. If so, to what extent is the program implemented?
3. What are the positive and/or negative aspects of the program?

Presentation of Findings

In order to test the hypothesis, the concept of relative frequency was utilized. Relative frequency is defined as organizing a set of data by summarizing the number of times a particular value of a variable occurs (Dryden 156). From that point the percentage distribution is calculated. The percentage distribution is the organization of a

frequency distribution into a table or graph that summarizes percentage values associated with particular values.

Question 1:

Do you have any kind of empowerment program in you office?

Relative frequency = # of times response occurred

total # of respondents

Yes	vs.	No
= <u>31</u> = .574		= <u>23</u> = .426
54		54

Percentage Distribution = Relative frequency x 100

Yes	vs.	No
= .574 x 100 = 57%		.426 x 100 = 43%

Question 2:

Is employee Empowerment encouraged by all levels of management?

Yes	vs.	No
RF= <u>21</u> = .677		= <u>10</u> = .323
31		31
PD= .677 x 100 = 68%		= .323 x 100 = 32%

Question 3:

If yes, is the program documented?

Yes	vs.	No
RF= <u>12</u> = .387		= <u>19</u> = .613
31		31
PD= .387 x 100 = 39%		= .613 x 100 = 61%

Question 4:

Do you feel empowerment is serving its purpose of making employees more productive and committed?

Yes	vs.	No
RF= <u>23</u> = .742		= <u>8</u> = .258
31		31
PD= .742 x 100 = 74%		= .258 x 100 = 26%

Question 5:

Do you have the needed authority and responsibility to produce the highest quality products?

Yes	vs.	No
-----	-----	----

$$RF = \frac{29}{31} = .935$$

31

$$PD = .935 \times 100 = 94\%$$

$$= \frac{2}{31} = .064$$

31

$$= .064 \times 100 = 6\%$$

Question 6:

Do you have a mechanism to influence command processes?

Yes

vs.

No

$$RF = \frac{15}{31} = .484$$

31

$$PD = .484 \times 100 = 48\%$$

$$= \frac{16}{31} = .516$$

31

$$= .516 \times 100 = 52\%$$

Chi-Square Calculation

A. Responses

YES	28
NO	21
	n = 49

	MALE	FEMALE	
B Observed YES	17	11	= 28
NO	12	9	= 21
	= 29	20	

C Expected

$$= (\text{Row})(\text{Column})/n$$

$\frac{28 \times 29}{49} = 16.6$	$\frac{28 \times 20}{49} = 11.4$
$\frac{21 \times 29}{49} = 12.4$	$\frac{21 \times 20}{49} = 8.6$

D. Chi-Square

$$= \frac{(\text{Observed} - \text{Expected})^2}{\text{Expected}}$$

$\frac{(17-16.6)^2}{16.6} =$ $\frac{.16}{16.6} = .010$	$\frac{(11-11.4)^2}{11.4} =$ $\frac{.16}{11.4} = .014$
$\frac{(12-12.4)^2}{12.4} =$ $\frac{.16}{12.4} = .013$	$\frac{(9-8.6)^2}{8.6} =$ $\frac{.16}{8.6} = .019$

E. Chi-Square

$$X^2_{\text{calculated}} = .010 + .014 + .013 + .019 = .056$$

$$X^2_{\text{critical}} =$$

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Degrees of Freedom} &= (r-1)(c-1) \\ &= (2-1)(2-1) \\ &= (1)(1) \\ &= 1 \end{aligned}$$

$$\alpha = 5\% = 3.841$$

$$\begin{array}{ccc} X^2_{\text{calculated}} & < & X^2_{\text{critical}} \\ 056 & & 3.841 \end{array}$$

Chapter IV

RESULTS

Summary of the Project

The purpose of this project was to evaluate possible deficiencies in current programs leading to the end goals of providing recommendations for increasing awareness of empowerment and formulating guidelines for its implementation. Earlier surveys have suggested that the full potential of empowerment has not been realized and that in some cases, a digression to less satisfaction in the workplace is occurring with a possible degradation in service delivery. The survey will focus on the worker level and measure the ability of the employee to more effectively and efficiently carry out job functions as a result of changes brought about by empowerment.

Conclusions

Evaluation of Questions 1:

- A. Do you have any kind of employee empowerment program in your office?

- B. Relative frequency was measured between the yes and no responses. Relative frequency for the yes responses was .574; the relative frequency for the no responses was .426. The percentage distribution between the scores was 57% for the yes response and 43% for the no responses.
- C. There is little significant difference between the two scores.

Evaluation of Question 2:

- A. Is employee empowerment encouraged by all levels of management?
- B. Relative frequency for the yes responses was .677; the relative frequency for the no responses was .323. The percentage distribution between the scores was 68% for the yes responses and 32% for the no responses.
- C. There is a significant difference between the two scores.

Evaluation of Question 3:

- A. If yes, is the program documented?
- B. Relative frequency for the yes responses was .387; the relative frequency for the no responses was .613. The percentage



distribution between the scores was 39% for the yes responses and 61% for the no responses.

C. There is a significant difference between the two scores.

Evaluation of Question 4:

A. Do you feel empowerment is serving its purpose of making employees more productive and committed?

B. Relative frequency for the yes responses was .742; the relative frequency for the no responses was .258. The percentage distribution between the scores was 74% for the yes responses and 26% for the no responses.

C. There is a significant difference between the two scores.

Evaluation of Question 5:

A. Do you have the needed authority and responsibility to produce the highest quality products?

B. Relative frequency for the yes responses was .935; the relative frequency for the no responses was .064. The percentage distribution between the scores was 94% for the yes responses and 6% for the no responses.

- C. There is an overwhelming significant difference between the two scores.

Evaluation of Question 6:

- A. Do you have a mechanism to influence command processes?
- B. Relative frequency for the yes responses was .484; the relative frequency for the no responses was .516. The percentage distribution between the scores was 48% for the yes responses and 52% for the no responses.
- C. There is not a significant difference between the two scores.

Chi-Square Analysis:

- A. The chi-square test allowed comparison of the male versus female responses.
- B. Using the degree of freedom of 1, the results of the test concluded with $T_{\text{calculated}}$ value being .056 and the T_{critical} value being 3.841.
- C. The results fail to reject the null hypothesis and fail to support the actual hypothesis.

Chapter V

Discussion

Summary

The purpose of this research was to evaluate the presence of empowerment programs and if present what possible deficiencies there are with the current empowerment programs. The study determined the presence of empowerment by analyzing the relative frequency of responses obtained on the survey. Finally the study utilized the chi-square test to compare the survey responses observed with the expected responses.

The results suggest that management has done little or nothing to implement empowerment programs via training and leadership of employees. The survey results obtained do not allow sufficient data to support or reject the hypothesis. The results simply determined the relative frequency for the survey responses.

The survey results indicate that with questions 1 and 6 there is no significant difference between the yes and no responses. These

results could have happened by chance. However, questions 2, 3, 4, and 5 indicate a significant differences between responses. There are many factors that could have caused this difference in responses. Perhaps the questions may have been understood or interpreted differently by each individual. Possibly the individuals believing empowerment programs are being implemented are more apt to respond positively to the questions. On the contrary, those individuals that felt that empowerment programs are not being implemented may have responded negatively when answering the questions.

At the end of the survey respondents were asked to give examples of positive and negative effects. The positive effects listed were:

1. Good ideas surfaced
2. Reduced cost and time
3. Allowance for necessary changes within organization structure
4. Better command direction with employee input
5. Increased job satisfaction
6. Opportunities for career advancements/enhancements

7. Employees being more responsive to customer needs
8. Individuals can impact work environment
9. Emphasis on training and leadership skills
10. Focus on individual accomplishments

The negative effects listed were:

1. Employees can voice opinion but will be penalized
by management
2. Immediate supervisor supports employee, but not
upper management
3. Too many reviews and rewrites of manuals and
procedures
4. No employee empowerment program in place
5. If there are empowerment programs being
implemented they are too vague
6. Decreased employee morale
7. Total quality management (TQM) and empowerment
are buzz words
8. Management not supportive of empowerment
programs

9. Management support questionable unless idea is management oriented

Limitations

One of the limitations in the study was the survey questions did not measure the relationship of training and leadership as it relates to employee empowerment. Another limitation was that the survey was administered after ATCOM employees had been informed that the organization possibly would suffer from relocation and reduction in workforce. Employees may have been negatively impacted by managements decision to relocate or even terminate employment for employees within the organization. This impact can cause less than favorable responses from employees being affected by relocation or reduction in the workforce.

In addition, the respondents may have had difficulty interpreting the focus of each question. This might be attributed to the actual wording of the questions. Indeed, women may respond differently than men depending on the interpretation of the questions.

Another problem encountered by the surveyors was the length of time required to mass produce and solicit responses from employees.

The individuals were required to respond via telephonic response.

Telephonic surveys were not a common type of survey used within the organization. In addition, employees did not want to participate in the survey due to the length of time required to participate in a telephonic survey.

The telephonic survey also produced a great amount of work that the surveyors may not have anticipated. This factor is not necessarily a limitation, just a lot of work as with most research efforts. First, the surveyor randomly selected individuals from the organizational directory. Once the employee was selected, the surveyor telephoned the employee to ask if he/she wanted to participate in the survey. If the employee agreed to participate in the survey, the questions were read aloud and each answer was recorded. If the employee did not agree, the surveyor had to select the next employee on the list. After all the responses were tabulated, the survey responses were compiled and reviewed.

Another limitation associated with the survey was job satisfaction. If the employee was content in his/her workarea, then the responses were more likely to be positive or favorable. Whereas, if the

the employee worked in area that he/she is not content, then it is more probable that the response would be negative or less favorable.

Suggestions for future research

The data obtained does not conclude only suggests that recommendations aimed toward implementing or improving employee empowerment programs for individuals in the workforce.

First, it is strongly recommended that management establish an empowerment team responsible for energizing employees. Bob Nelson comments that there are six reasons why managers should energize employees:

1. Downsizing, rightsizing, and reengineering create environments in which employees trust.
2. Employees must be more self-directed and autonomous on the job.
3. Managers must create supportive work environments to foster desired behaviors and outcomes.

4. The more “high-tech” our work environments become, the more “high-touch” managers must be with their employees.
5. A manager’s limited time with his or her employees must be positive and meaningful.
6. All employees want to feel valued and appreciated for their work, skills, and knowledge. (25)

Another recommendation is that management focus on how employee empowerment results in greater customer satisfaction through increased quality goods. Employees exhibit high levels of peak performance when there is an opportunity for training and continuous learning. By providing employees with all levels of training it can enable them to meet and exceed standards. It is crucial that management educate the workforce through all levels of potential benefits of employee empowerment. When employees are given the opportunity to learn and better themselves within the organization, it can electrify an otherwise stagnant group of individuals.

It is strongly recommended that management develop an

empowerment philosophy that focuses on the principles of empowerment. Nelson states:

1. Tell each employee what he/she is responsible for.
2. Give employees authority equal to their responsibility.
3. Set standards of excellence.
4. Provide people with training
5. Provide feedback on performance.
6. Recognize them for their achievements.
7. Management needs to trust the employees.
8. Give them permission to fail
9. Treat them with dignity and respect. (31)

Finally, management must also encourage employees to become leaders or express their leadership skills. Employees must be willing to take prudent risks to move towards individual and organizational goals. This can be achieved by setting priorities and balancing resources. By encouraging every employee to take risks, exercise initiative, deliver quality results, and not to be afraid to make mistakes, management will create a supportive environment that nurtures personal and professional growth.

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