

Empowering Leadership

Douglas L. Jones



DOUGLAS L. JONES

EMPOWERING LEADERSHIP

Empowering Leadership

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BIO OF DOULAS L. JONES

An “Eagle Feather” is the highest honor that can be given to a White Man by a First Nations native. It represents “Openness, Honesty, Strength, Integrity, Character and Wisdom”.

It is the “most valuable credential” I have ever earned.

It is not something that you can strive to obtain. It is earned by giving “Trust, Respect and Acknowledgment”. It is about “Adding value to People so that they can add value to others”.

My background has been in the study of “Behavioural Psychology”.

- What are the driving forces in a person’s life
- What are the real components of their behaviours (Thinking, Feeling, Actions)
- How to influence a person’s choice of behaviours

My professional development has been through practice and teaching

- Building and maintaining a private Counselling Practice (Helping people to deal with their emotional issues)
- Building and maintaining a private Coaching Practice (Helping people to develop their intellectual goals and plans)
- Teaching the concepts of “Choice Theory Psychology, Reality Therapy and Lead Management”
- One-On-One Business and Management Coaching
- Designing and presenting “Professional Development Workshops”

I am a: Certified “John Maxwell” Coach, Trainer & Speaker

Certified Personal and Executive Coach
Certified Emotional Fitness Coach
Senior Faculty of the William Glasser Institute
Masters in Adult Education
Member of Rotary International
Member of Toastmasters International

My passion is helping “Decision Makers” to become more effective “People Influencers”.

SHORT TEASER

“Empowerment” is not a tangible thing, it is a feeling. (Within you & within your employees)

You can't help others to feel “Empowered” unless you have felt “Empowerment” within yourself.

Your words and actions are the only tools you have to “Empower” or influence others.

This book describes what drives “People's” motivation, thinking, feelings & behaviours.

It also gives you the practical understanding of people and the communication process that will “Empower” or influence the people around you.

“Empowering Leadership” means:

- Understanding your people (Their Motivations and Behaviours)
- Showing that you are interested in and care about your people
- Communicating effectively with your people (Being a role model)
- Inspiring your people (And Empowering them)

This book will change you and will change your employees.

Are you ready for this?



1 INTRODUCTION

“You cannot give what you do not have”

– John C. Maxwell

“Empowerment” is not a tangible thing. It is a personal “feeling” that only exists within you. You will choose how you “feel” by the how you are being treated (the words and actions of the people around you). Feeling empowered is something you choose. Understanding what influences that choice to “feel empowered” is what this book is all about.

Your words and actions are what will “empower” others. Choose them wisely.

This is not a self-help book. It will give you practical communication skills that will help you “Influence” other people. How you use this skill will determine whether you “empower” people or “destroy” the people you want to “Influence”.

This book can be used by every human being both personally and professionally. By understanding the content of this book, you can then choose to feel “empowered” yourself and whether you will choose to “empower” others.

However, I have designed it for Executives, Managers and Supervisors as a “People Skills” reference handbook. It is intended to give you:

- An understanding of your employee’s “needs motivations and behaviours”.
- The communication tools & strategies that will help you influence your employee’s.

Every person in the world has exactly the same “Five Basic Needs”, how each person meets those needs will be different. Awareness is the first step to understanding people (including yourself and your employees).

The chapters describing the “Five Basic Needs” will give you the following things:

1. A description of each need and how it drives a person’s feelings, their motivation and behaviour.
2. An understanding of how “Empowerment” works.
3. A process to “influence” your employee’s feeling of “Empowerment” by encouraging them to meet their own needs.
4. A feeling of “Empowerment” for yourself through understanding and a practical communication process.

The next step is to learn and practice the communication tools & strategies that will help you influence your employees. This is an integration process that will take time, effort and energy to absorb, learn and live. Keep this book handy and re-read the chapter on “Five Basic Needs” every once in a while. It will re-fresh your understanding of your employees and yourself.

“Empowerment” is not just a once off effort. It demands conscious effort every hour of every day with every employee. This will require a significant change in your attitude, motivation and even life style. You cannot encourage “Empowerment” one day and not the next.

If and when you begin to practice and live “Empowerment” your life will be changed forever. So will your employees lives, because you will become their Role Model, their Mentor and their Coach.

“Empowerment” is a gift that is yours to give. It is your choice of how you treat people. It is also a gift that you can unknowingly withhold. Either way, your employees are smart enough to figure out which you normally do. It is extremely important to understand the benefits to you and your staff, of “Empowerment”. It is equally as important to understand what withholding “Empowerment” will do to employee morale and productivity, not to mention your own credibility.

An “Empowering” attitude is a powerful thing. This is what you can give to others.

Are you ready for this?

2 DEFINITIONS

I would like to start by not only giving you my definition of certain key words but also the context and intent behind those words. The definitions may vary slightly depending on which dictionary you use, but the context should become clear.

Empower: (Dictionary definition: (verb); To enable, permit or give authority to)

(These are some of the words you will find in a Thesaurus)

- To approve of
- To authorize
- To entrust with
- To invest in
- To delegate to
- To endorse
- To sanction
- To support
- To advocate
- To boost
- To encourage
- To recommend
- To uphold
- To validate
- To enable
- To ordain
- To bestow upon
- To favour
- To promote
- To hold accountable for

When a person is empowered, they are recognized, approved and given authority. What is not so obvious is that they also inherit responsibility, additional work load and accountability.

Those seeking empowerment may want to look beyond the glory of recognition to see all the additional stress that comes with that small moment of fame.

Leader: (Dictionary definition: (noun); Captain, chief, commander, the person in charge)

Above all, a leader is a role model. He or she is measured only by their words and actions. The only tools that a leader has are his or her communication skills. John Maxwell wrote a book: “Everyone Communicates, Few Connect”. Leaders “connect” with their people.

Behaviour: (Dictionary definition: (noun); A combination of thoughts, feelings and actions)

Behaviour is not just your actions. You are always thinking and feeling things while you are acting. A more accurate phrase would be “Total Behaviour”. When I use the word behaviour in this book, I am always referring to total behaviour (Your thoughts, feelings and actions together).

Motivation: (Dictionary definition: (noun); That which gives purpose to behaviour)

Motivation is 100% inside of you. Other people can try to influence you, but they cannot motivate you.

Your motivation is decided by:

- analyzing the situation
- deciding how you feel about all the influences around you
- studying all the options that look like good solutions (actions that might be taken)
- deciding which action to take and whether it is worth it
- Determining the consequences of the actions
- (sometimes Determining the consequences of the actions on other people)

Your motivation is measured mostly by how you feel after this decision process. This process does not take very long nor does it take much conscious thinking because you have repeated it so often with so many different circumstances, that it has become a sub-conscious response.

The bottom line is that nobody can motivate you. They can try to influence you but **“they cannot get inside your head and force you to think the way they want you to.”**

Psychology: (Dictionary definition: (noun); An attitude, an ideology, a way of thinking)

Each of us has our own brand of logic (psychology if you will). Sometimes it is called perception. This is why the real world does not exist. It only exists as you see it. After all, at least to you, your perception is what is real to you, for now anyway.

Your way of thinking is what rules your world. Learning means that you are accepting that there are other ways of looking at things. Your psyche (thinking) is expanding. It is all about being open to new ideas.

Manager: (Dictionary definition: (noun); Administrator, boss, overseer, supervisor)

I make this distinction between Leader and Manager, because in the dictionary, they use the words leader and manager interchangeably. In actual fact, they have entirely different meanings and functions.

First, a leader works “on” the system giving guidance and direction. Whereas, a manager works “in” the system to implement the corporate processes.

Both Managers and Leaders would benefit by understanding the people they lead and strengthening their ability to empower those same people they lead.

3 UNDERSTANDING THE NEEDS, MOTIVATIONS & BEHAVIOURS OF YOUR EMPLOYEES

As a human being, your number one priority in life is to get what you “want” from the outside world and the people around you. What you “want” may be a great deal more than what you actually “need”. Meeting your “needs” will give you a feeling that you are satisfactorily living your life. Getting what you “want” will be a constant struggle because of the thinking that “more is better”. Ultimately, the more “wants” you get, the less satisfied you become. This is a vicious cycle which will be a constant thorn in your side and it will greatly influence your motivation.

I will not debate the merits of you getting more of your “wants” in the book. I will however, discuss meeting your “Five Basic Needs” as they are defined in detail in Dr. William Glasser’s book: “Choice Theory”.

We all have exactly the same “Five Basic Needs”, however each person will meet their own needs differently. The “Five Basic Needs” are the physical and mental driving forces in every person’s life. 99% of the behaviours you use in the run of a day can be shown to be an attempt to meet one or more of these “Five Basic Needs”. Consciously or unconsciously, you will struggle to meet these “Five Basic Needs” as a minimum, in the behaviours you choose while living your daily life routines.

The Need for Security and Survival

The Need to Achieve, Accomplish and Succeed

The Need to Have Freedom of Choice

The Need to Belong and Feel Valued

The Need to Have Fun

The key here is that when you understand how these needs drive your feelings & behaviours (thoughts, feelings & actions), you will also understand what drives the behaviours of your employees. The additional benefit is that you will also understand how to “Empower” your employees. As I explain each of the “Five Basic Needs”, I will give you practical examples of “How to empower a person”.

“Empowerment” is about learning about you and why you and your employees do the things you do. It is then about learning how to “communicate to motivate” your employees.

If knowledge is power then this book will “Empower” you, and it is your choice to pass that “Empowerment” along to your employees.

3.1 THE NEED FOR SECURITY AND SURVIVAL

It should be obvious that survival is the most important need in everyone’s life. If you don’t survive, there is no point in discussing anything further.

Most people have a job or some source of income. Why? The answer is: To buy heat, light, water, food and shelter (because if we didn’t have these things, we wouldn’t survive). We usually try to get to work on time and do a good job while we are there so that we keep our job. We will usually try to do quality work in an effort to make ourselves indispensable as much as possible. Sometimes we will do more than what is asked for or expected so that we appear more valuable to the company. And sometimes, we may do things that we are not paid for so that we appear more valuable than other employees (like taking work home with us to impress the managers).

Theoretically, the amount of time we should spend on earning our income is about 8 hours a day. This is not necessarily so for most of us. If you include travel time and preparation time, that figure is more like 10 to 11 hours a day. The bottom line is, consciously or unconsciously, 99% of our thoughts, feelings and actions at work are oriented toward meeting our survival need.

Secondly, every person in the world needs to get some sleep every day (day or night). Why? The answer is: Because if you didn’t sleep, you wouldn’t survive. Again, theoretically, we should sleep about 8 hours a day. (The amount of sleep a person gets may vary)

Thirdly, people need to eat. Some people concentrate on eating the right foods all of the time. Most people don’t eat properly. Some eat too little, some eat too much and most of us don’t eat the right stuff. Our survival depends on our eating habits.

Fourthly, people need fluids. What we drink and how much we drink will dramatically impact our survival.

Regardless, everyone in the world concentrates on making sure they survive until tomorrow and hopefully a little longer. Survival is the physical need and obviously the most important need. If we didn't survive, it is (The End).

In any case, about two thirds of our day is focused almost entirely on meeting our survival need. This means that we only have about a third of our day left to get all our other four psychological needs met.

Just look at all of the things you do in a day (behaviours you use) that insure your survival.

- You get up on time
- You get to work on time
- You do a good job at work, so that you keep your job
- You eat when you are hungry
- You choose healthy foods (Maybe)
- You drink fluids when you are thirsty (Some good for you, some not)
- You exercise a little (Maybe a lot, maybe not at all)
- You get some sleep

These are not behaviours that you sometime do only if you feel like it. These are behaviours that you have to do. And they are behaviours that you have to do every day whether you like it or not. Your very survival depends on doing them. Survival is a very powerful driving force in everybody's life.

Security is a sub-set of survival. An employee needs to know that the income being earned will insure:

- there is food on the table at home
- that the mortgage is being paid
- that the kids will be educated
- that he or she has transportation
- that there is time for the family, friends
- that there is some fun along the way

A manager or leader in the workplace needs to understand how powerful a motivator "security and survival" are in an employee's life (their own lives too).

Employees constantly measure how they feel about their jobs (so do managers and leaders)

- about the workplace environment
- about who they work “for”
- about who they work “with”
- about the company itself
- about whether their job is secure
- and when and how much the next raise will be

To “empower” someone, anyone, you must first get to know them a little. This means genuinely connecting with them and not just passing niceties. This does not have to take hours of conversations, but it does mean that you need to show interest in them, maybe their family but most importantly their well-being and stability. Before you can influence someone, they need to know that you care about them.

You can tell when a person is sad, angry or frustrated. Most times we just ignore it thinking that they’ll get over it. That indifference is usually viewed as “you just don’t care”. One question “by you” could make a world of difference in your relationship (friendship) with that person.

How do you think that person would react to you saying: “You seem a little frustrated right now, Are you?”

Please note that if this is the first time that you have shown any interest in this person, you will get you a funny look, because this person has no reason to trust you yet. But, if you become consistent in using this approach, the trust will grow because you will appear authentic, respectful and trustworthy.

Again, the first time you ask this type of question, their response might be a little guarded, but eventually they will begin to see you as at least a little more interested and sensitive than next guy. Awareness, interest and sensitivity are what opens the door to “empowerment”.

“**Empowering**” an employee is being sensitive to how that employee feels about his or her own security and survival circumstance. It would not be a good idea to talk about the needs of the company when the employee is worried about the car payment that is due at the end of the month. The employee will feel **empowered** if he or she feels that you care about them and would actually help if you could.

“**Empowerment**” is about treating the employees in such a way that they “feel” good about the relationship they have with you. They also might feel that they would help you or the company if they actually could while still meeting their own needs.

3.2 THE NEED TO ACHIEVE, ACCOMPLISH AND SUCCEED

Every person, in the world today, wants to know that they can be a success at something. We have a need to know that, if we put our minds to something, we can achieve it or accomplish some or all of what we set out to do.

If we achieve it, our self-esteem will increase, our self-worth and self-image will improve. We will feel good about ourselves, our skills and our abilities. We can then feel proud of our progress and track record. We strive for self-confidence through the things we have done and what we are capable of doing in the future. Achievement will dramatically affect how we feel about ourselves. (The internal impact)

If we accomplish things, our status with the people around us will rise. We will be viewed as competent, resourceful and skilled. If we know that we have done our best, then we are proud to share our efforts with the outside world. We seek recognition from the people we want to impress. When we get it, we will work harder to accomplish the next big thing. Accomplishment influences our motivation to achieve more. (The external impact)

The way we measure how well we **Achieve, Accomplish and Succeed**, is by how we feel about the results of our efforts. No matter what we try to do, we will measure how well we did by how we feel.

Feeling good will only last for a short time, and then we move on to the next effort. All of this is to say that we are constantly, every moment of every day, striving to **Achieve, Accomplish and Succeed**. We are constantly seeking our own approval and the approval of others for the many things we do each day.

This is a force at the cellular level inside every human being on earth. Managers and Leaders need to understand that this is a strong driving force in every employee's life, not only in the workplace but in every aspect of his or her personal life too.

A “good” manager needs to recognize each employee's need to **Achieve, Accomplish and Succeed**. A “great” manager learns to channel and encourage each employee's work efforts in the direction of the company or department's goals. When the manager provides the resources needed for the job and professional development opportunities along the way, this gives the employee the feeling that “**this**” workplace is a need satisfying pace to be.

That same “great” manager learns to encourage that employee to meet their own personal needs as well. This of course means that the manager must also learn to connect with each employee on a personal level more than just the daily pleasantries. This does not mean that you become best buddies, but it does mean that you become aware of that employee's goals, plans and aspirations.

Sometimes a manager can even design workplace activities that help an employee to accomplish some of those employee's personal goals too.

This kind of interest in an employee's personal and professional growth, development and accomplishment, gives that employee a stronger sense of self-confidence and self-worth. In other words, it meets an employee's need to **Achieve, Accomplish and Succeed**. This creates the internal feeling that the need is being met.

Additionally, that **“great”** manager will publicly acknowledge each employee's contributions. This does not mean praise, but does mean giving credit where credit is due. A simple thank you once in a while will go a long way to ensuring employee productivity, job satisfaction and loyalty. All too often we look for the things that our employees do wrong. A **“great”** manager looks to catch an employee doing the right things or doing a good job, and lets the world know that the company is proud of this employee and that this employee can be proud of their own accomplishments too.

This establishes the employee's credibility with his or her peers, other managers and the world at large. This is the recognition that everyone secretly craves. It is the external tangible evidence that we are worthy of the confidence that others have in us. This is the positive external impact that a manager can have on an employee.

Please note: **“Only a secure manager or leader will empower his or her employees.”**
“Likewise, the more successful your employees are, the more successful you become.”

Leadership is **“Influence”** nothing more, nothing less.

– John Maxwell

“Empowering Leadership” means: actively encouraging (**Influencing**) employees to **Achieve, Accomplish and Succeed**.

“Empowering Leadership” also means acknowledging each employee's contribution to you personally, to the team and to the company. Obviously this is a benefit to the employee, the team, the manager and the company. Everybody wins.

3.3 THE NEED TO HAVE FREEDOM OF CHOICE

Have you ever been told “Do this now”? They may have said it nicer but in the end you are still being told what to do and when to do it. To them, you don't have any choice. To them, you must do what they tell you to do and you need to do it now. How do you feel?

No matter how nicely they put it, chances are that you are not going to jump up with enthusiasm and get it done. The feeling will most likely be negative.

We judge how well we are doing meeting our own needs by how we feel. A negative feeling usually indicates that our needs are not being met at this moment in time. When we are “told what and when to do things” and are given no choices, we will probably assume any or all of the following:

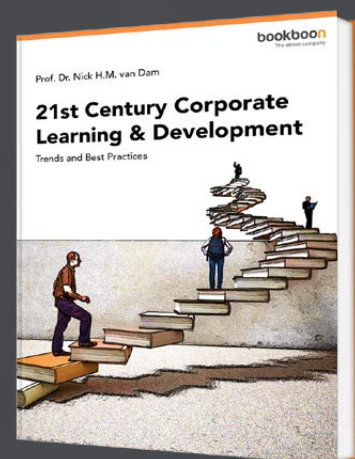
- They want power over me
- They think that I am not smart enough to do things on my own
- They always give me the crummy jobs
- They don't think that I am good enough to do more important things
- They don't trust me
- They don't respect me
- I am being punished

All of this resentment is created just because we are not given any options. When we have negative feelings, we tend to rebel. All animals, even humans, when backed into a corner, will come out fighting. Look at every war that has ever been fought in the entire history of man, somebody thought their freedom was going to be taken away.

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The simple fact is that, if we were given options, even limited ones, we would not have as many negative feelings. Self-defense is not necessary and discussion is then possible. The need for Freedom of Choice is so strong that sometimes it outweighs logic.

Freedom of Choice is a driving force that lingers in the background of our mind and only bursts out when there is a threat of it being taken away. We tend to think of Freedom of Choice as a personal inalienable right and not just a privilege.

There are two major influences on our need for Freedom of Choice.

1. Because we have had to fight all our lives to get what we believe is rightfully ours, we tend to reject the limitations that other people place on us. We do not want to be controlled or manipulated.
2. Because we have a strong need to achieve, accomplish and succeed, we are constantly searching for ways to control our surroundings. Controlling another person is an accomplishment. We usually hate it when people do this to us, and yet we still try to do it to others because it feels like we are in control and we have accomplished something.

When assigning tasks to your employees, “how you say it” is as important as what you have to say. There is always a choice, as limited as it might be. Managers and Leaders need to understand how destructive “**demands without options**” can be and why.

Being aware of your employee’s need for Freedom of Choice is a management tool that will help you put things in such a way as to encourage the employee to search for the options. Employees will often surprise you with their perceptions of what the different options might be. Listening to your employees is empowerment at its best.

Managers and leaders who respect “the needs” of each employee in every interaction with their employees, will find after a time, a dramatic change in their employee’s attitudes, thinking, feelings and actions. If you want to “empower” your employees, this is how you do it.

“**Empowering**” employees is simply making sure that you give them some options (as limited as they may be). You might want to focus all of the options on getting the results you want but they are still options.

“**Empowerment**” is when an employee feels that you have tried your best to give them as much freedom as possible.

3.4 THE NEED TO BELONG AND FEEL VALUED

All we have in this world is the relationships we build with other people (at home, at work and socially). Sure we can buy valuable things but those things don't value us in return. We have a need to connect with people, talk with people and be valued by people.

Look at all the clubs, associations, religions, political parties and activist groups that exist. In the free world, they all provide a place where people of like minds can gather in support of each other. In these groups and activities, we know that we will be accepted and recognized as adding value and support for some chosen cause. Some people will even seek to be on the executive or at least have input into group policies or activities, thereby increasing their value to the group.

On the negative side, even street gangs and organized crime, recognizes that everybody has a strong need to belong and be valued.

As employees, we work hard at our jobs, we produce quality and we contribute to the workplace culture as we can. For all that we contribute at work, we want that contribution be acknowledged and valued because it shows that we are valued as a member of the team and as a person.

We strive to be members of the team. We want to be recognizable within the team. To be recognizable, we must contribute. We want that contribution to be recognized and valued. This makes us valuable too. Being valued by others makes up a large part of our self-esteem (it shouldn't but it does).

We have a strong need to belong and be valued. We measure "how well that need is being met" by how we think other people "feel" about us (being valued by others). This need is so strong, that if a relationship goes bad, sometimes people will become depressed. If the relationship gets better, people tend to be happier. It doesn't matter where that relationship is (home, work, socially) the feelings will affect every aspect of our life including work.

As Managers and Leaders, you must continuously look for opportunities to recognize, acknowledge and appreciate (not necessarily praise) the contributions of your employees. This says to them that you value them as a person and a member of the team. In most cases, a simple "thank you for doing that" is all that is needed.

The morale of your organization is a direct reflection of whether or not each employee feels valued. Job satisfaction, productivity and absenteeism are also a measure of each employee's feeling of being valued in the organization.

The best example of the effects of “valuing people” came from when I was Software Development Manager for a company. When I arrived, the morale of the entire company was a 3 on a scale of 1 to 10. In 6 months, the morale of my department was an 8, while the rest of the company stayed at a 3. My focus was on recognizing the accomplishments of each employee and getting each employee to recognize each other for their contribution too.

“Empowering” an employee can be as simple as showing them that you value them as a team member. Just think about how you felt, the last time someone said: “Thank you, I appreciate that”.

“Empowerment” means truly valuing each employee “each day”. Valuing your employees will go a long way to ensuring employee attendance, productivity, job satisfaction and loyalty.

3.5 THE NEED TO HAVE FUN

There are some billion dollar industries that have done thousands of psychological studies and have found that “Fun” is one of the most powerful driving forces in a person’s life. These industries are spending millions of dollars per “Hour” to get you to buy their brand of fun. They are called the Movies and Television.

Now, look at all the would-be “Jocs” who play weekend football, hockey, soccer, baseball and basketball or any other, supposedly non-contact sport. They finish bruised and battered and yet will say “wow that was fun”. Look at all the amateur and professional sports that are on TV. You can watch other people get bruised and battered and still you can say “that was fun”. Sometimes, we will intentionally participate in potentially dangerous activities if the desire for fun outweighs the risks.

I need to clarify my meaning of the word “Fun”. The meaning I attach to the word Fun is “enjoyment”, and is not “frivolous comedy”. I see Fun in the workplace more as “Whistle while you work” rather than being mischievous and unproductive. Fun comes from enjoying what you do, appreciating the amount of energy and effort you put into it and taking pride in the results.

Most times, Fun is “the reward” for all the dull and boring things we have to do all our lives. We tend to look for the fun in everything we do. If there is some fun involved, it becomes the justification for the hum-drum drudgery of our everyday existence. If there is no fun involved, then we will tend to create fun in the project. And, sometimes we do things just because they are fun.

In the workplace, “Does having fun at your job mean that the quality of the work suffers?” The answer is “NO”. In fact, if employees are having fun while working, most often they will take the time and effort to do it right the first time. Studies have shown that productivity and the quality of the work increases in an enjoyable work environment. (FUN)

Studies have also shown that you will get only the minimum productivity and quality when the workplace environment is one of fear and intimidation. In this environment employees are never sure of what to expect and constantly fear punishment. (Lack of FUN)

We can rationalize things any way we want, but Fun is a motivator. Think it about for yourself. Wouldn't you rather work at a place where you enjoy what you are doing? Isn't it better to have a workplace that is fun to be at, rather than to be at a place that is nothing but pressure and stress?

As a Manager or Leader, you can influence the workplace you are in. You can reduce stress and increase productivity simply by introducing and encouraging a little fun here and there. The culture of your organization and the attitude of your employees will swing in a positive direction when there is a little fun to be had by all.

Fun in the workplace is a hard concept to accept since most of us concentrate on the serious bottom line goals of productivity and profitability. In the past, the attitude of “fun in the workplace” was almost forbidden. Studies now show that employees are almost more interested in reducing stress in their own lives than meeting the company's profitability goals. Making the workplace more enjoyable (Fun) should be a management priority.

“Empowering” employees means encouraging them to “whistle while they work” so to speak. Encouraging employees to have fun will go a long way to ensuring employee productivity, job satisfaction and loyalty.

“Empowerment” means learning how to make the workplace an enjoyable place to be. Your customers and suppliers will also recognize the enjoyable culture that you are encouraging. If you were to see a Fun workplace instead of a Stressed workplace, who would you want to do business with.

4 DEVELOPING, STRENGTHENING AND PRACTICING THE “EMPOWERMENT SKILLS”

Once you understand the “Five Basic Needs” and how to apply that understanding to influence your employees, you will need some practical exercises to practice these skills.

I have described some real life situations that you will run into at home, at work even socially. This is where you can practice, adjust your process and practice some more. The challenge is to compare what you do now with a new set of ideas. Try them, you’ll like them. See for yourself what works for you and what doesn’t.

Think Before You Speak

Acknowledge their Frustrations

Conflict Resolution

Clarify Perceptions

Building Trust and Respect

“Empowerment” is a gradual process that you can develop within yourself.

“Empowering” is sharing your skills and wisdom.

(Modeling the behaviours you want to see)

4.1 THINK BEFORE YOU SPEAK

Back in the 70s, some of the major universities did studies that showed that we think at about 1400 words per minute, that we can hear at about 750 words per minute and that we can only speak at about 150 words per minute. Just think about a time when you were deep in a conversation with the person in front of you and another conversation starts up somewhere near you and you can keep track of both. Now think about how you answered the person in front of you and yet you still had time to process how you felt about that second conversation.

What this is saying is that we have a lot of “Think Time” while we are waiting for the person in front of us to finish what they are saying. Usually, we are thinking about our own response, but we also processed some other fleeting thoughts while we are waiting, such as what we are going to have for lunch and we finally remembered that will need to do some laundry before that big meeting tomorrow. As soon as that person is finished their last sentence, we tend to hit them with our own ideas. The question is, did we really listen to what that person said or were we thinking about other things?

There is an exercise you can try just for fun that allows you to be an observer of your own behaviours (Thoughts, Feelings and Actions). In your next few conversations, just observe the number and types of thoughts and feelings that you have while waiting for your turn to speak. Try this a few times and you will be amazed at how many thoughts get packed into that “Think Time” between your speaking times.

It is in this “Think Time” that you have an opportunity to think about doing things differently. The choice is between the “way you have always done it”, (getting your point of view across), and adding value to or “Empowering” that person in front of you. You do not always have to get your point across nor do you always have to be right. “Empowering Leadership” is about putting your needs aside for a moment and helping that other person meet their own needs and accomplish their own goals while they are speaking.



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What do you think that person’s perception of you is when they come out of that conversation feeling “listened to and understood”? Isn’t that an accomplishment on your part? In the long run, isn’t that meeting your needs too? All you had to do was change your perspective of what is important at this moment. Now, consider what it costs you to make this type of change in your actions. There is no down side for “Empowering” people. Do you want to “Empower” someone or work on meeting your own needs first by making sure that your own opinions known?

“Empowering” another person is a conscious choice in every conversation you have. Why not take the time to practice?

“Thinking Before You Speak” is suggesting that “If you want to Empower employees”, you need to listen to what is being said, and show that you have heard and understand what was said. This acknowledges that they are of value to you and that you respect their opinions and ideas even if you may not agree with them. It also shows that you trust them to give the opportunity to give your own thoughts and ideas.

One of the keys to learning how to “Empower” anybody is to recognize in your conversations, when to consciously do thing differently. These are called triggers. In the beginning, this will take a considerable amount of time, effort and energy on your part to identify. Changing your focus away from you and placing that focus on them will be a big adjustment for you to make.

Only secure Managers and Leaders “Empower” their employees. It might be wise to keep in mind, that “the more successful your employees are, the more successful you will become”. Your image and reputation is build and maintained through your employees.

“Thinking Before You Speak” will give you the opportunity to choose to handle things differently. Understanding the needs that drive your employee’s motivation and behaviours are the resources necessary formulate the action plan. And, learning “how to say it” will be the tools that make it all happen.

“Empowering” your employees is about finding every opportunity to show that you pay attention when they speak, and that you are interested helping them to be successful. This simple behaviour on your part will create the feeling being valued, appreciated and “empowered” in your employees.

“Empowerment” happens when you are as concerned about “how you say it” as you are about “what you have to say”

“Thinking Before You Speak” is your opportunity to make a difference in your own life and the lives of your employees. It is a choice that will “Empower” you and your employees. Choose wisely.

4.2 ACKNOWLEDGE THEIR FRUSTRATIONS

All of your employees will get frustrated once in a while and the source may come from home or be at work. As a Leader or Manager, your job is be sensitive to the changes in your employee’s moods and be recognized as a person that they can go to if they need to talk. This does not mean that you have to become their counsellor, but it does mean that you understand and are willing to guide them to get the help they need.

A simple “You seem really frustrated by something, how can I help?” may be all you have to say in a private conversation. They may or may not want to talk, but what this tells them about you, is that you care about them. They will know that they are not alone and that help is available if they want it.

Sometimes it may be a situation that they have no control over, sometimes it is a very personal issue or it could be anywhere in between. Sometimes they just need to vent about it and sometime they need to seek professional help. As Managers and Leaders you may need to become more sensitive to the feelings and moods of your employees, not as their problem solver, but more as a resource or guide.

You do not have to look only for frustrations to justify acknowledging people, just remembering a person’s name is the most powerful acknowledgement of all. The sweetest music of all is hearing someone call you by you own name. As a Manager or Leader, acknowledging your employees and anyone else you come in contact with, should become a habit you practice every day. Not only does it build and strengthen your relationship with them, but it also strengthens your credibility in their eyes and in the eyes of everyone around you.

Everyone has a strong need to be recognized as a valued human being. They also need to know that their contribution is appreciated. Acknowledging people is a key step in the process of “Empowering” people.

At one time, Jack Welsh, CEO of General Electric knew the names of every employee on the production line. Even today he still learns the name of his cab drivers and thanks them by name at the end of the ride. That is acknowledgement taken to a very positive outcome.

In terms of “Empowerment”, you are acknowledging them as a person of value, that you respect their freedom of choice, that their survival is important to you and that you have confidence in their ability to handle things.

“Empowerment” is about taking the time, effort and energy to recognizing every opportunity where you can demonstrate that you want to encourage your employees to meet their own needs first and become as successful as possible.

4.3 CONFLICT RESOLUTION

In some cases, conflict is the mother of invention (a good thing). In other cases conflict is a power struggle. In either case, resolution is taking action to achieve an equitable result. For now, we are going to deal with the power struggles.

In most cases, conflict resolution implies there must be winner and a loser. In most scenarios, one party gets most of what they want and the other party walks away disappointed or angry. This is not resolution at all, at best it is summary judgment with no recourse. All too often, this is the inevitable result for disputes over tangible assets.

Here, I would like to present a process by which you can create more “Win-Win” solutions than you have ever done before. Of course, it is based on the understanding of our need for Achievement, Accomplishment and Success (personal power).

Consider when someone is in a verbal rage and you are the target. Usually, the more they rant the madder they get.

There are many ways to handle this situation, but I would suggest the following is a more effective resolution to the issues.

In your first step, you say: “I want to understand this better. Tell me what the matter is”

The flood gate will now open. They will dump all of their information on you (good, bad, relevant or not). Your job at this point is just to listen (no comments, suggestions, not a word). This may take as long as 20 minutes if they want. You asked them, so shut up and listen. They are even allowed to bring up things which have no meaning. They may even question your heritage. No matter, you have asked them to go first.

In your second step, you say: “I think I understand now. How do you think we should solve this issue?”

And now the dam bursts. They will probably tell you everything that you have ever done wrong, everything that you should be doing right now to fix it and everything that you should be doing in the future so it doesn't happen again. And again, they may even question your heritage. This may take another 20 minutes, but you are the one who asked, so again, shut up and listen.

At the end of all this venting, here is your question to yourself: “Is the emotions still as high as they were when this person started their tirade?”

The answer is “NO”. “Why?” The answer is:

- You acknowledged their frustration
- You asked them to state their issues
- You listened to everything they had to say
- You were not judgmental (You didn't speak)
- You appeared to value them as a person
- You showed them respect
- You asked for their solutions

For the most part all that is left is “How do we fix this”? (And you even have their suggestions)

They came to you with a strong need for achievement (power over you). You gave it to them on a silver platter. You even asked them for their solutions. From their perspective, they won, they beat you up and you didn't even defend yourself. Their need for power was met big time and they left you with nothing. (The first part of the “Win-Win”)

Now ask yourself, “Who guided this scenario?” “Who was able to defuse the anger? Who removed the emotion out of the potentially explosive situation?” “Who had the patience to use the understanding of the “empowerment” process to affect the calm solution?” “How do I feel about the skills that I just used?” “Are my needs being met?”

In the end, the complainer's needs are being met and your needs are also being met. Isn't this much closer to the “win-win”?

“Empowerment” is about understanding the “Five Basic Needs” and how they affect people's choices of behaviours (Thinking, Feeling and Actions). It is then about developing the communication skills within yourself to model the empowerment process.

“Empowering” behaviours are the conscious application of Leadership Skills to influence relationships (At home or at work). I encourage you to practice, practice, practice.

4.4 CLARIFYING PERCEPTIONS

The following scenario is a good example of the need for Clarifying Perceptions.

One day in the late afternoon, the boss rushes in, says nervously and loudly to an employee, “I need this report by 9:00 am tomorrow morning, can you get it for me? I’ll give you all the resources you need, can you do it”? The employee just as nervously says yes and the boss hurriedly goes back to his office. 9:00 am the next morning the boss screams “What the hell is this, This is not what I asked for?”

The first question that came up was “Who’s fault is it?” Some people said it was the employee’s fault for not producing the report that the boss wanted. Some said that it was the boss’s fault for not explaining exactly what he wanted. Some said that it was both their faults. The reality was that they were both at fault. The boss thought he gave one picture and the employee thought he got a different picture and the problem was that neither one of them bothered to check to see that the two pictures were the same.

There are two pieces of learning here. The first is that attaching blame is not helpful, useful or productive. It wastes valuable time effort and energy, along with causing anger, resentment and fear. This is the exact opposite of empowerment. The focus should have been on “Why did this happen. And, how do we make sure it doesn’t happen again?”

The second piece of learning is that it is the boss’s responsibility to make sure that the employee knows exactly what the content of the report should show. It is also the responsibility of the employee to make sure that he understands exactly what he is to produce. What this means is that they both need to ask questions until that criteria is met. Both the boss and the employee need to “Clarify their Perceptions”.

There is one solid fact here. “The real world does not exist, it only exists as I (You) see it”. The old saying is that “Perception is Everything”. Just because we think we gave an accurate description of what we want, does not mean that the other person got the same picture as we intended. Likewise, what appears to be a negative circumstance may not necessarily be negative at all. As Managers or Leaders we need to check all of our perceptions all of the time.

“Empowerment” means that you need to take on the responsibility to make sure that your perceptions are accurate every time. Please note: things change, so just because your perception of someone or something was accurate yesterday, does not mean that it accurate now. Check again.

“Empowering” your employees means that you model the behaviours you expect from them. It is your job to encourage clear communications in both directions.

4.5 BUILDING TRUST AND RESPECT

BUILDING TRUST

All you have in this world is the relationships that you build with the people around you. There are three major feelings that are absolutely essential in a “Quality” working relationship. If “Trust, Respect or Acknowledgement” are missing in any relationship, then the relationship is doomed to “Fail”.

Think of these feelings as they apply to you. Think about a person that you don’t “trust”. Is your relationship with them great, just so-so or are you skeptical in every moment you have to spend with them?

Trust is a great motivator. If you “trust” someone, typically you would do almost anything for them and you know that they would probably do the same for you. You have a feeling of being secure in the relationship you have with them. You may know in your heart that they would never intentionally harm you. Over time, circumstances around you may change, but “Trust” is what will help you through the bad time as well as the good. The interesting thing about “trust” is that it is a forever thing.

If you do not “trust” a person, then typically you will question every behaviour (thoughts, feelings and actions) that person uses. You will be skeptical of their motives, intentions and the quality of what they produce. Your major focus will be on “what that person is doing wrong now” or “how will they hurt me this time”? What is interesting about not trusting a person is that there is almost nothing you like or trust about that person ever again.

“Trust” is usually looked upon as an “All or Nothing” thing. Once you have lost trust in a person, it is almost impossible for them to regain your trust.

“Trust” is lost when one person makes a mistake that hurts someone else. We are all human and we all make mistakes. We will make more mistakes in the future, guaranteed.

“Trust” is simple, either you do or you don’t. If you do trust, there is a bucket of emotions that support that feeling. If you don’t trust, there is a different bucket of emotions that support that feeling too.

We change our minds many times every day. You can change your mind about “trust” in an instant too. The difficulty is that it is very easy to switch from “trusting” to “not trusting”, but it is almost impossible to switch back to “trusting” once you decide not to “trust” a person.

To make the transition back to “trusting” requires that you forgive yourself for two things. First, it is about forgiving yourself for being wrong about that person. You made the mistake of “trusting” them. They proved that your judgment was wrong. This means that you are flawed. This causes guilt in you and so you think that you deserve to be punished.

And second, it is not about forgiving that other person for making a mistake, it is about forgiving yourself for wanting to hold a grudge against them for pointing out your personal flaws and bad judgment.

The reason it is so hard for someone to regain your “trust” is that there is nothing that they can say or do that would make a difference. You are the one that has to do all the internal work. You have to give yourself permission to get over your own embarrassing habits.

We can't forget about the things that happened in the past but we can learn from them. There are no guarantees that those same mistakes won't be made again, but it is your choice as to whether you believe that the person will try not to make the same or other mistakes again. But more importantly, “Trust” is a choice. It is simple but it is not easy.

If you choose to NOT trust, then you may have to live with doubt, anger, frustration and worry. Ultimately this will affect your attitude towards and outlook on life. You may have heard of the term “worried sick”. Living in a constant negative state of mind can and will make you sick.

If you choose to “trust”, then the opposite of “worried sick” becomes true. Less stress and anxiety leads to more satisfaction and happiness.

If “trust” is a choice, then you may want to ask yourself, “Do I want to live my life worrying and waiting for a person to prove that I can trust them?” or “Do I want to live my life trusting people until they give me a reason not to?” With the former, you will live in fear and trepidation, with the latter, you will live anticipation and harmony. Which will it be for you?

This is how you consciously choose to “Empower” yourself.

People can tell whether you “trust” them or not. Choosing to “trust” is how you “Empower” your employees.

BUILDING RESPECT

Again, all you have in this world is the relationships that you build with the people around you. If “respect” is missing on either side of a relationship, then that relationship is doomed for failure.

“Respect” is a feeling and that feeling is strengthened or destroyed based on how each person treats you. You measure their attitudes and feelings toward you to establish how much “respect” they have for you. “Respect” is also yours to give or withhold and it will be obvious which one you are doing at any point in time.

To “respect” someone means that you value them, you appreciate them and see them as a positive influence in your life. If you do not “respect” someone, it usually means that you do not value them and would prefer not to have any contact with them at all.

Just be aware that if you are forced to work with a person that you do not “respect” that negativity can make you sick. The same is true of a relative or an in-law that you do not “respect”, they can make you sick too.

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You don't have any “control” over how people treat you, but you do have absolute control over how you treat the people around you.

You've heard of the term “Treat people with respect”. Well, here is how you do that.

“Ask instead of tell”. Think about how you feel when a person asks for your thoughts, ideas, feelings, opinions. It feels pretty good doesn't it? Someone wants to hear what you have to say.

The questioner is really saying:

- I respect your right to have an opinion
- I do not necessarily have to agree with you
- I am interested you as a person
- I am interested in your thoughts and feelings
- I trust that you will give me a true and honest answer
- I trust that you will ask me for my opinions and feelings too
- I trust that we can discuss these ideas and not just argue who is right and who is wrong
- I trust that this discussion will build respect for each other

Even if you want to get a point across, you can still put it in the form of a question. For example: “What do you think about this idea?” This gets your idea out there and still asks for their opinion. Asking for a person's opinion is the most effective way to build respect.

“Trust and Respect” go hand in hand, and building them will take a different mindset than most of us have grown up with. From the day you were born, you have been trying to get what you want from the people around you. The idea of constantly going after what you want and getting your demands stated has created years of habits. You have programmed yourself to be first in line when it comes to your speaking or your actions.

“Asking” implies that you are willing to go second (you want them to speak first). This is not going to be an easy transition for anybody to make. Going second is not a habit that most of us have ever consciously practiced. This creates an enormous internal conflict. It delays our meeting our own need for achievement and accomplishment. But look at the benefits.

This is the “Empowerment” skill. The cost of going second is a minor delay in meeting our own needs in favour of “empowering” others first and then enjoying the satisfaction of knowing that it is our own skill that creates all of the shared “Empowerment”.

“Asking” is an attitude shift. I have used the term “You cannot give what you do not have”. Shifting your attitude to become inquisitive is the gift of “Empowerment”, not only to yourself but also the people you ask.

I have also used the term “Everyone Communicates, Few Connect”. Connecting means putting the time effort and energy into building “Trust and Respect” with everyone around you.

“Empowerment” means that you demonstrate that you are willing to give up your right to be first, that you are willing to listen and that you are interested in them as valued employees and friends.

“Empowering” means being a role model. It means understanding the concepts of Leadership and practicing them wherever possible.

4.6 CATCH THEM DOING SOME “GOOD STUFF”

By now, you should realize that recognition and acknowledgement are huge motivators in anyone’s life.

Because we constantly struggle to meet our need for accomplishment and success, we have developed the idea that if we find the mistakes of others, we will look better or we will appear more competent. Nobody really teaches this principle, we just watch others do it and then adjust the process to suit ourselves. It is a habit that is well engrained in our subconscious mind, so much so that we view “mistake finding in other people” as a valuable asset to our skillset.

Here is a question for you: “What is your impression of a person who constantly points out other people’s mistakes?” I do not trust them and I do not respect them. To me, they are malicious back stabbers.

If this is just an inherited skill without a serious evaluation of its consequences, then we need to question the value of doing it. This brings up the question: “What can we do instead that would be more in line with our core values?”

The obvious answer is to search for “the good stuff” that people do well. This may take some time, effort and energy to get it right. Secondly, what you do with that information becomes important. Recognition is very different from praise and acknowledgement is very different from prestige.

Praise and prestige are both evaluations. They are somebody’s opinion. The problem with giving evaluations or opinions is that as soon as you don’t give it to the next person, feelings are hurt and morale goes down.

On the other hand recognition and acknowledgement are tangible statements of fact. There are no inherent values attached.

Searching for the “good stuff” is a talent well worth developing. It will have a dramatic positive affect on morale. The reason is because it meets our basic need for accomplishment and achievement. Done well, this form of recognition is an effective “Empowerment” tool.

“Empowerment” done in this way has three benefits. One is that you can feel “empowered” by giving it away to your employees. Two is that your employees feel “empowered” by your gift of recognition and acknowledgement. And three your employees will begin to emulate you. They too will search for the “good stuff” in others.

Being a Leader means taking a risk. So take risks that have a proven greater positive potential.

5 SUMMARY

In the introduction, I quoted John Maxwell as saying: “You cannot give what you do not have”. In terms of empowerment, this means that you cannot empower other if you have never experienced the feeling of being empowered yourself.

You can feel empowered from the outside world, by how you are treated (the words and actions of the people around you). You can feel empowered from within by acknowledging that you have the understanding, the skills and the experiences that will enable you to influence people in an inspiring way. Either way, you will know it when you feel it.

You are the only one who is in control of your “attitudes, words and actions”. Other people may try to influence you, but you are still in control of you. Regardless of how you have been treated, you can choose how “you” treat the people you wish to empower. You now know “what to say” and “how to say it”.

I have given you practical ways to influence how an employee feels about how “you treat them”. It is now up to you to practice your communication skills, make adjustments in how you say things, and then practice some more. I also said in the introduction that once you make the commitment to use “empowering” behaviours (thoughts, feelings and actions), your life will change. You will also be able to recognize the changes in the behaviours (thoughts, feelings and actions) of the people around you.

“Empowerment” is not a tangible thing. You cannot possess it nor can you give it away. It is a “Feeling”.

Other people can feel “empowered” by you, if you encourage them to learn, grow and succeed. Likewise, you can feel “empowered” by others if they encourage you to learn, grow and succeed.

You can only practice the behaviours (thoughts, feelings, actions) that you know will create the feeling of “empowerment”. You can then measure how well you are doing by how the people around you respond.

If you want to “empower” your employees (or anyone else for that matter), you need to decide whether all of the time, effort, energy and money is really worth it. This is a huge investment and it is a change in life style. Are you ready for this?

Your first step is to understand human behaviour and by this I mean the “Five Basic Needs”. This explains why each of us chooses the behaviours that we do.

Your second step is to strengthen your communication skills. If you want to influence people, you need to practice your “How you say it skills”. You need to talk in terms of “what benefits” your employee.

Then you need to integrate these principles into your everyday life style. You need to begin to live what you believe in.

If you want your employees to see and use these principles then you can only model the “empowerment” behaviours that you want to see them use. If you are consistent, your employees will begin to believe you. People do what people see. Eventually, your employees will begin to emulate you.

Now, do you understand how “Empowerment” works?