

8 Clear Contrasts Between Empowering and Disempowering Leaders

Knowing how to nurture people so that they reach their maximum leadership potential is as much psychology as it is an art. There are ways leaders limit the creativity of others and there are ways to get folks to reach new heights they haven't even dreamed about. The following are ways leaders can empower others to fulfill their potential in life

1. Empowering leaders allow others to make mistakes

Some leaders are more concerned with getting a job done correctly than about empowering people to learn how to do the job. When all a leader cares about is getting a job done right, they don't really delegate authority to others to perform a task but view their workers merely as an extension of their arms and legs but not their brain because they don't let them think for themselves. Often, those they give to perform a task are corrected constantly as the job is being performed. On the other hand, empowering leaders often allow those they assign tasks to make mistakes and then gracefully critique them after each finished task is done

2. Empowering leaders don't micromanage.

Micromanaging should only be done if a leader is working with a person totally untrained or unskilled at a particular task. This kind of working arrangement should only be temporary because a person should not stay in a task they don't have the potential skill to perform and, once the transition job proficiency is complete, the leader should allow the worker to perform said task with only macro oversight. Micromanaging breeds an atmosphere of distrust and tells the person given the task that the leader doesn't really believe in them. Habitual

micromanagers usually don't have a clue when it comes to being an empowering leader.

3. Empowering leaders focus on the positive traits of others

We all stumble in many ways. All of us usually drop the ball on assignments at least 10 percent of the time—depending on how much overwork we have. In addition to this, there are always going to be mistakes in a certain percentage of the tasks we perform, and somebody else will always do a job differently than the next person. Consequently, a leader will always have the opportunity to point out things that a person didn't do absolutely correct or up to par or in the same way the leader would have accomplished it—thus, said leader should attempt to focus the most on what the person given the task did right and the results of the work performed. Of course, the exception to this is if the person totally messed up the task or didn't follow the guidelines given to them. When we focus on the positive contributions of others we impart confidence to them and motivate them to continue to perform at a high level

4. Empowering leaders give constructive, not destructive, criticism.

There should be regularly scheduled times after each major task is completed to review the work and assess whether the objectives were met. This should be based on the criteria given before the task was attempted so that there is an objective way to gauge whether or not the task was performed with excellence. Regular debriefing times like this allow the employee or person given a task to understand whether or not they are growing in the job or where they stand in regards to their employment. It is not fair to tell a person to be told one year after they start a job that they are not performing well. By this time their job is already in jeopardy and they haven't even been given a chance to improve because they had no feedback. Those who desire to work with a spirit of

excellence usually welcome consistent, constructive criticism. Of course, when a leader puts a person down, calls them names, belittles them or speaks condescendingly to them, they are dispensing criticism that can destroy and not build up those working under them

5. Empowering leaders give guidelines, goals and outcomes expected.

Empowering leaders usually always give those working for them general guidelines for a job, the objectives of said task along with the end result they are looking for. This enables the person given the task to run downfield with the ball creatively without constantly looking over their shoulder wondering if they are still playing on the playing field. Disempowering leaders merely give a person a task but have amorphous guidelines, goals and objectives so that nobody but the leader really knows if the job is being done right or wrong. When leaders do this, it is a sign that either they themselves don't even have real objectives for a task or they are just trying to keep exercising psychological control over their workers

6. Empowering leaders connect people to their passion, gifts and calling.

Empowering leaders always attempt to match people with jobs according to their gifts, passion and abilities. Disempowering leaders don't take these things into consideration and often are guilty of attempting to force a square peg into a round hole. Empowering leaders take pride in being able to help people soar like eagles into the highest heights imaginable, while disempowering leaders care more about getting the tasks accomplished than releasing human potential. Empowering leaders also are sensitive and lead each person differently according to their experience, personality and temperament.

7. Empowering leaders focus on inspiring people as opposed to

forcing people to perform

Empowering leaders cast vision so as to inspire their followers to perform great things, while disempowering leaders often get things done merely by giving orders and making demands on people. When you inspire people, they perform at a much greater level because they are allowed to make their own decision to serve and have a greater amount of “buy in” while those merely following orders will just do enough to please the leader and usually don’t tap much into their creative juices.

8. Empowering leaders engage in dialogue; disempowering leaders dictate their desires and ideas.

Empowering leaders attempt to allow a flow of dialogue between them and their followers in work-related projects. These leaders understand the importance of receiving regular feedback from their subordinates so that they will have a better understanding of how to go about accomplishing tasks. Conversely, leaders who disempower others don’t usually engage in dialogue but merely dictate what and how they want a project done. Folks under these kinds of leaders eventually lose their motivation to think and just robotically follow orders because they know their opinions don’t really matter. Dictating leaders usually don’t multiply other leaders—they are merely retaining followers who have allowed their creativity to be capped. {eoa}

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