

Empowerment

Managers tend to understand *power*. Leaders, however, tend to understand *empowerment*, and only revert to power in rare or unusual occasions. Empowerment is the capacity to get others to do what they want (as opposed to what you want). Empowerment is the idea that getting more does not affect how much others have (as opposed to taking away from someone else). Empowerment comes from an internal source (as opposed to an external source). Empowerment leads to cooperation (as opposed to competition). Empowerment means, ultimately, that everyone can have it (as opposed to only a few having it).

Over the past thirty years, successful leaders have learned to leverage the theory and practice of empowerment. The following text was excerpted and adapted from:

Whetten, D., and Cameron, K. (2016), *Developing Management Skills* (9th ed.), Pearson.

Self-Efficacy (a sense of personal competence)

Empowered people not only feel *competent*, they feel *confident* that they can perform adequately. They are self-assured. They feel a sense of personal mastery and believe they can learn and grow to meet new challenges. Self-efficacy determines whether people will try and persist in attempting to accomplish a difficult task.

Self-determination (a sense of personal choice)

Empowered people have a sense of having *choices*. That is, they can initiate and regulate one's own choices. People feel self-determined when they can voluntarily and intentionally involve themselves in tasks rather than being forced to or prohibited from involvement. Their actions are a consequence of personal *freedom* and *autonomy*.

Personal Consequence (a sense of having impact)

Empowered people have a sense that when they act, they can produce a *result*. People with a sense of personal consequence believe that expending effort will produce a result. Personal consequence is the conviction that through your own actions, you can influence what happens. You have a sense of *control*, and you can have *impact*.

Meaning (a sense of value in an activity)

Empowered people have a sense of meaning. They *value* the purpose or outcomes of the activity in which they are engaged. Their own ideals and standards are perceived as consistent with what they are doing. That is, the activity "counts" in their own value system. In addition to producing a result, they *care* about what they produce.

Trust (a sense of security)

Empowered people are confident that they will be treated fairly and equitably. They maintain an assurance that even if they are in subordinate positions, the ultimate outcome of their actions will be justice and goodness as opposed to harm or damage. They have confidence that those holding authority will not harm them, and they will be treated honestly.