



One Grove Street, 201D

Pittsford, NY 14534

Ph: (585) 218-0610

Toll Free: (888) 689-8077

Fax: (585) 218-0615

Overcoming Organizational Indifference

Motivating Employees

How to Prevent Good People from Becoming Organizationally Indifferent

A plague is running rampant through the economy, affecting both corporate entities and nonprofit institutions. Its debilitating effects can strike any employee at any time – even a top performer. Even worse, it's highly contagious and can quickly spread throughout the company, often ruining profits and limiting growth opportunities.

What is this plague? It's *Organizational Indifference*, and no company is immune.

Here's the typical cycle: When people begin a new job, whether they were promoted or newly hired into the job, they usually come into that position with a great deal of enthusiasm. They are excited about all the new opportunities, the new people they will work with, and the new goals they will accomplish. They feel needed and are proud that they have the chance to play such an important role in the organization. The problem is, over time, their attitudes slowly begin to change. Eventually, enthusiasm moves out, and organizational indifference moves in, which in turn causes the company's

productivity to decline while employee frustrations rise.

If you want your company or nonprofit organization to flourish, you need to keep your employees motivated so organizational indifference doesn't set in. You need to maintain that initial enthusiasm they had when they were first promoted or hired. Although management plays a big role in the organization's operation, a management team is only as strong as its employees. So if the employees become organizationally indifferent, your bottom line will suffer.

Fortunately, there are steps you can take to ward off organizational indifference among your employees. By simply following these five steps, you will be on your way to keeping your employees energized and seeing your company rise to a new level of productivity. Keep in mind that each of these steps is interconnected. So if you neglect any *one* of them, organizational indifference may still creep in.

1. Set Goals and Have a Clear Vision

Having clearly defined goals and a vision is essential for the success of any organization. Without a *Shared Vision*, there is no focus – nothing for your employees to strive towards. But employees need direction as well. They need to know what their respective main objective is, as well as what the organization is ultimately trying to achieve.



Many companies start out with a vision, but lose sight of it somewhere along the way, ultimately leading to the organization wandering around in a fog or going bankrupt. For instance, one Fortune 50 Company that comes to mind worked its way up to being at the top of its game. Both the managers and the employees knew exactly what they were aiming for. They knew what their vision was and they strived to reach those goals every day. However, over time, that vision got lost in the shuffle of conducting everyday business. The employees were no longer focused on an ultimate goal, and they did not know in which direction to turn. Without direction, the only vision the company had was to avoid going bankrupt.

Having a clear vision can make a huge difference in your organization. With everyone working in the same direction, confusion is eliminated and employees are much less likely to become organizationally indifferent.

2. Keep Employees Informed

Communication is key. With so much going on within an organization, it's easy to get caught up in tasks such as handling crisis situations and devising plans to bring in more revenue. The problem occurs when managers get so wrapped up in their duties that they forget to inform their employees about what they are doing. With little or no communication from their supervisors, employees feel disconnected. Since they don't know what is going on, they don't feel as much a part of the organization.

There are several ways to make sure your employees don't get left behind. You can keep them informed and "in the know" about the latest developments in your company by:

- Scheduling regular group meetings
- Taking the time to meet one-on-one with each employee (Yes, it may take some time, but it will be well worth it in the long run)
- Creating status reports on a regular basis

By keeping your employees in the information loop, you will help them avoid unnecessary frustration and confusion – two feelings that often lead to organizational indifference. When everyone in your organization knows exactly what is going on, the company will run much more smoothly and more productively.

3. Equip Your Employees

One of the biggest mistakes you can make is to assume your employees have all the skills they need to do their job well. Just because someone was great at his/her last job doesn't mean that he/she will not need training for the new or current job. More often than not, employees will have the basic skills necessary to do the job. However, when you give people the opportunity to further develop their skills, they can often get the job done more effectively and efficiently.

Employees crave professional development. If you want to keep them from becoming organizationally indifferent, you need to equip them with the necessary skills so that they can reach their full potential. If they ask for training, offer it. If they don't ask, find out what they need. This shows that you care about the professional development of your employees and that you are willing to invest in them for the betterment of the company. If they feel that you don't care, that attitude will be reflected in the work they produce.

4. Create a Motivational Environment and Provide Incentive

When your employees are doing a great job, they need to hear it. They need to be recognized for their contributions. This may seem like common sense, but many managers forget to show their employees the praise and appreciation they so deserve. The appreciation doesn't even have to be in the form of a

tangible reward. For example, you can recognize an employee simply by posting his/her picture or a thank you note in the office so everyone knows the significant contribution he/she has been making to the company. At other times, a simple pat on the back or “Excellent work!” will be well received.

Although you don't necessarily have to show appreciation with monetary compensation, it does create an incentive – provided the reward system is fair and appropriate. As your company grows and develops, you need to check and recheck your compensation structures to ensure that they are online and fair to all employees. When people give 150% of their energies to an organization – and they see that their efforts have greatly benefited the company – it is only natural that they would like to be compensated with a bigger paycheck. Employees become organizationally indifferent when they see their co-workers doing half as much work, but making the same amount of money. Your top performers may get frustrated and think, “Why should I put all this effort into something when I can do less work and get paid the same amount of money?”

If your compensation structure isn't fair and appropriate, you could also run into a situation where your lower and average performing employees actually make more money than your highest performers. When this occurs, your top performers will feel insulted and become organizationally

indifferent. If the money is not fairly distributed, your lower performing employees will never reach their full potential and your top performers will get frustrated and leave the company. Creating a motivational environment with a fair compensation structure provides incentive and encourages employees to do their jobs to the best of their abilities.

5. Empower Your Employees

How much power do your employees have? Are they free to make certain decisions on behalf of the company, on behalf of the customer? Employees should feel and act as if the organization is their own. When each employee is a “mini-entrepreneur” life is much easier for everyone in the company. Managers are then free to focus on their tasks, while the employees run the company.

Empowerment comes when the previous four steps have been implemented. Your employees know what the organization is trying to achieve, what they can and cannot do to make it happen, and how to find the answers or procedures for those things they are unsure of. With this empowerment, each person is truly playing an integral role in the organization. And if employees feel they are an essential element in the growth of the company, they *won't* become organizationally indifferent.

The Cure for What Ails You

If you're company is infected with organizational indifference, implementing

each of these five steps will bring about the cure you need. With the indifference gone, your company's strategic plan will come together and will take on a new sense of reality as people are once again energized, on track, and working together for common goals. You will then experience the faster growth and higher productivity that your organization desires and deserves.

Money Really *Can* Grow on Trees

In today's economy, every business needs to capitalize on its strengths and eliminate its weaknesses to ensure long-term growth. With both money and resources tight, there's no room for second chances or "trying again next month." There may not be a "next month." Your company must produce results today if you want to stay competitive tomorrow.

Unfortunately, too many business owners and managers are stuck in the prevalent mentality of "slashing budgets," "laying off staff," and "making cutbacks" as a way to increase revenue. What they fail to realize is that instead of trimming away critical elements of their company, they need to focus on growing the business – on nurturing their money tree. Only then can they realize that money really does grow on trees!

To grow an organizational money tree, you need the four components of *SharedKnowledge*[™], which are organizational communication, skills, motivation, and empowerment. While most managers know *what* those four elements are, they are unsure of *how* to develop them in their team. They mistakenly believe that

everyone knows how to communicate, how to do their job, how to stay motivated, and how to make decisions. On the surface, that may be true; however, when you probe deeper, you usually find that your people need additional guidance in order make their knowledge relevant to the company and to their organizational role. Without that guidance, they become organizationally indifferent, believing that their contributions don't matter to the company's success.

If you're ready to transform your business into an income-generating money tree, use the guidelines below to instill a sense of *SharedKnowledge* in your team. Only then will your company grow into a strong and sturdy entity that towers above the competition.

Step One: Ensure your money tree has a direction for growth.

Every tree needs sunlight and nutrients to grow. Your company's money tree is no different. In business, the company's vision is the light source. It's the guiding light that everyone in your organization reaches for. The problem is that too few people know what a vision statement really is.

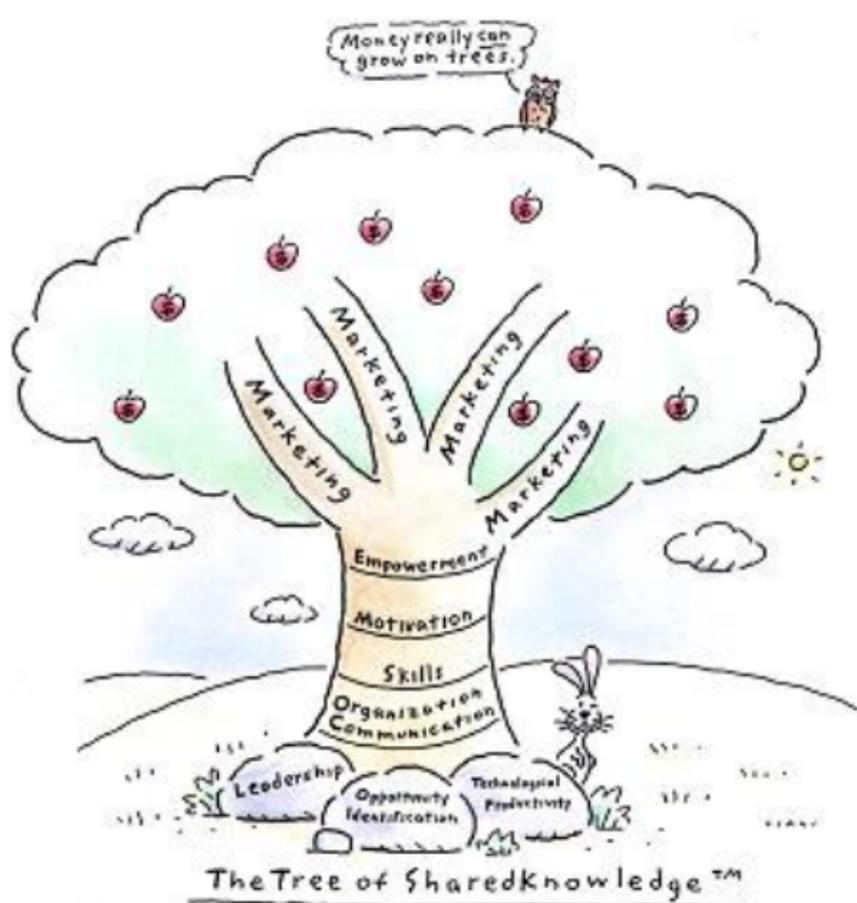
Typically in business school, management seminars, and in books we see the words "vision" and "mission" touted as being important and often used interchangeably. But it's hard to get your hands around what they do for you or how to make them active and dynamic parts of the business. So often the

vision and mission seem apart, set aside, and something reserved for the management team to write on a poster.

Here's the difference: Your mission is what you do. Your vision, on the other hand, is that guiding star that tells you whether you're on the right path. Your vision is how you want your company to be positioned in the marketplace. A compelling vision takes what you do (your mission) and transforms it into something the entire team can strive for. So while your mission may be to sell technology-related products to the consumer market, your vision is to be the leading provider of practical, timely, and creative solutions to your customer's technology needs. Your vision then gives everyone in the company something to strive for rather than just selling gizmos and gadgets.

Very often when you ask employees, "What is the vision of this organization?" they each give a different answer – most of which will revolve around what the company does, not how it needs to be positioned. Others will say the vision is some behavioral trait, such as to be courteous to customers. That's a good value statement, but it's not a vision.

To uncover your company's true vision, you first need to find out why people buy from you. You may think they buy from you because you have the best widget in town, but it may actually be because of many other factors, such as your level of customer service, your hours of operation, your team's advanced industry knowledge, etc. Find out



the precise reason(s) by hiring an outside consultant to survey your clients. An outsider will typically get much more information, as people tend to open up when an objective third-party conducts the survey. Use the information you receive to refine your vision statement.

Step Two: Give your money tree the proper nutrients.

Once you get the necessary information to refine your vision into something that's actionable and followable, the next step is to work with your employees and have each person define three to five specific goals they can set for themselves that tie to the vision. For a salesperson, one goal might be to increase referrals. For an administrative assistant, a goal might be to reduce office supply expenses. Such goals nourish the vision and enable the money tree to grow.

Branching off from the goals are the objectives that will make the goals attainable. So after establishing goals, each person then needs to state clear objectives he or she will undertake to make the goals reality and to fulfill the vision. To increase referrals, one of the salesperson's objectives may be to conduct a certain number of follow up calls each day. To reduce office supply expenses, one of the administrative assistant's objectives may be to print documents in "fast draft" mode to reduce ink usage. These steps provide the building blocks that enable the tree to grow towards the vision.

Step Three: Water your money tree regularly.

In order for your money tree to sustain its growth, it needs regular care. Schedule monthly meetings with your team so everyone can discuss what they are doing in regards to the objectives, the goals, and the vision. At this time, ask each person to turn in a monthly status report that details his or her activity. Next, have the department managers consolidate the information from their team's reports and organize it into a document that shows what goals the individual departments achieved.

At the next meeting, share the consolidated information with the staff. Encourage them to count how many times they each contributed towards an accomplishment, whether it was making phone calls, researching information, stuffing

envelopes, assisting customers, etc. The objective is to have each person understand how his or her activities – however small they may appear – contribute to the company living its vision and attaining its goals. This is an important step, because if people don't see how they're contributing, they'll feel unimportant and indifferent to the company's success. Your employees will experience a renewed sense of commitment when they discover how much their work truly matters in the grand scheme and how their input helps the company thrive and grow into a profit-generating money tree.

Unlimited Growth

With a vision (the sun's guiding light), goals and objectives (the nutrients), and regular meetings (the continued care), your money tree can grow beyond your wildest dreams. When you revise your vision according to client feedback and initiate a process that communicates that vision to your team, you will motivate and empower your employees to excel because they'll know their contributions to the company and what they're supposed to strive for. As a result, you'll foster an environment that eliminates organizational indifference and that works diligently for the company's good.

This is one formula for business success you can bank on.

How to Overcome Organizational Indifference

We hear the phrases every day: “That’s not my job.” “I can’t help you; talk to my boss.” “That’s just how we do things around here.” “Someone else was supposed to do that.” Such are the warning signs of organizational indifference.

Organizational indifference occurs when your employees no longer care about the company’s success. They’re simply working for a paycheck, doing only what it takes to not get fired, and not looking for opportunities that will help the organization thrive. Unfortunately, organizational indifference exists in companies of all sizes and in all industries. It hits the bottom line. No one is immune.

How much organizational indifference is in your company? What percent of your employees come to work just to get a paycheck or to add the organization to their resume? 10%? 25%? Maybe 75%? Realize that no matter what percent you perceive, the reality is usually much greater. When you consider all the labor costs involved in recruiting, hiring, training, and paying benefits, do you really want even one

organizationally indifferent person on your team?

When you rid your team of organizational indifference, your employees are eager to express new ideas and genuinely want to help clients. They are excited to come to work because they know their contributions matter and they have a definite purpose in the organization. As a result, customers enjoy doing business with the company, thus increasing your revenue and profitability. Additionally, your operating expenses and turnover decrease as employees take a more active role in the company. Productivity soars as each employee strives to make a positive impact on the bottom-line.

Think the above scenario couldn't possibly come true in your organization? Think again. It is possible to overcome organizational indifference and transform your team into a unified workforce with an entrepreneurial spirit that sustains focused effort, flexibility, and the willingness to seize new opportunities. To analyze where your team is on the indifference scale and begin to fill any gaps that exist, rate how well your employees perform each of the following tasks.

1. Communicate the organization's vision

The company's vision is more than words on paper. It's a lofty goal of where you want the company to be and how you want the community to perceive the organization.

While the business owners and senior level executives usually know and strive to uphold the company's vision, front line employees typically have only a vague idea of the vision and cannot fully grasp its importance. This is unfortunate, because if you want a unified, entrepreneurial spirit to take hold in your organization, your team must understand and believe the vision you set forth. Your employees can only operate at their best when they have a reason to do so.

When your employees know and embrace the vision, they'll have a newfound purpose for their everyday activities. They'll have a sense of the "big picture" and will be able to understand how their actions, routine as they may be, contribute to the greater goal. Studies show that people want to do their best; they want to excel, to be involved, and to take an active leadership role in their job. However, they can only do that when they believe that their contributions matter and they see value in their actions.

Walk around your organization and ask your employees if they know 1) the company's vision, 2) what it means, and 3) how their actions contribute to it. If they are unable to answer all three parts of the question, it's time to explain the vision in detail and exemplify it with your actions.

2. Use the technology tools they have available in an effective manner

Most employees know how to "get around" in various computer programs and

they know how to create a sales piece, a spreadsheet, or a brochure; however, many of those people could reduce the amount of time they spend on their tasks if they simply knew the productivity skills for the given technology. The fact is that no matter how much you invest in technology and no matter how many training sessions you send your people to, you'll never know if your employees are using the technology effectively unless you measure their performance. You must know where your people are in terms of their technological skills as well as where you want them to be.

Ask yourself, "How effective is the technology training we've done?" "Do my employees really get their tasks done in the shortest amount of time?" and "How much downtime do my employees have as a result of equipment malfunctions?" Most company leaders find that their employees actually have very little understanding of the skills that would increase their productivity and make their documents better.

To accurately uncover the truth behind the technology in your office and your employees' skill level, have an outside consultant track your team's productivity and downtime. Also, have the consultant question your employees about their comfort level with various technologies so your team can tell you where they want additional training. The more proficient your employees are with the technology tools available, the more capable they'll be to serve clients and create results.



3. Routinely give praise and recognition

For an organization to thrive and for employees to feel valued, there must be a company-wide environment of praise and recognition. An ideal environment is one where not only does management praise and recognize employees, but also employees praise and recognize each other and the management team. Why is this so important for dispelling organizational indifference? Because any kind of team endeavor is going to be enhanced when the team members approve, praise, and encourage each other's efforts. Conversely, when team members have a negative view towards each other, then the team typically falls apart.

In order to create an environment of praise and recognition, CEOs and senior managers must lead by example. Answer this: Have you given praise and/or recognition to your employees in the last seven days? Do your employees know what is expected of them? Do you give your employees opportunities to learn and grow? If you answered “no” to any question, then you need to give greater focus to your praise and recognition efforts. Establish avenues where employees can receive recognition, such as in company newsletters, postings on bulletin boards, or even with handwritten thank you notes from the management team. Show your employees that they’re valued and they in turn will value the company.

4. Know when they have the authority to take action on behalf of the organization – and do it

Many company leaders talk about empowering their employees, but when it comes time for employees to exert their authority in a situation, they quickly learn that empowerment does not exist. That’s because too many company executives fail to realize that empowerment is more than assigning authority; rather, empowerment is a three-fold process that builds trust between the employees and the corporation.

First, when employees are empowered, they know precisely how much latitude they have in any given situation. They don’t have to second-guess themselves when they make

decisions because managers have detailed what each person can do. Second, when empowered employees have reached the limit of their authority, they know the steps to take to find out additional information or to make suggestions. Finally, empowered employees are not afraid to think outside the box or offer ideas because they know they have management's support and that the senior executives want their input. They feel that the company values their ideas and they strive to devise new ways to help the organization perform better.

As you strive to empower your workforce, take the time to detail the latitude each person has, the processes in which to channel new ideas, and ways for managers to show their support. And remember that empowerment is a two-way street. It's a shared responsibility between the employees and the managers that instills trust and responsibility in every team member.

Proven Results

When your employees know what the organization is about, how to use their technology effectively, how to instill team motivation, and what their empowerment processes are, you lay the groundwork for eliminating organizational indifference. And when your employees care about the organization and are excited about their work, they'll solve more problems, serve customers better, and contribute to the company's success significantly, thus increasing bottom-line profits. It's the combination of these four

elements that moves the organization forward and unifies people with the entrepreneurial spirit that leads to long-lasting results.

Organizational Indifference Quiz

How much organizational indifference exists in your company? Have your employees anonymously answer the following questions on a scale of 1-10.

(1 = very poorly, 10 = very well)

How well do you:

1. Understand the organization's mission, vision, and goals. _____
2. Understand the organization's competitive advantage. _____
3. Know and support the organization's core values. _____
4. Initiate actions that could benefit the organization. _____
5. Respond to customer needs in an exemplary way. _____
6. Know when you have authority to take action on behalf of the organization – and do it. _____
7. Use the technology tools you have available in an effective manner. _____
8. Feel and act as if your opinions count. _____
9. Routinely give and receive praise and recognition. _____
10. Enjoy what you are doing. _____

Total Score: _____

Scoring Guide

90-100 – Vibrant workforce

75-89 – Positive environment

40-74 – Complacency reigns

1-39 – Serious problems

Are Your Employees Giving You the Silent Treatment?

Encourage communication for greater company profits

by Linda Keefe

In any company, communication between managers and employees is a big issue. Employees want guidelines from their supervisors, and the management staff wants input from their team. And while most companies have little trouble sharing information *down* the layers, they are challenged to bring information *up*.

The reasons for such a communication gap are numerous, ranging from employees thinking, “I don’t want to appear incompetent”, to “who am I to offer ideas to management?” They recognize that management is busy with strategy and planning, so they choose not to interrupt. At the same time, employees *need* to familiarize management with their day-to-day activities.

Fortunately, there are steps you can take to get your employees to interact better. When employees and managers communicate well together everyone can understand what it takes to advance the company’s strategic

vision and attain its goals. Support from every member in the group is essential for a company to significantly grow and prosper

To instill confidence in your employees and encourage them to contribute, apply the four elements of *SharedKnowledge* – a process that transforms the entire organization to one that works with a unified entrepreneurial spirit. This unique *combination* of elements, including organizational communication, skills, motivation and empowerment, creates mini-marketers throughout the business. Below are ways to use these four vital components to get your employees to communicate their needs so they can help the company succeed.

1. Communicate Needs

Communication is a two way process and a shared responsibility. Employees and managers alike have responsibility for setting expectations and requirements, and for communicating barriers and opportunities.

Ask your employees to speak up and tell the management team what they are struggling with and what managers can do to help. Reinforce the company's vision and state how the current objectives contribute to it. Then explain that you need the employees' input to attain the company's vision.

2. Share Industry Skills and Knowledge



While most employees are knowledgeable about, and skilled in, their particular job duties, many managers are unaware of their employees' daily activities. Encourage your employees to educate you about their job specifics. Ask them to explain what goes into each successful project by proactively listing all the actions and costs, including time requirements.

Ask questions to get your employees to offer suggestions about the current situation. For example, you may say, "Last year we increased sales by 35% but circumstances have changed. How do you think we can regain last year's position? Is there something in your job that could be changed to make a stronger contribution to our company vision and goals? Listen to the feedback carefully and where feasible, act upon it. Your employees will see their value to the company and its bottom line.

3. Create a Motivation Cycle

Your input plays a big part in motivating employees to communicate with you. Make communicating with management easy. Some suggestions to consider include:

- Arrange a group conference call in which employees share their ideas about a particular project or strategic plan.
- Send employees a personal thank you note for a job well done, with the management team's signatures.
- Set an hour aside (on a regular basis) to conduct round table discussions with employees to address their concerns.
- Offer short, 15-minute one-on-one sessions between managers and employees to discuss employee issues/ideas.
- Have senior management sit with the employees during breaks or at lunch to discuss company activities.

When the employees see you and other managers taking an interest in their responsibilities, they'll be spurred to complete their tasks to the best of their ability. The senior team's interest will show that each employee's contribution is integral to the company's strategic initiative. Employees will actively seek out new and creative ideas to advance the organization and will share those ideas with you. The result will be a greater increase on the company's bottom line.

4. Establish Empowerment Expectations

Empowerment is about setting the expectations. Discuss goals and parameters with everyone involved *before* you begin delegating tasks so that, as a team, you can make the needed tradeoffs to ensure a successful outcome. When everyone knows the specifics of what's required, you are empowered to create the desired results. Always remember that the entire interaction hinges upon communication, and the quality of the communication determines how empowered you and your team are.

Results Now

Show why open communication from both sides, management and employees, is so vital to the company's success. Make it a shared responsibility to educate each other, express what you need, and show how specific duties affect the bottom line. Your team will operate more efficiently and greater success will follow.

Empower Your Employees to be Mini-Marketers

by Linda Keefe

Regardless of your company's marketing campaign, your employees are walking billboards for your business twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. As a result of their direct or indirect words and actions, your company will receive either good, bad, or neutral press depending on whether your employees are satisfied in the organization and feel a part of the company's mission. The key to eliminating the bad and neutral press and harnessing the positive press is to empower your employees so they're mini-marketers for your organization, whether they realize it or not.

When you empower your employees you give them the message that their contribution is important. And that feeling of being a part of something larger than themselves motivates all people. As a result, the degree to which people can identify their contribution to the organization is the degree to which they'll speak and act positively about the company. That's why you want to empower your people to make decisions, to take action, and to embrace a unified entrepreneurial spirit that allows the company to shine.

What is Empowerment?

Empowerment is more than simply telling people what they can and cannot do.

Empowerment is a three-fold process that builds trust between the employees and the corporation. First, when employees are empowered, they know precisely how much latitude they have in any given situation. They don't have to second-guess themselves when they make decisions because managers have detailed what each person can do.

Second, when empowered employees have reached the limit of their authority, they know the steps to take to find out additional information or to make suggestions. Finally, empowered employees are not afraid to think outside the box or offer ideas because they know they have management's support and that the senior executives want their input. They feel that the company values their ideas and they strive to devise new ways to help the organization perform better.

No matter how your company is currently organized, you can attain this three-fold level of empowerment. When you do, the rewards will show not only in an increase of positive press, but also in the bottom line as your customers and shareholders notice the difference.

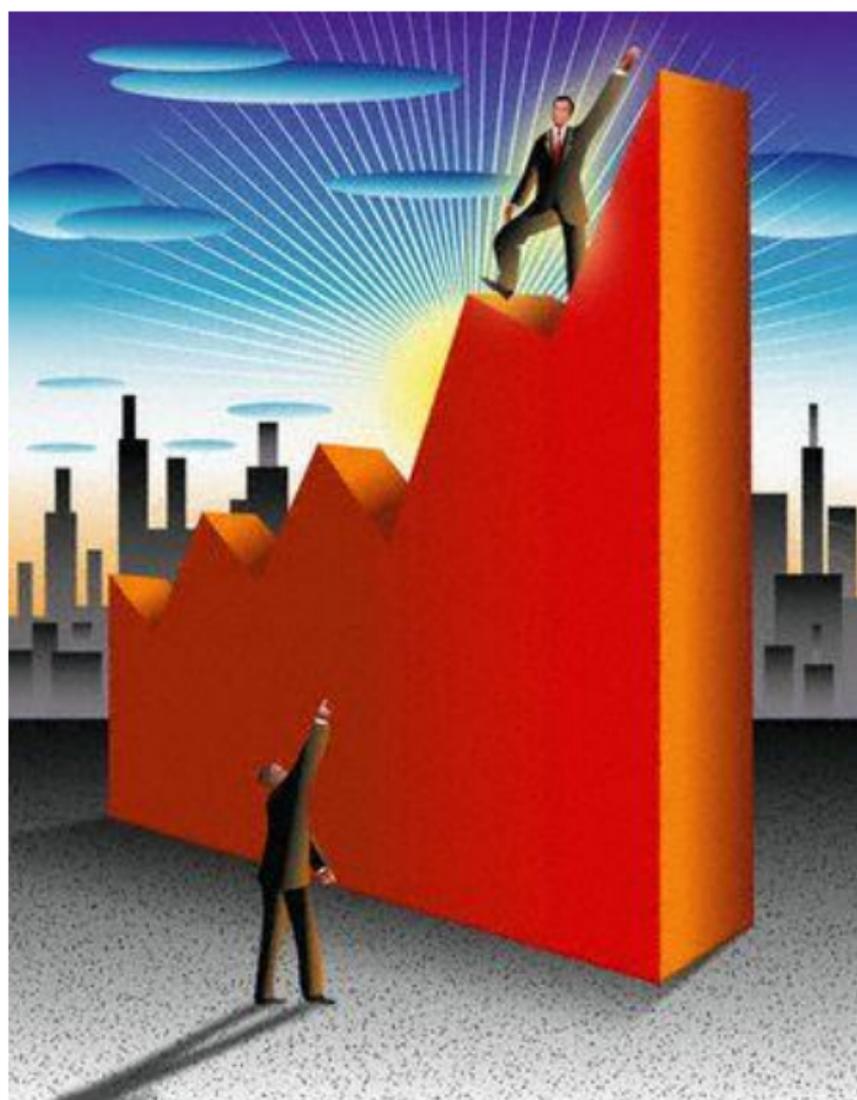
Initiate a Culture Change

Simply telling employees that they are empowered is not enough. Empowerment is a culture change you need to instill. In most

companies, employees expect managers to tell them what to do in every situation. However, deep in their hearts, employees want more responsibility and want to make a meaningful contribution. They want to play a vital role, but experience, management, and colleagues have taught them that to be “good employees” they need to do what they’re told. In reality, companies today don’t want mini-puppets who do what they’ve been told. They want employees who are entrepreneurially minded and who feel as though they have a stake in the organization’s success.

Such a transition and culture change requires that management stop making decisions for people. Rather than tell people what to do, turn it into a questioning style of management. Ask employees what they think they should do in a situation and then listen to their answers. If their answers aren’t well thought out, ask them more detailed questions to prompt further thinking. Whatever you do, don’t jump in with the solution. Instead, make it a safe environment where employees can think through their options and come to their own decisions.

For example, if you’re uncertain what to price a new product, ask your employees for their input. After all, they are the ones on the front line who interact with customers, so they have valuable insights you can’t get from the executive suite. If their initial responses to your question don’t make sense, ask them to think in the context of different scenarios, such as “What if the customer buys in bulk?” or “What if the customer wants a trial



period?” As they refine their initial ideas, be open to what they say. In as many situations as possible, use their input towards the final decision. Such a process may take longer upfront, but in the end it will create time for the managers as the employees take over more and more of the decision process.

Listening is Key

In any business interaction, customers tell the company’s employees what they want and need. In order for employees to relay that information to management, they need to feel that they’ll be listened to and taken seriously. This is important, because based on the customer feedback your employees offer, you may discover an untapped niche, a new product idea, or a better service offering than your competition currently has.

When you don't listen to your employees or when you discount their input as unimportant, you squash their motivation and foster a team of stagnate, negative employees. That's not an environment conducive to creating mini-marketers. However, when you listen and respond to feedback, you help your employees be in a state of *SharedKnowledge*[™], where they have the information, skills and motivation that contribute to the company's vision and strategic plan. So being customer focused is no longer enough to gain market share; you need to be employee focused as well and listen to your employees as you would the customers.

Empowerment in Action

You'll know your team is empowered when their daily actions and words put the organization in a positive light. An example of an empowered employee is the receptionist at the Raleigh, North Carolina Chamber of Commerce who researched the answer to a visitor's question and then e-mailed him the answer the following day. She could have simply responded to his question with an "I don't know," but her organization empowered her to go beyond the customary information sources.

In a grocery store, an empowered employee hears the customers' requests for a particular product and tells the manager, who in turn asks the regional buyer to order that product for the store. Without such a responsive manager, who listens to employees

and acts on their suggestions, the employee would keep such feedback to herself, resulting in lost product sales for the store.

In a restaurant, an empowered waitress listens to a customer's complaint about the establishment's temperature and her request to turn up the heat. The waitress explains that the temperature controls are kept under a locked box and that she does not have the key. Rather than tell the customer there is nothing she can do, the waitress talks to the manager on duty and attempts to work out a solution. She communicates her findings to the customer, both the good news and the bad news about the temperature, and the customer ultimately leaves the restaurant happy and satisfied that the waitress listened to and acted on her concerns.

In each of these examples, the empowered employees gave the company positive press without even knowing it. They became more than just a receptionist, a clerk, and a waitress; they became mini-marketers whose actions spoke louder than their words and earned the company repeat business and higher profits.

Empower Your Employees Today

As you strive to empower your workforce, take the time to detail the latitude each person has, the processes in which to channel new ideas, and ways for managers to show their support. The more empowered your employees are, the greater rewards your company will reap in terms of positive press, increased sales, and higher bottom-line results.



About the Author

Linda Keefe is the Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Shared Results International, a management consulting and implementation firm that helps organizations grow and prosper by overcoming organizational indifference and creating a unified entrepreneurial spirit.

- 28 years experience in business and communications, MBA from RIT.
- Publisher and creator of *TECH TALK – Technology Terms and Tips for Non Techies* – an award winning training tool that increases technological productivity.
- Awarded *Best Practices Partner* by the *American Quality and Productivity Center*.
- Communications Manager for Xerox Business Services, winner of the *Malcolm*

Baldrige Quality Award. Developed program cited as world-class benchmark.

- Director, American Red Cross, Tehran, Iran. Honored with the *Clara Barton Award for Excellence*.
- Seen in numerous publications including *American Management Association, Chief Learning Officer, American Staffing Association, Training Magazine, American Media Association, Credit Union Executive Society, National Public Accountants*, and *US Industry Today*.
- Key speaker at many for profit and nonprofit conferences, panels and workshops.



One Grove Street, 201D
Pittsford, NY 14534

Ph: (585) 218-0610

Toll Free: (888) 689-8077

Fax: (585) 218-0615