

Empowerment & Innovation

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Two words that are often used by leaders in business and government are empowerment and innovation. “We have empowered our employees...” or “We support our employee’s innovation efforts...”. Unfortunately, too many organizations create obstacles that disempower their workforce and make innovation more difficult than necessary.

If you want to understand the links between empowerment and ability to be innovative think about the following questions:

1. *Do your employees feel it is their job to solve problems?*
2. *Does your organization support initiative and entrepreneurship?*

First, encouraging empowerment and innovation is not enough! Encouragement and communicating a shared vision is certainly critical to the process of empowering innovative thinking but the goal is to *change* the way employees work. Changing the business routine from a group of people who are doing a job to a highly energized team of entrepreneurs who are constantly searching for new and better ways of making your vision a reality. Changing the business by want using creative techniques to drive innovative solutions to meet organizational goals. Programs need to be initiated that show people how they can use creative techniques to come up with new solutions. There are specific steps you can take to increase employee empowerment and support for innovation.

- Identify a senior leader with the explicit task of managing empowerment and innovation.
- Create systematic processes to quickly identify and adopt good ideas.
- Formalize initiatives giving employees time to think, reflect, and discuss issues and problems.
- Create and measure innovative activity in ways that stimulate action and competition among individuals and workgroups.
- Utilize competitive activities to facilitate experimentation and problem solving
- Identify, discuss, and document successes and failures in order to fostering openness and learning.

Empowered employees improve performance by finding innovative ways of correcting errors in service delivery, redesigning work processes, making continuous improvement. Failure to encourage and support empowerment can seriously undermine the effectiveness of your organizations ability to innovate.

Successful empowerment and innovation are significant indicators of success for any organization. Does your organizational innovation need improvement? Take a close look at employee empowerment in your organization.

Questions?

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