

# **E**mpowerment

Empowerment is the process of enabling or authorising teams or individuals to think, behave, take action, and control work and decision making in autonomous ways. It is the state of feeling self-empowered to take control of one's own destiny. In a people intensive environment like facilities management, the empowerment of team members can be a highly effective strategy for engagement and involvement behind a customer oriented service strategy.

The roots of the team perspective on empowerment stem from theories of social exchange where the emphasis is on building democratic organisations through the sharing of power between superiors and subordinates. The goal is to cascade power to lower levels of the organisational hierarchy transferring formal authority or control over resources and the ability to make decisions relevant to a person's job or role. In short, team empowerment is about employee participation through increased delegation of responsibility down through the chain of command.

The empowerment of individuals has its roots in theories of self actualisation and quality of work life. Rather than focusing on management practices for sharing power with employees, the individual perspective is focused on how employees experience empowerment at work. This relates to personal beliefs that employees have about their role and is more about people empowering themselves rather than being empowered by others.

When people feel empowered at work, they experience a connection between the needs of job and their own beliefs, values and behaviours. They understand how their competence and capabilities can be applied to work activities and have a sense of choice in initiating and regulating their own actions. This self determination reflects a sense of autonomy over decision making, work methods, pace, and effort and the degree to which they can influence strategic, administrative, or operating outcomes at work.

Empowerment programmes are often implemented with the hopes of building employee commitment, overcoming worker dissatisfaction, and reducing absenteeism, turnover, poor quality work and sabotage. These objectives can be realised but often fail because managers do not appreciate the extent of culture and system change required to succeed. Everyone must be clear about what empowerment entails and the modifications required to the behaviour of managers and team members. Successful empowerment programmes depend heavily on training and communication programmes to support the change required.

*One of the bestselling books on empowerment is "Empowerment Takes More Than a Minute" by influential leadership guru Ken Blanchard. Published by Berrett-Koehler | ISBN-10: 1576751538*