

Empowering Survivors

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Developing an empowered workforce is one of the best ways to slingshot an ordinary organization into an extraordinary one. Though changing a company's culture is a slow process there are some items that can move the change along a little faster. The application of positive reinforcement will move an individual to change four times faster than using negative feedback. We should then strive to catch our employees doing right things and give immediate feedback. Waiting to give feedback will only water down the reinforcer's affect on the employee.

I like to refer to positive techniques as bridges and negative ones as potholes. Hit any potholes lately? We all have at some time. If you can be positive approximately 75% of the time your "potholes" will be tolerated as not being yourself that day. Below are some bridges that you can use with your staff and watch the new culture emerge.

Bridges to Empowering Employees

- Start small - this is a new way of working
- Provide positive reinforcement
- Help employees realize how much power they currently have
- Develop employees to overcome their fear of acting without your approval
- Trust employees to do the right thing - show your employees that you have trust in them and their decisions
- Use communication methods that support empowering ways (provide goals, budgets, and boundaries to the finished product and let them do the rest)
- Inspire employees to excel
- Let employees help you achieve success (remember, their success is your success)
- Listen, that is listen, I mean really listen to your employees
- Delegate responsibility **and** authority along with the responsibility
- Encourage employees to suggest better ways of getting the job done
- Allow active participation in team **and** company goals (Look for opportunities to include employees at every level of the organization)
- Recognize good ideas before questioning aspects that may not work

The benefits of an empowered workforce are many. Here are just a few:

- Employees take ownership of their work and take responsibility for their results
- Employees serve customers like they were the business owner
- Employees and companies are enabled to soar

Of course there are many other aspects of empowering a workforce that should be part of the overall company strategy. And in the end both the company and the employee will benefit from this new way of doing business.

Remember, the only difference between ordinary and **extraordinary** is a little "extra."