

LEADERSHIP & CULTURE

Empowering the Company to Run Itself

By Leyla Hussein • 16 July 2019



An owner told me once, only half joking, that he had not taken a real holiday in eleven years because the business fell over every time he left the room. He had built something profitable and successful, and he was quietly its single point of failure. When I asked him why he had started the company in the first place, freedom was somewhere near the top of the list. He had built himself a very well-paid cage.

So let me ask you the same thing. Why did you start your business? To grow it, to be your own boss, to look after your family? Or, in the end, to build something that can run and stay profitable without you standing over it? Whichever it is, you get there the same way. You invest in your people.

Empowerment is not delegation

I have said it many times: [your workforce are the cogs and gears](#) that keep the business turning. They have to be aligned with your ultimate goals and clear on where the company is heading, because without that you can forget ever letting the organisation run itself. The culture that makes it possible is one of [empowerment](#), and empowerment is not the same thing as delegation, however often the two get muddled. Delegation is simply handing over duties. Empowerment is building the confidence and the autonomy for someone to own those duties.

Lean on delegation alone and it is hit or miss. Not everyone wants more on their plate, however well they are performing. Some people find extra duties actively demotivating, because they do not see the added responsibility as worth it. Maybe

they already love their job exactly as it is. Maybe they simply do not want the extra pressure. And here is where managers trip up. They spot a strong performer, assume more responsibility will empower them, and pile it on. For some it works. For others it is the nudge that walks them out the door.

Test the water first

You cannot delegate and expect instant empowerment to follow. What works far better is to empower first, then delegate, and before you empower anyone, watch how they already operate. Who is already doing more than their role asks? Who keeps coming to you for the next job? Who actually has the temperament for more responsibility?

Try a few extra duties on for size before you formally hand them over. It tells you two things at once: whether the person even wants the responsibility, and whether they can handle it. Trialling in this way puts far less pressure on your team while still giving you a clear read on their capabilities. If they struggle or plainly dislike it, that is your answer, and there is no sense forcing it. If they thrive, you have also learned how much support they will need when you do promote them.

The most common case is the person who is perfectly capable and clearly willing but simply lacks the confidence to act. That is exactly where empowerment earns its keep. You let them make their own calls, put their own ideas forward, and [you provide the direction](#) right up until the moment they no longer need it. That moment, when they can carry the work the way you taught them and own the outcome too, is true delegation. It is also the moment your business takes one more step toward running itself.

Ready to grow your sales?

Hayward Miller is your outsourced B2B sales team, generating leads, booking meetings and winning business for you.

Contact us today on **01842 777 760** or visit haywardmiller.co.uk