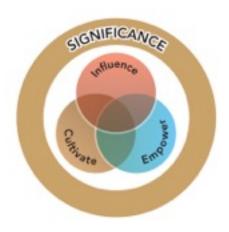# THE POWER OF EMPOWERING OTHERS

One of the biggest struggles I help business owners get over is the ability to effectively empower employees to do the job autonomously. The idea is almost cliche at this point because the belief that it's the right thing to do is widely held, but the practice of effectively doing it is not as common.

Many people will argue that they really are good at empowering others because they delegate to their employees all of the time. But, there is a difference between delegating and empowering. Delegating is assigning a specific duty to be performed in a specific way within a specific timeframe. Empowerment is passing the power to the employee that allows them to decide which job or jobs to do, when to do them, how to do them, and how to respond to problems that pop up along the way. Empowerment requires autonomy - the freedom and independence from external control. (hint: that "external control" is you)

While delegation is part of empowerment, empowerment is not delegation. Empowerment can be outlined in three simply written and difficultly executed steps.

1. Delegate the job. Tell them what the ultimate result you want is.
2. Give autonomy. Give them the authority to accomplish the ultimate result in their own way without you hovering and checking their work.
3. Stay away. Remember, you can't give autonomy and take it back. Once given, you have to be diligent to let it stay given.

> **"If owners choose to stay involved in the front line decision making, they have simultaneously chosen to limit the growth their business can accomplish."**

The greatest resistance that I observe keeping people from empowering others comes with the second step, giving autonomy. Owners of businesses have experienced a level of success because of how good they are at executing business processes. And, they have typically experienced some sort of problem when they have tried giving control to their employees in the past. Because business owners hate being made to look like a fool, when their employees make mistakes that the owners would never make, the owner takes back control and continually keep themselves involved in the front line levels of operations to guarantee they are able to avoid having mistakes made again. As the saying goes, they are effectively working "in the business" not "on the business". If owners choose to stay involved in the front line decision making, they have simultaneously chosen to limit the growth their business can accomplish.

Experiencing the pain of failed attempts at empowering employees, and knowing the problems that come from not empowering employees doesn't fix the problems that have resulted in past attempts. Identifying what went wrong and mitigating it is what will fix the problem. Most of the time I see the problems coming from not effectively communicating with employees what you expect, and how you expect the job to be done. But, problems also occur when employees are given too big of a task all at once. Empowerment requires trust, and trust should be built with small steps, not giant leaps. Giving compete autonomy on a massive project which the employee has virtually no experience in is a quick way to ensure failure all around. Be sure to build levels of autonomy to be given that are in proportion to the experience and expertise of the employee.

The power of empowering others is four fold.

1. You get to spend more time doing what you're good at. If you are continually involved in front line decision making, you will frequently find yourself doing something that you aren't the best at.
2. You get to spend more time doing what you like. As the owner of the business, the ultimate goal is to create a business that serves you, not the other way around. A business that actually serves you is one that let's you choose what are the most fun parts of the business, the ones you enjoy the most, and allows you to spend time doing that, instead of doing the things you hate doing because they suck the energy out of you.
3. Empowering employees gives the employee a sense of ownership. One of the two significant contributing factors that builds psychological ownership is autonomy. So, if you want your employees to act like they own the business, and to treat the business with as much respect as you do, then empowering them is a crucial step to accomplishing this.
4. Empowering employees makes you not needed any more. Yes, that's right, once your employees are capable of doing everything as good as you can, you're not needed any more. I know many of you just put up your defensive wall and said, "I want to be needed". While I understand what is motivating you to say that, you've got to look at the bigger picture. The one where you're a successful business owner who has just left for a 30 day trip, or been able to be home at 4:00 every afternoon for the last month after not showing up until 9:30 in the morning because your employees are empowered to take care of everything.

The power of empowering employees is it gives you the freedom to choose to do what you want, not be forced to do what you must.