EMPLOYEE EMPOWERMENT
### Empowerment Defined

- Webster dictionary defines empowerment as: ‘giving the means, ability or authority’
- To empower someone is to give the individual authority

- To make decisions
- To contribute his / her ideas
- To exert influence
- To be responsible and accountable
- To set his / her own goals
- To solve problems within his/her sphere of responsibility and authority
Empowerment enhances employees intrinsic work motivation because once empowered they feel that:

- They are competent and valued
- That their jobs have meaning & impact
- That they have opportunities to use their talents
- That they are effective and powerful.
INTRINSIC WORK MOTIVATION

Reduced Powerlessness perceptions

Implementing teams

Individual task assessments, competence, choice, sense of impact, meaningfulness, community

Positive Interpretative Style

Empowerment (Intrinsic task motivation)
VIEW POINT WITH A DIFFERENCE

- RANDOLPH – Empowerment is not ‘giving’ people the power to make decisions
- People are already equipped with the ‘power’ to make effective decisions. This is the ‘power’ of ‘useful knowledge and internal motivation
- The organization only recognizes and releases this power into the organization

- This viewpoint is in consonance with concept of empowerment in Indian philosophy
- Vedanta asserts ‘Tattvamasi’ (you are that) – you are infinitely powerful within you.
INDIA SHOWS THE WAY

• In 1944, Homi Bhaba became the first person in the world to practice ‘Empowerment’ in his organization ‘Tata Institute of Fundamental Research’ (TIFR)

• Later practiced in Atomic Energy Commission (1948) and Atomic Energy Establishment (1954)

• Team of scientists given all freedom and facilities to develop research ---- wonderful results

• The New India Assurance Company also practiced empowerment in 1950s. The concept worked extremely well.
The Empowering organization differs from the traditional bureaucratic organization

- **Goals of mechanistic (traditional) organization**
  - Low cost,
  - Control of inputs
  - Standardization
  - Predictability
  - Obedience
  - Creation of demand
  - Detection of defects
  - Occasional improvement

- **Goals of empowering organization**
  - Elimination of waste
  - Flexibility
  - Innovation
  - Sensitivity to demand
  - Elimination of defects
  - Continuous improvement
• The empowering organizational culture makes a difference
• In an empowering organizational culture
  – Employees can effectively respond to unexpected problems
  – Employees can spontaneously make use of arising opportunities
    because they possess:
    - The ability to assess the situation
    - Self-confidence to rely on their judgment
    - Authority and skill to work effectively
    - Attitude to work in teams.
NEED FOR EMPOWERMENT IN THE PRESENT CONTEXT

1. Economics of decision – making
   → Dramatically decreasing costs of information technology
   → Emergence of knowledge – based economy
   → Leading to decentralized decision-making
   → So empowering employees becoming a compulsion
2. Growing concern for survival
Highly competitive & rapidly changing market environment
Requires people who can:
1. quickly respond to unexpected problems
2. Spontaneously make use of arising opportunities.
Only empowered employees can do so. Bureaucratic model & control by command fail to give results
Key to Total Quality Management

Key Elements of TQM

• Employee involvement
• Empowerment
• Co-operative effort to achieve quality management

Weber & Sorensons—Successful implementation of TQM dependent on constructive culture (where employees are highly involved and empowered)
Indispensable Device for Improved Performance

• Reasons for its indispensability

1) During times of transition and transformation empowered employees more effective

2) Power and control delegated by superiors increases employees ‘say’ in the functioning of the organization

3) Empowered employees can ‘use’ progressive thinking’ for exploiting full productive capacity of the new technology

4) Empowerment provides ‘intrinsic work motivation’

5) Empowerment leads to:

a) Flexibility (b) Innovation (c) Commitment (d) Continuous Improvement (e) Transformation of individuals and (f) Better service for customers

All these are significant contributors to improved performance
Prerequisites to Empowerment

• 1) Ensuring general facilitators to empowerment
   * Delegation of power
   * Employee Participation
   * Innovation
   * Access to information
   * Accountability

• 2) Building Empowering leadership
   (a) Develop Leaders – who understand the strengths and weaknesses of employees
   (b) Who support people so that they can make full use of their latent talents & skills
Prerequisites to Empowerment-II

(c) Who have situational sensitivity to prevent any physical or social disabilities which hamper employee performance
(d) Who will develop structures which necessitate collective decision making
(e) Who will provide positive emotional atmosphere
(f) Who will reward and encourage in visible and personal ways
(g) Who will foster initiative and responsibility
(h) Who will express confidence in his employees
Prerequisites to Empowerment-III

3) Developing Empowering Attitudes

- Making basic shift in management thinking/attitude to:
  - Expect the best from people
  - Develop trust in people
  - Take positive measures to stimulate full efforts of people
  - Understand that there is no optimum right-varied solutions to a problem possible depending on situational factors
  - Understand that there is no watertight demarcation between ‘brainwork’ and ‘manual work’. Involve manual workers in decision making
4) Building Skills of Empowerment

- Continuous training workshops
- To Develop core skills related to:
  - Effective listening
  - Effective communication
  - Supportive behavior
  - Continuous improvement (Kaizen)

- To Develop human resource skills like:
  - Negotiation
  - Coaching and counseling
  - Leading discussion and meeting etc.
Process of Empowerment

Conger & Kanungo’s Perspective
Conger & Kanungo identify
Five Stages in the Empowerment Process

- Understanding conditions leading to a psychological state of powerlessness
- Empowering managerial practices
- Providing self-efficacy information removing conditions of powerlessness

Results in empowering experience in subordinates
leads to initiational motivation / persistence to accomplish tasks
Three Stages in the Empowerment Process

Information sharing
- Creating a clear vision and clarifying little pictures
- Helping people understand the business
- Building trust through sharing sensitive information
- Creating self-monitoring possibilities

Creating autonomy through structure
- Creating a clear vision and clarifying little pictures
- Clarifying goals & roles collaboratively
- Evolving new decision-making rules which support empowerment
- Formulating new empowering performance management processes
- Using heavy doses of training

Teams becoming the Hierarchy
- Providing direction and training for new skills
- Encouraging and supporting change
- Gradually having managers let go of control
- Working through the leadership vacuum stage
- Acknowledging the fear factor
DWIVEDI’S PERSPECTIVE

• Dwivedi’s Empowerment Process – The Indian context

• The First Stage – Fracturing the bureaucracy & trust-building measures required to fracture bureaucracy
  
  – Transparency
  – Customer orientation
  – Decentralization of power
  – Effective communication
  – Team work
  – Streamlining of systems
  – Free flow of information/ information sharing
  – Accountability
  – Feeling of ownership among employees
  – Independence in decision making
  – Participation in problem - solving
• **The second stage** – Creating Autonomy and Building Self – Managed teams

• Autonomy – No Outside control.
  
  Self – control through :
  
  → commitment to goals
  
  → self-appraisal system

• Example – Bhaba Atomic Research Centre

• Self–Managed Teams :- No hierarchical organizational structure.
  
  →Teams free to take decisions about problems pertaining to them.
  
  →Teams plan, organize, control
Elements in the structure for autonomy

- **Vision** – Direction towards which organization has to move
- **Goals** – Goals must be set collaboratively & stated in concrete form
- **Decision – making rules**
  - Delineate decision – making boundaries for teams & managers in the beginning itself-no scope for conflict
  - Operational decisions – domain of teams.
    Strategic decision-domain of managers
- **Performance Appraisal and Training**
  Managers usually train and lead the employees towards a structure of autonomy. Employees initially work under manager’s guidance. They learn:
  - To make decision
  - To resolve conflicts
  - To make budget
  - To do various jobs competently
  ** Once tuned to new system and confident – employees given autonomy.
  ** Manager now operates as a coach, mentor and guide.
  ** Employees become accountable for their performance.
Barriers to Empowerment

• Incongruence between empowerment ‘s goal of inclusion and organizational culture
• Low need for autonomy among people
• Managerial fear related to distribution of power
• Need for high power among managers
• Fear of exposure of managerial short-comings
• Fear of subordinates
  – Capable ones could replace the manager
  – Best talent may go to other departments or organizations