ROSELLE
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STRATEGIES

Helping You Select and Develop Great Leaders

How Leaders Succeed—They Empower!
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In our current **Leadersynth** series, we first introduced the topic of "How Leaders Succeed", and then explained in our second edition that leaders are learners. In this third edition, we focus on the importance of empowering others in your leadership approach. As a reminder, we believe that, to be a successful LEADER, it is critical that you engage in each of the behaviors, below:

- **L**earn
- **E**mpower
- **A**chieve
- **D**irect
- **E**n-spire
- **R**enew

Empower. To empower others, according to Webster's unabridged dictionary, is to give official authority to, or to provide the necessary faculties or abilities, to another. That is, to empower is to authorize and enable another to do a task, take on a responsibility, initiate an action, or move forward. Of the six essential leadership behaviors we will discuss in this series on how leaders succeed, this is one of three that are most focused on developing your team and others around you (the other two are Direct and En-spire, coming up in future editions).

The great General George S. Patton said, "Never tell people how to do things. Tell them what to do, and they will surprise you with their ingenuity." Bill Gates, philanthropist and co-founder of Microsoft, said, "As we look head into the next century, leaders will be those who empower others." From the field of war to the valley of silicon, then, empowerment has become a key leadership skill.

When you Empower others, it requires a degree of mental preparation:

- Recognize that your capacity to get things done is limited when you do everything on your own
- Acknowledge to yourself that others on your team have untapped potential and could take on more responsibility than you currently give them
- Admit to yourself that your focus should be less on day to day tasks and more on strategic, future oriented thoughts and plans
- Determine that the best way to develop your team--and spend your time on highest priority tasks--is to become highly effective at turning things over, authorizing, and assisting others

First, get out of your own way. If you are like most leaders we have worked with as coaches, you probably engage in behaviors that unwittingly undermine your capacity to empower and develop others. People often refer to this cluster of behaviors as "micromanaging", because they include actions like: demanding to stay informed down to the smallest detail of every team member's tasks, checking incessantly on tasks others were given to handle, stepping in to take back projects that were handed off to direct reports, and working longer hours to make sure that no detail is overlooked.

There are some obvious problems with this picture of a micromanager, but also a number of subtler issues that undermine a leader's effectiveness. For example, micromanagers tend to foster dependence on the part of their direct reports. As a consequence, high performing and confident direct reports often find their way out of the team or the organization, and the least confident and competent team members usually stay. From our experience as executive coaches, micromanagers are more likely to be passed over for promotion or terminated as part of a larger downsizing effort . The reason? They tend to have little time to focus on the tasks and initiatives that are their boss's and/or the organization's highest priorities, because they never get out of the weeds. Micromanagers also tend to become angry, frustrated, critical, or emotional when things do not go exactly the way they desire.

If you recognize yourself in this picture, take steps to find a coach and work toward a more effective leader approach. Your team will thank you for doing it; your boss will respect you for asking for help.

Then, learn how to delegate. The act of delegation is one that involves giving others the authority and responsibility to handle tasks or projects in your stead. Delegating is NOT the action of dumping stuff on a direct report at the last minute, because you did not plan adequately for all the tasks on your plate. When you use delegation to empower others, you should have three fundamental questions in mind:
- What does each of my direct reports need to work on next that would help them achieve a greater level of confidence and competence, and perhaps position them for promotion?
- Which tasks assigned to me would be appropriate to assign to others on the team, so that I can create space on my calendar for my highest priority tasks and projects?
- What level of support will I need to provide to those to whom I delegate, including adequate lead time, instruction, feedback, and follow through?

The key to becoming a strong delegator is to consider these three questions every day, as each new project and task comes through your door or into your inbox. In order to maximize the use of your time on any given day, you must quickly decide to handle the tasks yourself, push back on the timeframe and renegotiate a later deadline, or delegate them to someone else on your team. These are the only three options you have when it comes to handling work.

Are you an empowering leader? Here are some questions you can ask yourself to determine the extent to which you leverage empowerment in your leadership, currently:
- Do I trust others enough to empower them to do work for which I am ultimately responsible?
- Do I make my expectations clear for the delegated tasks and ensure that others understand?
- Can I let go of the desire for tasks being done *perfectly* (the way I would do them) for *good enough* (the way others might do them)?
- Can I still recognize my own value after I empower others to complete tasks assigned to me?
- Do I use delegated tasks and projects to develop the confidence and competence of my team?

We hope this third in a seven-part series has been helpful to you. Please give us your feedback, and share with us if you have an example from your own leadership experience that you think illustrates this successful leader component of empowering. We look forward to hearing from you!