# Are You Delegating Or Empowering Or Both? Here's How To Find Out

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Covid-19 has changed the DNA of our workplace. It has ushered in many insights, especially the insight that delegation and empowerment matter more now than they did before. Moving forward, leaders must nurture these valuable skills to recover and rebuild high-performing teams, irrespective of the way and place of working.

Even though these two words are used interchangeably, their nuances are different when viewed from the eagle-eye perspective of the leader. Both have their unique place; therefore knowing the difference between the two allows a leader to better prepare and take action.

The best practices recommend:

• Empower your team first, then think of delegating; not the other way around

• Delegation is the higher state of the empowerment-delegation pair

Do you know which of your team members are empowered? And which ones you have delegated to? Do they know if they're empowered or delegated? The answer is usually no.

Naturally, this causes confusion. Do you struggle in this area? If so, you're not alone.

Most leaders do talk about the concept of empowering their team, yet many fall short for a number of reasons. You might have delegated, but that doesn't mean you've empowered by default.

The key lies in delegating in a way that creates an organic sense of empowerment. This is especially important when teams are working remotely, as it strengthens the team's autonomy to decide how to work and makes it

easier for them to work, as well as making it easier for leaders to manage their teams.

Reflect on your own leadership style: How well do you understand the difference and pivot between delegating and empowering? Navigating the balance between the two can be tricky and needs finesse. Use these triggers to steer you to create an environment where your team feels empowered.

**Key indicators you're wearing a manager's hat when delegating to your team:**

• You are assigning work tasks to the team. You focus more on your to-do lists — the completion of the tasks — and less on the person.

• You are allowing someone to represent you by acting on your behalf without truly granting them authority.

• You are likely distributing work that needs to get done but originates from murky laziness, lack of interest or lack of time. You are issuing direct assignments that offer little opportunity to grow. Hence, development is secondary.

• You are likely still focused, at some level, on control, especially if you're setting upfront protocols for what/how to do tasks and checking up on *how* the work is getting done.

Through these actions, you're only empowering yourself — getting things done which you otherwise would have not been able to do alone. While this means less work for you in the short run, it can also turn into more work for you in the long run. It also ensures that you are your own leadership legacy — for good or ill. It holds you at the center of leadership activity and allows you to raise more followers, but not to cultivate leaders within your organization.

**Key indicators you're wearing a leader's hat when empowering your team:**

• You are giving the team enough space to represent themselves and take initiative.

• You are giving decision-making responsibility and ownership to them.

• You focus on enabling a person by seeding the potential for interest as well as developing required competency, building skills, confidence, and capability. Development of the team and growth is one of your primary focuses.

• You have a support-learn-apply triadic mindset in place to ensure the team's success.

• You gain a comfort level about the team's capability and in turn, empower them more.

• You establish a running dialogue with the team to establish a partnership with them — your focus on guidance takes the place of your need to control.

Empowerment always comes from a noble intent to make others grow, so focus more on the person to ensure that he/she becomes better. This in turn automatically leads him/her to better execute tasks.

Empowering your team is time-consuming and complicated work in the beginning, especially when you have to give problems back to subordinates to solve themselves. When you do this, you have to be sure that they have both the desire and the ability to find a solid solution. However, investing the initial time and resources to develop your team creates less work for you in the long run.

Doing this kind of work inevitably places someone else at the center of leadership activity. Making them feel responsible for meaningful tasks and making them believe that they are competent creates a healthier working relationship and fosters mutual trust. You are giving others more authority and power to achieve objectives with the aim of developing team commitment, enthusiasm and expertise while simultaneously encouraging innovative initiatives that benefit the organization over time.

You, the one granting empowerment, begin to learn how this particular person thinks and approaches issues. Their ways of working may be very different from yours, but that matters less as you are more open to new ideas and new ways of working.

Empowerment is a motivational concept related to self-efficacy and self-actualization and it is intended to function as a motivational strategy. It's about improving self-management and sparking others from within to take action. In turn, it helps subordinates increase confidence, self-actualization and self-esteem. You build the other person first and then automatically

he/she looks upon you as a leader. This ensures that more leaders are your leadership legacy — which is almost always a good thing for the organization.

Focusing on empowering employees means you are actually elevating more leaders — irrespective of the industry and the company size or culture. And when an organization reaches the right level of empowerment, it enables faster decision-making, increases ownership, swift problem-resolution and a more customer-oriented approach to your business.

Empowerment does necessarily require some level of delegation, but not all instances of delegation produce an empowered team. To drive empowerment, the manager/leader has to change how she/he leads — work on herself/himself, both at the team level and at the organizational level.