*We Help You Focus Clearly,
Organize Effectively,
And Act With Courage*

How do empowering leaders behave?

*A **depowering** person says:*

♦ *Your* problem is...

♦ Why are you doing *that*? Here's what you *should* do.

♦ I'm not paying you to think.

♦ Here's the plan. Make sure you follow it. I want a full report in 6 months.

♦ I hope you learned something from this.

♦ Believe me, if you need to know something I'll tell you.

♦ Forget that other stuff, this is more important.

♦ You should be happy.

♦ I hope you're satisfied.

*An **empowering** leader says:*

♦ What issues are you struggling with on this project/job?

♦ What does the client want?

♦ What is your strategy for ...

♦ How does that fit our vision, values, and goals?

♦ In evaluating your project, what are you proud of?

♦ Sorry about?

♦ What have you learned?

♦ This is what's important to me...

♦ What information do you need?

♦ Who else should be involved, and when?

♦ How can I help you succeed?

Cathy Perme

Empowering Others

Many people have no idea how to empower others, and one can't learn simply through a textbook or course. Empowering others means "letting go." It means making a systematic and sustained effort to give others more information, knowledge, support, and opportunities to exercise <u>their</u> power for mutual benefit.

An empowering leader has the courage to ask more questions than give answers and effectively focuses the team on shared vision, values, and goals. In this role the leader collects, transforms, and disseminates information, creating dialog within the team.

WHAT DOES AN EMPOWERING LEADER DO?

1. **Asks productive questions.** This is critical. Productive questions stimulate the team to improve their own thinking and problem-solving processes. They are thoughtful and probing in nature. They do not focus on facts and figures but on concepts, feelings, values, and strategies. ❑

2. **Maintains balance.** The leader is like the pilot of a sailboat -- listening, looking, and testing the environment to identify risks and opportunities. She/he transforms that information for the team, helping to set realistic expectations for performance. By doing so, the leader helps the team stay balanced and use the forces of change to move toward the goal.

3. **Manages boundaries.** Too much information can distract and distress; too little can result in inaction. The leader identifies information and other resources that the team needs and ensures that boundaries are removed to make them available. The leader also recognizes information that is irrelevant and establishes boundaries to slow down or redirect that information to parts of the organization where it may be needed.

4. **Focuses attention on vision, values, and goals.** Through choice of questions, statements of expectations, and management of boundaries, an empowering leader infuses vision, values, and goals into the daily work of the team.

The empowering leader is at the center, not the head, of an effective team. He or she is neither greater nor less than any other member of the group -- but simply contributes different things to the team's overall success. ❑

Cathy Perme and Glenda Eoyang, President of Excel Instruction, Inc. collaborated to write this issue.