

LogiStyle

Helping Corporations Develop Logical Leadership

Food For Thought

August 2007

Is your organization empowered? How can you tell?

Dear *LogiStyle* Colleague:

Food for Thought is our way of sharing interesting concepts on corporate leadership and management with others who might find it useful. The thoughts offered are intended to be controversial and thought provoking. They always follow our motto of helping develop logical leadership.

Most corporate leaders would like to think that the people in their organization are empowered. The virtues of empowerment are acknowledged, respected and coveted. But, what is empowerment? How can you tell if your organization is empowered? We propose a provocative definition of empowerment, and suggest a way to tell if your organization is accordingly empowered.

At LogiStyle, we offer a workshop on speed and agility to corporate executives. An important component in achieving speed and agility is an empowered organization. So, what is empowerment? Most intuitive - as well as, formal - definitions of empowerment suggest that it is to enable or permit an individual, or a group of individuals, to make decisions and take actions. Most corporate leaders want their organization to be empowered, in the belief that more can be achieved with greater speed by doing so. But, in our opinion, few corporate leaders have fully fathomed its implications.

A critical question the leader needs to ponder, we believe, is whether the leader is willing to let the (members of the) organization make decisions and take action that might be counter to the intuition and inclination of the leader - so long as their goals and objectives remain consistent with those of the leader. If every decision and every action taken by the organization is required to be in alignment with the wishes of the leader then the organization is not empowered. All that the leader has delegated is the "doing," not the "thinking."

A common misconception is that there is a “best” approach to business issues, situations or decisions, and that logic and reason, together with wisdom and experience, will reveal and convince others of the superiority of the “best” approach. An even further misconception is that the leader always knows best. In reality, the uncertainties of the future course of events make it impossible to discern the “best” approach and multiple viable options remain defensible. Further, the leader, based on extensive knowledge, wisdom and experience, might be more often right than wrong, but, by no means, always right.

In a truly empowered organization, there will be many instances where individuals follow a path different from the leader’s voiced preference, in the belief that such path is more effective in achieving the organization’s goals. Such independence of thought and the resulting actions are what empower the organization. Furthermore, the leader’s willingness to express an opinion but accept and respect the eventual choice made by the action-taker within the organization, cultivates an environment of empowerment.

Based on this belief, we propose this test of empowerment: Can people in the organization readily name a few instances in the recent past where somebody has chosen to follow a path that is known to be counter to the intuition of the leader? How readily can they recall such instances? How many can they recall? How did the leader react? We believe, these questions are a telling test of empowerment.

We have known and worked with a number of organizations that have cultivated such an empowered culture. If you would like to learn more about a corporate culture of empowerment or how you can build such a culture within your organization, please call or write to us. Also, contact us if you would like more information on our workshop on speed & agility.

We have received many responses to our Food for Thought mailings, asking if you can freely share and forward these thoughts. Indeed you can. All we ask is that a clear attribution to LogiStyle and our contact information are included. For the interested reader, we have archived some of our recent Food for Thought mailings at our website, and can be viewed at [LogiStyle: Food for Thought Archive](#). As always, we welcome your comments. We hope your business is doing well. If we can be of any assistance please feel free to call – even, if just to chat.

Best Regards,

Balaji