

Provide Clear Parameters

When you've delegated a task, ask the rep to explain back what they heard. Chances are, you'll find gaps in their understanding. Most people don't get an entire concept or process the first time. Reinforce what they need to learn through practical application. Hint: Asking, "What questions do you have?" is more effective than asking, "Do you have any questions?" Asking "what" sends the message that questions are expected.

Provide the Authority

Sometimes, we delegate responsibility without clearly providing the authority. As a result, those on the front-line are confused about how far they can go. Acknowledge that they may feel uncomfortable at first. Give examples of decisions where reps may hesitate. Then provide steps for resolving them. Create a cheat sheet they can consult. Resist the temptation to step in when you see someone about to make a mistake. Every rep has to develop their own confidence.

Empowering People to make the best decisions

The Attributes of an Empowered Decision-Maker

Empowered decision-makers possess the ability to examine the elements of a situation, evaluate what needs to be accomplished and determine what to do. Second, they have the ability to *manage uncertainty*. The best decision-makers become comfortable with being uncomfortable. Third, they have the skills to *recover from what goes wrong*. When things go wrong, top reps are comfortable taking a step back, evaluating what happened, and developing a fix. Fourth, they have the confidence to *act independently*. Top decision-makers take initiative without asking for permission. They make a practice of thinking three and four steps ahead. The key element connecting all of these attributes is confidence.

Reinforce the Process

Rehearsal and reinforcement are critical for empowering. Some may remain uncomfortable embracing their new authority. This is generally more about emotion than intellect. Explain that you understand their apprehension. Reinforce that you've got their back. Work together on each of the processes they will need to master. But be careful not to make the decisions for them. When they start pushing you away it is because they have developed the confidence to act on their own.

Foster Network Judgment

Employ apps such as Guru® or Zapier® to create a home-grown knowledge base that reps can refer to when searching for resources to solve problems. Encourage reps to contribute ideas and information they gather from customer encounters that can help other reps address the similar issues. If necessary, provide incentives to get reps to contribute their ideas and encourage use during staff meetings and coaching sessions.

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