

DIMENSIONAL ASSESSMENT OF EMPOWERMENT IN ORGANIZATIONS

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This research project was inspired by a survey that was designed to help an organization determine how well it was doing in its efforts to empower associates and achieve a goal of continuous improvement. Initial review of the survey created suspicion that the survey was not built around the appropriate dimensions to accurately measure the level of empowerment in organizations. As such, the survey was psychometrically analyzed to determine the validity of the instrument as a measure of empowerment. Additionally, an extensive review of the literature was performed to determine new dimensions that would most accurately measure empowerment. Eight dimensions (culture, trust, accountability, leadership, ability, commitment, responsibility, and communication) were put forth as the most appropriate to measure empowerment. Subject matter experts with knowledge and experience in the area of organizational empowerment reviewed the new dimensions for accuracy and fit with the original survey items.

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## CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

This research project was inspired by a survey (see Appendix A) that was designed to help an organization determine how well it was doing in its efforts to empower associates and achieve a goal of continuous improvement. Initial review of the survey created suspicion that the empowerment dimensions in the survey were not appropriate. It was determined that the survey should be revised to accurately measure the level of empowerment in organizations.

As such, an extensive review of the literature was performed to determine the dimensions that should be utilized in the measurement of organizational empowerment. Subject matter experts (SMEs) with knowledge and experience in the area of organizational empowerment reviewed the new dimensions for accuracy and fit with the original survey questions. Results of this process lead to the recommendations for the revision of the survey.

### Empowerment Initiatives

Prior to a review of the dimensions of empowerment, it is important to be clear as to which form of empowerment will be reviewed and discussed. Empowerment is a general construct, which can be implemented in a variety of forms and fashions. For instance, personal empowerment, which is often utilized by a therapist, is different from educational empowerment often found in secondary and higher education forums, and both are different from employee empowerment found in organizations. This research will place the focus on empowerment initiatives in organizations.

The manner in which organizations utilize empowerment is instrumental in the determination of the dimensions that compose empowerment in organizations. Therefore a clear understanding of the history, role, and function that empowerment serves in organizations should

be developed prior to the identification of the dimensions involved. In order to create this knowledge base, the focus will be on the general aspects of empowerment initiatives in organizations. This focus will include the history of empowerment in organizations, definitions of employee empowerment, organizational uses of empowerment, the benefits and costs associated with empowerment, organizational reasons for implementation of empowerment, the failure of empowerment initiatives, and the empowering organization.

### History of Empowerment

Business and management principles are continually evolving. Employee involvement, of which empowerment is a contributor, is one of the more current management methods. Investigating the evolution of European and American management concepts is useful in understanding how organizations have come to utilize this methodology. Kalbaugh (1998) provides an historical overview that begins with the early guilds, which were the forerunners of the current huge conglomerate organizations. Guilds were groups of artisans who had their own rules governing quality, price, and other criteria. Within these guilds, individuals utilized their unique abilities to create goods and services that were a reflection of themselves. Guilds assured the quality of their products by closely controlling membership through a rigorous hierarchical system in which master craftsmen trained apprentices.

As the industrial revolution came of age, factories became the norm for business structures as artisans moved to the city in search of larger returns. These workers became part of larger organizations in which individuals and their contributions were devalued. Management told the workers exactly what to do and how to do it. Workers had no input as to the manner in which their job was performed. As independent factories merged, larger and larger organizations were created, resulting in the need for bureaucracy. This business model is commonly pictured as

a pyramid with large horizontal bands dividing the power structure. The majority of the power lies in the small tip of the pyramid. The degree of power diminishes as the pyramid grows larger until virtually no power exists at the base where the common worker is placed. As bureaucracy became unmanageable and unrealistic, organizations began to look for alternatives. One of the alternatives that was experimented with was employee involvement, often made up of “groups of two or more people who shared decision making powers and responsibility” (Kalbaugh, 1998, p. 43) regarding specific aspects of their individual jobs. Those groups are also generally responsible for the impact that their contribution has on the organization as a whole.

There is some debate about exactly when empowerment began to be considered a valid managerial concept. Most researchers agree that Elton Mayo and the Hawthorne studies served as the foundation for the interest in employee participation (Herrenkohl, Judson & Heffner, 1999). Other researchers are more specific in their assertion of the foundations of empowerment, claiming that the 1930s Human Relations school of thought is the root of empowerment (Korunkonda, Watson & Rajkumar, 1999). They support their assertion by pointing to an argument advanced by Mary Follette in which she asserted that by cooperating rather than competing, human beings can rise above limits imposed upon them by physiology, biology, or the environment.

### Defining Empowerment

The exact point where empowerment came into being is difficult to ascertain, and it is even more difficult to obtain a standard definition of empowerment. Efforts to define empowerment have ranged from simple one-lined definitions to more complex and encompassing explanations. Listed below are several of the simpler and more straightforward definitions of empowerment that different authors have offered:

- Merriam Webster's collegiate dictionary (1993) defines the verb empower as “to authorize or delegate or give legal power to someone.”
- “Employee empowerment often refers to employees being more proactive and self-sufficient in assisting an organization to achieve its goals” (Herrenkohl et al., 1999, p. 373-374).
- “Empowerment as a means of liberating employees suggests that employees should be free to do what they think is best without fear of veto by the boss” (Korunkonda et al., 1999, p. 32).
- Employee empowerment “is a fancy way of saying that we are going to treat employees like adults. To empower employees, we give the right information, set clear goals, and allow them to do the jobs they were hired to do” (Caudron, 1999, p. 26).
- “A common academic definition of empowerment is experienced choice, competence, meaningfulness, and progress” (Jones, 1999, p. 203).
- “Empowerment is a process whereby an individual’s belief in his or her efficacy is enhanced” (Lin, 1998, p. 224).
- Empowerment is “recognizing the power that exists in a role, allowing more, and expecting a person to express it” (Porter-OGrady, 1998, p. 5).
- “Empowerment combines both the ability and opportunity to judge correctly and do the right thing, as well as a preparation to do what must be done” (Edgeman & Dahlgaard, 1998, p. 75).
- “Internal and external cooperation subsumes team work and collaborative organizations, whereas employee fulfillment can be considered to subsume employee empowerment” (Korunkonda et al. 1999, p. 30).
- Empowerment is “conceptual job autonomy, the capacity to design one's work processes and to make key, non-routine decisions” (Dobbin & Boychuk, 1999, p. 266).



- In the “real expression of empowerment, specific expectations are already present with the role. Every individual: plays a part in determining his or her work, participates in evaluating the outcomes of work, has the authority necessary to do the work, acknowledges all changes in work, and must make decisions that affect his or her work and workplace relationship” (Porter-OGrady, 1998, p. 5).

It appears that most of the straightforward, simple definitions revolve around the individual. Common themes in these simple definitions are Autonomy, Power, Ability, Judgement, and Expectations. The more complex definitions tend to focus on the relationship between the individual and the organization. For instance, Maccoby (1999) asserts that empowerment can be deduced down to two meanings: a) the investment of authority in individuals so that they are responsible and accountable b) the concept that an organization must be a learning organization in order to be an empowering organization. Herrenkohl, was frustrated by the lack of an agreed-upon operational definition, and as such, created one. His definition includes both the initiatives of the individual employees and the support of those initiatives by the organization. Empowerment thus becomes a situation in which a supportive and interactive environment encourages employees to seek out and implement more efficient business methods (Herrenkohl et al., 1999).

To support the operational definition that was created, Herrenkohl et al. (1999) listed the various definitions from which it was derived. Those definitions included: 1 – letting those who do the work have or at least share in the power, 2 – responsibility for results being shared equally by managers and employees, 3 – recognizing employee contributions as key to the organization’s overall success, 4 – involvement of all employees and managers in business decisions, 5 – recognition of the team’s responsibility to pursue the shared vision and goals, 6 -employee self-

motivation developed as a result of the comprehension of responsibility and the authority that comes with it, 7 – awareness of the personal impact in attaining company goals, 8 – individuals successfully working together as teams, expanding the power of the teams, 9 – the influence of the learning process in individuals and teams, and 10 – encouragement of new skills intended to positively impact the organization’s success.

While some researchers and authors are focusing on the development of definitions for empowerment, others warn against it. Jones (1999) feels that often times an evaluative component, which is usually positive, is attached to definitions of methodologies. He suggests that only after the positive spin has passed is it worth the time and effort to develop a precise definition. As such, he warns practitioners to be wary of empowerment labels. Others, however, see value in developing definitions, but they warn of having a limited scope. For instance, Heaton (1998) advises that empowerment is not an isolated concept; it comes in a number of forms. Methodologies such as teams, employee involvement, etc., are similar to empowerment in their function and purpose, and they are often used in conjunction with or in place of empowerment. As such, practitioners would be advised to define empowerment in terms of its larger organizational uses and impact.

#### Uses of Empowerment Initiatives

Dobbin and Boychuk (1999) argue that the manner in which work is organized, across several industries and management levels, is impacted by the influence of empowerment. This is largely due to the usefulness of empowerment in organizations. It is not just a ‘feel-good’ practice; it is a productive and useful practice as well. Due to the significant impact that empowerment can have, organizations are changing the manner in which work is organized to take advantage of those uses.

Empowerment is commonly used to promote individual and/or group problem solving. According to Jones (1999), empowerment is not only a problem-solving tool in and of itself, but it is often used as a gateway to creativity. This is largely due to the fact that empowerment is considered “to facilitate self-control, the liberation of minds, and the creation of problem-solving skills” (Korunkonda et al., 1999, p. 29). This creativity is often put to use in the analysis of process breakdowns. Empowerment provides the organization with the opportunity to have new eyes look at old problems in order to help distinguish between fact and opinion in determining what the true possibilities are. A fresh view contributes greatly to the ability to make decisions and to the actions that are required in order to create a solution that addresses the whole process and not just the breakdown (Willis, 1999). Allowing people and groups to make decisions regarding certain processes can be highly beneficial to organizations.

Another instrumental use of empowerment is problem solving with regard to quality. Employees who have the support and trust of their management are able to make intelligent business decisions, build internal and external working relationships, and have input on how processes and services can be improved within the existing working environment (Korunkonda et al., 1999). One such system is TQM, which is a way of managing to improve the effectiveness, flexibility, and competitiveness of the business as a whole. It is no exaggeration to say that two recurrent themes throughout the literature on TQM are teams and employee empowerment. Moon & Swaffin-Smith (1998) state that in order for there to be a successful implementation of TQM, there must be high levels of process ownership, continuous improvement, and employee empowerment. Employee empowerment is considered crucial to TQM on three grounds:

- 1 - empowerment involves providing better information and skills and delegating authority to the non-managerial employees so they can perform more tasks and perform

them better, 2 - the idea of self control as opposed to management control, 3 - the assumption that empowerment results in employee satisfaction, which is needed to provide customer satisfaction and continuous improvement (Korunkonda, 1999, p. 30).

Though seen as highly beneficial to TQM, some experts fear that “excessive reliance on teams and empowerment on the basis of faith and anecdotal evidence rather than hard-core empirical evidence could be a fatal long-term outlook for the TQM movement” (Korunkonda et al., 1999, p. 33). Six Sigma is another popular quality system that uses empowerment as a crucial element. This is where the performance level equates to 3.4 defects per million opportunities for defects to occur. It is crucial that the team members who are actually performing the work are empowered to make decisions regarding quality (Hellinghausen & Myers, 1998).

Empowerment can be extremely useful to an organization, but it is also vulnerable to abuse. Organizations see that a link between employee empowerment and satisfaction can be readily established. However, organizations often overlook that link because they feel that both empowerment and employee satisfaction are results of practices that satisfy employees (Korunkonda, 1999). It is a common misconception that empowerment alone will lead to employee satisfaction. Many organizations implement empowerment practices in name only to pacify employees. An organization may increase empowerment initiatives but at the managerial or director level only, or they may let the employees believe they are a contributing part of the team when in reality the employees’ ideas are heard but never implemented (Snell & Chak, 1998). Many organizations may claim that they empower their employees, but those who actually do are rare (Moon & Swaffin-Smith, 1998).

## Benefits and Costs of Empowerment Initiatives

Although there is no doubt as to the usefulness of empowerment in organizations, the question that precedes any new initiative is, What are the benefits? “The benefits that can be derived from empowerment include employee commitment, quality products and services, efficiency, responsiveness, synergy and management leverage” (Lin, 1998, p. 223). To be a bit more specific, Clemmer (1998) asserts that empowerment is beneficial because each individual can see how his or her work is part of the bigger system. Employees are trusted and expected to act responsibly, and they live up to those expectations. Smaller units that work as a team and carry their own responsibilities are dedicated to overcoming obstacles and generating new opportunities. Employees are passionate about and committed to their work because they feel ownership over it, and it becomes easier to focus on the needs of the customer and the company. Finally, because employees have control, they are more likely to suggest alternatives and meet challenges rather than to sit idly by.

Results from companies using the empowered team concept show that when workers feel themselves to be a part of the team, they become more creative and more dedicated to getting the job done, and the company benefits as a whole (Hellinghausen & Myers, 1998). Because each team member brings a different skill set to the table, teams with members whose jobs are widely varied can better coordinate implementation of projects that involve several departments. In addition, creativity in meeting customers’ needs is enhanced when individuals and teams are empowered to make decisions without waiting for upper management’s approval. Lastly, the perception of the work environment is increased because employees know they play an important role in the company’s overall success (Johnson, 1999).

Some employee empowerment initiatives take the final step to employee ownership. Studies by The National Center for Employee Ownership demonstrate that companies utilizing employee ownership strategies show an increase in sales and employment figures and a decrease in workers' compensation claims (Day, 1999). Research indicates that U.S. companies that are employee-owned have harder employee relations and retention, even during recessions. They also post capital returns between 8% to 14% higher than their competitors and show remarkable growth of market share (Pereira, 1998).

However impressive these factors may be, many companies are not ready or willing to transition to employee ownership of the company. While beneficial to the initiative, full employee ownership is not a requirement in order to have a successful employee empowerment initiative. Over the past decade or so, numerous rigorous studies have “demonstrated the enormous economic returns obtained through the implementation of what are variously called high involvement, high-performance, or high commitment management practices. This evidence is drawn from studies of the five-year survival rates of initial public offerings, studies of profitability and stock prices in large samples of companies from multiple industries, and detailed research on the automobile, apparel, semiconductor, steel manufacturing, oil refining, and service industries” (Pfeffer & Veiga, 1999, p. 37). A study of 100 German companies across several different industries showed a positive relationship between employee initiatives, such as empowerment, and market performance. The companies that valued their worker performance and contributions highly often produced above-average long-term stock returns compared to others in their industry (Pfeffer & Veiga, 1999).

Immediate and short-term benefits of employee involvement have been shown to help the organization, but these gains may eventually mean nothing if the company does not have a long-

term strategy for survival. In a study intended to measure the survival rate of 146 companies that had an initial public offering in 1988, after five years only 60 percent of the companies were still in business. The study analysis showed that how the companies valued and showed appreciation for employees was a significant factor in the ongoing success of the company, regardless of other factors such as company size, profit level, and type of industry (Pfeffer & Veiga, 1999). Based on research, some authors believe that “organizations that embrace empowerment, and proactively record and use corporate memory, will have an advantage in the global market. Current literature suggests that empowerment and organizational memory” are beneficial to organization’s long term survival (Johnson, 1999, p. 20). In short, the payoff of empowerment is a more educated, more flexible organization, able to respond instantaneously to changes in the market, and turn on a dime for the customer if necessary (Willis, 1999)

The benefits of empowerment are impressive. However, nothing is without cost, and the costs associated with empowerment can be intimidating if not managed well. Johnson (1999) points out several problems that can be associated with empowerment. Conflicts between team members can disrupt creativity and motivation and result in the failure to find a solution. Lack of organization control may lead to missed deadlines or company standards being overlooked. Even with training, employees may not be able to foresee or know how to handle all the consequences of their decisions. It may be necessary for experienced managers to oversee empowered teams in order to resolve conflicts and keep the teams on track and aligned with company goals. “Once democracy is unleashed in the organization, maverick employees can get out of hand, divisive actions can develop, or strategic coherence can be threatened” (Lee, 1999, p. 54-55). It is important that organizations be aware of the expected loss of management control and prepare to deal with the repercussions when entering into an empowerment initiative.

## Reasons for Implementing Empowerment

There are many reasons for implementing empowerment, and one of the most commonly referred to is that it is simply the right thing to do. Some experts, such as Borowski, (1998) believe that Kant's categorical imperative can be used to determine which actions are morally correct. Kant's categorical imperative essentially says that every person should act in such a way as to obtain the maximum of our actions. Looking at this in the framework of an employment organization, a business is morally acceptable when all people in it are treated with the respect they deserve. While this argument and others like it surface several times in the literature, organizations that are implementing empowerment do not give this as a reason for the practice.

Most organizations will refer to their employees as their greatest asset when rationalizing an empowerment initiative. The employees are the ones who must work together to plan and execute strategies that will accomplish the goals of the business (Willis, 1999). If a company does not treat its employees as valuable assets having the potential to reach vast new heights, nothing out of the ordinary will ever happen. The company must help the employees unlock their own abilities to achieve (Covey, 1999b). Many experts echo this when they acknowledge that though each employee has the potential to bring a competitive advantage, most people underperform their potential due to low expectations or disorganization either within themselves or from within the company. Most employees have more talent and ability than their jobs require or that they have the freedom to express (Covey, 1999b). Organizations are beginning to see this as a problem and are implementing empowerment to overcome it. In attempts to build upon company strengths, many organizations are taking the best employees from various departments, teaming them up, and giving them total control over certain projects, from the biggest to the smallest decisions (Hellinghausen & Myers, 1998). Organizations are realizing that the



empowerment of frontline workers is critical if the organization is to understand core business processes, because these people are the ones doing the actual work, and they are in the best position to make the most effective suggestions and improvements (Johnson, 1999).

Frontline employees are usually closest to the technical work processes, and they are sometimes also closest to the customers. When employees do not feel that their efforts make a difference to the company, job stress increases and morale drops. Unfortunately, customers are usually able to pick up on this stress and frustration (Berman, 1999). Empowerment programs can be used to help transform a stagnant and apathetic organization into an enthusiastic place where employees feel like contributors and want to work together to better serve the customer (Dover, 1999). Indeed, empowerment is gaining momentum not just as a tool to overcome employee apathy. “The use of empowered employee teams to solve problems, lower costs, increase quality, and in short, improve customer satisfaction, is gaining momentum in today's global business environment” (Hellinghausen & Myers, 1998, p. 21). This makes sense in that one of the main goals of empowerment is to meet the customer's needs in the most efficient way possible. If this is accomplished most of the time, then empowerment has proven itself beneficial to the company's bottom line through increased revenues (Potochny, 1998).

Initiatives meant to improve organizational performance and profits are, of course, desirable, but empowerment is not a quick fix by any means, and reckless implementation can be more damaging than beneficial. However, thorough planning and utilization of empowerment strategies can energize an organization from within and help create a competitive advantage in the industry (Robinson, 1998). In today's work environment, empowered teams can help keep a company one step ahead of the competition because they are innovative, often resolve customer problems on the spot, and develop products and services better suited to the customer's needs

(Hellinghausen & Myers, 1998; Maccoby, 1999). Whether or not a company recognizes, encourages, and utilizes what its employees have to offer may be what determines its success or failure (Johnson, 1999). Many organizations recognize the importance of allowing the workers who actually handle the processes and the customers make daily decisions to improve and enhance those processes and relationships (Johnson, 1999). If nothing else, teaching workers how to make responsible business decisions and then allowing them to do so saves valuable time (McCarthy, 1999).

In a changing world, organizations and individuals must change in response to environmental influences, or internal influences such as the recent trend is ‘organizational flattening’ or a reduction in the number of levels in the power structure of the company (McConnell, 1998). While there is no doubt that organizations must change, there is growing disparity as to how they should go about the process of change. One aspect that most experts agree on is that change is most effective when people do not feel threatened by it but rather can embrace it, recognizing opportunities for increased personal involvement and influence (Anonymous, 1998). Taking this into consideration, the following are some approaches that companies can use in their organizational change efforts to ensure successful change to a new way of doing business. 1 – Communication is vital to establish proper expectations. Failure to communicate will hinder, even stop, progress. 2 – Clearly define roles and make sure that employees understand them. Though this may seem elementary, everyone needs specific structure and guidelines to successfully implement a new system. 3 – Encourage questions and ideas rather than adopting an approach that is viewed as a closed door. 4 – Maintain a high level of trust and honesty between all departments. 5 – Offer strong leadership. Workers will have confidence in an upper management that appears strong, committed, involved, and encouraging.

6 – Allow enough time for people to learn, adapt to, and recognize the benefits of the new process. 7 – Educate managers to the new processes and procedures. Employees need to see that help and support are readily available. 8 – Have an “internal change champion.” This person must head up all efforts to implement the change and must be trained to motivate employees, solve unforeseen problems, and see the change through to its complete integration (Willis, 1999).

Some experts believe that in order to implement large changes within an organization, employee involvement and contributions must be a major part of the restructure (Lin, 1998). Using this idea, more and more organizations are beginning to recognize that empowerment is one important key to adapting to changes in the industry (Johnson, 1999). Overall, it can be said that companies succeed in the face of change when they are able to motivate and encourage employees to participate rather than simply telling them what to do (Kotter, 1999).

Leaders and their workforces are beginning to take responsibility for making change successful, and the companies they are creating are better able to compete in the marketplace and make plans for the future (Willis, 1999). This is often done by practicing the principles of empowerment. “Empower others by removing blocks, by changing systems or structures that seriously undermine the change vision, and by encouraging risk-taking and nontraditional ideas, activities, and actions. This helps increase the effectiveness of internal change processes to cope with external change” (Kotter, 1999, p. 17). While empowerment can be useful, if not essential, to making change efforts successful, if principles of empowerment are not already in place, then this additional change in organizational practice can further complicate an already daunting plan to make major changes within the organization (Willis, 1999).

High performing organizations see their people as assets, strive to meet customer needs, and adapt to changing environments. In these high performance organizations there is generally

less bureaucracy, more employee involvement in establishing and reaching company goals, and better employee relationships (Kotter, 1999). They also use “leadership practices that energize workers who are attuned to strategic goals. The result is more leadership from more people, a clearer sense of direction, long-term visions, productivity and innovative strategies to support the vision, and directors to focus on the big picture” (Kotter, 1999, p. 16).

Empowerment contributes heavily to all of the above components of a high-performing organization. With effective empowerment, the employees recognize how their actions and decisions directly affect the customer. They learn to focus on the value to the customer and are inspired and motivated to work together to improve the process and the product (Dover, 1999). All of this requires that employees be well trained, take personal responsibility for improving the organization, and have faith in the validity of their decisions (Covey, 1999a). As desirable as all of this may be, employees cannot be forced to be supportive in producing a high-performance organization, because the degree of involvement and performance is established by each individual (Avery, 1999).

It is this voluntary component that has researchers focusing on employee motivation. Some experts have suggested that organizations stop looking for the one program or initiative that will solve all of the organization’s problems. Instead they recommend that the organization look at the capacity that is as of yet untapped and the organization’s ability to “zest” (Lin, 1998). In order to product excitement, commitment, and action (“zest”) organizations must understand what basic human motivation is. Woodruff (1999) posits a theory that people are driven by one of three motives: achievement, affiliation, and influence. Those who thrive on achievement seek out personal and professional challenges around them and strive to perform at the highest level. Those driven by affiliation expend the most energy improving the quality of their relationships.

Finally, those who are driven by influence concern themselves with those around them, seeking to persuade, convince, or empower their coworkers to achieve goals.

Understanding human motivation is not enough; organizations must have beliefs and actions that support the development and maintenance of employee motivation. As such, it has been shown that companies with high employee motivation focus on the following work aspects for their employees: work that is meaningful for the employee, high expectations requiring a high standard of performance, clear communication of goals and purpose, demonstrated interest in employees and evidence of employee value, fair and equal treatment in the workplace, and supporting competence in employees and their performance (Catlette & Hadden, 1999).

While an organization's beliefs can help develop a motivated workforce, they can also do just the opposite. Some organizational assumptions and beliefs can hinder motivation. These organizational theories often revolve around the assumptions that employees need a dominating and controlling management because they can't focus or meet goals without it, employees for whom expectations are low are happier because they are under less pressure, and an organization that is run with a gentle hand will be full of sharing and goodwill (Catlette & Hadden, 1999). While these beliefs may be well meaning, they are obviously detrimental to attempts to develop employee motivation.

Regardless of what their particular beliefs may be, companies must exhibit actions to support these beliefs; otherwise it is just rhetoric. Indeed, companies with high employee motivation "share three things in common: 1 - they keep people solidly behind the core purpose, 2 - they let people know they are cared about, first as people then as professionals, and 3 - they remove obstacles from the paths of their workers" (Catlette & Hadden, 1999, p. 18). Many

companies strive toward these goals by using empowerment as a means of increasing and maintaining employee motivation (Lin, 1998).

### Failure of Empowerment Initiatives

It is estimated that well over half of empowerment initiatives fail (Allen & Alvarez, 1998). The majority of these failed empowerment initiatives follow a similar pattern or process: the announcement of the new initiatives, the first response to the news, the confusion surrounding the changes, and the recognition of the failed attempt. The first reaction usually falls somewhere between optimism of hoping it will work and cynicism of thinking it won't work. Many employees and managers see the potential benefits but are concerned about their new responsibilities. These concerns can build because the personal benefits of each employee career path, performance recognition, and compensation are not immediately apparent. Nevertheless, a flurry of activity follows the initial announcement. This often includes the creation of new performance measures for the organization and individual as well as the endowment of authority and responsibility (Dover, 1999).

Progress has begun toward an empowered workforce. But there will be issues of concern as the empowerment comes into effect in terms of actions and decisions. These may cause chaos, or at least the perception of chaos, and wary managers try to over-control teams whom they do not trust to have the knowledge or ability to make the right decisions. Thus a backlash occurs, and frustrated employees stop making the efforts that management is overriding anyway. Eventually, senior management allows the program to die quietly (Dover, 1999).

One of the most common explanations is that the employees simply were not capable or were not ready to be empowered. There may be some truth to it, as an undermining factor of empowerment can be the mind-set that the employees bring into the picture. Allen & Alvarez

(1999) discuss warnings to organizations against empowering victims, cynics, and bystanders. The assertion is that these individuals approach empowerment with a self-serving agenda. Victims are convinced that their environment is responsible for their attitude, and they feel they have little power to change their own personal situation. Cynics hold a negative or disapproving attitude, and they are able to see only the potential problems of the initiatives, never the benefits. Bystanders simply will do nothing. They pretend the issues are unimportant to avoid facing the disappointment of the situation. These three mental maps go against the principles of empowerment and will be not only unsupportive but actually detrimental to empowerment initiatives. In order for empowerment to work, an organization must be cognizant of who it empowers. Allen & Alvarez (1999) assert that individuals who are in control of their lives and take control of their environment are ready to be empowered. These individuals will approach empowerment by looking for what they can change resulting feelings of personal peace.

While the people themselves may be a potential factor in the failure of empowerment initiatives, it is more commonly the lack of organized effort that is put out by the organization that is to blame. In many organizations, the words are much more powerful than the actions that follow (Harari, 1999). There is much vocalization during the planning and announcement stages; however, the effort level falls to almost nothing as time goes by. In order to maintain momentum, an organization must take action on promises (Covey, 1999b). Another failure of effort on the part of organizations is the form that empowerment takes. In many real life cases, empowerment exists only as the delegation of additional duties to employees. They have no more power—simply more work (Korunkonda et al., 1999). It is much easier to simply delegate than it is to actually change systems in order to truly empower employees. Empowerment is a new way of thinking, and organizations must make a real effort from the core of the company

(Covey, 1999a). This takes a great deal of patience and a great deal of effort that most organizations either do not have or are unwilling to exert, resulting in failed empowerment initiatives.

While few organizations will ever list executive leadership as a factor in the failure of empowerment initiatives, it is undoubtedly so. Despite the potential benefits, empowerment programs often fail due to the problems within the company that initially made empowerment seem like a good idea. Many managers still feel their success and value is a result of the power they have, and handing over that power to employees is viewed as a personal threat. Meanwhile, some employees mistake empowerment for discretionary authority and the power to decide things unilaterally, and they lack the collaborative skills that management neglects or refuses to teach them. Others resist the need to assume more power and cling to a comfortable dependence on authority (Dover, 1999).

There are several other factors related to leadership that can play a role in undermining empowerment efforts. These may include the lack of support from the organizational structure, systems, and executives. The lack of support in these areas is often associated with the fear that management has of losing control (Allen & Alvarez, 1999). Indeed, managers often cringe at the term “empowerment” because they don’t want to relinquish power, and they often fear the quality of the decisions that will be made by their employees (Potochny, 1998). This fear can result in “endullment, which occupies the opposite end of the empowerment spectrum. Endullment is embodied in telling people what to do, creating confining boundaries, offering limited feedback, and allowing limited ownership of one's job. The result is employees who are apathetic about both their work and the organization” (Scontrino, 1998, p. 541).



While the employees, the lack of organizational effort, and the executive leadership can all be contributors of failure of an empowerment initiative, more often than not it is the organization's assumptions that serve as the deathblow to empowerment. The assumptions are the basis of organizational culture and that is what ultimately drives the implementation. If those assumptions are flawed, the implementation will be as well. Dover (1999) discusses some flawed assumptions including: 1 – Assuming that whoever has the power is automatically right. Having the power to make decisions does not mean that the decisions will necessarily be good. 2 – Imagining that one person (or a few people) has the power to make or break the company. In reality, the majority of all successes and failures are a result of collaborative effort, and the empowered workers need to have faith in each other. 3 – Expecting employees to immediately jump on the empowerment bandwagon. Some employees will resist empowerment efforts just as some managers will. This can cause problems between the sponsors of the program and the hesitant employees. 4 – Thinking that employees have all the necessary skills for their new roles. The fact is that neither managers nor employees may be able to identify, much less perform, all the functions of their new roles, especially at the beginning of the effort. 5 – Allowing impatience to change the focus. Opponents of the empowerment effort may insist that the process is taking too long or costing too much, hoping to influence the organization to abandon the idea.

### The Empowering Organization

In general, organizations that are successful in implementing empowerment view the organization as organic, not mechanical. The organization lives and grows because it is composed of living, growing people. It is a living ecosystem and must ultimately be governed by principles (Covey, 1999a). Those principles by which the organization is to be governed are the

basic assumptions that the organization holds. Empowerment is dependent on such organizational factors as values, work or managing styles, systems, and ability, all of which are determined by the organization's culture (Lin, 1998). One such belief is that employees must be properly trained and educated in order to be truly involved in the long-range success of the company (Hooks, 1999). Another belief is that all employees in the company should share in leadership, taking part in both its benefits and its responsibilities. While the scope and material rewards will vary greatly, loyalty will be carefully cultivated through such beliefs (Edgeman & Dahlgaard, 1998). Research has shown that "successful organizations create stability in unstable times by being true to their mission, vision, values and operating philosophies" (Harvey, 1998, p. 9). The beliefs and goals of an organization never outlive their usefulness or importance, and they contribute greatly to organizational initiatives.

Organizations whose beliefs are supportive of empowerment recognize the organization as a social system. In order to lead a social system effectively, the organization understands that the employees need to hold the same purposes and values as the system. This will enable the employees to become personally invested in making the system more effective (Maccoby, 1999). Not only do the values and the system need to be aligned, but the system needs to be supportive of the values. DeLeede, Nijhof & Fisscher (1999) suggest that organizations take an overall approach and apply sociotechnical theory to change the systems involving training, compensation, resources, etc in conjunction with the distribution and delegation of responsibilities. These systems allow organizations to infuse the core values (such as profound trust, empowerment, and distributed leadership) and competencies into people and thus more broadly into the organization. The result is an empowered organization composed of empowered people (Edgeman & Dahlgaard, 1998).

An organization whose beliefs and systems place people first can be very successful and profitable. Researchers have discovered several specific systems that produce profits through putting people first. They include employment security; selective hiring; self-managed teams and decentralization as basic elements of organizational design; comparatively high compensation contingent on organizational performance; reduction of status differences; and the sharing of information. Employment security serves as a supportive system largely because workers fear that by increasing efficiency, they will work themselves out of the job. Therefore, employment security is fundamental to the implementation of most other high performance management practices. Selective hiring is also a system that supports high performance. However, the organization first needs a large applicant pool from which to select. They need to be clear about what the most critical skills and attributes are. They also need to make certain that the skills and abilities sought are consistent with the particular job requirements and the organization's approach to this market. Once the critical skills are determined, they need to screen primarily for attributes that are difficult to learn or change through training.

Self-managed teams and decentralization can provide an increased sense of responsibility, which stimulates more initiative and effort on the part of everyone involved. Compensation systems can take a number of different forms, some of which are incentives directly related to company performance such as stock options and profit sharing. Others are simply team or individual bonuses or rewards. While reduction of status differences may not seem like a system, it is indeed. This system can be implemented symbolically (language, labels, physical space, and dress) and substantively (reduction of an organization's degree of wage inequality). The sharing of information is possibly one of the most critical systems since the lack of information or ability to understand and utilize the information can block even the most

capable and highly motivated employees from contributing the enhancement of organizational performance (Pfeffer & Veiga, 1999).

### Empowerment Dimensions

There is an abundance of opinion as to what comprises empowerment. However, a scan of the available literature reveals that only five to eight dimensions of empowerment are prevalent in publications. Researchers and experts tend to focus on a single or select few dimensions that influence empowerment. This focus allows them to present how those specific components can be utilized and structured to help ensure the success of empowerment initiatives. When taken as a collective they give an excellent overview of what is required from the operating orientation of the organization, the traits of the initiative, and the individual orientations in order to ensure successful empowerment initiatives.

The following section concentrates on eight general dimensions of empowerment. These are based upon natural groupings of the literature that was reviewed. These are not the only empowerment dimensions and they may not be the most appropriate contributors to apply in the measurement of empowerment, which will be addressed later in this paper. However, it is important to review these areas because they encompass the majority of the current literature. The eight dimensions that will be discussed are teams, culture, trust, accountability, leadership, knowledge, and commitment.

#### Teams and Empowerment

Empowerment is generally utilized in conjunction with organizational change initiatives such as teams. The use of empowered teams rather than empowered individuals helps to ensure a higher level of performance and better results of the empowerment initiative. When empowered

individuals are grouped into empowered teams, each member contributes personal experience, education, skills, and ideas that all build upon each other to accomplish larger, more significant goals. Successful empowered teams share common characteristics: They are permanent entities, not just temporary solutions. They establish their own goals and construct the processes to be used to meet those goals. Team members communicate regularly to report progress, plan future steps, solve problems, and create a unified group. They create and follow their own plans and processes. They depend on each other, and the head of the group has no more power or say than any of the other team members (Kalbaugh, 1998).

Essentially, teams must share joint responsibility for their work, decisions, etc in order to be effective. However, the American value of individualism can create an obstacle for joint responsibility. In Americans' private and work lives, most people want to be accountable for only their own performance and do not want to rely on others or be held responsible for what others do or do not accomplish. There tends to be a culture of individualism, which often conflicts with the concept of teams. This challenge must be overcome in order for a team to truly be successful. Each member must take responsibility not only for their individual goals, but for the team goals since the focus and recognition is on what they achieve as a team, not as individuals (Adler, 1999b).

In response to this, researchers have been searching for the key to creating the requirement of joint responsibility. A study by DeLeede et al. (1999) emphasizes the necessity of the collective mind for having responsibility at the team level. They state two factors necessary in order for the team to be responsible – a collective mind and an organizational context that facilitates responsible behavior. Characteristics of the collective mind include: 1 – a critical collective task as well as clear common tasks and goals, 2 – inter-relating, because in critical

situations no member of the team will have a clear view of the total situation, 3 – standardized, and therefore predictable, behavior and interrelationships. The standardization creates a necessary base for collective improvisation and for creative and intelligent collective action, 4 – influence of organizational factors such as norms and values of the organization, procedures for decision making, training in selection, and availability of resources (DeLeede et al., 1999). To achieve a collective mind, DeLeede et al. (1999) suggest that the concrete connections of actions be emphasized over the connections between people.

In compliance with their joint responsibility, team members must work together as a collective unit. Teamwork in the business world has traditionally meant utilizing the strengths of employees to work on different areas of a project. The employees report to a manager who is the person responsible for making the actual decisions (Hellinghausen & Myers, 1998). However, the joint responsibility of empowered teams requires much more than simply pooling resources. “Teams of empowered employees must have the authority and autonomy to make significant changes in the way the company does business” (Hellinghausen & Myers, 1998, p. 22).

However, people cannot simply be thrown together and be called a team. The foundations for creating teamwork are: 1 – A common effort for a common goal. This effort must be facilitated by communication and trust between everyone involved. 2 – Promoting creativity and willingness to try new ideas via worker inspiration, involvement, and accountability. 3 – An increased motivation and commitment when trust and solidarity are present within the team. 4 – The necessity for leadership to inspire and support the effort so that the team works to meet or exceed expectations. 5 – Sufficient skills and environment underlying the team’s effort from the beginning (Spitzer, 1999). The first and best step to creating a good team is taken when “the

organization defines the project to be completed, identifies how much empowerment is needed, and the recruits the best people to work on a problem” (Hellinghausen & Myers, 1998, p. 22).

The second step is making sure that teamwork happens. Smialek (1998) went directly to the teams when attempting to determine how to create teamwork. Results indicated that teams deem seven major factors as essential to create teams that are successfully responsible. 1– Provide team-building training, including both technical and interpersonal relationship skills. 2 – Assure that there is necessary time for the team process. 3 – Include a true representation of groups on teams and provide well-organized teams with balanced participation in order to facilitate and enhance decision making and problem solving outcomes. 4 – Provide an environment that is open to the team members’ opinions and ideas, that supports and encourages new ideas, and that follows through on team recommendations. 5 – Respect and trust team members. 6 – Assure the use of effective and efficient communication methods among team members and other organizational factors. 7 – Recognize team members for their time and effort.

In addition to team members’ verbal reports, experts have also offered suggestions as to what it takes to make empowered teams successful. One such expert claims that if any team is to have ongoing success, it must strive to constantly improve both process and quality and continue to be innovative (Smialek, 1998). It is important to note that there is no recipe for success, every team is different. There is no single method that will serve to create effective, responsible, empowered teams. Each team must take into account its educational, technical, and training foundation and work to develop their team recipe for success (Smialek, 1998).

### Culture and Empowerment

While each team must ultimately find its own recipe for success, that recipe will do them little good if they are not in an organization that supports empowerment principles. In order for

an empowerment initiative to be successful the manner in which employees work, the values of the organization, and the feelings of employees regarding involvement must all transition through some form of culture shift (Lin, 1998). Culture, as defined by Schein (1992, p. 12) is “a pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems” The culture of an organization is especially critical as it is the company environment that will ultimately determine if the empowerment effort has the support it needs to succeed (Heaton, 1998). This notion has been supported through research findings that the organizational variables, more so than the individual variables, account for the greater degree of perceived empowerment (Koberg, Boss, Senjem & Goodman, 1999). In fact, the individual variables can easily be overcome by the organizational culture variables. When the environment of the company does not accept new ideas, they tend to lose their more creative employees. The challenge is to “create organizations that attract creative and dynamic people and develop organically, not with gimmicks, utopian fantasies, or with stock options” (Lee, 1999, p. 53). Creating the proper environment is crucial, and it cannot be superficial. When employees see that the actions of the company do not match its stated vision, trust in leadership will diminish (Bennis, 1998).

While the importance of an organization’s culture is clear, it is not always clear as to what an empowering culture looks like. An empowering culture can be defined by its degrees of trust and support, the level of involvement of all employees, and the measure of the organization’s willingness to try new ideas (Lin, 1998). To help create an organizational culture that is a good climate for empowerment, leaders need to establish an environment that includes



mutual trust and respect and that gives all employees the opportunity and support to exhibit their skills. Good leaders will assign value and importance to even the most repetitive task and provide employees with the inspiration and dedication needed to create a cohesive group inspired to achieve company goals (Bennis, 1998). This social architecture can be built in a large part by building on the basic principles put forth by Covey (1999b). He posits that the general principles that relate to all relationships, fairness, justice, honesty, integrity, and trust, can serve to guide the organization in their development of a culture that will support and encourage empowerment.

An organizational culture that provides a positive climate for empowerment is a necessary condition to empowerment. However, the culture cannot be instantly created. The seeds must be planted, and the ideas must grow and be nurtured. Organizations cannot truly empower workers; they must create the proper environment for the workers to choose to empower themselves (Willis, 1999). Creating and maintaining an empowering culture requires a lot of effort from management. They must foster a spirit of partnership and a mentality of trust, faith, and success. Leaders themselves must demonstrate the value of teamwork and individual contribution (Covey, 1999b). Peters (1999) lists some practices that organizations can follow to help them create an empowering organization: 1 – Establish a workplace where knowledge and resources are shared so that all employees become skilled in various areas. 2 – Make certain that employees are directly responsible for career development rather than relying on a systematic program of advancement based on length of service. 3 – Implement training that serves the needs of the employees. 4 – Utilize employee strengths to meet customer goals and analyze emerging trends. 5 – Have Human Resources focus on organizational strategy. 6 – Help recruit and train future employees by working with educational institutions on their curriculum, and provide training for specialized work. 7 – Be open to using nontraditional employees (telecommuters,

college students, etc.) on certain projects or for certain functions. 8 – Help employees relieve non-job-related stress in order to improve on-the-job performance. 9 – Create and instigate a truly unique mental and physical work environment. 10 – Keep all employees informed by promoting open meetings and posting news and information publicly.

Establishing these procedures will take some time, but there are some actions that organizations can take immediately to help foster an empowering culture. One action that has a strong impact in helping to create an empowering culture is making sure that all employees know that mistakes are acceptable (Adler, 1999a). Another such action is rewarding positive contributions, as it has a strong impact on what employees and managers view as performance expectations (Lin, 1998). Possibly one of the most dramatic organizational culture changes occurs when upper management demonstrates trust in a team by allowing the team to progress unhindered and trusting that the team will make the correct decisions on their own (Hellinghausen & Myers, 1998). Allowing employees to act empowered contributes heavily to an empowering culture.

### Trust and Empowerment

In an ideal world it would be quite simple for managers to provide employees the authority in order to act on their empowered status. However, this does not happen quite so easily, and a high degree of trust that must be cultivated, both on the part of management and the employee. After all, empowerment is successful only when a relationship of trust exists between partners and those partners are both fully committed to a process. There must be a true partnership between the worker and the workplace (Porter-OGrady, 1998). That partnership is both the basis of and result of trust. The trust that is so critical to the partnership between employees and the organization is generally supported by two elements of knowledge:

knowledge that employees faced with alternative choices will choose the path that most closely corresponds with the organization's goals, and knowing that those employees will be able to successfully navigate that path (Edgeman & Dahlgaard, 1998). It is possible that there is a third critical element in that individuals or teams will be allowed to take action on the path they choose to travel.

This last element may be one of the more critical ones to successful empowerment initiatives. Lin (1998) states that trust and support are the foundation of empowerment. Therefore, leaders need establish and demonstrate trust in their employees by providing them information and resources, listening to and implementing their ideas, showing confidence in their contributions, and allowing them to have decision making power. Trust is one of the primary reasons why managers are able to truly empower employees. The lack of trust in workers constrains organizational success because it does not allow them to draw on the knowledge and intellect of their employees to improve operations and build a competitive advantage (Harari, 1999). In order to capitalize on what empowerment has to offer, managers must first trust employees. Trust comes first because there is a linear relationship between trust, empowerment, and the benefits of empowerment Covey (1999a).

While the importance of trust may be readily apparent, developing a high trust culture can be a daunting task. Some authors suggest a straightforward approach – trust your workers until they show you they cannot be trusted (Harari, 1999). While this is simple and makes sense, it is very difficult to accomplish. Other authors suggest that the more confidence workers have in each other, the easier it is to establish trusting relationships (Marnes, Wicks & Huber, 1999). This requires that managers and employees work to assure each other that they have the skills, abilities, and resources needed for empowerment. Once members of an organization become

more confident in each other, a higher degree of trust will develop. While trust will develop naturally to some extent, there are further actions that leaders can take to help foster a high trust culture. These actions include:

be honest no matter what the cost, take the heat rather than passing the buck, be appreciative of and recognize efforts, remove the obstacles than get in the way of employee success, then step back so they can perform their tasks, stay positive in order to build confidence, and walk the walk. Finally, don't spend time micromanaging, checking up, and managing crises. Instead, create a shared vision and strength, and mentor to help develop individuals and teams (Willis, 1999, p. 76).

#### Accountability and Empowerment

Many organizations eventually work through many of the barriers to empowerment and are finally able to give employees autonomy. However, this is only half the battle. Empowerment requires that employees are held accountable, and there is a large difference between being held accountable and bearing responsibility (DeLeede et al., 1999). Most organizations simply delegate responsibility and provide employees with just enough authority to accomplish their responsibilities. Simply delegating responsibility to teams for certain day-to-day procedures does not necessarily make those teams accountable for the process or outcome (DeLeede et al., 1999). Employees should have conceptual job autonomy, which is the freedom and authority to design and manage the completion of tasks and the ability to make important decisions independently (Dobbin & Boychuk, 1999). This autonomy should ultimately result in accountability. However, the level of autonomy is a critical factor in whether or not accountability is established. Employees with low autonomy are responsible for most aspects of a procedure but have little or no influence as to the final product or service. Employees with medium autonomy are

responsible for most aspects of a procedures and have influence on some of the final product or service. Employees with high autonomy are responsible for all or most aspects of the process as well as the final products or services (Dobbin & Boychuk, 1999). It is the high autonomy that most likely is functioning to produce accountability. This is critical, as many experts believe that empowerment is not truly valid unless workers have complete accountability. They also feel that management should remove themselves from the process and allow the employees to do things their own way. But employees must be aware of the expected outcome and that they will be held accountable for meeting that expectation fully (Heimbold, 1999).

While accountability is essential to empowerment, there are some preconditions that must be met before individuals or teams can be held accountable. Those preconditions include: “1 - the freedom to determine the reasons for acting, 2 - awareness of possible consequences, 3 – the situation should include options, 4 - the actor has the skills necessary to make a balanced evaluation between the different options” (DeLeede et al., 1999, p. 207). These four aspects of freedom to act are all necessary in order for employees to take responsibility and bear accountability. If one or more of these conditions are not met, an individual cannot bear full responsibility or accountability (DeLeede et al, 1999). In addition to these preconditions, employees must have the freedom to act in a responsible manner; this often serves as the overall precondition for responsibility and accountability (DeLeede et al, 1999). Finally, It is also an important that managers base accountability on the same indicators that the individual or teams base their accountability on.

Many of these indicators are related to power. Managers are often willing to share responsibility but are less likely to share the power to utilize resources and make important decisions. Simply put, there is power over someone or something, which we call authority, and

there is power to, which is enablement (Maccoby, 1999). The above definitions imply that in an organizational setting, empowerment is associated with two parties: the leader who grants the power, and the employee who receives the power (Lin, 1998). In these terms, empowerment is something given to the worker that is perceived to have value. The idea behind empowerment is to help the worker feel more important to the organization. To the organization, this gift of power should be appreciated and well used by the worker. However, this power, which was seemingly easily handed over to the worker can just as quickly be taken back (Porter-OGrady, 1998). This gift is not true empowerment, as the employees have no power in the situation. The power is solely in the hands of the leadership.

### Leadership and Empowerment

Empowerment requires that power lie not only in the hands of management but also in the hands of the employees. But many leaders have a great deal of difficulty sharing and transferring that power. “Executives know that high degrees of involvement, participation, and autonomy are keys to high performance. But in their hearts, they still crave orderliness, predictability, control, and planning. As such they search for a master plan that can regulate change and bring a sense of order” (Clemmer, 1998, p. 17). In searching for this master plan, many companies decide to try new theories such as empowerment, and team effort, but the leadership still wants to hang on to its authoritative power (Covey, 1999a).

In today's corporate world, managers are frequently the problem when developing empowered teams. Managers must transfer some types of power and control in order for the teams to make decisions and accomplish goals independently (Hellinghausen & Myers, 1998). It is this surrender of power that can cause resistance on the part of managers and supervisors.

Some experts point to this resistance as the primary reason for failures in empowerment (Jones, 1999).

Research has shown that top management commitment, as in any organizational change initiative, can help to overcome much of the resistance of managers and supervisors. This involves leadership and support from top executives of the empowerment efforts. Top management must support the change initiative and the change agent, who is the person charged with implementing the strategies of the empowered environment. He or she also supports the empowerment effort via training and education and rewards the efforts of successful teamwork (Johnson, 1999). These actions by top management generally result in similar behaviors and actions by mid and lower levels of organizational leadership. This form of modeling is highly beneficial to the empowerment initiative because managers must be able to adapt their relationships with employees to facilitate the empowerment movement. They must restructure themselves to be coordinators or coaches rather than independent decision-makers (Johnson, 1999). This transition of manager roles has been shown to help to promote empowerment. According to the research of Koburg et al. (1999) groups are more likely to feel empowered when that group has a leader who facilitates group effectiveness and promotes the value of the group.

To help accomplish these feelings of empowerment on the part of employees and to establish an empowering organization, leaders must take the initiative to create the empowering environment. This can be done by personally reassigning power and proving through action that the team is trusted to act with the same authority held by the leader (Lin, 1998). The leader must also model the characteristics the team needs to demonstrate, namely “respect, fairness, caring, patience, and the ability to listen” (Berman, 1999, p. 6).

The type of leader who is capable of modeling and overseeing empowerment must be open and honest with team members and must be able to inspire and coach without taking control. He or she should also be able to interact with others, be open-minded and accepting of new ideas, and have the willingness and capability to learn new ways of accomplishing goals (Johnson, 1999). These skills and abilities are crucial, because in an empowering organization, the manager's job is to facilitate and counsel rather than to control. In addition, managers need to find ways to support and encourage the entire empowerment initiative as a better method of doing business across the entire organization (Johnson, 1999). In short, as a leader in an empowering organization, there are four main duties: choosing the right people; establishing the right values; focusing employees on the right business goals; and constantly communicating (Heimbold, 1999).

Experts offer some principles to help leaders accomplish the duties discussed above. These twelve principles presented by Trahan & Burke (1998, p. 14) serve as guides to leaders and require that they change the way in which they think about leadership.

1 – Understand the external environment. 2 – Enlist people's passions and energy to support the company's mission and strategy. 3 – Use steady and consistent leadership to help make changes to the bottom line. 4 – To change culture, you must first change people's behaviors. 5 – Let service to customers drive your company structure. 6 – Create a climate of alignment by implementing the right systems to support people in their work. 7 – Give employees what they need to succeed or get out of the way. 8 – Teamwork is essential to success. 9 – A productive employee is a happy employee, not the other way around. 10 – Strive for a good fit between the skills people have and the everyday jobs



they do. 11 – Remember that employees are people too. 12 – Be aware of false indicators of success.

In short, it can be said that in order to support empowerment, leaders need to redefine their roles. That role redefinition can be summed up by stating that the leader must stop making all the decisions and orchestrating all the action and instead wisely reassign these roles to the team members (McConnell, 1998).

### Knowledge and Empowerment

It is clear that leadership's role changes during empowerment. Management moves away from making all of the decisions and helps to facilitate processes and environments that allow employees to make the decisions. In order for this shift to be successful, empowered workers must be knowledgeable, competent, and confident in their job processes and in their decision-making ability (Johnson, 1999). In this vein, "communication, involvement, and development have to be considered as a continuum which cuts across management theories in order to create the environment for participation and for innovation" (Moon & Swaffin-Smith, 1998, p. 303). This requires free and unfettered access to pertinent information in order for empowered employees to make good decisions. However, managers often have hidden motives and/or are negligent when it comes to sharing information (Potochny, 1998). To neglect to share information with empowered individuals and teams is detrimental to the success of empowerment. The importance of sharing information is so high that one expert uses it as a litmus test for empowerment. Each organization needs to assess whether workers have quick access to accurate information. If they have to go through several others or a myriad of procedures to obtain information, then there is a trust issue within the organization. The common assumption made by employees is that they are not trusted with the information, or they would

have easier access to it (Harari, 1999). This particular trust issue can make or break an empowerment initiative.

While organizations must trust employees enough to share critical information with them, they must also educate the employees as to what is being shared with them. Employees must be trained to not only understand the information being shared, but they must also know how it is to be used to the benefit of the organization (Barton, Shenkir & Tyson, 1999). Training is extremely critical to the success or failure of a company's attempt at empowerment. But even training has to be handled properly. If the training is presented in a way where the employee gains the knowledge but is unable to utilize it, nothing positive has been accomplished (Heaton, 1998). Training and education must be provided in such a way that it creates a learning environment where all members of the organization are constantly learning and sharing information. Snell (1998, p. 341) identifies several characteristics that depict this type of organization, including “a responsive learning approach and strategy, participative policy-making, constant sharing of information, internal exchange, reward flexibility, enabling structures, boundary workers as environmental scanners, inter-company learning, a learning climate, and self-development opportunities for all.”

While training and education are essential aspects of the knowledge acquisition and empowerment, all of the knowledge is useless if it is not retained within the organization. Organizations need to have a mechanism to record what was learned, what was done correctly, and what was done incorrectly. Such a mechanism is typically referred to as organizational memory, which is defined as the persistence of organizational knowledge (Johnson, 1999). In order to share and learn from empowerment over time, the lessons learned must be accessible for constant review and reflection (Verespej, 1999). Organizational memory can be obtained through

knowledge management, which is defined as methods for retaining the knowledge and wisdom of employees so that the information will not have to be re-learned after individuals exit the organization (Johnson, 1999). It can and should play a role in knowledge management as an enhancement of organizational memory (Johnson, 1999). While technology is critical to developing knowledge management, the culture must also demand and support the development of organizational memory. This can be done through creating an environment where employees are strongly discouraged from withholding information and where each employee is expected to teach what he or she knows to others. This creates a knowledge management system that is part of the fabric of the organization's culture and promotes organizational memory (Verespej, 1999).

#### Commitment and Empowerment

While all of the above factors are critical to the success of empowerment initiatives, there must be a high level of commitment present in order for empowerment to succeed. This commitment can be described as loyalty and trust that is mutually shared between employees and the organization (Levinson, 1999). This loyalty and trust is important because true empowerment is the worker knowing that he or she is making a difference. It is the freedom and trust to make decisions, the knowledge that the decisions are valid, the accountability and reward for performance, and the validation of being recognized as a thinking contributor rather than simply a follower of orders (Lin, 1998). Commitment is often exhibited through a feeling of job ownership, which is the ultimate result when employees begin to perceive how their work fits into the bigger picture of overall company performance and success (Day, 1999).

There are numerous benefits and organizational rewards designed to develop dedicated individuals. A community culture resulting from employee commitment to the organization, allows the company to make significant improvements in production standards, processes and

quality in rapid increments (Willis, 1999). This culture creates empowered employees who are wholly committed to the goals of the organization and who are willing to make the supreme effort and whatever sacrifices to meet those goals. The dedication of these workers manifests itself in better than average speed and adaptability (Levinson, 1999).

There are many practices that motivate employees to feel ownership in the company as opposed to a 'I-only-work-here' attitude. Building an ownership culture is based on five entrepreneurial beliefs outlined by Blonchek (1999, p. 16): "1 - belief in the leader, 2 - belief in the purpose, 3 - belief in the operational model, or how the business works, 4 - belief in empowerment, and 5 - belief in the reward." In order to help assure that employees share company goals, these beliefs should be put into action. Employees need to know and participate in every aspect of the business. They must understand the basis on which the company operates, recognize how the business turns a profit, be familiar with standard company operations, and use what they know about the purpose and structure of the company to improve their own performance. Also, the company must publicly recognize outstanding effort and reward teams and employees accordingly (Barton et al., 1999).

Few companies promote entrepreneurial beliefs and employee ownership attitudes, and even fewer put them into action. However, it is possibly one of the more economically beneficial actions that an organization can take. According to Day (1999) there are several steps that organizations can take to begin developing employee ownership attitudes. 1 – Evaluate the departments to assess the needs and the potential for success. 2 – Be willing to keep employees informed about the business. An attitude of ownership is based on knowing everything about the company, and gaining this knowledge is an ongoing process. The awareness of the company's potential success or potential failure must be public information. 3 – Establish daily goals to

demonstrate effort and success. 4 – Be willing to try new methods and ideas in every area of the business, and document the effort and results. 5 – Make all efforts and accomplishments public knowledge in order to unify the company. If everyone shares in the glory, everyone will be more motivated and committed to his or her roles in the company. 6 – The company must make the initial move of trusting employees without knowing how the employees will handle that trust. 7 – The staff must be handed the responsibility of making certain decisions. 8 – Encourage additional opportunities to promote the group mentality, such as volunteering for an outside project as a group. This will help solidify the group's commitment to each other.

Taking steps to begin developing employee ownership attitudes is a step in the right direction, but it is not enough to create commitment. Dessler (1999) states that organizations must also make plans to foster the commitment. In order to support and nurture this commitment, organizations must:

- 1 – Determine to put its people first, and demonstrate this by stating this value in writing and providing managers who are willing to follow this path.
- 2 – See that all employees are aware of and enthusiastic about the company's mission. Communicate the mission as something to be enthusiastic about.
- 3 – Hire and train employees with special attention to their values, not necessarily the company's needs.
- 4 – Promote organizational fairness. See that processes and procedures treat employees fairly and that managers do the same. Establish thorough grievance procedures and encourage openness and communication without fear of reprisal.
- 5 – Emphasize the atmosphere of community. Stress the importance of each worker's value to the organization. Reduce the perceived gap between management and non-management levels in the company. Contribute to the sense of community through recognition of team effort and hosting company-wide affairs.
- 6 – Encourage the personal development of all employees. Create jobs that will challenge workers, provide employees with empowerment and

the training and opportunity to handle it properly, seek to promote from within, and offer loyalty and security.

### Implementation of Empowerment

Prior to the implementation of empowerment, an organization must first determine whether or not it is ready to be empowered. To make this assessment, Willis (1999) recommends that the following six questions be asked: 1 – Is upper management really committed to the idea of empowerment? If management is not behind the idea in the belief that it will benefit the business, empowerment will not succeed. 2 – Are there any anticipated changes in management? Full and steady support of management is essential, and any changes can damage the effort. 3 – Are employees experienced in working together? An environment that already encourages and rewards team effort is better primed for empowerment. 4 – Are the time and resources available to make empowerment a reality? Partial commitment can never result in complete success. 5 – Are employees currently too busy to meet, share ideas, and discuss plans? If so, organizational changes will need to be made to facilitate the new work methods. 6 – Do employees have the technical knowledge to fulfill the objectives? Poorly trained workers cannot perform at the level the organization requires to be successful.

Just as important as when to implement empowerment is when not to implement empowerment. The following lists several factors as indicated by Pfeffer & Veiga (1999) that an organization should look for that indicate empowerment should not be implemented. 1 – Short-term pressures that enslave managers. Achieving profits through people takes time to accomplish and an emphasis on short-term financial results will not be helpful in getting organizations to do the right. Taking actions with payoffs that will occur beyond the time for which a manager will be measured on their performance is difficult and risky. Today's pressing problems make it

difficult to focus on actions aimed at building a better organization for the future. Managerial career processes contribute to this short-term pressure. 2 - Organizations tend to destroy competence by inadvertently destroying wisdom and competence or making it impossible for wisdom, knowledge, and experience to benefit the firm. Management practices that require programs and ideas to be explained and reviewed in groups are a major culprit of this. In any domain, expertise is some portion of the expert's knowledge and that competence is tacit, not readily articulated or explainable and not irreducible to a formula or recipe. The expert knowledge has a substantial component of tacit knowledge and it will be impossible for experts to present the real basis of their judgments and decisions. 3 - Managers who do not delegate enough. Relying on a tacit knowledge and expertise of others requires trust and a willingness to let them do what they know how to do, this often results in resistance of management to delegate. At least some of this resistance derives from two social psychological processes: belief in the efficacy of leadership and a self-enhancement bias. 4 - Perverse norms about what constitutes good management. These norms include the idea that good managers are mean or tough and that good management is mostly a matter of good analysis.

When determining whether or not to implement empowerment, it is helpful to know what to expect. Willis (1999) discusses five stages of empowerment that were originated by Hitchcock and Willard. Stage one involves denial. To overcome this denial, there must be high involvement in the education process, abundant sharing of all kinds of information, and probing for concerns. Stage two involves testing. To handle this stage, organizations should set clear boundaries and interim operating practices, create specific guidelines and priorities, assure that there is understanding of responsibilities and the degrees of freedom. Stage three involves participating. In this stage it is important that there is interim management support by providing worksheets

and problem-solving processes that help to lessen anxiety. Stage four results in employees who exhibit responsibility. To further this, organizations should ask thought-provoking questions to open new horizons and to let employees envision the possibilities. Step five results in empowered employees. Everyone needs more and more information about the organization, customers, and competitors. Employees are measuring their performance against best practices and are encouraged to investigate new technologies and methods.

Wajzman & Lewis (1999) present a different take on the stages of empowerment. They discuss three stages of empowering individuals: 1 – An individual must clearly comprehend the personal benefit of making the change. Understanding the personal positive result of the effort is the only factor that will help the individual commit to the steps involved in taking the action. 2 – The company environment must be dedicated to supporting the empowerment effort. If management only pays lip-service to its empowerment goals, employees will be frustrated by not knowing how to perform, and no changes will occur. 3 – Once both the individual and the company are committed to the empowerment process, there must be an educational support system put in place. Both managers and employees need to be trained in their new roles, both in terms of technical skills and in the interpersonal skills of wielding the power they hold. Without clear guidelines and comprehension of those guidelines, it is too easy to slip back into the way things used to be done, disregarding the empowerment effort altogether.

In addition to the stages of empowerment that organizations and individuals go through, there is the need for an organizational structure that supports the empowerment process. This has gained much attention from experts and researchers. Overwhelmingly they agree that implementing empowerment takes and extreme effort. Leadership must design and commit to new organizational concepts and structures that support and encourage the empowerment



initiative (Smialek, 1998). As such, if a company is serious about gaining real benefits from empowerment, it will be necessary to reevaluate how the company measures and rewards performance to bring it in line with the team concept (Hope & Fraser, 1998). To help organizations reexamine, redesign, and renew their systems, Hope & Fraser (1998, p. 23) suggest that organizations “employ the following five threads: eradicate incremental thinking, constantly improve shareholder value, drive radical improvements with demanding targets, relate performance targets to other strategic business units and external factors, base a major portion of performance bonuses on company-wide results.”

When creating systems to support empowerment, Dover (1999) proposes that organizations would be wise to focus their efforts explicitly in two areas: redefining expectations of all organizational roles in relation to empowerment, and shifting employee focus away from personal discretion and toward value creation. Shifting employee focus to value creation can be accomplished through the following steps. 1 – Modifying or eliminating contradictory rewards and recognition. A key implementation activity includes reducing exorbitant executive compensation. 2 – Accentuating the shared purpose, defined as collaboratively using a cross-section of employees, and then teaching employees how best to use this shared information. 3 – Creating expectations for mutual accountability through focusing measures and incentives on collaborative value creation. 4 – Creating meaningful jobs serving as an explicit link between employee work and customer value. 5 – Redesigning managerial roles and measures to reinforce value creation. Management feedback and incentives should be modified to recognize managers who build and support empowered, self-directed employees. 6 – Teaching systems thinking and collaborative skills.

## Dimensions as Measures of Empowerment

A review of the literature reveals an abundance of research regarding the measurement of the effects of employee empowerment. A multitude of studies have been performed on the Return on Investment (ROI) of empowerment, employee attitudes regarding empowerment, the outcomes of organizational empowerment, etc. However, the amount of research regarding the measurement of the level of empowerment in organizations is negligible. Few studies focus on the determination of whether employees are empowered and at what level they are empowered. This research has generally focused on the empowerment dimensions that are the most appropriate contributors to apply in the measurement of empowerment.

Research on empowerment can generally be sorted into two groupings. The first grouping offers dimensions which can be utilized to determine the individual employee's perception of empowerment. The second grouping offers dimensions which organizations should utilize when assessing the level of empowerment within the organization. Each of these groupings and their associated dimensions will be addressed.

The Empowerment Indicator Survey presented by Dawson (1992) utilizes only one dimension as a measure of empowerment. Employee perception regarding empowerment behaviors of managers are considered to be the single dimension that determines the level of empowerment in the organization. The degree to which responsibility, accountability, and authority are perceived to be communicated and delegated serve as the sub-scales of empowering behaviors of managers. Menon (2001) also employed a single dimension in the measurement of empowerment. The measurement tool concentrated on the dimension of employee experienced power and its sub-scales of perceived control, perceived competence, and goal internalization.

While employee experienced power may appear to be a different dimension than the dimension of empowering behavior of managers discussed earlier, the sub-scales appear to be related.

Corrigan (1998) argues against the measurement of empowerment based upon a single dimension. She notes that the majority of single dimension measures are based on behavioral rather than cognitive terms. As an alternative to the single behavioral dimension measures the 1992 Spreitzer Empowerment Measure is advocated. The measure is based on four cognitive dimensions including meaning (value of task related to individual beliefs and attitudes), competence (self-efficacy as developed through task mastery), impact (personal influence over outcomes), and self-determination (perception of causal responsibility through initiation of actions). Research by Roller (1995) agrees with the concept of using cognitive elements to measure empowerment and advocates the model originated by the 1992 Spreitzer Empowerment Measure. Results indicate that dimensions grounded in specific behaviors of empowerment were best to determine perceived levels of empowerment in individuals. Those dimensions included autonomy (perceived freedom of choice), participation (perceived ability to impact decision-making), and responsibility (perceived meaning of tasks).

The Employee Empowerment Questionnaire (EEQ), developed by Hayes (1994), built upon the concept of measuring cognitive elements to determine the level of empowerment in an organization. However, the validated survey was built upon a single dimension of empowerment – that of employee perception of their level of empowerment. Unlike other measures, the questionnaire investigates the manner in which empowerment is related to other variables. Job satisfaction, job stress, intention to quit, task variety, task feedback, task autonomy, task identity, task importance, participation, managers commitment to quality, supervisor commitment to

quality, and co-worker commitment to quality are seen as linked to empowerment but not necessarily as dimensions of empowerment.

Lashley (1999) utilizes five dimensions (task, task allocation, power, commitment, and culture) in the creation of a framework for the analysis and measurement of perceptions of organizational empowerment. The task dimension examines the “discretion which is allowed to the empowered in performing the task” (p. 179) they are responsible for. Task allocation explores “the amount of responsible autonomy an individual employee or group of employees have” (p. 180) in performing their responsibilities. Power represents “the feelings of personal power which individuals experience as the result of being empowered (p. 180).” The commitment dimension focuses on “the assumptions about the source of employee commitment and organizational compliance (p. 180).” Finally, culture considers “the extent to which organizational culture fosters feelings of empowerment (p. 181).”

Dimensions recommended for organizations assessing the level of empowerment within the organization are presented in a variety of manners. There are general dimensions which can be interpreted within a specific organizational context and there are dimensions which are defined to the extent that they can be applied to any organizational context.

One of the more general sets of dimensions was presented by (Lin, 1998, p. 236) who stated that “the essence of empowerment comes from four dimensions – leaders, employees, organizational culture, and management practices.” More specifically, empowerment dimensions “included a shared vision, experiencing a supportive organizational structure and governance, responsibility for knowledge and learning, and institutional recognition” (Herrenkohl, Judson & Heffner, 1999, p. 383). Hancer (2001) is even more specific in asserting that while many dimensions of empowerment including accuracy, communication openness,

trust, and training are important, the quality of leader member exchange is the most definitive dimensional measure of organizational empowerment.

While not presented in a measurement format, Byham (1992) presents six dimensions that organizations must meet in order to empower employees. A recommendation is made that organizations create a measurement systems consisting of the dimensions. Those dimensions are: 1 - Reward and recognition systems, 2 – a guiding vision and mission, 3 – performance management systems, 4 – job design, 5 – effective organizational communication, and 6 – selection and promotion systems.

One of the more definitional sets of dimensions for measuring empowerment was presented by Herrenkohl et al. (1999). They designed and validated a set of eight dimensions for the conceptualization and measurement of employee empowerment: 1 – Recognition fairness. Appropriate rewards and recognition of success and achievement. 2 – Goal clarity. Clearly stated organizational goals and the support and direction needed to achieve them. 3 –Risk taking. The response of the company to potential costly mistakes such as in risk assessment or management. 4 – Quality. Whether the organizational structure requires employees to be responsible for quality and for meeting customer needs. 5 – Teams. Stressing the importance of working together effectively as a team. 6 – Company success. Whether employees are encouraged to take personal responsibility for meeting company goals and contributing to the company’s overall performance. 7 – Work Processes. Who has the responsibility for determining the procedures to be followed and the hierarchy in each department. 8 – Company problems. Who within the company has the power to control quality, calculate costs, and solve major organizational issues.

Finally, Willis (1999) presents ten key dimensions that are useful in determining whether or not an organization is truly empowering. Those dimensions include: 1 - Vision and Mission.

Vision and mission statements provide the foundation for an empowered organization. Reasonable objectives help set up correct expectations and provide a yardstick for measuring success. The vision must be fully developed and compelling enough to withstand intense scrutiny and build ownership and commitment.

- 2 - Trustworthiness. Trust holds everything together, creates the environment for empowerment, and increases in that same environment. It consists of a balance of courage and consideration.
- 3 - Education. Explain why empowerment is necessary and important to the organization, what will be done to achieve the desired results, how the change will be implemented, and what is in it for the employees. Make the effort to create responsive training that addresses the technical, business, and soft skills that empowered employees will need.
- 4 - Top Management Support. Addressing the problems associated with conflicting priorities, confusion, and the inability to spend sufficient time on instituting empowerment requires that top management place a high priority on the integration of empowerment.
- 5 - Ownership. Employees have to know and accept that it is their turn to be creative in solving problems and in finding better ways of doing things. This includes accepting the responsibility and accountability to govern themselves.
- 6 - Communication. Empowerment can only be accomplished if information has been communicated, understood, and translated into individual responsibility.
- 7 - Accountability. It is necessary to build specific criteria into the empowerment agreement to create a standard against which performance can be measured.
- 8 - Performance Measures. Empowered individuals need to be reminded where they started, where they have been, and how far they have come.
- 9 - Quick Wins. Visible improvement builds organizational confidence in the process, builds acceptance for change, and provides important practice steps in the learning curve. An early win in the process helps avoid procrastination and

starts consensus building so that the organization moves forward. 10 - Rewards. Let everyone share in the rewards. Recognition and praise should come often.

## Conclusion

This review of the literature was performed in order to determine the dimensions that should be utilized in the measurement of organizational empowerment. The literature illuminated the manner in which organizations utilize empowerment as well as the numerous contributory dimensions that comprise employee empowerment in organizations. These factors were all taken into account in the development of the dimensions presented here.

There appears to be a lack of agreement on whether the construct of empowerment is best measured by employee perception of empowerment or by empowering organizational factors. While there are valid reasons for selecting either measurement method, the dimensions that are presented here are from the latter method. There is no theoretical reasoning to the selection of empowering organizational factors as the measurement method. The decision was made due to the content of the survey that is being utilized in this study. The survey is built around dimensions of empowering organizations rather than employee perceptions of empowerment.

The review of the literature guided the development of eight dimensions presented here. These dimensions are advocated as the most appropriate to utilize in the measurement of employee empowerment in organizations. Those dimensions and their working definitions are:

- *Culture* - Pattern of shared organizational values, basic underlying assumptions, and informal norms that guide the way work is accomplished in an organization.
- *Trust* - Degree to which organizational members have confidence in each other and the organization.

- *Accountability* - Processes for holding individuals and groups answerable for accomplishing assigned tasks.
- *Leadership* - Processes for spreading power, authority, and influence to all levels of the organization, including creating new roles for positional leaders to support the spread.
- *Ability* - Processes for acquiring, sharing, and utilizing the critical information, skills, and knowledge that are essential to effective decision-making and task completion.
- *Commitment* - Loyalty that is mutually shared between employees and the organization, often resulting in feelings of employee ownership.
- *Responsibility* - The freedom and authority to manage and accomplish tasks and make relevant decisions.
- *Communication* - Methods for gathering, distributing, and attending to information required in order to perform effectively.

It is suggested that these eight dimensions be used to revise the survey (see Appendix A). This should improve the ability of the questionnaire to measure the level of empowerment in organizations. The desired outcome is a set of dimensions and subsequent items that will serve as an instrument for organizations to utilize in determining whether or not the organization is truly empowering employees.



## CHAPTER 2 - METHOD

This study has two distinct statistical components, both based upon a survey that was designed to help an organization determine how well it was doing in its efforts to empower employees. The first statistical component utilized archival data to determine the reliability and validity of the survey. The second statistical component utilized the knowledge and expertise of subject matter experts to determine the content validity of the survey as well as the face validity of the newly determined dimensions. The results of both statistical components are reported and discussed.

### Participants

The archival data were collected in October of 1998. The survey was given to employees from six co-located departments within a mid-size chemical company utilizing employee empowerment. Those departments included advertising, customer assistance, facilities & engineering, research & development, logistics & transportation, and marketing. Surveys were given to managers in each department who had all their direct reports fill them out. A total of 215 surveys were collected. Of the 215 total surveys, 22 came from advertising, 64 came from customer assistance, 23 came from facilities & engineering, 55 came from research & development, 35 came from logistics & transportation, and 16 came from marketing.

The Subject Matter Expert (SME) data were collected from subject experts who completed a sorting tool. Those experts included advanced students, professors, and consultants, all of whom were considered to have substantial knowledge and expertise in the area of employee empowerment. Of the 15 invited to participate, a total of 12 subject experts completed the SME sort.

## Instrument

The original survey (see Appendix A) with which the archival data were collected was developed as a measure of empowerment. The Education Team from a chemical company approached a small consulting firm to assess the organization's level of employee empowerment. The stated purpose being to help the organization determine how it was doing in its efforts to empower associates and foster the organization's goal of continuous improvement. The consulting firm worked in conjunction with the company to develop the survey that was presented. The survey was designed with empowerment being defined as:

A business approach that gives associates the opportunity to make collaborative business decisions – with established guidelines – by sharing the authority, responsibility, information, and accountability needed to make those decisions. The level of empowerment will depend on the associate's learned skills and abilities, and will increase as additional skills and abilities are mastered. Empowerment gives associates the opportunity to participate in the decision making process, and have more say over how and what work will be done.

The paper-and-pencil survey consisted of 105 items which were on a 7-point rating scale and was based around nine dimensions. Those dimensions being:

- *Customer Focus* (GC) represents the group's knowledge of both internal and external customers as well as their emphasis on maintaining a strong customer focus.
- *Information* (I) represents ways that each group responds to the information processing and knowledge gathering needs of the group.
- *Continuous Improvement* (CI) represents the group's ability to recognize the need for, initiate, and evaluate programs for improving effectiveness.

- *Decision Making (DM)* represents the group's understanding of decision-making policies within their department or group.
- *Measurement Systems (MS)* represents group's measurements in areas associated with group effectiveness.
- *Training (TG)* refers to employee development, including a learning environment, formal training, and informal learning opportunities.
- *Supervisor-Associate Relationships (SR)* represents how a group perceives the relationship between the group and its direct supervisor. Areas addressed in this area include trust, conflict management, respect, cooperation, etc.
- *Relationship with Co-Workers (RC)* represents how a group perceives the relationship between members of the group. Areas addressed in this area include trust, conflict management, respect, cooperation, etc.
- *Group's Relationship with Others Within Our Organization (WR)* represents how a group perceives the relationship between itself and other groups within the organization. Areas addressed in this area include trust, conflict management, respect, cooperation, etc.

The sorting tool the subject matter experts (see Appendix B) were given was developed as a method of identifying the items from the original survey that would fit into the 8 newly identified dimensions. The sorting tool was sent to each of the SMEs via e-mail and was returned either by e-mail or postal service. The sorting tool listed the 105 items from the original survey in mixed order. For each of the 105 items, the SMEs identified which of the 8 new dimensions the item should be placed in. In the comment section the SMEs provided expert opinions as to the face validity of the new dimensions. Those dimensions being:

- *Culture* - Pattern of shared organizational values, basic underlying assumptions, and informal norms that guide the way work is accomplished in an organization.
- *Trust* - Degree to which organizational members have confidence in each other and the organization.
- *Accountability* - Processes for holding individuals and groups answerable for accomplishing assigned tasks.
- *Leadership* - Processes for spreading power, authority, and influence to all levels of the organization, including creating new roles for positional leaders to support the spread.
- *Ability* - Processes for acquiring, sharing, and utilizing the critical information, skills, and knowledge that are essential to effective decision-making and task completion.
- *Commitment* - Loyalty that is mutually shared between employees and the organization, often resulting in feelings of employee ownership.
- *Responsibility* - The freedom and authority to manage and accomplish tasks and make relevant decisions.
- *Communication* - Methods for gathering, distributing, and attending to information required in order to perform effectively.

### Statistical Analysis

There was doubt that the nine dimensions of the original survey adequately assessed the level of employee empowerment. The doubt was based on the information presented in the review of the literature, which did not support all of the concepts presented as dimensions in the survey. As such, a decision was made to perform a psychometric analysis of the instrument, utilizing archival data. Due to the small sample size (215) and the large number of items (105), a decision was made to analyze the instrument by dimensional sections rather than as a whole.

The archival data were analyzed for missing data, normality, and outliers. Based upon the analysis, a clean data set was created by deselecting some respondents from further analysis. To determine reliability, each dimension was subjected to item-total correlation as well as calculations of alpha. This analysis was intended to identify section items with a low correlation in order to maximize internal consistency, making the survey as reliable as possible.

Cross validation using two methods focused statistical attention on construct validity. A within section Exploratory Factor Analysis was performed on each dimension. This was done to determine whether or not each dimensional scale was measuring what they purported to measure. In total, 9 Exploratory Factor Analysis were performed, each utilizing a Maximum Likelihood Estimation where all items with an Eigen value  $\geq 1.0$  were extracted. A cut-off of 0.35 was used for all factor loadings.

This was followed by a Higher Order Factor Analysis utilizing the determined weights of the individual sections. This was done to determine whether or not the 9 dimensions of the survey were reliable scales that all loaded significantly onto a higher order construct, indicating the survey as a valid instrument for the measurement of a unitary construct, called empowerment. Within the Higher Order Factor Analysis, a Maximum Likelihood Estimation without a rotation was used to examine the model. All items with an Eigen value  $\geq 1.0$  were extracted. A cut-off of 0.35 was used for all factor loadings.

Content validity and face validity were assessed utilizing the knowledge and experience of 12 subject matter experts. Each SME reviewed the existing 105 survey items and sorted them into the 8 empowerment dimensions identified from the review of the literature. An agreement rate of 75% determined the items which loaded on the new empowerment dimensions. The results of the SME sort were used to determine whether or not there was support for content

validity of the survey. Additionally, the SME results were compared with the results of the within section Exploratory Factor Analysis that were performed to provide additional information as to the content validity of the survey. Comments of the SMEs were used to determine whether or not there was face validity for the new dimensions.

Upon completion of the psychometric analysis suggestions to enhance the survey were developed. The suggestions were based on the review of literature presented in chapter one as well as the results of the statistical analysis. Future research should center upon re-administration of the refined survey to determine whether or not the psychometric properties of the survey have improved.

## CHAPTER 3 - RESULTS

The initial analysis was performed on the archival results of the Empowerment Survey (see appendix A). The archival data were examined to identify any data that was out of range for that variable. Results of the examination indicated that all responses were within the 7-point range. The data were then examined for any missing data. It was found that several cases had values missing. Respondent 89 and 90 were deselected due to large amounts of non-random missing data. Overall, it can be assumed that the missing data were random because approximately 5% of the cases were missing.

Frequencies, z-scores, and histograms were conducted on the data to determine whether or not any univariate outliers existed. Examination of z-scores indicated that several univariate outliers existed where the data were  $\pm 3.29$  standard deviations above the mean. Outliers within the Customer Focus (GC) variable were found for item GC1 (case 12 = 3.41, case 15 = 3.41, case 143 = 3.41, 16 = 4.26, and case 141 = 4.26) and for item GC4 (case 10 = 3.94 and case 11 = 3.94). Outliers within the Continuous Improvement (CI) variable were found for CI32 (case 4 = 4.36, case 9 = 4.36, case 107 = 4.36 and case 166 = 4.36) for item CI37 (case 77 = 3.35 and case 143 = 3.35) for item CI38 (case 77 = 3.79 and case 143 = 3.79) and for item CI42 (case 77 = 4.10 and case 143 = 4.10). Outliers within the Relationship with Co-Workers (RC) variable were found for item RC87 (case 16 = 3.41 and case 143 = 3.41). Outliers within the Group's Relationship with Others Within Our Organization (WR) variable were found for item WR94 (case 16 = 4.04 and case 143 = 4.04) for item WR99 (case 9 = 3.37, case 18 = 3.37 and case 162 = 3.37) and for item WR105 (case 9 = 3.49, case 18 = 3.49 and case 162 = 3.49). The results indicated that several univariate outliers existed, as such 16 cases (4, 9, 10, 11, 12, 15, 16, 18, 30,

48, 77, 107, 141, 143, 162, 166) were deselected from further analysis.

Mahalanobas Distance was conducted on the data to determine whether or not any multivariate outliers existed. Examination of the data, utilizing critical values determined by a chi square table, indicated that several multivariate outliers existed. Analysis of the Customer Focus (GC) variable revealed that the Mahalanobas Distance (39.171) was above the critical value (27.877), which was determined from the chi square table at 9 degrees of freedom and the 0.001 level. Analysis of the Information (I) variable revealed that the Mahalanobas Distance (85.115) was above the critical value (32.909), which was determined from the chi square table at 12 degrees of freedom and the 0.001 level. Analysis of the Continuous Improvement (CI) variable revealed that the Mahalanobas Distance (85.145) was above the critical value (48.820), which was determined from the chi square table at 19 degrees of freedom and the 0.001 level. Analysis of the Decision Making (DM) variable revealed that the Mahalanobas Distance (85.430) was above the critical value (24.322), which was determined from the chi square table at 7 degrees of freedom and the 0.001 level. Analysis of the Measurement Systems (MS) variable revealed that the Mahalanobas Distance (18.790) was above the critical value (10.828), which was determined from the chi square table at 2 degrees of freedom and the 0.001 level. Analysis of the Training (TG) variable revealed that the Mahalanobas Distance (41.297) was above the critical value (24.322), which was determined from the chi square table at 7 degrees of freedom and the 0.001 level. Analysis of the Supervisor-Associate Relationships (SR) variable revealed that the Mahalanobas Distance (91.205) was above the critical value (45.3150), which was determined from the chi square table at 20 degrees of freedom and the 0.001 level. Analysis of the Relationship with Co-Workers (RC) variable revealed that the Mahalanobas Distance (103.205) was above the critical value (29.588), which was determined from the chi square table



at 10 degrees of freedom and the 0.001 level. Analysis of the Group’s Relationship with Others Within Our Organization (WR) variable revealed that the Mahalanobas Distance (61.416) was above the critical value (29.588), which was determined from the chi square table at 10 degrees of freedom and the 0.001 level. The results indicated that multivariate outliers existed in all of the sections, as such 8 cases (8, 18, 89, 116, 125, 138, 166, 205) were deselected from further analysis.

Based upon the analysis of the data a clean data set was created. In all, 23 cases were deselected from further analysis. This resulted in a decrease of total respondents from 215 to 192 respondents.

In order to determine normality skewness and kurtosis were evaluated. The cut off for skewness was 3 and –3 while the cut off for kurtosis was 2 and –2. Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics, including measures of normality, for the archival data.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics of Archival Data

Variable	# Items	Mean	Std. Deviation	Outliers Included		Outliers Removed	
				Skewness	Kurtosis	Skewness	Kurtosis
GC	10	53.12	9.25	-3.53	-0.37	-2.80	-0.61
I	13	63.69	12.84	-3.58	2.25	-1.73	0.18
CI	20	105.29	16.88	-3.18	0.49	-1.47	-0.94
DM	8	43.16	9.63	-5.78	2.38	-5.23	2.65
MS	3	14.08	4.38	-2.50	-1.15	-2.83	-0.32
TG	8	37.68	10.89	-2.18	-1.75	-2.66	-0.87
SR	21	112.38	29.84	-5.13	-0.35	-5.43	0.94
RC	11	59.38	12.05	-4.01	1.84	-2.12	-0.98
WR	11	58.31	12.16	-4.08	1.21	-3.53	1.44

Prior to deleting outliers, Customer Focus (-3.53), Information (-3.58), Continuous Improvement (-3.18), Decision Making (-5.78), Supervisor-Associate Relationships (-5.13), Relationship with Co-Workers (-4.01), and Group’s Relationship with Others Within Our

Organization (-4.08) were found to be skewed since they were outside of the cut off of 3 and -3. However, after the outliers were removed, only Decision Making (-5.23), Supervisor-Associate Relationships (-5.43), and Group's Relationship with Others Within Our Organization (-3.53) were found to be skewed.

Prior to deleting outliers, Information (2.25) and Decision Making (2.38) were both found to be kurtotic since they were outside of the cut off of 2 and -2. However, after the outliers were removed, only Decision Making (2.65) was found to be kurtotic.

Upon completion of the initial analysis the survey was subjected to tests of reliability. An initial correlation matrix was run to determine the homogeneity of the items. Overall, the items are significantly correlated. This indicates that the majority of the items are homogeneous.

Item-total correlations were generated to determine the discriminating power of the items. All items within the Customer Focus (GC) factor appear to be correlated with the sum of the factor, indicating the existence of a base correlation. All items within the Information (I) factor appear to be correlated with the sum of the factor, indicating the existence of a base correlation. All items within the Continuous Improvement (CI) factor appear to be correlated with the sum of the factor, indicating the existence of a base correlation. All items within the Decision Making (DM) factor appear to be correlated with the sum of the factor, indicating the existence of a base correlation. All items within the Measurement Systems (MS) factor appear to be correlated with the sum of the factor, indicating the existence of a base correlation. All items within the Training (TG) factor appear to be correlated with the sum of the factor, indicating the existence of a base correlation. All items within the Supervisor-Associate Relationships (SR) factor appear to be correlated with the sum of the factor, indicating the existence of a base correlation. All items within the Relationship with Co-Workers (RC) factor appear to be correlated with the sum of the

factor, indicating the existence of a base correlation. All items within the Group's Relationship with Others Within Our Organization (WR) factor appear to be correlated with the sum of the factor, indicating the existence of a base correlation.

Alpha coefficients were generated to determine the internal-consistency reliability of the survey. Table 2 presents the alpha coefficients for each dimension of the archival data.

Table 2

Alpha Coefficients for Archival Data

Variable	# Items	Alpha
GC	10	0.8677
I	13	0.9214
CI	20	0.8842
DM	8	0.9378
MS	3	0.7406
TG	8	0.9176
SR	21	0.9817
RC	11	0.9596
WR	11	0.9619

The alpha coefficient for the Customer Improvement factor (0.8677) is good. The alpha coefficient for the Information factor (0.9214) is good. The alpha coefficient for the Continuous Improvement factor (0.8842) is good. The alpha coefficient for the Decision Making factor (0.9378) is good. The alpha coefficient for the Measurement Systems factor (0.7406) is decent and may be due to the small number of items in the factor. The alpha coefficient for the Training factor (0.9176) is good. The alpha coefficient for the Supervisor-Associate Relationships factor (0.9817) is good. The alpha coefficient for the Relationship with Co-Workers factor (0.9596) is good. The alpha coefficient for the Group's Relationship with Others Within Our Organization factor (0.9619) is good. Further analysis of the data reveals that deletion of an individual item within any dimension would not appreciably improve the alpha coefficient of that dimension.

Results indicate that overall the survey is reliable. The deletion of items to maximize internal consistency was not carried out as the reliability analysis revealed that the survey was already as reliable as possible. However, the small sample size should be taken into account when reviewing the results.

Construct validity was assessed using two methods for cross validation. A within section Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was performed on each dimension. A summary of the EFA results for each of the nine dimensions is presented in Table 3. The table is followed by a detailed discussion of the EFA results for each dimension. The dimensional EFA was followed by a Higher Order Factor Analysis utilizing the determined weights of the individual dimensions.

Table 3

Summary of Dimensional EFA Results for Archival Data

Variable	# Items	# Commu < 0.33	Variance	Chi Square	KMO	# Factors Indicated
GC	10	3	47.86%	$\chi^2= 50.413, df = 26, p < 0.003$	0.882	2
I	13	0	62.35%	$\chi^2= 127.583, df = 42, p < 0.001$	0.895	3
CI	20	3	53.52%	$\chi^2= 251.235, df = 116, p < 0.001$	0.821	4
DM	8	0	66.03%	$\chi^2= 227.636, df = 20, p < 0.001$	0.886	1
MS	3	0	52.91%	Not Available	0.643	1
TG	8	0	59.29%	$\chi^2= 98.509, df = 20, p < 0.001$	0.891	1
SR	21	0	72.196%	$\chi^2= 693.360, df = 189, p < 0.001$	0.965	1
RC	11	0	68.951%	$\chi^2= 160.530, df = 44, p < 0.001$	0.949	1
WR	11	0	70.272%	$\chi^2= 229.094, df = 44, p < 0.001$	0.940	1

Exploratory Factor Analysis was used to examine the 10 item Customer Focus (GC) variable. Within the Exploratory Factor Analysis, a Maximum Likelihood Estimation without a rotation was used to examine the model. All items with an Eigen value  $\geq 1.0$  were extracted. Overall, 47.86% of the variance is accounted for by the factor loading. The Chi Square ( $\chi^2= 50.413, df = 26, p < 0.003$ ) indicates that the model is significant while the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin

measure of sampling adequacy (0.882) shows that the matrix is factorable. There were three Communalities which fell below the cut-off of 0.33. Those Communalities are GC1 (0.125) and GC2 (0.297). Factor loadings indicate that all items are not loading on a single factor, two factors are indicated (see Table 4). There are significant cross-loadings with the exception of GC1, which does not load onto either factor. Therefore, item GC1 should be dropped and the remaining items should be reworded so that the items fall within a single factor.

Table 4

Customer Focus (GC) Factor Loadings for Archival Data

Item	Factor 1	Factor 2
GC1		
GC2	.545	
GC3	.985	
GC4	.574	
GC5	.566	
GC6	.674	
GC7	.486	.487
GC8	.567	
GC9	.638	.553
GC10	.487	.493

Exploratory Factor Analysis was used to examine the 13 item Information (I) variable. Within the Exploratory Factor Analysis, a Maximum Likelihood Estimation and Varimax Rotation were used to examine the model. All items with an Eigen value  $\geq 1.0$  were extracted. Overall, 62.35% of the variance is accounted for by the factor loading. The Chi Square ( $\chi^2 = 127.583$ ,  $df = 42$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) indicates that the model is significant while the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy (0.895) shows that the matrix is factorable. There were no Communalities which fell below the cut-off of 0.33. Factor loadings indicate that all items are not loading on a single factor, three factors are indicated (see Table 5). Items I17 to I23 are loading on the second factor relatively well. However, items I11 to I15 show significant cross

loading on factors one and three, except for items I11 and I12 which load onto the first factor and item I16 which loads on the third factor. Therefore, this factor could potentially be split into two separate factors. To do so item I16 should be dropped and items I11 to I15 should be evaluated and re-worded so that the items fall within a single factor. In addition, additional items should be created for each factor

Table 5

Information (I) Factor Loadings for Archival Data

Item	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
I11	.809		
I12	.832		
I13	.748		.377
I14	.609		.398
I15	.417		.641
I16			.911
I17		.762	
I18	.464	.608	
I19		.633	
I20		.497	
I21		.672	
I22	.361	.448	
I23	.458	.457	

Exploratory Factor Analysis was used to examine the 20-item Continuous Improvement (CI) variable. Within the Exploratory Factor Analysis, a Maximum Likelihood Estimation and Varimax Rotation were used to examine the model. All items with an Eigen value  $\geq 1.0$  were extracted. Overall, 53.52% of the variance is accounted for by the factor loading. The Chi Square ( $\chi^2 = 251.235$ ,  $df = 116$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) indicates that the model is significant while the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy (0.821) shows that the matrix is factorable. There were three Communalities which fell below the cut-off of 0.33. Those Communalities are CI26 (0.127), CI35 (0.274), and CI36 (0.236). Factor loadings indicate that all items are not loading on

a single factor, four factors are indicated (see Table 6). Items CI35 to CI38 and CI 40 to CI43 are loading on the first factor relatively well. CI24 and CI30 to CI32 are loading on the second factor well. Items CI27 to CI29 are loading on the third factor well. Items CI33 and CI39 are loading on the fourth factor well. Therefore, this factor could potentially be split into four separate factors if items CI25 and CI34, which are cross loading, are dropped or reworded to fit in a single factor. If four factors are selected additional items should be created for each factor with the most being created for the third and fourth factors.

Table 6

Continuous Improvement (CI) Factor Loadings for Archival Data

Item	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
CI24		.537		
CI25	.431	.386		
CI26				
CI27			.936	
CI28			.890	
CI29			.665	
CI30		.729		
CI31		.809		
CI32		.467		
CI33				.784
CI34		.659		.396
CI35	.430			
CI36	.432			
CI37	.553			
CI38	.450			
CI39				.736
CI40	.845			
CI41	.865			
CI42	.502			
CI43	.667			

Exploratory Factor Analysis was used to examine the 8 item Decision Making (DM) variable. Within the Exploratory Factor Analysis, a Maximum Likelihood Estimation without a rotation was used to examine the model. All items with an Eigen value  $\geq 1.0$  were extracted.

Overall, 66.03% of the variance is accounted for by the factor loading. The Chi Square ( $\chi^2=227.636$ ,  $df = 20$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) indicates that the model is significant while the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy (0.886) shows that the matrix is factorable. There were no Communalities which fell below the cut-off of 0.33. Factor loadings indicate that all items are loading on a single factor very well (see Table 7). Therefore, this factor appears to be holding together well and items should remain intact.

Table 7

Decision Making (DM) Factor Loadings for Archival Data

Item	Factor 1
DM44	.743
DM45	.618
DM46	.648
DM47	.833
DM48	.881
DM49	.878
DM50	.928
DM51	.909

Exploratory Factor Analysis was used to examine the 3 item Measurement Systems (MS) variable. Within the Exploratory Factor Analysis, a Maximum Likelihood Estimation without a rotation was used to examine the model. All items with an Eigen value  $\geq 1.0$  were extracted. Overall, 52.91% of the variance is accounted for by the factor loading. The lack of Chi Square indicates that the model is not significant while the Kaiser-Meyer Olkin measure of sampling adequacy (0.643) shows that the matrix is not a strong factorial candidate. There were no Communalities which fell below the cut-off of 0.33. Factor loadings indicate that all items are loading on a single factor well (see Table 8). However, the small number of items and the lack of significance of the model indicate that creation of more items should be completed before determining whether or not this is a single factor.



Table 8

Measurement Systems (MS) Factor Loadings for Archival Data

Item	Factor 1
MS52	.591
MS53	.916
MS54	.631

Exploratory Factor Analysis was used to examine the 8 item Training (TG) variable. Within the Exploratory Factor Analysis, a Maximum Likelihood Estimation without a rotation was used to examine the model. All items with an Eigen value  $\geq 1.0$  were extracted. Overall, 59.29% of the variance is accounted for by the factor loading. The Chi Square ( $\chi^2= 98.509$ ,  $df = 20$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) indicates that the model is significant while the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy (0.891) shows that the matrix is factorable. There were no Communalities which fell below the cut-off of 0.33. Factor loadings indicate that all items are loading on a single factor very well (see Table 9). There fore, this factor appears to be holding together well and items should remain intact.

Table 9

Training (TG) Factor Loadings for Archival Data

Item	Factor 1
TG55	.782
TG56	.808
TG57	.844
TG58	.663
TG59	.594
TG60	.581
TG61	.913
TG62	.896

Exploratory Factor Analysis was used to examine the 21 item Supervisor-Associate Relationships (SR) variable. Within the Exploratory Factor Analysis, a Maximum Likelihood

Estimation without a rotation was used to examine the model. All items with an Eigen value  $\geq$  1.0 were extracted. Overall, 72.196% of the variance is accounted for by the factor loading. The Chi Square ( $\chi^2= 693.360$ ,  $df = 189$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) indicates that the model is significant while the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy (0.965) shows that the matrix is factorable. There were no Communalities which fell below the cut-off of 0.33. Factor loadings indicate that all items are loading on a single factor very well (see Table 10). Therefore, this factor appears to be holding together well and items should remain intact.

Table 10

Supervisor-Associate Relationships (SR) Factor Loadings for Archival Data

Item	Factor 1
SR63	.864
SR64	.842
SR65	.840
SR66	.858
SR67	.765
SR68	.784
SR69	.868
SR70	.828
SR71	.870
SR72	.895
SR73	.779
SR74	.838
SR75	.841
SR76	.851
SR77	.804
SR78	.856
SR79	.886
SR80	.891
SR81	.915
SR82	.879
SR83	.869

Exploratory Factor Analysis was used to examine the 11 item Relationship with Co-Workers (RC) variable. Within the Exploratory Factor Analysis, a Maximum Likelihood

Estimation without a rotation was used to examine the model. All items with an Eigen value  $\geq 1.0$  were extracted. Overall, 68.951% of the variance is accounted for by the factor loading. The Chi Square ( $\chi^2 = 160.530$  df = 44,  $p < 0.001$ ) indicates that the model is significant while the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy (0.949) shows that the matrix is factorable. There were no Communalities which fell below the cut-off of 0.33. Factor loadings indicate that all items are loading on a single factor very well (see Table 11). Therefore, this factor appears to be holding together well and items should remain intact.

Table 11

Relationship with Co-Workers (RC) Factor Loadings for Archival Data

Item	Factor 1
RC84	.806
RC85	.768
RC86	.865
RC87	.876
RC88	.868
RC89	.799
RC90	.862
RC91	.833
RC92	.870
RC93	.792
RC94	.785

Exploratory Factor Analysis was used to examine the 11 item Group's Relationship with Others Within Our Organization (WR) variable. Within the Exploratory Factor Analysis, a Maximum Likelihood Estimation without a rotation was used to examine the model. All items with an Eigen value  $\geq 1.0$  were extracted. Overall, 70.272% of the variance is accounted for by the factor loading. The Chi Square ( $\chi^2 = 229.094$ , df = 44,  $p < 0.001$ ) indicates that the model is significant while the Kaiser Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy (0.940) shows that the matrix is factorable. There were no Communalities which fell below the cut-off of 0.33. Factor

loadings indicate that all items are loading on a single factor very well (see Table 12). Therefore, this factor appears to be holding together well and items should remain intact.

Table 12

Group’s Relationship with Others Within Our Organization (WR) Factor Loadings for Archival Data

Item	Factor 1
WR95	.816
WR96	.838
WR97	.838
WR98	.872
WR99	.904
WR100	.878
WR101	.857
WR102	.814
WR103	.847
WR104	.754
WR105	.794

The use of Exploratory Factor Analysis to review each factor revealed that 5 of the scales are measuring what they purport to measure. Decision Making (DM), Training (T), Supervisor-Associate Relationships (SR), Relationship with Co-Workers (RC), and Group’s Relationship with Others Within Our Organization (WR) are each a single factor. With minimal item revision Customer Focus (GC) will become a single factor and serve as a good measure. However, Information (I), Continuous Improvement (CI), and Measurement Systems (MS) are not good measures as they do not extract into single factors. Measurement Systems (MS) and Continuous Improvement (CI) appear to be the most problematic factors. Measurement Systems (MS) is problematic due to the small number of items and should be dropped or have additional items created. Continuous Improvement (CI) shows four factors being extracted revealing that the dimension is not measuring the construct of continuous improvement and should most likely be dropped.

A Higher Order Factor Analysis was used to examine the 9 dimensions of the survey. Within the Higher Order Factor Analysis, a Maximum Likelihood Estimation without a rotation was used to examine the model. All items with an Eigen value  $\geq 1.0$  were extracted. Overall, 61.673% of the variance is accounted for by the factor loading. The Chi Square ( $\chi^2 = 96.535$ ,  $df = 27$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) indicates that the model is significant while the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy (0.909) shows that the matrix is factorable. There were no Communalities which fell below the cut-off of 0.33. Factor loadings indicate that all items are loading on a single factor very well (see table 13). Analysis reveals that there are 9 reliable scales that all load significantly onto a higher order construct. This supports the survey as a valid instrument for measuring a unitary construct, called Empowerment.

Table 13

Higher Order Factor Loadings for Archival Data

Item	Factor 1
GC	.766
I	.827
CI	.899
DM	.846
MS	.635
TG	.817
SR	.833
RC	.614
WR	.785

The secondary analysis was performed on the results of the Subject Matter Expert (SME) sort. Twelve SMEs were each provided a sorting tool (see appendix B). The tool was used to review the existing 105 survey items and sort them into the 8 new empowerment dimensions (see conclusion of chapter 1). In order for an item to be placed within a dimension, an SME

agreement level of 75% must be met. Utilizing this constraint, 32 of the existing items were sorted into new dimensions (see table 14).

Table 14

Results of the SME Sort

Dimension	Items with >75% agreement
Culture	---
Trust	RC 84, WR 95
Accountability	---
Leadership	DM 46, TG 62, SR 64, SR 66, SR 67, SR70, SR 71, SR72, SR75, SR 77, SR78, SR 80, SR 83
Ability	CI 35, CI 37, CI 42, TG57, TG 58, TG59, TG60
Commitment	---
Responsibility	CI33, DM45
Communication	I12, I13, I14, I16, I17, I18, I23, RC 85, WR96, WR101

Results from the SME sort lend content validity support for three of the original dimensions, Information (I), Supervisor-Associate Relationships (SR), and Training (TG). 11 of the 21 items for Supervisor-Associate Relationships (SR) variable were selected as items for the new Leadership dimension. 7 of the 13 items for Information (I) were selected as items for the new Communication dimension. 4 of the 7 items for Training (TG) were selected as items for the new Ability dimension.

These results appear to be in line with the results of the within section Exploratory Factor Analysis that were performed. Of the three original dimensions, both Supervisor-Associate

Relationships (SR) and Training (TG) extracted into a single factor. While Information (I) extracted into two factors, the items which were selected for the new Communication dimension were loading on a single factor of the two factor model of Information (I), with the exception of I16.

Initial review of the items from the Continuous Improvement (CI) variable indicates that only 4 of the 19 items were selected for new dimensions. 3 items were selected for the new Ability dimension while 1 was selected for the new Responsibility dimension. This does not appear to support the content validity of the original Continuous Improvement (CI) variable. However, when compared to the results of the within section Exploratory Factor Analysis that was performed there may be some content validity. Review of the items selected for the new Ability dimension reveals that all of the Continuous Improvement (CI) items selected loaded onto a single factor of the four-factor model that was extracted. The other items that loaded onto that factor should be reviewed to determine if rewording would allow them to be selected as items of the new Ability dimension.

Finally, results of the SME sort do not provide content validity support for the remaining original dimensions of Decision Making (DM), Relationship with Co-Workers (RC), Group's Relationship with Others Within Our Organization (WR), Customer Focus (GC) and Measurement Systems (MS). While Decision Making (DM), Relationship with Co-Workers (RC), Group's Relationship with Others Within Our Organization (WR) each had 2 items selected for the new dimensions, the items were selected for separate dimensions. Of the 2 Decision Making (DM) items selected, one was selected for the new dimension of Leadership while the other was selected for the new dimension of Responsibility. Relationship with Co-Workers (RC) and Group's Relationship with Others Within Our Organization (WR) each had an

item that was selected for the new dimension of Trust and the new dimension of Communication. While the within section Exploratory Factor Analysis of these dimensions (DM, RC, and WR) resulted in the extraction of a single factor for each dimension, the split selection of items for the new dimensions may indicate that the content of the items is not representative and should be evaluated. Neither Customer Focus (GC) nor Measurement Systems (MS) had items selected for any of the new dimensions. These results appear to support those found from the within section Exploratory Factor Analysis that were performed. Customer Focus (GC) extracted into two factors with significant cross loading while Measurement Systems (MS) did not extract into any factors.



## CHAPTER 4 - DISCUSSION

This research project was inspired by a survey that was designed to help an organization determine how well it was doing in its efforts to empower associates and achieve a goal of continuous improvement. One of the questions this study sought to answer was whether or not the survey was built around the appropriate dimensions to accurately measure the level of empowerment in organizations. Results of the statistical analysis indicated that overall the survey is reliable. However, the small sample size should be taken into account when reviewing the results.

Validity estimates revealed that 5 of the dimensions are measuring what they purport to measure. Decision Making (DM), Training (TG), Supervisor-Associate Relationships (SR), Relationship with Co-Workers (RC), and Group's Relationship with Others Within Our Organization (WR) are each a single factor. One factor, Customer Focus (GC) could serve as a good measure with minimal item revision. However, Information (I), Continuous Improvement (CI), and Measurement Systems (MS) are not good measures as they do not extract into single factors. Measurement Systems (MS) and Continuous Improvement (CI) appear to be the most problematic dimensions and should be extensively rewritten or dropped altogether.

Overall, analysis indicates the 9 dimensions as reliable scales that all load significantly onto a higher order construct. This supports the survey as a valid instrument for measuring a unitary construct. However, the review of the literature and the results of the SME sort cast doubt that the construct that the survey is measuring is actually empowerment.

Empowerment can be used as a catch-all term for employee involvement and participatory management initiatives. It is possible that the survey is accurately measuring the

organization's initiative, which may not necessarily be empowerment. Therefore this survey, while reliable and valid, cannot be supported as a pure measure of empowerment.

The second question this study sought to answer was whether or not new dimensions could be determined that would more accurately measure empowerment. An extensive review of the literature was performed in order to guide the selection of the new dimensions to be utilized in the measurement of organizational empowerment. The resulting dimensions and their working definitions are heavily influenced by the literature and appear to have a high level of face validity as demonstrated by the SME sort. Eight dimensions were put forth as the most appropriate to measure empowerment. Those dimensions were:

- *Culture* - Pattern of shared organizational values, basic underlying assumptions, and informal norms that guide the way work is accomplished in an organization.
- *Trust* - Degree to which organizational members have confidence in each other and the organization.
- *Accountability* - Processes for holding individuals and groups answerable for accomplishing assigned tasks.
- *Leadership* - Processes for spreading power, authority, and influence to all levels of the organization, including creating new roles for positional leaders to support the spread.
- *Ability* - Processes for acquiring, sharing, and utilizing the critical information, skills, and knowledge that are essential to effective decision-making and task completion.
- *Commitment* - Loyalty that is mutually shared between employees and the organization, often resulting in feelings of employee ownership.
- *Responsibility* - The freedom and authority to manage and accomplish tasks and make relevant decisions.

- *Communication* - Methods for gathering, distributing, and attending to information required in order to perform effectively.

The third question this survey sought to answer was whether or not the existing survey could be revised using the new dimensions. Subject matter experts with knowledge and experience in the area of organizational empowerment reviewed the new dimensions for accuracy and fit with the original survey items.

Results from the SME sort indicated that three of the dimensions from the survey were similar to three of the new dimensions. Approximately 52% of the items from Supervisor-Associate Relationships (SR) were selected as items for the new Leadership dimension. Similarly, approximately 54% of the items from Information (I) were selected as items for the new Communication dimension. Finally, approximately 57% of the items from Training (TG) were selected as items for the new Ability dimension.

Initially, Continuous Improvement (CI) appeared to be poorly represented in the new dimensions as only 4 of the 19 items were selected. However, review of the items selected for the new Ability dimension revealed that all the survey items that were selected loaded onto a single factor of a four-factor model. That factor has 8 items, 3 of which (38%) were selected as items for the new Ability dimension.

The survey dimensions of Decision Making (DM), Relationship with Co-Workers (RC), and Group's Relationship with Others Within Our Organization (WR) were poorly represented in the new dimensions. Each survey dimension had 2 or 3 items selected for new dimensions. While between 18% and 25% of items in a dimension were selected, they were not grouped together within a new dimension. Neither Customer Focus (GC) nor Measurement Systems (MS)

were represented at all in the new dimensions. Both dimensions had zero items selected for the new dimensions.

Overall, it would be possible to revise the existing survey in order to use the new dimensions. Three of the new dimensions of Leadership, Ability, and Commitment are able to draw from items and dimensions in the original survey. However, the remainder of the new dimensions will need to have new items created. The new dimensions of Trust and Accountability only had two items each selected from the old survey while Culture, Accountability, and Commitment had zero items selected. Therefore, while the existing survey is a good starting point, extensive revision and creation of items will be necessary in order to utilize the new dimensions to measure empowerment in organizations.

### Implications

The primary implication of this study is that the survey can and should be revised. While the survey has been shown to be reliable and valid, the review of the literature, development of new dimensions, and SME sort provide support for the expressed doubts regarding the appropriateness of the survey dimensions. A strong possibility exists that the survey is accurately measuring the employee involvement initiative of the organization and not empowerment.

Actions to revise the survey to assure that it actually measures the construct of empowerment should be taken. Those actions should begin with the adaptation of items from the Supervisor-Associate Relationships (SR) variable to the new Leadership dimensions. Items from the Information (I) variable should be adapted to the new Communication dimensions. Items from the Training (TG) and Continuous Improvement (CI) variables should be adapted to the new Ability dimension. Additionally, items should be created for the new dimensions of Culture, Trust, Accountability, Commitment, and Responsibility. Finally, items from the survey that are

not adapted to new dimensions should be reviewed to determine whether or not rewriting them would allow them to be adapted to a new dimension, if not they should be dropped.

The resulting revised survey should be analyzed for reliability, content validity, and construct validity. The survey should then serve as a good measure of the empowerment construct. Organizations would be able to utilize the survey to measure the level of employee empowerment in the organization. The implication being that when organizations are cognizant of the actual level of empowerment in the organization they are able to increase that level. To increase the level of empowerment organizations would need to evaluate the climate, culture, processes, and systems of the organization as related to the new dimensions of Culture, Trust, Accountability, Leadership, Ability, Commitment, Responsibility, and Communication.

### Limitations

The limitations of this study should be taken into account prior to the development of a new survey to measure empowerment in organizations. One of the primary limitations of this study is the sample size. There were only 215 respondents of which 23 were deselected reducing the sample size to 192. Therefore the majority of the statistical analysis was done within dimensions due to the large number of items (105) and the small number of respondents. Any revisions or variations of the survey should be validated using a larger sample size.

Another limitation of the study is the self-report nature of a questionnaire. While surveys are often the most efficient method of collecting data, the results may be skewed as participants may have a tendency to overrate. Therefore, the level of empowerment in the organization may not be accurately portrayed even though analysis supports the internal validity of the survey. Therefore, it is recommended that the external correlates be reviewed to determine the extent to which the survey is accurately measuring the level of empowerment in the organization.

### Recommendations for Future Research

This study presents eight dimensions to be utilized in the measurement of organizational empowerment. However, these dimensions have not been validated and may not be the most appropriate measures. It is possible that the dimensions have been mislabeled. In particular, the Commitment dimensions could potentially be renamed Ownership and the Responsibility dimension could potentially be renamed Authority. Additionally, Ability and Communication may be sub-scales of a larger Resource dimension. Most importantly, there may be a dimension that is missing. The eight dimensions do not account for outcomes. Possibly, a dimension should be developed which accounts for such outcomes as teamwork, customer focus, innovation, etc. Future research should address these issues in order to create a hearty set of dimensions for the measurement of empowerment in organization.

Additionally, the larger issue of employee perceptions of empowerment versus organizational factors that empower employees should be addressed. As discussed in chapter one, research on dimensional assessment of empowerment is generally split into two groups. One group advocates dimensions to measure the individual employee's perception of empowerment. The other group advocates dimensions to measure the level of the factors within the organization that empower employees. Future research should focus on whether the construct of empowerment is best represented by employee perception of empowerment or by empowering organizational factors. Once this issue is resolved the research can then turn unified efforts to the determination of dimensions that are the most accurate measures of the empowerment construct.

## APPENDIX A

### Empowerment Survey

# EMPOWERMENT SURVEY

## □ Purpose

- This survey has been designed to help your work group determine how you are doing on your efforts to empower associates and to foster our organization's goal of continuous improvement.
- Your feedback will help provide guidance for future empowerment plans.
- The results of this survey may contribute to the current and future research of empowerment.

## □ Basis of the Survey

This survey is based on giving us your feelings about nine broad-based areas of interest.

1. Your group's customer focus
2. Information
3. Continuous Improvement Factors
4. Decision Making
5. Measurement Systems
6. Training
7. Manager/Supervisor Associate Relationships
8. Your Relationship with Your Co-workers
9. Your Workgroup's Relations with Other Departments

## □ Survey Directions

If you do not know how to respond to a question, leave it blank. Please respond to each questions to the best of your ability, choosing the number that best reflects your current opinion: (1) Not at All, (2), (3), (4) Sometimes, (5), (6), or (7) To A Great Extent.

If you wish to make additional comments or provide feedback on the survey content, please do so within the appropriate section of the "Comments/Feedback Page" (the last page of this packet).



□ **Questions You May Have**

- How is my confidentiality protected?

*To help you respond openly and honestly, an outside party will evaluate data collected from this survey. Your responses will be sent directly to the University of North Texas Center for the Study of Work Teams for evaluation and data analyses. Your individual responses will NOT be made available to anyone at our organization. Further, results will NOT be presented in a way that identifies individuals.*

- How should I respond to questions?

*When responding to questions, use your current opinions as a reference point. Also, try your best to answer questions fairly and accurately.*

- What happens after I complete my survey?

*Place your completed survey in the accompanying envelope and seal it. The survey administrator will collect the sealed envelopes and send them to the University of North Texas Center for the Study of Work Teams where the results will be tabulated.*

- How will the results be shared with us?

*Results will be tabulated and shared in two ways: first, responses will be grouped with all others for total company-wide analysis and second, group responses will be shared with your group only and your immediate management team.*

- Are there plans to do surveys like this in the future so that we can measure our progress on empowerment issues? *Yes*

□ **Definitions**

- **Empowerment:** *A business approach that gives associates the opportunity to make collaborative business decisions - within established guidelines - by sharing the authority, responsibility, information, and accountability needed to make those decisions. The level of Empowerment will depend on the associate's learned skills and abilities, and will increase as additional skills and abilities are mastered. Empowerment gives associates the opportunity to participate in the decision-making process, and have more say over how and what work will be done.*
- **Technical Skills:** *Complex or scientific tasks performed in a systematic procedure that is accomplished with ease, proficiency, and correctness.*
- **Business Skills:** *Exhibits understanding and displays ability to perform in the trade, commerce, or industry engaged in.*
- **Interpersonal Skills:** *Ability to build relationships between persons.*
- **Redesign:** *A series of steps that one goes through in redesigning the way a work area functions. Broadly, this includes looking at the environment that the work unit interacts with, the technical processes it uses to get the work done, and the way that people fit into the work of the unit. A design team usually carries out the redesign process over a period of twelve to eighteen months.*

**If you have any questions about this survey, contact XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX**

Your Work Group's Name and Location: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Your Immediate Manager/Supervisor's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

	Not At All			Sometimes			To A Great Extent
<b>I. Your Group's Customer Focus</b>							
1. Our group knows who our customers are inside our organization.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. Our group knows who our customers are outside our organization.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. Our group has developed methods to determine the needs of our customers.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. Our work is important to our customers.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. We measure our group's customer satisfaction levels on a regular basis.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. We focus our efforts on creating long-term business relationships with our customers.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. Our group is always looking for new ideas to help us surpass our customer's expectations.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. Our group often discusses new ways to be the best at solving our customer's maintenance, repair and supply needs.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. Our group demonstrates that we care about our customers by anticipating and meeting their needs.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. Our group provides quality products/services that deliver value to our customers.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>II. Information</b>							
<i>Our group has access to the business information we need to:</i>							
11. Develop goals.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12. Develop work processes to meet our goals.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13. Develop our priorities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14. Make decisions	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15. Our group has access to the quality information we need to perform our work.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16. Our group has access to the production information we need to perform our work.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

	Not At All			Sometimes			To A Great Extent
<b>II. Information (continued)</b>							
<i>Our group has access to the business information we need to:</i>							
17.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
18.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
19.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
20.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
*21.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
22.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
23.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>III. Continuous Improvement Factors</b>							
24.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
25.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
26.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
27.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
*28.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
*29.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<i>Our group is designed so that:</i>							
30.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
31.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
32.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
33.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
34.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

\* Denotes Focus Group Point

**III. Continuous Improvement Factors** (continued)

*Our group is effective because it is composed of people who:*

	Not At All			Sometimes			To A Great Extent
35. Can learn each other's jobs.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
36. Need to work together to perform work.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
37. Have the business knowledge and information to perform work.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
38. Have the technical skills to perform work.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
39. Have the authority to make decisions about our work.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
40. Want to work together.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
41. Have the interpersonal skills to work together.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
42. Can perform our work from beginning to end.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
43. Enjoy their work	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

**IV. Decision Making**

44. Our group clearly understands which decisions it is responsible for making.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
45. Our group makes the decisions needed to effectively perform our work.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
46. Our direct supervisor is supportive of our group's ability to make decisions even when we make mistakes.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

*For decisions our group makes, we all clearly understand:*

47. Who is responsible for making a decision?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
48. Who must be involved in making the decision?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
49. Who must approve or who can veto a decision.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
50. Who must support our decision?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
51. Who must be informed of our decision?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

	Not At All			Sometimes			To A Great Extent
<b>V. Measurement Systems</b>							
<i>Our group knows how effective we are because we measure:</i>							
52. Our costs.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
53. Our work.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
54. Our customer satisfaction.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>VI. Training</b>							
<i>Our group is effective because:</i>							
55. We have identified our training needs.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
56. We have a plan to address our training needs over time.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
57. We receive the training needed to perform our jobs.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
58. We receive training on how to perform other group members' jobs, i.e., cross training.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
59. We receive the business training (e.g., budgets, costs, quality) needed to perform our jobs.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
60. We receive training on how to work together in groups (e.g., group decision-making, resolving group conflict, etc.).	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
61. Our supervisor helps us identify training needs.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
62. Our supervisor helps us to receive the training we need.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Not At All  
Sometimes  
To A Great  
Extent

## VII. Supervisor-Associate Relationships

The following questions have to do with the relationship between associates in your immediate work area and your direct manager/supervisor. Using the scale after each question and the last six months as a frame of reference, please circle the number that corresponds with your answer.

*The manager/supervisor of my immediate work area does a satisfactory job of:*

63. Developing employees' trust.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
64. Encouraging decision-making among employees.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
65. Sharing information with employees.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
66. Addressing conflict in a positive, constructive way.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
67. Developing clear goals.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
68. Providing feedback regularly.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
69. Providing feedback in a positive manner.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
70. Treating all associates equally.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
71. Treating associates with respect.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
72. Being open to associates' ideas and suggestions.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
73. Welcoming changes that increase productivity.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
74. Listening to associates' concerns.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
75. Motivating associates.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
76. Showing appreciation for good work.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
77. Encouraging cooperation between associates.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
78. Being approachable when problems occur.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
79. Admitting mistakes.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
80. Receiving feedback.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
81. Developing good working relationships with associates.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
82. Answering questions.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
83. Supporting associates when there are problems.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Not At All

Sometimes

To A Great  
Extent

### VIII. Your Relationship With Your Co-Workers

The following questions have to do with the relationship between associates in your immediate work area. Using the scale after each question and your experiences in the last six months of work as a reference point, please circle the number that corresponds with your answer.

*Associates in my immediate work area do a satisfactory job of:*

84. Developing trust.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
85. Communicating important business information.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
86. Solving work problems and conflicts in a constructive, positive manner.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
87. Listening to concerns.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
88. Making themselves open to suggestions and ideas.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
89. Using suggestions and ideas to improve work processes.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
90. Giving and receiving feedback.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
91. Treating each other with respect.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
92. Admitting mistakes.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
93. Showing appreciation for good work.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
94. Helping others when information is needed.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

### IX. Your Work Group's Relations With Others Within Our Organization

The following has to do with the relationship between associates in your immediate work area and associates in other work areas of our organization. Using the scale after each question and your experiences within the last six months as a reference point, please circle the number that corresponds with your answer.

*Our work group does a satisfactory job of:*

95. Developing trust with other work groups	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
96. Communicating important business information with other work groups.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
97. Solving work problems and conflicts in a constructive, positive manner with other work groups.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

	Not At All				Sometimes			To A Great Extent
<b>IX. Your Work Group's Relations With Others Within Our Organization</b> (continued)								
<i>Our work group does a satisfactory job of:</i>								
98.	Listening to concerns of other work groups.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
99.	Making themselves open to suggestions and ideas of other work groups.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
100.	Using suggestions and ideas to improve work processes.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
101.	Giving and receiving feedback with other work groups.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
102.	Treating each other with respect.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
103.	Admitting mistakes.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
104.	Showing appreciation for good work with other work groups.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
105.	Helping other groups when information is needed.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

**THANKS FOR COMPLETING THIS SURVEY. COLLECTIVE RESULTS WILL BE SHARED WITH YOU IN THE NEAR FUTURE FOR YOUR WORK GROUP.**



## APPENDIX B

### SME Sorting Tool

## Employee Empowerment SME Sorting Tool

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### General Information:

Thank you for agreeing to serve as a Subject Matter Expert (SME).  
Your knowledge and expertise will be a valuable asset to this project.

Please note that your responses will contribute significantly to the results of this research project.  
Due to the direct contact you will have with me, your answers will be traceable back to you, but will not be used in any manner.  
Responses from all the SMEs will be compiled so as to maintain the confidentiality of individual contributor responses.  
The completion and return of this sort will serve as your consent to be involved in the research project.

To return the document electronically – enter your answers, save the document, attach the new document to an e-mail.  
To return this document using postal service – send to xx.  
Feel free to contact Sarah Bodner via e-mail (xxxxxxxxxxx) or phone (xxxxxxxxxxxxx) with any questions or comments.

### Purpose of the Sort:

This research project is based upon a survey that was designed to help an organization determine how well it was doing in its efforts to empower associates and achieve a goal of continuous improvement. There are doubts that the original empowerment dimensions in the survey were the appropriate dimensions. As such, an extensive review of the literature was performed and new empowerment dimensions were created.

Utilizing the knowledge and experience of subject matter experts, the existing 105 survey items will be reviewed and sorted into the 8 new empowerment dimensions (listed below). Further research will be done to determine which survey items should remain and to create new survey items.

### Definitions of the Empowerment Dimensions:

Below are the 8 empowerment dimensions and their working definitions.

<b>Culture</b>	Pattern of shared organizational values, basic underlying assumptions, and informal norms that guide the way work is accomplished in an organization.
<b>Trust</b>	Degree to which organizational members have confidence in each other and the organization.
<b>Accountability</b>	Processes for holding individuals and groups answerable for accomplishing assigned tasks.
<b>Leadership</b>	Processes for spreading power, authority, and influence to all levels of the organization, including creating new roles for positional leaders to support the spread.
<b>Ability</b>	Processes for acquiring, sharing, and utilizing the critical information, skills, and knowledge that are essential to effective decision-making and task completion.
<b>Commitment</b>	Loyalty that is mutually shared between employees and the organization, often resulting in feelings of employee ownership.
<b>Responsibility</b>	The freedom and authority to manage and accomplish tasks and make relevant decisions.
<b>Communication</b>	Methods for gathering, distributing, and attending to information required in order to perform effectively.

**Task Instructions:**

Determine the best possible dimension (column) for each item (row).

Place a mark (x) in the appropriate column for each item. Try to mark only one dimension per item.

For items that absolutely fit into more than one dimension - Place a mark (x) in the primary and a mark (o) in the secondary dimension.

Mark the “Unsure” column for items that absolutely do not fit into a dimension. Please use this category sparingly.

Write any comments that you may have at the end of the document.

#	Survey Items	Culture	Trust	Accountability	Leadership	Ability	Commitment	Responsibility	Communication	Unsure
1	Our group provides quality products/services that deliver value to our customers.									
2	Our group has access to the scheduling information we need to perform our work.									
3	I get to perform a variety of different jobs.									
4	Our group is composed of people who want to work together.									
5	For decisions our group makes, we all clearly understand who must support our decision.									
6	We receive training on how to work together in groups (e.g., group decision-making, resolving group conflict, etc.).									
7	The manager/supervisor of my immediate work area treats all associates equally.									
8	The manager/supervisor of my immediate work area is open to receiving feedback.									
9	Associates in my immediate work area give and receiving feedback.									
10	Our work group uses suggestions and ideas to improve work processes.									
11	Our group knows who our customers are inside our organization.									
12	Our group has access to the business information we need to develop goals.									
13	Our group has access to the financial information we need to perform our work.									
14	I get to see the outcome of my work.									
15	Our group is composed of people who have the interpersonal skills to work together.									
16	For decisions our group makes, we all clearly understand who must be informed of our decision.									
17	Our supervisor helps us identify training needs.									
18	The manager/supervisor of my immediate work area treats associates with respect.									
19	The manager/supervisor of my immediate work area develops good working relationships with associates.									
20	Associates in my immediate work area treat each other with respect.									
21	Our work group gives and receives feedback with other work groups.									
22	Our group knows who our customers are outside our organization.									
23	Our group has access to the business information we need to develop work processes to meet our goals.									
24	Our group can easily store information that helps us work together.									

#	Survey Items	Culture	Trust	Accountability	Leadership	Ability	Commitment	Responsibility	Communication	Unsure
25	The work I perform is important to my customers.									
26	Our group is composed of people who can perform our work from beginning to end.									
27	Our group knows how effective we are because we measure our costs.									
28	Our supervisor helps us to receive the training we need.									
29	The manager/supervisor of my immediate work area is open to associates' ideas and suggestions.									
30	The manager/supervisor of my immediate work area adequately answers questions.									
31	Associates in my immediate work area admit mistakes.									
32	Our work group treats each member with respect.									
33	Our group has developed methods to determine the needs of our customers.									
34	Our group has access to the business information we need to develop our priorities									
35	Our group can easily share information that helps us work together.									
36	I have the ability to make decisions about how I do my work.									
37	Our group is composed of people who enjoy their work									
38	Our group knows how effective we are because we measure our work.									
39	The manager/supervisor of my immediate work area develops employees' trust.									
40	The manager/supervisor of my immediate work area welcomes changes that increase productivity.									
41	The manager/supervisor of my immediate work area supports associates when there are problems.									
42	Associates in my immediate work area show appreciation for good work.									
43	Our work group admits mistakes.									
44	Our work is important to our customers.									
45	Our group has access to the business information we need to make decisions.									
46	Our group is encouraged to look outside our work area for changes, which affect our jobs.									
47	I get to see how well I perform my work.									
48	Our group clearly understands which decisions we are responsible for making.									
49	Our group knows how effective we are because we measure our customer satisfaction.									
50	The manager/supervisor of my immediate work area encourages decision-making among employees.									
51	The manager/supervisor of my immediate work area listens to associates' concerns.									
52	Associates in my immediate work area develop trust.									
53	Associates in my immediate work area help others when information is needed.									
54	Our work group shows appreciation for good work with other work groups.									

#	Survey Items	Culture	Trust	Accountability	Leadership	Ability	Commitment	Responsibility	Communication	Unsure
55	We measure our group's customer satisfaction levels on a regular basis.									
56	Our group has access to the quality information we need to perform our work.									
57	Our group understands what things we must do to be successful.									
58	Our group is composed of people who can learn each other's jobs.									
59	Our group makes the decisions needed to effectively perform our work.									
60	Our group has identified our training needs.									
61	The manager/supervisor of my immediate work area shares information with employees.									
62	The manager/supervisor of my immediate work area motivates associates.									
63	Associates in my immediate work area communicate important business information.									
64	Our work group develops trust with other work groups									
65	Our work group helps other groups when information is needed.									
66	We focus our efforts on creating long-term business relationships with our customers.									
67	Our group has access to the production information we need to perform our work.									
68	Our group has developed a mission statement that describes our performance goals.									
69	Our group is composed of people who need to work together to perform work.									
70	Our direct supervisor is supportive of our group's ability to make decisions even when we make mistakes.									
71	We have a plan to address our training needs over time.									
72	The manager/supervisor of my immediate work area addresses conflict in a positive, constructive way.									
73	The manager/supervisor of my immediate work area shows appreciation for good work.									
74	Associates in my immediate work area solve work problems and conflicts in a constructive, positive manner.									
75	Our work group communicates important business information with other work groups.									
76	Our group is always looking for new ideas to help us surpass our customer's expectations.									
77	Our group has access to the cost information we need to perform our work.									
78	Our group has developed a flow chart of our major work processes.									
79	Our group is composed of people who have the business knowledge and information to perform work									
80	For decisions our group makes, we all clearly understand who is responsible for making a decision.									
81	We receive the training needed to perform our jobs.									
82	The manager/supervisor of my immediate work area develops clear goals.									
83	The manager/supervisor of my immediate work area encourages cooperation between associates.									

#	Survey Items	Culture	Trust	Accountability	Leadership	Ability	Commitment	Responsibility	Communication	Unsure
84	Associates in my immediate work area listen to concerns.									
85	Our work group solves work problems and conflicts in a constructive, positive manner with other work groups.									
86	Our group often discusses new ways to be the best at solving our customer's maintenance, repair and supply needs.									
87	Our group has access to the goal achievement information we need to perform our work.									
88	Our group has used the flow chart to improve how we perform our work.									
89	Our group is composed of people who have the technical skills to perform work.									
90	For decisions our group makes, we all clearly understand who must be involved in making the decision.									
91	We receive training on how to perform other group members' jobs, i.e. cross training.									
92	The manager/supervisor of my immediate work area provides feedback regularly.									
93	The manager/supervisor of my immediate work area is approachable when problems occur.									
94	Associates in my immediate work area are open to suggestions and ideas.									
95	Our work group listens to concerns of other work groups.									
96	Our group demonstrates that we care about our customers by anticipating and meeting their needs.									
97	Our group has access to the waste or inefficiency information we need to perform our work.									
98	Our group has developed a list of problems that occur in our work area and ways to address the problems.									
99	Our group is composed of people who have the authority to make decisions about our work.									
100	For decisions our group makes, we all clearly understand who must approve or who can veto a decision.									
101	We receive the business training (e.g., budgets, costs, quality) needed to perform our jobs.									
102	The manager/supervisor of my immediate work area provides feedback in a positive manner.									
103	The manager/supervisor of my immediate work area admits mistakes.									
104	Associates in my immediate work area use suggestions and ideas to improve work processes.									
105	Our work group is open to suggestions and ideas from other work groups.									

**Comments:**

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