

The Role of HR in Increasing Empowerment and Employee Involvement with Knowledge Workers: The Case of SoftTek

by

Denise Cox

Bachelor of Commerce, University of Calgary, 1997

and

Myra Fernandes

Bachelor of Commerce, McMaster University, 1999

RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

In the

Faculty of Business Administration

© Denise Cox and Myra Fernandes 2005
SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY
Summer 2005

All rights reserved. This work may not be
reproduced in whole or in part, by photocopy
or other means, without permission of the author.

APPROVAL

Name: Denise Cox and Myra Fernandes
Degree: Masters of Business Administration
Title of Project: The Role of HR in Increasing Empowerment and Employee
Involvement with Knowledge Workers: The Case of
SOFTTEK

Dr. Gervase R. Bushe
Senior Supervisor
Associate Professor of Management and Organization Studies

Dr. David C. Thomas
Second Reader
Professor of International Management

Date Defended/Approved:

August 2, 2005

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY



PARTIAL COPYRIGHT LICENSE

The author, whose copyright is declared on the title page of this work, has granted to Simon Fraser University the right to lend this thesis, project or extended essay to users of the Simon Fraser University Library, and to make partial or single copies only for such users or in response to a request from the library of any other university, or other educational institution, on its own behalf or for one of its users.

The author has further granted permission to Simon Fraser University to keep or make a digital copy for use in its circulating collection.

The author has further agreed that permission for multiple copying of this work for scholarly purposes may be granted by either the author or the Dean of Graduate Studies.

It is understood that copying or publication of this work for financial gain shall not be allowed without the author's written permission.\

Permission for public performance, or limited permission for private scholarly use, of any multimedia materials forming part of this work, may have been granted by the author. This information may be found on the separately catalogued multimedia material and in the signed Partial Copyright Licence.

The original Partial Copyright Licence attesting to these terms, and signed by this author, may be found in the original bound copy of this work, retained in the Simon Fraser University Archive.

W. A. C. Bennett Library
Simon Fraser University
Burnaby, BC, Canada

Simon Fraser University



Ethics Approval

The author, whose name appears on the title page of this work, has obtained human research ethics approval from the Simon Fraser University Office of Research Ethics for the research described in this work, or has conducted the research as a member of a project or course approved by the Ethics Office.

A copy of the approval letter has been filed at the Theses Office of the University Library at the time of submission of this thesis or project.

The original application for ethics approval and letter of approval is filed with the Office of Research Ethics. Inquiries may be directed to that Office.

Bennett Library
Simon Fraser University
Burnaby, BC, Canada

ABSTRACT

Changing organizational culture can be a difficult if not impossible task. Several studies identify factors which contribute to organizational culture. We explore two such factors, empowerment and employee involvement. We study an organization which is attempting to improve organizational culture. Through the evaluation of employee perspectives and the integration of existing models of empowerment and employee involvement, we provide recommendations to enhance these factors to trigger a shift in organizational culture.

The human resources department maintains several roles in the organization. In these roles HR representatives have the opportunity to affect empowerment by applying HR strategies. They possess knowledge, skills, relationships, and the position to champion empowerment initiatives, facilitate the development of empowering managers, implement empowerment programs, and provide a knowledge base regarding empowerment. We provide an analysis of a variety of perspectives and options that may be applied by HR professionals to enhance empowerment.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to acknowledge a select group of our professors and classmates for their guidance and inspiration for this project.

Gervase Bushe, thank you for challenging us. We did not realize the complexity that would be involved in defining culture. You challenged us to apply critical thought and proven models and we are grateful for that challenge. You also helped us when we were struggling to define our project, providing guidance and showing understanding.

Rick Iverson, you are a true inspiration to us. You provided us with the foundation for Human Resources and we have been building upon it ever since. The knowledge that we gained in your course will serve us well as we develop in our careers.

Tom Lawrence, you are truly an amazing teacher. Your course was at times the most demanding but also the most rewarding. You challenged us every day to think outside of the box, a skill that is not easy to learn.

Finally, to the 2005 LOC cohort, thank you for being a wonderful group of friends and colleagues. This year was memorable; we will never forget our Highland Pub experience.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Approval	ii
Abstract.....	iii
Acknowledgements.....	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	v
Chapter 1 – Project Charter.....	1
Project Charter Development.....	1
Project Proposal	5
Background	5
Issues	6
Approach.....	8
Employee and Manager Assessment	9
Utilization of Change Levers	10
Deliverables	10
Budget and Resources.....	11
Project Plan (Milestones).....	11
Potential Issues or Constraints	11
Completion Criteria	11
Chapter 2 – Field Project	12
Introduction.....	12
Background.....	12
Approach.....	13
Empowerment.....	15

Boundaries	16
The Six Facets of Empowerment.....	18
Choicefulness.....	18
Effort.....	21
Impact	23
Self-system control	26
Meaningfulness.....	28
Universal Justice	31
Employee Involvement.....	32
Information Sharing.....	34
Knowledge Development and Training.....	37
Rewards and Recognition Systems.....	40
Power Sharing.....	42
Summary of Recommendations.....	45
Implementation Plan.....	49
Chapter 3 – How HR Professionals Contribute to Empowerment in the Workplace.....	56
Introduction.....	56
The Role of HR in the Organization.....	58
Evolution of the HR Function: Administrative to Strategic	58
Four Roles of the HR Professional	59
Challenges and Limitations.....	63
Empowerment: More than an HR Buzzword?.....	64

Models of Empowerment.....	64
Methods of Empowerment.....	66
The Role of HR in Developing Empowered Employees	73
The Assessment	74
Choicefulness.....	75
Effort	77
Impact	78
Self-System Control.....	80
Meaningfulness	83
Universal Justice	85
Conclusion	86
Chapter 4 - Reflection & Learning's About Consulting and Field Research	88
What We Did Right	88
Areas for Improvement Going Forward	91
Conclusion	95
References.....	96
Appendix I – Interview Questions	102
Employee Interview	102
Intro.....	102
Empowerment.....	103
Employee Involvement	106
Appendix II – Survey Questions.....	108
Appendix III - Summary of Survey Results	111

CHAPTER 1 – PROJECT CHARTER

Project Charter Development

In 2004, the company we are working with, a software company that we will call SoftTek undertook an initiative to enhance its corporate culture. This initiative began with the realization at the CEO and senior executive level that organizational culture can be an important contributor to organizational performance. They also identified, soon after the acquisition of a major competitor, that an assessment of the organizational culture was required in order to determine how far apart the employees of each previous organization were in terms of their cultures. They also wanted to identify how far the overall organization was from the ideal “constructive culture”.

In early 2004, SoftTek used a third party consulting firm to administer surveys in order to measure the existing culture. This survey was repeated in 2005 to determine if there had been movement toward the identified ideal culture. The results were delivered with a breakdown by department and sub-groups within each department. The department that is the focus of our project is the Information Technology (IT) department within SoftTek. This group’s results were most significantly out of alignment with the ideal “constructive culture”. The IT group is currently in a critical period of its development. They have recently undergone a major reorganization after a series of several smaller reorganizations over the past year and a half. The Vice President of the group has recently left the organization and they are in the process of hiring a new CIO. The department is in a state of major transition and HR and the IT Leadership would like to be proactive about improving the environment and laying the groundwork for success

going forward. Improving the organizational culture has the potential to impact the satisfaction of employees and the performance of the organization overall.

Through the culture survey results (for more information refer to Human Synerstics™), IT's culture was identified as being most closely aligned with the Passive/Defensive© type of organizational culture. This is characterized by the expectation that people interact with each other in cautious ways that protect their own security. In keeping with the prominence of this Passive/Defensive© culture, the behavioural style that was most prevalent was avoidance, which involves being non-committal and avoiding blame. According, to Human Synergistics™, this type of culture and behaviour can inhibit high-performance and initiative-taking behaviours. The real challenge for the organization lies in determining how to influence the culture in the organization and develop behavioural styles and expectations that will contribute to higher commitment, greater employee satisfaction, and overall high performance in the group.

In developing the scope for our project we began with a very broad, high-level goal – to identify the issues and make recommendations on how to change the organizational culture in IT toward the ideal or a “constructive culture”. There were two significant issues with this objective. First, the concept of culture is broad and somewhat ambiguous. Identifying ways to change organizational culture would be extremely difficult with little in the way of proven models and frameworks available to structure a cultural change. Therefore, the validity of the recommendations we could make for such an imprecise concept might be questionable.

The second issue was the scope of the project. If we were able to identify a framework to change the organizational culture of IT, the scope, effort, and timeline would be unrealistically large given the timeframe for the engagement. Culture change is (as identified by the SoftTek Executive) an ongoing effort and it would be difficult in just a couple of months to provide a comprehensive and actionable set of recommendations to “change culture”.

This led us to identify ways in which the organization could begin making changes to the operating styles of the group, which are shown to create a shift toward a more ideal organizational culture. As identified through the third party report on culture in the organization and as supported by the organizational behaviour literature, there are certain causal factors which shape and reinforce organizational culture. The two causal factors on which IT had the least favourable scores provided the most potentially powerful levers for change if addressed and the most potentially damaging factors if left to deteriorate. Therefore, we decided to focus our efforts on further exploring these causal factors, which are empowerment and employee involvement. By narrowing the scope to address these specific causal factors, we believed we could remedy our issues regarding scope by providing an evaluation and recommendations based on well-studied frameworks. As well we could ensure the capacity existed to provide an appropriate depth of analysis and actionable feedback in the available timeframe. This would also provide the most valuable deliverables for our client, as the analysis and outputs would be more specific and meaningful and the recommendations would be more manageable to implement than a broad attempt to change all aspects of culture.

The first step in addressing organizational culture had already taken place, which was an assessment of where the team is today. In order to make improvements, it is important to understand the current operating state. Through meetings with our Project Sponsor and the Human Resources Business Partner for IT, it became clear that there had been several organizational changes since the last employee survey had been administered and these changes may have affected the way people were feeling and behaving in IT. Also, in reviewing the survey results, we found that while the causal factors were defined and the specific questions which were used to assess these factors were identified, the underlying issues and perceptions regarding empowerment and employee involvement were not well defined. This led us to develop a scope and approach which included the further gathering of information through interviews with employees across functions, regions, and managerial levels to gain a better understanding of the common themes, issues, and opportunities. Based on those findings, we would follow these interviews with a survey of all IT employees in order to determine which factors of empowerment and employee involvement truly held the most challenge and opportunity for improvement. The key findings from our information gathering would be combined with the current theories and models to prepare a formal assessment and develop recommendations to develop stronger employee empowerment and involvement, which in turn could drive a shift toward a more constructive culture. The final Project Charter follows below.

Project Proposal

Project Name: SoftTek IT Culture Initiative

Revision Date: June 1, 2005

Customer Project Sponsor: SoftTek Sponsor

Project Managers: Denise Cox, Ivy Feng,
Myra Fernandes

Background

Organizational culture was identified as a significant priority for SoftTek' executives and the CEO, in 2004 after SoftTek acquired Techware. SoftTek defines culture as:

The basic assumptions, shared values and beliefs that guide the way organizational members behave toward each other and approach their work.

An assessment of organizational culture was performed using tools provided by a third party consulting firm, Human Synergistics™, to measure the cultures of the two groups identified as Classic-SoftTek and Classic-Techware and to identify the ideal culture for SoftTek going forward. The culture was defined using three general clusters of “styles” of interaction (i.e. Constructive©, Passive/Defensive©, and Aggressive/Defensive©) and significant differences between desired styles and ideal styles were identified.

Approximately one year later, several cultural initiatives have been undertaken, including the development and launch of SoftTek Core Values, and the culture of the combined organization was again assessed using the Organizational Culture Inventory™ (OCI) and Organizational Effectiveness Inventory™ (OEI™) surveys. Results have

shown varying degrees of progress towards the ideal “constructive culture”© across business units. Collectively, there has been little movement toward the ideal state.

One department in particular has been identified as being notably out of alignment with the desired organizational culture. The Information Technology (IT) organization results were significantly below the IT historical average, the corporate average, and the Constructive culture© benchmark data. The IT group has been through several reorganizations within the past 18 months. They have just recently (end of May) gone through another reorganization. They have also begun an initiative to bring in a new CIO. The interim leader is the CFO.

Reports by geographic area have been developed from survey results and are shared with each group via the HR Business Partner. Managers and the HR Business Partner will jointly begin the process of developing action plans for the coming year. These action plans will propose how each sub-unit will drive change toward the desired organizational culture.

Issues

In April of 2005, the IT organization was presented with the results of their OCT™ and OEI™ survey. The report identified some striking results. While each of the departments at SoftTek was out of alignment with the ideal cultural style, to some extent, IT had the greatest degree of misalignment between their identified ideal culture and the current operating culture.

Their ideal cultural styles were identified as:

Primary: Humanistic/Encouraging© (a Constructive style©)

Secondary: Self-Actualizing© (a Constructive style©)

Their actual current operating cultural styles were shown to be:

Primary: Avoidance© (a Passive/Defensive style©)

Secondary: Competitive© (an Aggressive/Defensive style©)

The current operating cultures are believed to drive outcomes that are undesirable including role clarity issues for IT's members and departmental-level quality of outputs (per the OCI™/OEI™). In addition, qualitative feedback from HR and management has indicated that IT is perceived as not delivering to the needs of the organization.

Given the identified culture and performance issues in IT, HR and IT Leadership would like to develop the leadership capacity to drive a shift toward a constructive culture, which is shown to be characteristic of high-performing organizations. They would also like to assess the employee perception of recent organizational changes and the impact on their expected responses to a culture change effort.

Issues will be addressed by exploring and implementing changes to affect the identified levers for change to operating culture.

Approach

Identified Levers for Change – Empowerment and Employee Involvement:

According to the Human Synergistics™ framework, the operating culture of an organization emerges as a result of the organization's structures, systems, technologies, skills and qualities. For purposes of this evaluation, we will focus on the “structures”, most importantly Empowerment and Employee Involvement, as the targeted levers for change. We have chosen these causal factors as the focus of our evaluation and recommendations for two reasons:

1. Empowerment and Employee Involvement have been identified as the causal factors with the least favourable scores, so present potentially powerful levers for change if properly managed and the potential to continue to reinforce an undesirable culture if not managed.
2. In light of the recent IT restructuring, there is an opportunity to identify complimentary enhancements to the new organizational structure, which will facilitate greater empowerment and employee involvement.

The first step in addressing the causal factors of Empowerment and Involvement within IT will be to assess employee and manager perceptions of types of empowerment and involvement.

Employee and Manager Assessment

Empowerment and Employee Involvement

In order to explore the current experiences, perceptions, and opinions regarding Empowerment and Employee Involvement within IT, we will perform individual interviews with a cross-section of managers and employees, representing each department, geography and managerial level. These interviews will explore the underlying themes and perceptions regarding the facets of Empowerment and forms of Employee Involvement that have the most meaning and potential to influence employee attitudes.

We will use two models of Empowerment and Employee Involvement against which to interpret responses. These will include the Facet Model of Empowerment in Work Organizations (Bushe, Havlovic & Coetzer, 1996b) and High Involvement Management (Lawler, 1986). The results of the interviews will help us to determine:

1. Which facets of empowerment and forms of involvement have the potential to be most meaningful and influential for employees and how they perceive each in IT.
2. How likely managers are to embrace the facets of empowerment and forms of employee involvement.
3. Where managers feel they have the ability/capacity to affect empowerment and employee involvement and where they may require further development and tools.
4. Whether or how employee and manager perspectives on empowerment and employee involvement are aligned or misaligned.

5. Where opportunities and gaps exist in the organization to strengthen empowerment and employee involvement.

We will attempt to gauge whether there has been a shift in attitudes toward empowerment and employee involvement as a result of the reorganization through employee interviews. We will use surveys to gauge the level and type of resistance to change that may be encountered going forward in order to facilitate change planning and selection of appropriate change strategies.

Utilization of Change Levers

Based on common themes, perceptions, and identified gaps between employee and manager's experiences of and capacity for empowerment and involvement, we will suggest how the change levers may be best utilized. This will include the incorporation of secondary data to suggest best practices methods for empowering and involving employees, identification of potential risks and challenges of using these methods within the context IT at SoftTek, and the most appropriate leadership skills to implement the best practices.

Deliverables

There will be several key deliverables resulting from this study:

1. Report to HR business Partner for IT outlining.
 - a. Summary of employee and manager perspectives on Empowerment and the facets of Empowerment that may be utilized to affect cultural change.

- b. Summary of forms of Employee involvement which may be leveraged to affective a shift toward constructive culture and coinciding strategies.
2. Leadership development recommendations which can contribute to a constructive culture via empowerment and employee involvement.

Budget and Resources

SFU Project resources will be given access to telecom infrastructure and meeting rooms for interviews and presentations

Project Plan (Milestones)

Start Date	May 1, 2005
Project Proposal Sign-off	June 17, 2005
Interviews Complete	July 1, 2005
Findings/Recommendations to Sponsor	July 11, 2005
Final Report Complete	July 18, 2005
Presentation to SOFTTEK Stakeholders	July 29, 2005

Potential Issues or Constraints

Access to relevant individuals due to geography, schedules

Completion Criteria

The project will be complete when the presentation of assessment and recommendations is delivered to the Sponsor and HR Business Partner

CHAPTER 2 – FIELD PROJECT

Introduction

The following report is provided in its entirety to SoftTek. In addition to the report, we will provide a PowerPoint presentation of the key findings and recommendations. Below is a summary of the key concepts of empowerment and employee involvement. The data was collected through interviews (see Appendix I) and surveys (see Appendix II) and has been analyzed using these key concepts and models. A summary of key recommendations has been provided.

Background

The CEO and the Executive Committee have identified organizational culture as a priority for development at SoftTek. Several factors have combined to make this an ideal opportunity for our MBA team to provide SoftTek IT with a formal assessment and recommendations to drive a shift in the culture of SoftTek IT towards the identified ideal “Constructive Culture”©.

The IT organization has undergone numerous structural and leadership changes over the course of the past year and a half. The most recent reorganization saw fundamental changes to the structure and another significant change to IT Leadership is pending; the introduction of a new CIO. Times of transformational change are an opportune time to affect cultural change in organizations. According to Schein:

“Crises are especially significant in culture creation and transmission because the heightened emotional involvement during such periods increases the intensity of

learning. Crises heighten anxiety, and anxiety reduction is a powerful motivator of new learning. If people share intense emotional experiences and collectively learn how to reduce anxiety, they are more likely to remember what they have learned” (Schein, 1990, p 109).

As well, the organization has recently been provided with a valid baseline evaluation of the current culture using the Organizational Culture Inventory™ and Organizational Effectiveness Inventory™ (OCI™ and OEI™), which was administered and interpreted by Human Synergistics™. The results provided measures of the styles used, the outcomes, and the causal factors for these styles.

The causal factors, or levers for cultural change, are the focus for this study, since they provide the opportunity for practical application of change programs. We are focusing on the structural causal factors of Empowerment and Employee Involvement. These were identified as the least favourable scores and so present potentially powerful levers for change if properly managed and the potential to continue to reinforce an undesirable culture if not managed. The timing also provides an opportunity to complement the structural changes being implemented with enhancements to drive greater employee empowerment and involvement.

Approach

The OCI™/OEI™ results have provided a good point-in-time illustration of some of the cultural gaps existing in IT. To fully analyze the underlying cause of these gaps and to identify potential solutions for implementation requires a depth of information not available in the survey results. We have structured our approach to look into the

underlying themes and perceptions in IT and combining our key findings with current literature and best practices to provide useful and practical recommendations. The approach is as follows:

1. Review of the OCI™/OEI™ results to understand the current discrepancies as identified in the Human Synergistics™ framework.
2. Interview SoftTek HR representatives to understand the background, objectives, and challenges through the eyes of a close stakeholder
3. Interview IT Leadership and a sample of IT members (a representative cross-section of regions, functions, and managerial levels) in order to further explore the perceptions of causal factors of culture misalignment, including but not limited to lack of empowerment and employee involvement
4. Survey of the IT population to identify and measure the degree to which issues of empowerment and employee involvement are pervasive in the department.
5. Summarize key findings and major issues using existing models of empowerment and employee involvement
6. Provide recommendations for the organization, leadership, and HR utilizing the key findings, literature, and best practices.

This report will end with a sample implementation that can be modified and customized.

Empowerment

Empowerment has been shown to improve performance and employee satisfaction. Empowering employees can give them a sense of ownership over their tasks and a sense that they can guide and control their destiny at work. Empowerment can also create efficiencies in the workplace, freeing up higher-level managers to focus on more strategic planning, while leaving empowered employees to effectively address the day to day operations and needs of the customer groups with confidence.

Human Synergistics™ defines Empowerment as the “the extent to which people are given the authority, resources, experience, and opportunity to perform their tasks autonomously”. We have applied a model of empowerment to evaluate several facets of empowerment within SoftTek IT and determine which facets should be developed to enhance employee empowerment. The Facet Model of Empowerment developed by Bushe, Havolvic & Coetzer (1996b) consists of six facets. Each facet and related IT issues are analyzed below.

There are several facets to empowerment according to the Bushe model, including choicefulness, effort, impact, self-system control, meaningfulness, and universal justice. The OCI© survey, which highlighted empowerment as a causal factor which is out of alignment, explored the facets of choice and effort, as the questions dealt with authority and influence (choice) and resources, training, time and practice (self-efficacy). While these facets are considered in our study, we also delve into the employee experiences of the other factors in order to uncover issues that may limit their sense of empowerment.

Boundaries

While empowering employees has been identified as a strategy to gain a high performance work culture, Hirshorne and Gilmore (1992) among others theorize that several boundaries need to be in place for people to work together without confusion and anxiety. These boundaries include:

1. Authority boundaries -- who is in charge?
2. Task boundaries -- who is supposed to do what?
3. Political boundaries -- who wants what?

The introduction of empowerment in an organization generally reduces these boundaries leaving it up to the individuals to develop their own boundaries in their relationships. As a result of continuous change, multiple reorganizations, frequent changes in senior leadership, and lack of role clarity the boundaries identified above (authority, task, and political) have been deficient in SoftTek IT. The risk of introducing empowerment initiatives without proper consideration and preparation is that empowerment reduces the clarity of these boundaries even further. While empowerment has been identified as a causal factor for poor cultural alignment, the introduction of empowerment with a lack of reasonably understood boundaries has the potential to raise anxiety levels. To this point, we would like to highlight the need to clarify the authority boundaries when considering the implementation of empowering practices.

Several issues identified can be tied to the lack of clear boundaries which may create anxiety for employees acting as empowered workers. Authority boundaries refer to who is in charge. With frequent changes in leadership it is almost impossible for

employees to be confident that those with authority today will have it tomorrow. This may be a difficult, if not impossible, issue to formally overcome, but is worth being cognizant of and attempting to clarify leadership in all teams with any structural or role changes.

Task boundaries or role clarity has also been identified as an ongoing problem. The general feedback with regard to the reorganization is that employees believe that the new structure is “going in the right direction”, that in theory, the global model will help to clarify what group is responsible for what work. However, it is clear that many people are still unsure of the task responsibilities across the organization as a result of information not being fully shared regarding the roles and structures in other sub-teams within IT, post-reorganization. The issue of the timeliness and manner in which this type of information is shared will be addressed further in the next section on Employee Involvement.

Political boundaries are something that may not be discussed openly, but may be discussed and conjectured upon just the same. If it is not clear what the objectives of each of the groups are and the needs of individuals, especially those holding power in the form of formal authority, people may be reluctant to make their views, opinion, and possible constructive suggestions known.

The overall issue of a lack of boundaries must be considered in determining the most appropriate strategies for addressing empowerment through all facets. This is a general cautionary note to ensure that with each potential empowering strategy and tactic, the risks of reduced boundaries are identified and the potential for improving task, authority, and political boundaries is integrated.

Below, each type of empowerment is described, along with the related issues and recommended approaches to begin addressing these issues.

The Six Facets of Empowerment

Choicefulness

Choices are an important type of empowerment in that “the more one feels that one can choose what to put one's effort into, and what not, the more empowered one feels” (Bushe et al, 1996b). This is similar to the concept of “self-determination” (Thomas and Velthouse, 1990) which reflects “autonomy in the initiation and continuation of work behaviours and processes”.

With regard to choicefulness in day to day work, about half of the employees surveyed said that they do have choices. Through our interviews, choices were identified as existing in several forms in the organization including employees and managers taking responsibility for budgets, managing their own tasks in the context of defined work objectives, and identifying preferred project work. One comment that emerged repeatedly was the uniqueness of each person’s role and skills. This seemed to encourage the perception that these individuals were in a position to have choices as a result of their unique role and abilities. For the most part, employees did appreciate the ability to exercise some degree of choice in their day-to-day work role.

There were some cases of task list management and micromanagement of employees that felt their skill and management level warranted greater freedom to manage their work, but overall employees were able to identify aspects of choicefulness that existed.

Overall, our survey results indicated that:

- 49% of employees agreed or strongly agreed that they have choices in the their role about what they work on
- 28% were neutral
- 23% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the above statement

At the same time, 38% of respondents indicated that the majority of their tasks are identified by their manager and team lead. The apparent inconsistency with the previous statistics may be explained by the rationale that employees are being given direction by their managers, while at the same time being granted choices in other areas. It may depend on the role and the individual as to whether choices are appropriate and/or appreciated.

One drawback highlighted in interviews regarding choicefulness related to the lack of identified priorities and guidelines to accompany employees' choices. The competing pressures from managers and internal customer groups combined with resource limitations, creates uncertainty and stress about making decisions regarding trade-offs. This highlights the boundary issues mentioned earlier, in which a lack of boundaries (including authority, task, and political) can create confusion and anxiety, as there is a perceived risk in exercising choice. This concern was raised by a front-line employee as well as at the senior leadership level (L1). At the senior leadership level it was identified that there is a sentiment in the business units that "IT chooses to do or not to do my projects and whether or not to respond to my requests". This creates a perceived animosity in the business towards IT for making "choices" about their

business. This is precipitated by a lack of process and strategic guidance with regard to approving work within the organization.

With regard to parameters or boundaries in making choices, 39% of employees agreed or strongly agreed that they required more parameters to guide their choices. 38% were neutral, which may be an indication that the question was unclear or that they felt current boundaries were adequate. This feedback indicates that there are a significant number of employees that would benefit from more developed parameters or guidelines around their decision-making.

In order to address the issues surrounding choicefulness, there are three recommended approaches which can be applied at several levels in the organization:

1. Provide the context of clear, shared, articulated guidelines at the Executive level as to which business units' initiatives are of strategic importance and that most align with the organization's goals. Ensure IT representation and the opportunity for dialogue at EC meetings.
2. Ensure there is an articulated vision for the IT organization that is shared internally to employees in IT, to guide their choices, as well as to the business units outside of IT, to provide justification for those choices.
3. Maintain and enhance choices, but address boundaries through role clarity (e.g. job descriptions) and improved processes.
4. Managers should identify roles and individuals that may create value through greater autonomy and decision-making authority and provide them with opportunities to

develop decision-making and communications skills (e.g. critical thinking, clear communication).

Effort

The concept of effort as it relates to empowerment is the perception of how much effort is required by an individual to attain a desired outcome. This relates to self-efficacy and a sense of empowerment when one believes that the more effort one puts into their work, the more successful they will be in achieving outcomes (Bushe et al, 1996b). We explored this concept in interviews by enquiring into whether interviewees felt they were able to achieve the goals they set or are set for them, and if not, what obstacles were in the way of achieving these goals. Several common responses emerged.

The first common experience was related to a lack of focus resulting from “fire-fighting” and “randomization”. The term “fire-fighting” was used to refer to dealing with the emergencies that come up and must be addressed, distracting the employee from their planned work and interrupting their ability to achieve their goals in the timeframe they planned. The term “randomization” was used to refer to a lack of coordinated objectives, which leaves employees to deal with competing priorities without the perceived authority to refuse or de-prioritize work. The result is the employees working on multiple tasks and objectives, without clear priorities or focus, reducing their effectiveness.

Survey results confirmed the initial observation made through interviews as 82% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that they were able to do their work without interruptions or emergencies. While some of this may be attributable to the nature of the work that is done in IT, there are certain roles that are designed to address

emergencies more so than others. The consistency of the response is high enough to indicate that employees perceive they are “firefighting” more than is reasonable for their roles, distracting them from feeling able to “get their work done”.

The second issue relating to the factor of effort is that the processes are not in place to facilitate the desired productivity within IT. Through interviews, it was identified at the senior leadership level that improved process within the organization should be addressed. The description of the organization as going through a “growing up” process was used to illustrate that the ad hoc approach was utilized in the past reflected the start-up roots of the organization. The processes are now inadequate to support the enterprise-level organization that the company has become. Survey results supported this perception, indicating that 54% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that the processes are in place to help them be more productive in their jobs.

The third issue relating to the facet of effort that was raised in interviews is the prevalence of duplication of effort. One employee, when asked what aspects lead them to feel unproductive expressed frustration at being assigned to a task only to find that someone in another office or region is doing the same thing, a not uncommon occurrence. This employee highlighted that this issue could be addressed through better coordination and one resource could, more efficiently, address the needs of multiple customer groups. This issue was raised primarily in the context of resources in disparate “geographical region” or between the “corporate” and “geo” groups. The survey indicated that this is not a serious issue across the organization, as 53% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that they felt the work they are doing was being duplicated in other regions.

However, this should not be ignored as 26% of employees did recognize it as an issue and this may be occurring in pockets of the organization.

In order to reduce these defeating effects which make employees feel their efforts are wasted or they are ill-prepared to achieve their objectives, we recommend several potential approaches:

1. Improved process within each group to improve the way employees accomplish work within and across groups
2. Improved processes to proactively identify and address “fires”, so fewer are occurring, they are taking less time to resolve when they do, and it is clear who is responsible for addressing them
3. Detailed job descriptions, identifying depth and breadth of responsibilities and cross-referencing these between roles, departments, and geographies to identify potential for overlap and duplication

Impact

Empowerment can also result from an employee having an impact in the organization. The facet of impact exists for employees when “...they can have impact on the organization, that is, when they are able to accomplish the tasks they (or others) have set out for them, and disempowered when they cannot” (Bushe et al, 1996b, p. 81). With regard to the ability to achieve outcomes set out for the employees, there were varying responses. Some employees had positive responses about the impact they were able to have on the organization, while others had some negative responses. These responses fell generally into two categories.

The first category had to do with the impact of the work that individuals were doing. Many individuals, through the course of interviews, indicated that they were able to recognize the benefit to the organization of the work that they were doing. Many also indicated that they received feedback from their managers and internal customers indicating their appreciation for the employees' contributions. The survey indicated that 88% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the work they do has recognizable benefit for the organization with no disagreement with this statement. 77% agreed or strongly agreed that they felt appreciated by their internal customers for the work that they do for them. This was observed in interviews through comments like, "...my involvement in integration helped the organization to feel like one big company" and "Yes, I have an impact and measure this by the relationships I have with the users I support". This is a very positive response and can contribute to a significant sense of empowerment.

The second category has to do with the impact of the IT department as a whole on the organization at SoftTek. Again, on the positive side, 79% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that IT plays a critical role in helping SoftTek achieve its objectives. However, in multiple interviews, managers and employees alluded to the issue of IT not being able to deliver for the business. We heard comments in interviews such as "...IT slows the business down", "morale is impacted by the perception of IT in the business", and "IT is not appreciated, as there is the 'gotta do more' mentality". Survey results indicated that only 25% of respondents agreed that IT is recognized as contributing valuable outputs for the organization.

There is a peculiar contradiction with regard to the impact of the IT department on the organization. While at a macro-level, managers and employees are citing the inability for IT meet business expectations, the majority of respondents, both through interviews and surveys, indicate that they and their teams had an important impact on the organization and feel appreciated by their internal customers for their contributions. This can be considered a major issue for empowerment. If employees are feeling that they are delivering beneficial outputs and achieving reinforcement at an individual level, but are unable to drive value and improve the perception of IT as a whole within the organization, this may lead to serious morale issues. People may feel they are doing all they personally can, yet are still part of a “losing team” in which it seems impossible to meet the expectations and gain the respect within the company.

In order to overcome the lack of a sense of achievement of goals in the IT organization overall, there are several things that the management team can reasonably do:

1. Develop a clear vision with clear priorities that are agreed to at the Executive level as to what the mission and priorities of the IT department are and ensure this is communicated to internal customer groups
2. Communication of Success Stories – There should be more sharing, publicly, of accomplishments in the organization. There are regular wins in the IT department and these should be highlighted in order to break the perception that IT is failing to meet business needs. While they may not be performing to ideal target levels, there are wins that can provide opportunities and modelling for other achievements.

Self-system control

Self-system control, in simple terms, refers to the ability for an individual to influence the rewards they receive by way of their performance. If a person performs well, but receives no positive reinforcement or rewards, they do not feel empowered. Alternatively, if they feel that strong performance will translate into benefits or rewards, they will feel empowered. (Bushe et al, 1996b) It is important to note that self-system control can exist due to rewards outside of monetary rewards.

The findings from interviews showed that several individuals expressed a sense of appreciation for the fact that their unique skill set or role allowed them the opportunity to have a great deal of say over the work that they do and the initiatives that they take on. This could be considered an important reward for proven performance or valued skills. They also identified instances when they were pleasantly surprised by unexpected rewards such as gift certificates from their managers.

One negative remark regarding the application of rewards had to do with rewards in the form of compensation being applied through the Management by Objectives (MBO) process. This process was raised as ineffectual for several reasons. For one, some people felt the objectives set were unrealistic, some felt they were not actually used in assigning bonus (e.g. 100% across the board), and others felt concern that the frequent and recent reorganizations meant that the manager assigning the scores, and ultimately the resulting bonus, would have little or no insight into the work effort and outcomes of the employee for that period. Therefore, the validity of the evaluation process was considered to be low. For these reasons, the implementation of the MBO's is having a negative effect on empowerment for some.

Survey results regarding the application of rewards and the effective use of the MBO process were extremely inconsistent with no majority agreement on whether respondents felt they will be rewarded for achieving goals, that MBO's are used to set objectives, or that employees believe that managers actually use the MBO's to judge and reward performance (See Appendix III). This should be a major concern as MBO's are one of the few formal and tangible systems in place that provide an opportunity to have a dialogue and formal feedback, linking performance to outcomes. Without this type of linkage, employees may feel helpless to control the outcomes and may not fully perform if they think that believe performance is not rewarded. This raises concerns about employees feeling it is worthwhile to provide discretionary output or "go the extra mile", providing the kind of initiative and effort that enhances the competitiveness of the organization.

Interviews also indicated a small number of people that felt that there were obstacles that they could not identify or control preventing them from meeting their career objectives in the organization. These may have been in the form of politics or feeling "pigeon-holed". This can be considered an impediment to self-system control, particularly if career progression is a valued reward for employees. Survey results with regard to this form of reward were inconsistent. When all managerial levels were included 43% agreed that it is clear what is needed to achieve career objectives. However, when isolated to individual contributors, that number went down considerable with approximately one-third of respondents each disagreeing, agreeing, and feeling neutral whether there was clarity with regard to what they need to do to achieve their career objectives in IT. Based on these findings:

1. Provide consistency in the application of MBO process. In theory, if MBO's were implemented as designed, they could have a positive impact on empowerment.
2. Allow stability of organizational structure for a period of time. While eliminating changes may not be realistic given the dynamic nature of the industry, the resulting improvements in empowerment, morale and trust may outweigh the imperfections in the structure in the short term.
3. Allocate budget an authority for managers to provide spot-bonuses for extraordinary effort, initiative-taking and achievement of organizational objectives.
4. Develop detailed job descriptions so it is clear to all employees what knowledge, skills, and abilities are required to take on new roles.
5. Make career counselling and development plans part of each employee's performance management program.

Meaningfulness

Not only does the tying of outcomes to rewards lead to a sense of empowerment, as with self-system control. A related facet of empowerment is the meaningfulness of the reward. Monetary rewards are not the only type of reward that holds meaning for people and often are much lower on the list relative to profile in the organization, opportunities for challenge and growth, and other rewards. People feel more empowered the more meaningful the rewards they receive for their efforts (Bushe et al, 1996b).

In interviews, several people expressed that compensation was not an important factor for them, citing alternate rewards such as new challenges and opportunities. This perspective should be taken with a grain of salt. Some people may say this, but do

appreciate raises and bonuses for their material benefit and as a sign of recognition. In addition, while some people do not necessarily find money the greatest motivator, if compensation is not managed carefully, it can act as a de-motivator. (Herzberg, 1959) If compensation is not addressed in such a way that it is aligned with the view the person has of themselves and their contribution, they can feel cheated or treated unfairly, which can result in a loss of commitment. Therefore, it is important that compensation is addressed with care regardless of whether people suggest that it is not a priority.

The survey results indicated that 57% of people agreed or strongly agreed that formal compensation is the most important form of reward that they can receive. This underlines the earlier recommendations about ensuring that performance appraisals are appropriately managed.

Other rewards were also identified as holding meaning for people. It was agreed by 82% of respondents that public acknowledgement of a job well done was an important form of recognition. 86% of respondents also agreed that morale and team-building events were a good use of resources, and 56% of respondents would like to see more non-monetary rewards given for accomplishing tasks.

Almost everyone we spoke to indicated that expressed appreciation from one's manager or their internal clients was a meaningful form of recognition. However, several people did mention that certain rewards had little meaning for them. In fact, one reward induced a response of cynicism from the recipients. The example given was the "Teamwork" plaque and letter that was distributed to people working on Sarbanes Oxley (SOX). It was impersonal and delivered by Executive Assistant, rather than the Director. Comments were that it was considered "a bit of a joke" amongst many recipients.

The concept of “meaning” in providing rewards is a difficult dimension to make recommendations about, as one person’s opinion of what makes a meaningful reward will differ from another’s. Based on the feedback we have three recommendations:

1. Discretionary rewards and spot-bonuses - The first is a broad recommendation that more authority/flexibility is given to managers in assigning rewards. We suggest two forms of flexibility; in timing and in budget. Recognizing that there are corporate guidelines and compensation review schedules to adhere to, one suggestion raised in our interviews was recognizing individuals with individualized rewards. By allocating a certain amount of each manager’s budget to be available for discretionary rewards, this allows reinforcement to be assigned in a timely manner. It also puts the decision of “what” reward to give in the hands of the manager who, with a clear understanding of the purpose of the rewards and the preferences of team members, will have the authority and knowledge to provide meaningful rewards.

2. Morale and team-building – Given the strong agreement amongst respondents that morale and team-building events are a good use of resources, we feel it important to ensure these are incorporated more consistently. It is probably valuable to ensure a high degree of employee input into what these events will look like.

3. Communications and coaching skills - In order for managers to better understand the wants and needs of employees, training in communications and coaching skills can prove valuable. This may also be a useful area of skill development for employees.

Universal Justice

Universal justice can also be considered a form of empowerment. When people are rewarded for their effort, regardless of the outcomes, a form of empowerment Bushe et al (1996b) call universal justice is present. This can be an important type of empowerment in an environment where an employee feels little control over external factors or other departments whom they depend on, or when high rates of organizational change creates interruptions to their roles and work tasks, such as has been the case in the IT organization in recent months. It gives employees an opportunity to have some personal control over what they receive when factors outside of their control disrupt goal achievement, despite the employee's best efforts.

The survey indicated that only 19% of employees believe that they are rewarded for extra effort, regardless of outcomes, and only 23% feel that they are penalized when goals are not achieved due to circumstances outside of their control. From this we can conclude that universal justice is an inconsistent form of empowerment in IT, but may be an area in which improvements can be made. The recommendations for addressing universal justice are similar to earlier recommendations for self-system control and meaning and include providing opportunities for discretionary rewards by managers when extraordinary effort is put forward.

It is relevant to note that while rewards have been identified for putting forward extra effort, in the case of Sarbanes Oxley for example, it was also highlighted that certain rewards were not considered meaningful. Therefore, it is extremely important to consider both of these factors when deciding upon rewards for employees to increase empowerment.

Employee Involvement

Employee involvement as defined by Human Synergetics™ is ‘the extent to which people at all levels actively participate in shaping the organization and helping it to achieve its mission’. While most studies have focused on production and service workers, there is an increasing body of knowledge that provides evidence to suggest that employee involvement programs can and do work for knowledge workers if implemented properly. When implementing employee involvement initiatives, there are several risks to be aware of. Portis & Hill (1991) have stated that the main reasons for success or failure of an employee involvement initiative center around:

1. Senior management’s championing of the program or lack thereof
2. Level of investment of effort and resources in launching the program
3. Employees’ willingness to view programs as in their best interest

Employee involvement initiatives are usually programs that must be supported by the organization (investment), implemented and led by HR and middle management (championing), and are clearly for the overall benefit of the organization (best interests). Interview results at SoftTek indicate low levels of involvement arose as a result of continuous change, multiple reorganizations of the structure, and attrition at the senior leadership level. While implementing an employee involvement program such as Total Quality Management (TQM) or Quality of Work life (QWL) would seem like a logical solution to this problem, these programs require large financial investments and the full support of the organization in order to achieve the desired outcome. During the interview process, many individuals articulated their concerns over their ability to become

personally involved in the issues of the business. Most felt as though their suggestions were not taken to the appropriate levels within the organization and that management changed so frequently that there was little point to investing in a relationship. This feedback suggests the need to ensure that all the relevant structures and processes are in place before an employee involvement initiative is undertaken.

As previously mentioned, the OCI/OEI™ survey results highlighted employee involvement as a causal factor that was out of alignment for SoftTek IT. The survey questions centered on management's interest in employee suggestions, employee involvement in the organization's improvement process, and the possibility of having ideas implemented further within the organization, which does not provide enough information to understand the issue. While our research does incorporate these elements, we believed that exploring additional factors as identified by the Lawler model (1986) will provide us with an understanding of some of the underlying issues that were not explored by the survey.

According to Lawler (1986), creating an employee involvement organization starts with the concept of fit: the people, the tasks and technology, the information processes, and the rewards and organization structure all must be in alignment before the organization can work efficiently. In addition to this prescribed fit, there are four features of an organization that also contribute to employee involvement, which are information sharing, knowledge development and training, power sharing, and rewards and recognition. Below each feature is described, along with the issues pertaining to that feature and recommended approaches to begin addressing them.

Information Sharing

The concept of information sharing within the organization refers to two factors, information disclosure and open communication. Information disclosure is the sharing of information regarding plans, goals, strategies, technologies and the external environment facing the organization (Lawler, 1998). Without critical information, employees can not be expected to act in the best interest of the organization. Most often, employee decisions will not align with the strategy and vision of the organization, and can sometimes be detrimental to its long-term success. Information sharing also refers to open communication, which is the accessibility of individuals and managers throughout the organization for feedback; a two-way process for communication. We explored these concepts further with the interviewees by enquiring into whether or not they felt they received the necessary information to make informed decisions and if they experienced open communication amongst their department peers and managers. Several common responses emerged.

The first common set of responses indicated a lack of communication regarding the short and long-term vision of the organization. Many employees have articulated that the IT Leadership team was not providing enough communication regarding the vision of the IT department and its future direction. The survey results indicated that 36% of employees believed that they were not obtaining enough information from their management team regarding the future direction of the department. Some employees that we interviewed found this extremely frustrating from both a personal and business standpoint. From a personal standpoint, concerns were voiced about the level of job stability and whether they should they be looking elsewhere for employment. From a

business standpoint, many employees do not have a clear understanding of their individual role and how it pertains to their department's and organization's roles, impacting their ability to perform their jobs effectively. In addition, many feel as though their career opportunities are unclear due to a lack of communication. The result is that the employees are conversing informally to obtain potentially inaccurate information to complete the picture. Employees are speculating about the potential "rebalance of power" within the organization (Europe, United States, and Canada), outsourcing possibilities, the future location of the new CIO and many are assuming that another reorganization is imminent. In addition, employees want to understand why there has been a delay in the communication of the most current reorganization.

The second issue relating to information sharing was the lack of perceived effort on the part of IT leadership and HR in communicating relevant information (core values, constructive culture, OCI/OEI™ results, etc.). For example, many employees stated that mass communications via email or the intranet were ineffective because most employees delete low priority emails or do not check the intranet site on a frequent enough basis to be kept abreast of the current non-critical developments. One employee stated that the culture initiative was too important to be communicated via a mass medium and should have been communicated via an interactive forum.

The third common theme regarding information sharing was the lack of two-way communication between employees and managers. Only 47% of employees stated that they had the necessary information to make good decisions. Some employees identified obstacles to informal communication with their managers about day-to-day issues as a result of geographic separation. Survey results indicated that management has an open

door policy for informal and formal communication as 86% of employees agreed or strongly agreed that they have the opportunity to make suggestions and approach their manager. However, as indicated in interviews, some did not feel comfortable voicing or disclosing opinions for fear of being reprimanded. One employee stated that public humiliation of employees had occurred on occasion, which sends the message to others to not voice their opinions. A few employees felt that while they were being solicited to provide feedback to management, their concerns were not being acted upon or brought forward to the next level of management. Furthermore, if suggestions, opinions, or views were brought forward, employees wanted to know the outcome of their feedback whether it was addressed or not. The implications for the organization are that suggestions and process improvements are not being capitalized upon. Also, while employees feel comfortable with the opportunities and ability to approach management, the survey results were inconclusive with regards to management sharing information regarding the future direction of the department (i.e. equal numbers agreeing and disagreeing).

Lastly, concerns were raised that management was doing enough to promote their respective IT departments to other business units within the organization. One employee stated that partnerships were developing between IT departments and business units however they were not being leveraged during critical times when understanding and patience are necessary. For example, the Sarbanes Oxley compliance procedures add considerable time to activities. The employee went on to state that simply communicating the department's previous track record of success and delivery of product would have helped.

In order to minimize the effects of these issues on employees, we recommend the following approaches:

1. Develop and communicate the long- and short-term vision for the organization and ensure communication of the objectives at the Executive level.
2. Deliver on promised communication including the implementation of periodic (e.g. quarterly) site meetings to discuss results in an open forum, allow employees to provide constructive feedback and follow up on concerns brought forward.
3. Coach IT Leadership/Senior Management on the benefits and techniques to promote two-way communication.

Knowledge Development and Training

Employee involvement can also result from providing employees with the skills necessary for group decision making, problem solving, leadership, and an overall understanding of the business. According to Lawler (1986), knowledge development and training enables employees to understand and contribute to organizational performance. Organizational knowledge can be any combination of the work (job skills), business (operations), or total work system (structure). Training and development is the means to get employees to increase their strength in one or more of the knowledge areas. Several common themes were identified from interviews on this topic.

The first common response was the lack of training and development over the past two years. Many employees identified the SoftTek and Techware 'Classic' organizations as providing ample opportunities for employee development, and noted that since the integration there has been little to no employee development. However, the

survey results indicate that employees do feel they have the necessary knowledge and skills required to perform their jobs effectively as 80% of respondents agreed with that statement. One employee indicated that the provision of funding was not the issue with engaging in training and development, but the problem was the lack of time. Courses require time away from work and employees can not afford to take this time off given the demands of IT. This frustration over the lack of training and development has been exacerbated by the recent reorganizations where promises of training opportunities have been inconsistently communicated across the IT departments. Employees are unsure if their department will receive the same training and development opportunities as others, which some interviewees indicated has caused resentment within IT.

Another common theme that was identified by a few employees was the lack of skills (decision making, problem solving, and job skills) of the current employee base due to the sometimes repetitive nature of work in IT. One employee stated that there were not enough choices in daily work activities, which has resulted in a deficit of many of the critical skills that are necessary to transition upward in the organization. For example, the recent reorganization has created situations where employees have been moved laterally within the organization without a replacement for their previous position as their skills do not exist and are not being developed within the organization. A side-effect of this phenomenon is that an employee may be managing two positions for an indefinite time period.

A related theme with regards to knowledge development and training was the lack of formal career development assistance for career path development. One employee vented their frustration stating that IT was not looking internally to fill vacant positions

because there is the perception that not all departments in IT have qualified and capable staff. This individual stated that they did not feel as though they were valued as an asset by the organization and that promotions and new opportunities seem to be granted based upon relationships rather than on merit. Only 30% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that there were opportunities available in IT for the development of skills in new roles.

Contrary to the themes highlighted during the interview process the survey results indicated that 40% of employees in the IT organization felt as though they have the appropriate opportunities available to them for training and development. The results did indicate that employees felt that they had the necessary knowledge and skills required to perform their jobs effectively as 80% of employees agreed with this statement. The discrepancy between the interview and survey data may be the issue is not as pervasive as the earlier interviews may have indicated, but is something to be addressed by each manager, nonetheless.

In order to address the themes and concerns surrounding knowledge development and training, SoftTek should:

1. Ensure that consistent training and development opportunities exist and are communicated within the organization. Promote in-house training catalogue and encourage employees to explore opportunities to develop skills and knowledge necessary for their identified career path with their managers.
2. Provide employees with clear job descriptions and career development paths.

3. Initiate informal shadowing/mentoring programs which allow employees to learn about different positions within the organization.

Rewards and Recognition Systems

Employee involvement can be fostered by rewards and recognition systems that are linked to the business performance of the organization. These systems can be tied to the employee's individual capability and contribution to the organization. According to Lawler (1986), rewards and recognitions systems are the easiest to implement to change the current operating environment to one which employee involvement is fostered. Two main themes emerged.

Several reward and recognitions systems were identified as existing in the organization including both formal and informal systems. For formal rewards and recognition systems, most employees stated that they were happy with the current compensation system, and that additional bonus and salary increase were nice, however money was not an effective motivator to exceed current levels of performance. In fact, 56% of respondents stated they would like see more non-monetary rewards. As mentioned in the Self-System control section, the MBO process was considered to be ineffective.

As for informal rewards and recognitions systems, virtually all employees stated that they received informal recognition from their manager and on occasion from their business unit customers. Most employees stated during interviews that informal recognition was an important motivator for them as they felt appreciated and valued for the work they performed for the internal client. As mentioned earlier, survey results

indicate that 77% of employees agree or strongly agree that they feel appreciated by internal customers for the work they perform. However, many interviewees identified that there are few opportunities to informally or publicly recognize employees, as not enough small awards exist and there are few public forums for recognition. The survey results highlight public acknowledgement of a job well done as important form of recognition.

As mentioned in the Meaningfulness section of Empowerment, many employees believe that morale events are an important forum to recognize the accomplishments and that currently, such events are far and few between. Spot bonuses are also another informal, yet meaningful way to link accomplishments to rewards, as are public communications of success stories during site meetings or broad communications to customer groups.

In order to overcome the lack of recognition and improve the current reward systems, there are several things that management in conjunction with human resources can reasonably do:

1. IT Leadership and HR must ensure that merit reviews and MBO reviews are conducted in a timely fashion, to ensure validity and consistency of award application.
2. MBO's must be implemented as designed, according to achievement individual goals in support of department goals.
3. Public recognition for achievements should be implemented as a component of all site meetings.

4. Morale and team-building events should be implemented to recognize milestones and group accomplishments.

Power Sharing

Power sharing refers to the decision making practices within the organization, specifically the ability to act and make decisions about the work in all its aspects (Lawler, 1986). While rewards and recognition systems were identified as the easiest to implement, power sharing is the most difficult because it involves the implementation of practices and structures that give employees a degree of control and direction of their work. The most common form of power sharing is known as parallel suggestion whereby employee suggestions are rewarded for problem solving and producing ideas which impact the business. Research has shown that parallel suggestion involvement strategies can lead to improvements in organizational performance and save organizations considerable amounts of money (Lawler, 1988). With regard to opportunities for power sharing, several common themes emerged from the interviews.

A common response was related to the forums available to employees. Virtually all employees stated that they were solicited by their managers to provide feedback either formally or informally and were not reluctant to make suggestions to their managers. The problem with sharing feedback was it has rarely been acted upon. This sends the message that employee opinions and suggestions are not valued by management and the business. The result is that employees have no incentive to make suggestions in the future that have the potential to improve business performance.

The second common theme centered on the ability to provide feedback regarding major project initiatives. Many employees described communication regarding major projects as a top-down approach where employee feedback was not solicited. One employee commented on this approach stating that individuals at the lower levels have the knowledge that is necessary to determine feasibility. Many stated that employee feedback would increase the possibility of achieving goals and would most likely result in realistic deadlines. The current effect on employees is that they do not feel that deadlines for projects are realistic which causes them to work harder and longer hours or conversely, give up on the objective as it is unachievable. Ultimately, this type of behaviour is frustrating for employees. Another form of inappropriate goal setting is the lack of goals at all. Certain employees found themselves in roles where there are no goals are being set. This does not allow for a sense of accomplishment or “impact” through achievement of a goal that is set out.

The last common theme regarding power sharing revolved around the lack of employee driven teams within IT. Ownership and greater decision-making responsibility were acknowledged by employees as important to reduce the inefficiencies that exist within the organization. The results from the IT organization survey showed that employees would like to have more decision making responsibility as 75% of employees agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. In addition, only 30% of employees responded that they have the ability to participate in decisions that effect how IT operates. These statistics indicate that there is a willingness and desire amongst many employees to take on more responsibility.

To implement a system of power sharing, there are three recommendations that should be considered:

1. Develop employee driven teams that would help facilitate communication amongst the functions within IT as well as between business units. Benefits include the sharing of best practice approaches as well as fostering a sense of ownership in the business.
2. Provide managers with sensitivity training regarding how to deal with employee feedback. Managers should learn to provide feedback to employees about why suggestions were taken or not taken, which allows employees to understand the reasons behind the decisions and encourages future suggestions.
3. Participative Goal-Setting – Involve employees in the goal-setting and planning activities. In addition to providing a sense of ownership, the relevant result for this factor will be that the employees will be able to influence the goals to be more realistic and thereby more achievable. Where goal-setting is not being done today, it would be a valuable exercise to perform jointly in a team environment. While early exercises in goal setting may prove to under- or over-shoot true attainable performance levels, the employees and teams will be able to see their accomplishments against their goals and become more able to determine challenging yet realistic goals.
4. Many of the recommendations made above to encourage greater empowerment and employee involvement have the ability to impact multiple facets of empowerment and features of employee involvement. These recommendations and which areas they have the potential to impact are summarized in Table 1.

Summary of Recommendations

Below is a list of the recommendations based on our evaluations and each facet of Empowerment and features of Employee Involvement that they are intended to address.

Recommendation	Facets of Empowerment							Features of Employee Involvement			
	Choice	Effort	Impact	Self Sys Control	Meaning	Universal Justice	Info Sharing	Knowledge Development	Rewards & Recognition	Power Sharing	
Vision for the IT Organization	✓		✓				✓				
Strategic Alignment at EC Level	✓		✓				✓				
Increase choices in day-to-day	✓									✓	
Training & Skill Development	✓				✓			✓			

	Facets of Empowerment							Features of Employee Involvement			
	Choice	Effort	Impact	Self Sys Control	Meaning	Universal Justice	Info Sharing	Knowledge Development	Rewards & Recognition	Power Sharing	
Recommendation											
Improved Processes (day-to-day & "fires")		✓									
Detailed Job Descriptions		✓		✓				✓			
Communication of Success Stories			✓						✓		
MBO Consistency				✓					✓		
Short-term stability in Org				✓							
Discretionary				✓					✓		

	Facets of Empowerment							Features of Employee Involvement			
	Choice	Effort	Impact	Self Sys Control	Meaning	Universal Justice	Info Sharing	Knowledge Development	Rewards & Recognition	Power Sharing	
Recommendation											
Rewards & Spot bonuses											
Career				✓				✓			
Counselling, Dev Plans, and Mentoring Programs											
Morale & Team Building					✓				✓		
Leadership Coaching					✓					✓	
Initiate Site Meetings							✓				

	Facets of Empowerment								Features of Employee Involvement				
	Choice	Effort	Impact	Self Sys Control	Meaning	Universal Justice	Info Sharing	Knowledge Development	Rewards & Recognition	Power Sharing			
Recommendation													
Initiate Employee Driven Teams													✓
Participative Goal-Setting													✓

Implementation Plan

As with any change program, the chances for success of the change will be improved if there is an articulated and accepted vision for those impacted by the change, as well as a concrete plan for implementing the change. We have provided a recommended approach to implementation for developing Empowerment and Employee Involvement, which incorporates findings from a variety of sources. This implementation plan, adapted from guidelines articulated by Foxman and Polsky (1991), provides a series of steps that the organization and leadership may follow and descriptions of the roles of HR and the IT Leadership through the process.

1. Provide a Vision, Identify the Motive, and Provide a Working Definition for Empowerment and Employee Involvement. Most change efforts are doomed to failure without a clear and articulated vision or common purpose for the change. This step requires the development of a vision for an empowered and involved workforce and requires that supporting decisions be made up front. These supporting decisions include determining what the organizational goals are and how empowerment and employee involvement will help to meet them. In the case of SoftTek IT, the OCI and OEI™ results provide a potentially compelling case for why empowerment and involvement are important initiatives. What will SoftTek IT look like after employee empowerment and involvement are enhanced?

The vision can be clarified by clearly understanding the motive for empowerment and employee involvement. In some cases, employee empowerment is implemented in order to gain efficiencies by limiting the need for middle management roles. In other

cases it is to improve customer service by empowering employees to be responsive. In other cases it is important to improve employee commitment and enhance performance. Be clear on what the motive for IT is going to be. Develop and communicate clear working definitions of each, as there are many ways of defining the concepts and it is critical for all employees to be on the same page.

The HR professional plays an integral role during this first step as they are the champions of the cause, ensuring that empowerment and involvement are truly representative of what employees and management need. The need for empowerment and involvement will usually stem from the HR business partner's need to link HR programs with the strategic direction of the organization. HR professionals will work with senior management to determine the nature and direction of empowerment and involvement programs. Once the working definition has been created, the HR professional must champion the further development of such programs to senior management as there must be substantial benefits to pursuing the initiative further. It will be HR's role to ensure that the initiative aligns with the vision and goals of the organization.

1. **Perform a Reality Check and Identify Risks.** This step requires asking some very basic but important questions. These include: Does empowerment or greater employee involvement make sense for the work we do? Will managers buy in to sharing power? Will employees be willing to take on responsibility? Is our organization designed to do this? And, most importantly, will empowerment and employee involvement allow us to better meet our stated goals? Part of this step may be performing an assessment of what aspects of employee empowerment and involvement require the most attention, as was done in the survey. It is important to understand whether there are responsibilities

that are too risky to share among newly empowered employees and what some of the risks might be to empowering other roles, such as possible downsides of a bad decision. If enhancing employee involvement is going to be implemented, management must be prepared to hear negative as well as positive feedback. One of the risks that goes with this is that people can become cynical if they take the time to become involved, share their feedback, and yet find that nothing is being done with that feedback. How prepared are you to follow through?

Once HR has received the approval to initiate employee empowerment and involvement programs it will be necessary to refine the working definitions to clarify what exactly management and employees will be responsible for supporting. While IT leadership will provide the initial definitions for employee empowerment and involvement, the HR professional will continue to facilitate discussions with both management and employees to collect feedback to determine if the initiative will be supported by both parties and if the working definition aligns with the current vision and goals of the organization.

2. **Develop a task force and/or test case.** This step involves bringing together managers and employees that are interested, understand the concepts most clearly, and are motivated to implement initiatives to improve empowerment and employee involvement. It was identified in the interviews that an IT Culture task force has been raised at the L1 level. This is a very logical starting point. The task force will bring various perspectives from different parts of the organization on how empowerment and involvement can be improved throughout the organization and where it makes sense to implement. They can also ensure a common understanding of the concepts through the

organization and collect feedback from various groups about the reception of these concepts. They can identify one specific goal or initiative as a test case and implement and evaluate it. They can use what is learned through this process to guide subsequent initiatives.

HR must initiate a test case scenario in order to determine if the initiative(s) will be supported by the IT employee population. This situation provides the opportunity to obtain the necessary feedback to adjust the initiative prior to implementation, and reduces the impact and risk if the initiative is not well-founded. It also allows the HR professional to work closely with employees to develop advocates within the IT organization to champion the initiative further. The test case also provides IT leadership with an opportunity to determine if the initiatives can be reasonably supported. The HR professional will be responsible for implementing the test case and measuring the outcomes.

3. **Identify Specific Initiatives.** It is likely very ineffective, if not impossible, to attempt to simultaneously implement all the recommendations provided to develop an empowered and involved workforce. Therefore it is important to determine which initiatives will provide the greatest benefit with the least risk and select one or a sub-set of initiatives to start with.

The HR professional should facilitate discussions amongst the senior leadership team to determine which initiatives will be pursued further. This is an important step for the HR professional because he or she must receive the support of the IT leadership team in order to choose which initiatives best meet the organizations needs. HR should provide

IT leadership with the necessary resources required to help determine and support the initiatives.

4. **Perform a Cost/Benefit Analysis.** Be sure to estimate the cost of implementing the empowerment or employee involvement changes. The costs of some initiatives may be minimal or negligible, but others may require the implementation of new technology, consulting costs, training costs, or potentially new headcount. A clear understanding of the costs and benefits will help to understand whether the initiative makes sense as well as to identify barriers and approach senior leadership for approval and funding if required.

The HR professional will play more of a generalist role in this situation as they will be responsible for analyzing and determining the cost and benefits of going forward with the employee empowerment and involvement initiatives. Once this information has been compiled, it is the HR professional's role and responsibility to continue to champion the cause presenting the information to senior management for final approval.

5. **Establish Metrics.** The metrics for success should be established in order to measure the success of empowerment and employee involvement initiatives. If an initiative is highly successful it may provide incentive and direction for additional initiatives. If it does not meet the goals set out for it, there are valuable lessons in that as well.

As a strategic business partner, the HR professional will have the necessary information to determine what metrics will be used to determine if the initiatives were successful or not. They will be responsible for determining how and when information

will be collected and filtered to determine the usefulness of the initiative. It will also be their responsibility to ensure that IT Leadership understands what is being measured and what their role will be in achieving the desired results.

6. **Provide Ongoing Communication and Ensure Employee Understanding of Initiatives.** Ongoing communication will ensure alignment of goals across departments and amongst employees. It will also act to remind managers and employees of the importance of their involvement in the initiative. Empowerment and Employee Involvement initiatives are fundamentally about sharing information and power throughout different organization levels, so for employees to be successful in meeting the goals, everyone must be on the same page about the objectives and how to use information and decision-making to further the accomplishment of shared goals.

Possibly the most crucial role HR will play is as the implementer of the empowerment and involvement initiatives. It will be the sole responsibility of the HR department to ensure that the proper communication is first sent to IT leadership to ensure that the management team understands what is being expected from them and most importantly how to deal with employees' questions. To ensure uniform communication for all employees the HR professional should provide opportunities for open forums where employees can interact with HR professionals to understand the initiative and what their role will be in helping the organization achieve the initiative. Direct communication with employees will also clarify any misconceptions that develop as result of hearsay or delays in communication from the IT leadership team.

7. **Monitor, Evaluate, and Revise.** Use the metrics established in Step 6 to continually evaluate the impact of the initiatives. Throughout, the HR department may

want to periodically repeat the employee survey that was previously implemented to determine if the initiative has driven a change in the employees' perception of the facets of empowerment and factors of involvement.

As the original champions of the employee empowerment and involvement initiative, the HR professional will be responsible for evaluating the continued effectiveness of the program as such programs cost considerable time and money to maintain. In addition, the HR professional will have the responsibility of communicating information to IT leadership. In cases where results are not favourable, it will be the HR professional's job to identify why results were not achieved and work with IT leadership to understand the causes of the results. The HR professional may also choose to coach IT leadership to highlight areas where the newfound employee empowerment and involvement can be better utilized.

CHAPTER 3 – HOW HR PROFESSIONALS CONTRIBUTE TO EMPOWERMENT IN THE WORKPLACE

Introduction

Empowerment is a widely used term in recent management literature. Why has empowerment been such a hot topic for managers and HR professionals in the '90s and into the 21st century? Some people say it is out of necessity that companies need to empower employees to take on more decision-making responsibility as they reduce middle-management overhead (Bogg, 1995). Others claim that it provides an important source of competitive advantage by generating greater employee contribution through commitment (Ackers, Marchington, Wilkson, & Goodman, 1992) or by harnessing much valued human capital in the form of creativity and innovation (Lin, 1998). In the case of our client, an IT department in a global software company, empowerment has been identified as a causal factor in developing the desired “constructive culture” which they expect to inspire high performance. This echoes a study exploring normative aspects of organizational culture, which identified that the distribution of control in an organization was positively correlated to constructive behaviours (Klein, Masi, and Weinder, 1995). Regardless of the rationale, empowerment is often considered a potential practice to drive business results.

According to Foxman and Polsky (1991), it is necessary for HR professionals to “take the lead in translating the concept of empowerment into results-oriented actions”. This is a bold statement which puts a great deal of responsibility on the Human Resources representatives in an organization to turn the potentially powerful, yet ill-

understood concept of empowerment into tangible results. As an HR professional, such a proposition may raise several very legitimate questions. How does our organization define empowerment and what are the benefits? How do we empower our employees and make this somewhat vague concept actionable? If it is the role of the HR professional to lead the charge in creating an empowered workforce, how much of the responsibility lies with senior and middle managers to implement and support empowerment? What role should HR play in implementing and supporting employee empowerment within organizations? What resources and tools are available to HR to increase employee empowerment?

We will attempt to answer these questions and provide a variety of perspectives and options that may be applied by HR professionals. This will be done by acquiring, comparing, combining and analyzing information drawn from various sources. There are many articles written about the role of HR in the contemporary organization and we will provide a summary of the roles that the HR professional may take on. We outline current models and methods of empowerment and how they may apply to our client organization. We will review the empowerment literature to provide a broad perspective and then drill down to the specific HR practices that can promote empowerment in the organization. Our aim is to provide a review of the potential approaches to be taken by HR professionals in developing empowerment in the workplace and recommend methods as well as identify the associated challenges and risks. To do this we will utilize the data and qualitative feedback we have gathered through working with our client, an IT department in a software company, currently considering employee empowerment as an approach to address cultural and performance issues within the department.

The Role of HR in the Organization

Evolution of the HR Function: Administrative to Strategic

The role of human resource professional within the organizational setting has changed considerably over the past decade. Once responsible for all “personnel” issues, the role has changed to include addressing strategic issues involving competitiveness and performance of the organization (Lawler, 2005). The HR professional is viewed as the individual who is responsible for identifying and bringing together the right parties in order to achieve the organization’s strategy. These responsibilities, in addition to the demands placed by the fast-paced business environment, leave few opportunities for mistakes. Therefore, it is crucial for the HR professional to understand the responsibilities of his or her role within the organization. According to Lawler (2005), the time for HR to change its role and function within the organization is now, as human capital is considered a competitive advantage and HR is the means to leverage that capital. As a result, the HR role must evolve into a business and strategic partnership with the organization to best serve its needs.

As previously mentioned, historically HR has functioned as the traditional entity that offered basic administrative services with an “emphasis on resource efficiency and service quality” (Lawler, 2005). In this context, HR serves a basic role within the organization; while essential, it is not considered critical and can be outsourced to more proficient companies. The next level of service the HR can provide is the Business Partner, which places emphasis on “knowing the business and exercising influence, solving problems, and designing effective systems to ensure required competencies”

(Lawler, 2005). However, in this role the HR professional does not possess access to resources to assist with complex issues that they face. Finally, according to Lawler (2005), the HR role should strive to evolve into a Strategic Partner with the organization, emphasizing “deep and broad knowledge of HR and of the business”. The HR professional should possess the analytical skills necessary to align HR strategies with the strategic goals of the organization; however the organization must provide the resources necessary to accomplish this goal. In our client organization, the HR professional that we have been working with has identified HR as a strategic business function that is valued by business leaders as critical to the management team. That is not to say that they do not deal with day-to-day personnel issues, but the majority of their time is spent serving a more strategic function. It is important to note that one function is not necessarily better than another; rather HR should function in all three capacities using the most appropriate function for the situation.

Four Roles of the HR Professional

Through a brief literature review, we have identified four major roles that the HR professional plays within his or her respective organization: generalist, facilitator, champion, and implementer. Since different situations call for different roles, the HR professional is expected to play the appropriate role in each situation.

HR Generalist Role

According to Lawler (2005), the role of HR generalist is defined as the major interface between the HR organization and the business units. As mentioned above, the HR professional must possess a broad and deep knowledge of all aspects related to

human resource management within the organization (Lawler, 2005). HR professionals are expected to manage specific personnel functions such as how to attract and retain employees and recognize how changes affect the organization. They may also be responsible for ensuring diverse workforces and knowing what policies should be implemented in order to help the organization achieve its goals.

An example of the variety of knowledge, skills, and abilities that an HR professional must possess includes being able to recruit executive talent, which takes its own specialized skills relative to employee recruitment. The HR professional may also be in charge of retrieving and analyzing survey data from employees to determine the best course of action for a particular initiative. The impact of the generalist role to the HR professional is the continued demand to provide his or her knowledge and expertise to a variety of situations that face the organization.

In our client example, the HR Professional was responsible for advising managers on the policies and procedures of merit reviews. The same HR professional is also expected to field questions directly from employees regarding issues or questions they may have with their merit review. They may be required to support the managers while at the same time advocating for employees.

Facilitator Role

While one expects HR professionals to be proficient in HR issues ranging from personnel management to compensation, what is not as well known is the bridge that the HR professional plays for programs and initiatives within the organization. As facilitators, HR professionals aid and maintain communication throughout the

organization, foster employee relationships, as well as manage relationships with other internal and external customers (Hansen, 2002). This role demands that HR professionals fully understand the relevant issues from each party's viewpoint as touched up in the merit example above.

According to Tracey and Nathan (2002), HR professionals should no longer make operational decisions, but act as consultants to the business functions they support. HR will provide managers with the necessary tools and training to effectively perform their management responsibilities. For example, consider a typical scenario where an employee resigns and the manager must fill the vacancy in the department. The department manager will have many decisions to make, such as what are the qualifications for the position, how many interviews to conduct and how much to award the new employee. The manager has an acute sense of the problem and the solution that will provide the best remedy. In this situation, the need for direct supervision by HR is not required because the manager is the closest to the problem and ultimately HR should only reinforce an already good decision (Tracey & Nathan, 2002). The implication for HR professionals is that their role will be to train management on how to best perform their duties and provide them with guidelines and resources necessary to achieve the best interests of the organization.

The HR Professional that we interviewed has identified many ways that she acts as facilitator. She has been engaged to facilitate disagreements between managers as well as facilitate leadership development sessions designed to enhance managers' communication and feedback skills.

Champion Role

The HR professional can often play the role of champion for issues that employees are unable or unwilling to voice. According to Hansen (2002), the HR professional “leads, influences, and inspires others to align the organization towards realizing its vision.” Specifically HR professionals act as change agents for success on the behalf of the employee.

HR professionals act as change agents by initiating and implementing changes based on ideas that are brought forward by management and employees. They may also initiate programs that they perceive as potentially valuable to the business. The HR professional plays what can be considered a political role in the organization as they must advocate to senior management why programs or procedures should be developed. They must balance their recommendations between the desires of the employees and the business needs of the organization (Lawler, 2005).

Where HR plays a strategic role they must be responsible for evaluating the current operating environment of the organization, and therefore must frequently champion change to achieve the strategic goals of the organization (Lawler, 2005). Possessing the knowledge, skill, and abilities to execute change strategies makes the HR professional a valued commodity within the organization

For example, the HR business partner that we have been working with has been responsible for championing the assessment of empowerment and employee involvement which has been the basis of this project. Recognizing the need to develop culture HR is leading initiatives that may not otherwise be raised by management.

To effectively champion the issues that are facing employees, the HR professional has the unique opportunity and responsibility to understand both the concerns of the employees and the business requirements of the company. With thorough knowledge of both sides the HR professional can bridge the gaps and determine the ideal solution to ensure the long-term success of the organization.

Implementer Role

HR professionals also have the role of implementing initiatives and solutions that are created within the HR function. An HR professional serves the important role of ensuring that the proper policies and procedures are in place and are successfully adhered to. For example, in our field project, it was stated that it is the HR department's responsibility to create and administer the performance review process. They then ensure that performance reviews are conducted on an annual basis in order to ensure that proper feedback is provided to all employees within the organization.

Challenges and Limitations

We have covered a subset of important roles that HR professionals play within the context of the organization. It is important to note that this list is not exhaustive, as there are many intricate nuances to the HR professional role that are not captured by this literature review. In order to better comprehend the HR role there are important challenges and limitations that must be understood by the HR professional and those that rely on HR.

The HR professional is not responsible for everything that occurs within the organization. During restructuring and downsizing times, HR professionals will feel

stretched to their limits, as they are often the bearers of bad news. They also have to deal with many other issues such as attrition, which cannot be attributed to their abilities or efforts. Separating what they can be held accountable for and what is out of their control is an important lesson for the HR professional.

Another challenge for the HR professional is to maintain the role of facilitator within the organization. It would be easy for the HR professional to identify themselves as either the advocate for employee issues or a supporter of only management-driven efforts. However the secret to success for the HR professional is to remain neutral and unbiased to both parties in order to provide objective evaluation.

The last challenge is for the HR professional to move into the role of consultant rather than simply providing extra help when required (Tracey & Norman, 2002). HR professionals must realize that line managers will be the area experts for issues pertaining to their departments; HR must learn to develop productive partnerships with management versus being cast as another administrative function that does not add value.

Empowerment: More than an HR Buzzword?

Models of Empowerment

Before empowerment can be implemented in an organization, there needs to be general agreement within that organization about what the concept of empowerment means. To some the word empowerment may evoke a sense of freedom and power that was not there before. Webster's dictionary defines empowerment as "to authorize". But when it comes to strategic human resources management, the definition can become somewhat more complex.

Conger and Kanungo (1988) defined empowerment as the “motivational concept of self-efficacy”. Through working with our client organization, we found that self-efficacy was part of what they wanted to encourage, but they did not go far enough to identify empowerment opportunities. The third-party consulting firm evaluating culture in the organization defined empowerment as “the extent to which people are given the authority, resources, experience, and opportunity to perform their tasks autonomously” (Human Synergistics™, 2004). A model that more closely reflects this definition of empowerment was provided by Thomas and Velthouse which goes beyond Conger and Kanungo’s. Their model builds upon the conceptualization of empowerment in terms of motivational processes to provide a multi-faceted definition of empowerment. In this model, self-efficacy is important but considered insufficient and is supplemented by three other facets of empowerment; sense of impact, meaningfulness and choice (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). From our perspective, this model is more comprehensive and useful in identifying the aspects of empowerment at play in our client organization.

Another variation on this multiple-orientation perspective on empowerment is introduced by Bushe, Havlovic & Coetzer (1996b) by exploring the “inside-out” of empowerment. In other words, they studied whether the models for structuring successful empowered work teams actually lead to employees “feeling empowered”. Building on Thomas and Velthouse’s ideas of empowerment, Bushe, Havlovic, and Coetzer add additional facets and summarize the conceptualization of empowerment in the idea that “as an employee, I feel empowered when I can accomplish what I must to get the rewards I value” (Bushe et al, 1996b). We explore these facets in our study with our client organization to understand which facets that are strengths and which require development

in the organization. We will utilize this model as a framework for identifying where and how the Human Resources department and its representatives can play a role in developing empowerment in organizations.

In the article “Share the Power”, the authors’ perspective on empowerment is extremely pragmatic (Foxman and Polsky, 1991). From a principal of an HR consulting firm they quote a practical working definition which provides a manager and employee orientation to empowerment: "for management, empowerment is the giving up of some control and the sharing of additional knowledge of company goals and achievements."... "for employees, it's the acceptance of risk by taking more responsibility. Both must be prepared to define objectives in terms of business goals, and to agree on what needs to be done. Management then must let employees play a significant role in how to do it on a day-to-day basis." (Foxman and Polsky, 1991). We will also incorporate this conceptualization of empowerment in our review from the perspective that HR has the opportunity to work at several levels in the organization, directly with managers, directly with employees, and through managers to impact employees’ perceptions.

Methods of Empowerment

As mentioned earlier, some of the literature looks at empowerment as a psychological construct with multiple facets. Some of the literature is prescriptive in that it identifies how empowerment can be put into operation. We will now review what methods and management practices have been identified which can lead to an empowered

workforce and we will use our client organization as a practical example of an organization for which these may be considered.

Conrad Lashley (1985) explores empowerment in the hospitality industry and indicates that empowerment initiatives will take on different forms depending on the organizational goals and managers' intentions. He identifies and classifies the initiatives used based upon the managerial motive of empowerment. When the managerial motive is empowerment through participation the initiatives include autonomous work-groups, whatever-it takes training, job enrichment, work councils and employee directors. When the motive is empowerment through involvement the methods employed may include quality circles, team briefings and suggestions schemes. If the managerial motive is empowerment through commitment they may utilize reinforcing rewards programs such as employee share ownership, profit sharing and bonus schemes as well as quality of working life programs such as job enlargement and job rotation. And finally, where the intent is empowerment through de-layering, the most appropriate initiatives may include job-redesign, retraining, autonomous work-groups, job enrichment, profit-sharing and bonus schemes. Due to the different types of initiatives which may be appropriate, it is important to understand the motive or intent which has led management to empowerment as a solution when selecting their empowerment strategy.

Ensuring that the motive or purpose behind the empowerment effort is well understood is critical in selecting the appropriate empowerment strategies. HR can play a role in identifying the motive as they may have a more objective view into the organization and the opportunities for empowerment than managers have and can act as a champion in raising the option and building the case for empowering workers. HR may

also play a critical role in the opposite scenario where managers are too intent on implementing empowerment. If managers are just seeking a blanket solution to poorly understood organizational issues, HR may challenge them to identify why, how or even if empowerment is a reasonable solution for the organization. In forcing them to articulate their motive, the HR professional will facilitate a more successful implementation through a clear vision and appropriate implementation strategy. Once the motive for empowerment is clear, HR can be an advisor on strategies that will support the empowerment effort through the application of HR programs. They may also lead and implement these programs, coach and train managers on how to share power, and encourage managers to work in a different way in order to accrue the greatest benefits from empowered employees.

Through discussions with the HR Business Partner, the client identified their style as empowerment through involvement and commitment. They are attempting to develop a more constructive culture in which employee creativity and innovation is encouraged through involvement. A constructive culture also provides ways for employees to meet their higher-order needs for satisfaction and growth (Human Synergistics™, 2004), which should encourage affective commitment. Therefore, the strategies that we have recommended align with these motives. For example, to encourage involvement we have recommended periodic team briefings and additional opportunities for employee suggestions. In order to implement empowerment through commitment we are recommending reinforcing reward programs such as discretionary bonuses and public recognition for significant achievements.

Some researchers suggest that the road to empowerment is paved by providing the right incentives, including rewards systems. One article, which reviews the history and the conditions that have precipitated various forms of empowerment, tackles several versions of empowerment that are in use in different organizations and in different countries (Tseo & Ramos, 1995). These solutions center mainly on employee equity ownership and suggest creative solutions such as using gamesmanship to attain commitment to goals (Tseo & Ramos, 1995). While we consider incentives and reward systems in our identification of HR strategies, we realize that there are constraints on incentive offerings given the industry and stage of growth of the client organization. For example, for our client organization we recommend enhancing the flexibility of their reward system. However, there are some reward system variations that are not feasible for our client due to the constraints of being part of a public organization with budget and policy restrictions to which they must adhere to. Fortunately, rewards are not the only route to enhancing empowerment.

And what about the article mentioned earlier which suggested HR needs to take the lead in implementing empowerment? How do they suggest HR take this on? They provide some suggested pre-implementation processes that must occur (Foxman and Polsky, 1991). Their article in 'Personnel Management' provides an approach with several steps including preparatory work to define the concept in day-to-day terms. This includes a reality check and understanding of how employees' actions will support the organization's goals. In our client organization this is an important first step as there appears to be inconsistency at the senior leadership level regarding what empowerment entails and how important it is.

The next step would be to develop a test case involving a task force of managers that most clearly understand the concepts and the benefits to be gained to establish a common meaning, communicate the link to business objectives, and evaluate the benefits versus risks of an empowerment program. This step would logically fall to a group in our client organization that we will refer to as the “culture committee” in IT; a group of managers and employees that believe the development of organizational culture is important and are tasked with identifying improvements. The third step is also critical and addresses a point that should not be overlooked – the goal of empowerment is to drive performance. Therefore, Foxman and Polsky suggest performing a cost-benefit analysis based on the information and understanding of the business goals to date. In our client organization, while there may be cynicism towards seemingly ambiguous concepts such as culture and empowerment, the identification of clear business benefits or cost savings will make empowerment a tangible initiative that the whole organization can buy into. The final step is the implementation. There is not a single prescribed method for doing this, but some guidelines to follow including sharing the power while being selective about how much and what type of power is shared (e.g. executive vs. operational). Then of course two-way communication must be maintained, recognizing that this is a partnership between employees and management that will have inherent tension between ambiguity and structure. This could be a challenging proposition for our client organization where the perception amongst employees is that organization is driven from the top down and employees are relatively powerless.

Each of these steps can provide value to the organization and have been suggested to them. But they will not be without their challenges. First, the work to define the

concept sounds simple enough, but this is the type of work that requires input and agreement from various people, including senior directors. This takes time and is often pushed to the bottom of the list of priorities. The duration of previous other undertakings such as sharing culture feedback and even reorganization communications can take what seems to be an absurdly long time, most likely due to other priorities and distractions. Making empowerment a priority is critical and requires senior management's buy-in and time. HR can play a role by making this as easy a process as possible by facilitating a process to get the necessary players together, asking the right questions and moving them toward an agreement on what empowerment will mean in their organization.

The second step, a reality check, would also provide enormous value. However, in an organization which is large and complex with almost as many types of roles as there are employees, identifying who has bought in and determining where empowerment will and will not help to achieve the stated goals of the organization is a complicated and daunting task. HR can play a role in implementing a program which takes a bottom-up approach to identifying opportunities for empowerment and by getting front line feedback on whether or not greater empowerment will be willingly accepted or will bring any benefit. This can be implemented through a cross-functional task force and forums for input, such as focus groups and online forums.

In the development of a business case, HR should play a facilitating role. Through the task force and forums, HR will be able to gain a working knowledge of what empowerment will look like in the organization, but it is the employees who will be able to identify and quantify the benefits. HR must work in partnership with managers and employees to implement the empowerment initiatives. As alluded to in the earlier

definition, empowerment initiatives require the involvement of managers and employees alike and will most certainly not survive if they are purely HR-driven initiatives.

“Few executives would deny that there has been little growth in empowerment over the last 30 years” (Argyris, 1998, p98). Argyris provide an evaluation of why this is. He provides suggestions which will help executives and HR professionals think more realistically about empowerment in order to avoid some of the pitfalls of the inherent contradictions. These include first, recognizing that companies have both top-down and bottom-up controls (i.e. controls and monitoring) and this will cause contradictions. It is important to identify and address/dialogue these gaps in order to maintain credibility, rather to pretend they do not exist. This is particularly important in the organization that we have been studying. Employees have undergone many organizational changes and have been moved around with little consultation and involvement. The current perspective of most employees is that decisions are made top down and they will be told where they are going to work and what they are going to do. A sudden change to espousing empowerment and high-involvement has the potential to raise eyebrows and illicit scoffs after over a year of top-down, unilateral, decision-making.

There does not seem to be a clear published methodology for implementing empowerment in an organization such as the one we have been studying. Therefore, it is important to analyze opportunities for empowerment on a case by case basis and thoroughly understand the business goals behind the empowerment initiative. There also seems to be consensus on the importance of a common understanding of what empowerment means in the organization before moving forward with empowerment

efforts that may create discomfort in the best case and cause cynicism and dysfunction in the worst.

The Role of HR in Developing Empowered Employees

Based on the research regarding empowerment methods, there are certain processes that are critical to the successful implementation of empowerment programs. The first is to ensure that there is a common definition and motive/goal behind developing empowerment in the organization. This speaks to the idea of ensuring that empowerment is not just a buzzword. In the case of our client organization, they have identified empowerment as a factor in developing a high-performance culture.

They should also perform some sort of a reality check to ascertain if and how employee actions can actually support the goals of the organization. This should include considering whether empowerment makes sense in the current environment and operating structure as well as how committed managers will be to sharing power and giving away some decision-making responsibility. We have provided our client with some insight in this area through interviews with the leadership in the IT organization as well as through gaining a cursory understanding of where employees see opportunities for empowerment in their day-to-day roles. HR can play an important role as both a champion and facilitator in this phase. As a champion, they can educate and provide access to the information and vision of what empowerment can do to drive high-performance and espouse the benefits that can result in the form of commitment and superior customer service. As a facilitator they can assist both managers and employees in identifying areas

of opportunity where empowerment can be further developed or initiated to help the organization reach its strategic goals and vision.

The Assessment

A key component in determining how realistic it is to introduce empowerment and where to concentrate efforts is in the area of assessment of employees' current sense of empowerment. Determining where people are today is an important first step in developing an action plan. If we take the perspective of empowerment as a psychological construct - as the determination of the employee about how empowered they feel - it makes sense to gauge this level of empowerment by looking into each of the facets that contribute to empowerment. HR can play a significant role here as an implementer of the assessment.

In our client organization, we have explored the facets of empowerment with the employee population through a survey (see Appendix II). This survey contained questions pertaining to each of the six factors which lead to empowerment (Bushe et al, 1996b). Conducting this survey allowed us to assist HR and the management teams in understandings which factors were contributing to a sense of empowerment and which were detracting from an overall sense of empowerment. But this is just the first step. Once an assessment is made of the facets which are underdeveloped, it is useful to understand how HR can independently or with managers work to increase employees' sense of psychological empowerment. We consider the HR or personnel strategies such as recruitment and selection, rewards, performance appraisals, etc. as tools which can be used strategically to increase empowerment. By understanding the employee's perception

of empowerment in the workplace, HR and management can be more efficient and effective in selecting the programs and practices intended to increase empowerment.

Now we will go through each of the facets and identify what HR and personnel strategies can be applied to influence employee sense of empowerment in the context of each facet and the role that HR can play in each initiative.

Choicefulness

The employee's ability to have choices over where to place his or her effort is an important facet of empowerment that must be considered. It is important to note that the more employees feel they can choose what activities to put their effort in, the more empowered they feel. Our survey results indicate that the majority of employees in this particular organization felt they were able to control where they placed their effort. While a lack of choices can lead employees to feel frustrated and disconnected from the business, too many choices without proper boundaries such as budget guidelines, processes, and procedures can cause employees to feel disempowered as a result of the lack of priorities and guidelines. In this situation an employee may feel lost or like they're not doing their job right (Bushe et al, 1996b). Respondents in our survey indicated that they did need additional parameters in order to make informed decisions (see Appendix III). The initiation of the proper HR strategies will help to alleviate some of these concerns, however the delicate balance of what is right for each employee and manager must be kept in mind.

Perhaps the most useful HR strategy to help alleviate the concerns highlighted around choicefulness is the implementation of **job design systems**. Three such systems

are defined roles and responsibilities, clear lines of authority, and coaching. The HR professional in conjunction with management can work as a business partner to help facilitate the development of clear **roles and responsibilities** for employees that articulate and define job responsibilities. During our field study interviews, employees identified clear roles and responsibilities as necessary to perform their jobs effectively. While senior management had a high level definition of what their departments were responsible for, employees were in limbo with regards to their specific job descriptions. Prolonged unclear boundaries can possibly lead to feelings of disempowerment because employees do not know where to focus their effort. HR must champion the development of clear job descriptions and hold managers accountable for ensuring that this is done. In addition, documenting the proper job roles and responsibilities ensures that the fit between the individual, job role, and organization are maintained (Stevens, 1994)

Establishing **clear lines of authority** ensures that employees understand the situations where they can exercise the power to make choices. As a result, it is HR's responsibility to ensure that organizational structures are properly implemented. In this capacity they are acting as a facilitator. The senior managers are expected to provide communications to their teams and HR provides the guidelines to ensure that communication of the roll-out is consistent.

Coaching is another HR strategy that can be employed to encourage choicefulness within the organization. In this context, the HR professional would take on more of a champion role to encourage managers to share the responsibilities with subordinates. Our survey results indicated that 49% of employees stated that they have choices in their role. Where choices are limited, the HR professional would have to work

with and coach managers to define what authority can be shared with the employees. In cases where responsibilities cannot be shared, the HR professional could coach the manager on how to communicate the rationale back to the employee.

Effort

The concept of effort in empowerment is defined as the link between the effort put into and the outcome of the situation. Specifically, employees feel empowered when they can get the same outcome with less effort, or a greater outcome with the same amount of effort exerted (Bushe et al, 1996b). Employees will feel disempowered if they have to exert additional effort to receive the same outcome especially if the outcome has lost meaning or value for them. It is imperative for the organization to ensure that the appropriate HR strategies are in place to ensure the link between effort and outcome is maintained and strengthened for a competitive advantage.

The first strategy that would help to facilitate the link between effort and outcome would be a clear job design system. Again, clear **roles and responsibilities** for employees would help to define what is expected and what accomplishments would be rewarded. In our field research, 82% of employees stated that they were unable to accomplish their work goals because of interruptions or emergencies. HR professionals must champion the effort to develop concrete job descriptions so that employees may begin to understand what is expected from them and how they will be compensated as result of that effort. HR professionals must also coach managers to ensure that they understand the different forms of rewards that are available to them to distribute. In our field study assessment, one manager articulated the need for ‘spot bonuses’ that could be

used to reinforce the link between effort and outcome in a timely manner. Therefore, HR professionals should re-educate managers about the potential rewards systems that exist within the organization as many may not be aware of them.

Another HR systems strategy that can be utilized is **training and development** to reinforce outcomes with their teams. The HR professional can play two roles when implementing training and development as a strategy. First, the HR professional can act as a generalist to work with managers to identify educational opportunities for employees. The aim would be to increase the employee's proficiency to reduce the amount of effort required for a particular task, while at the same time sending the message that the company is investing in the employees. The second role for the HR professional would be as a champion who would advocate the addition new courses to the course catalogue which would bring new skills into the organization. Lastly, they may also be an implementer of programs intended to train and develop the leadership capabilities of managers as mentioned in the Facilitator role.

Impact

Impact also refers to outcomes but specifically to the actual outcomes that an employee achieves. Bushe, Havlovic, and Coetzer (1996b) state that "employees feel empowered when they are able to accomplish tasks and disempowered when they cannot". The challenge is to provide employee with opportunities that encourage out of the box thinking but are not so challenging that they are considered unattainable (Bushe et al, 1996b). HR must ensure that the organization provides employees with the ability to achieve the desired organizational outcomes.

An effective **Human Resource Planning** system can help any organization achieve its desired goals. The HRP according to Human Resources Management Agency of Canada “is defined as the forecasting of human resource needs for the organization and planning the steps necessary to meet these needs”. Depending on the function of HR within the organization, the HR professional can play a multitude of roles in HRP. For example, in organizations where the HR function serves strictly administrative needs of the organization, HR would be involved in scheduling but may not be responsible for the develop of a strategy to retain current pool of skilled employees. However when serving higher level functions such as the business and strategic partnership, HR would play a more critical role in identifying skills gaps and would engage in proactive measures such as succession planning to address the future resourcing needs of the organization.

Induction and socialization strategies are another means to help the organization achieve its desired goals. Through this strategy, employees can feel connected to the organization’s goals and develop a sense of pride. As identified through our survey results, 82% of employees stated that morale events were a good use of resources. Through our interviews, employees stated that more team building events were necessary to encourage and develop the global team. In this capacity there are two roles for the HR professional. As implementer they will be responsible for ensuring that induction and socialization are done through the employee orientation. As facilitator, HR professionals will assist managers with identifying how to ensure role clarity for new employees and identify ways in which the employee can contribute to organizational success. For example, our field client implements mandatory employee orientation within the first month of employment.

Self-System Control

If it is found that the level of self-system control is low among employees, this indicates that employees perceive the link between achieving outcomes and receiving rewards to be precarious (Bushe et al, 1996b). It is intuitive that a low level of self-system control would be a liability to performance. If employees determine that efforts to achieve exceptional outcomes will not reap benefits, they may be reluctant to put forward the extra energy and entrepreneurial activity that may significantly contribute to the organization's competitive advantage. They do not feel empowered to influence their own rewards.

One HR practice that may be adjusted to improve the self-system control facet of empowerment is **reward systems**. This is the most obvious lever for establishing the link. Some may say that the reward systems can be one of the greatest barriers to empowerment (Kotter and Cohen, 2002). Because reward systems are part of the bureaucracy that establish external commitment, providing rewards for meeting specific tasks or objectives, they may inhibit employees from taking the kind of bold steps, even risks, that are characteristic of empowered decision-making. As Kotter and Cohen so eloquently put it, employees are told “boldly leap into the future and you will receive 10 cents if you succeed and a hammer on the head if you fail”. Therefore, it is important to design and implement reward systems that compensate people for behaving as empowered employees. This will vary from organization to organization depending on the type and degree of power that is being shared and what degree of risk-taking is encouraged. However, by adhering stringently to a “management by objectives approach” (MBO), which rewards accomplishing pre-specified goals within a stated time period,

opportunities for the application of creative and dramatic initiative may be lost. By designing a reward system that clearly links outcomes to rewards, yet also places a value on activities that require employee discretion (and therefore a degree of risk) it is more likely that employees will clearly see a path to achieving their rewards. HR should play the role of implementer in designing this reward system and a facilitator in ensuring the proper implementation by managers.

In our organization, the survey indicated that many people were interested in taking on greater responsibility. 75% of respondents indicated that they would like more decision making responsibility. However, the survey results also indicated that many employees did not feel they would be rewarded for appropriately for taking on extra responsibility as only 46% agreed or strong agreed that they would be rewarded for taking on additional responsibility. Also, in our client organization, there is a requirement to meet many pre-defined objectives. It is not realistic for employees to have complete discretion to pursue creative solutions. In this case a hybrid approach to reward systems may be useful. Rather than doing away with the MBO system, they could keep this intact and provide a discretionary bonus system or “spot rewards” that are activated when employees take initiative in their roles. Other applicable reward systems can include gain-sharing and employee stock options, as they give the employee some stake in driving outcomes that impact business success.

Performance appraisals are another less obvious area where the link between outcomes and rewards may be strengthened. Before employees can be rewarded for their outcomes, the granter of the rewards, most likely the manager, must be fully aware of the contributions that the employee is making to the organization. If the employee’s

accomplishments are going unnoticed or are not being attributed to that employee, the manager's evaluation will not reflect appropriate outcomes and appropriate rewards for those outcomes will not be possible. Therefore, HR can play a role in establishing the most effective performance appraisal approach possible. Similar to rewards systems, they may be an implementer of a well designed performance appraisal system, intended to capture objective information on important aspects of the employee's contributions, management by objectives for example. They may also be a facilitator and coach for managers to ensure that performance appraisals are being done on a timely basis, in the right environment. They may coach the manager on how to deliver appraisal feedback and ensure two-way communication in the performance appraisal process. They can also coach managers in the necessity of ongoing feedback outside of the formal performance appraisals to ensure that exceptional performance is being recognized when it occurs.

Career planning for employees may be another service that HR can provide that will improve the degree to which employees believe they have influence over rewards, particularly for employees that feel promotion and advancement are of paramount importance. These employees will feel motivated to produce outcomes if they believe doing so will open doors to their career aspirations. Where the career path and requirements are clear to an employee, they should feel empowered to achieve those goals. Where promotion decisions appear random or political, employees that value career advancement will feel disempowered to achieve their career objectives within the organization. Therefore, HR can play a role in facilitating the managers in outlining potential career paths in the organization, and defining the knowledge, skills, abilities and experience that are required to attain positions.

Meaningfulness

In addition to rewards being achievable, as they are when self-systems control is present, the rewards should also be meaningful, or provide value, to the recipient in order to engender a sense of empowerment. We believe that there are two main opportunities for HR to influence the degree of meaningfulness of rewards; through recruitment and selection and through coaching and facilitation.

The first practice, **recruitment and selection**, provides the first opportunity to inquire into the candidate's expectations. It also provides the opportunity to communicate the reality of the environment in terms of the reward mix available. Because rewards are likely limited to some extent, the first step in aligning meaningfulness lies in determining whether a fit exists between what the potential employee holds meaningful and what the organization is willing and able to offer. For example, if an employee is looking for a flexible work schedule in order to meet family demands and this is simply not within the parameters of what the company can offer, no amount of overtime will be likely to satisfy the employee that cannot achieve their desired four-day work week. While some employees are most interested in a pay check, others may place a high value on belonging and social activity in their environment. In our survey, we attempted to learn more about what the employee population in the IT organization valued, in terms of rewards. Not surprisingly, the results were mixed. 57% of people indicated that formal compensation was the most important reward they could receive. However, 82% also indicated that public acknowledgement hold value for them. Meaningfulness of rewards varies from individual to individual, so may be particularly challenging to align.

This leads us to the second area that HR may be helpful in encouraging empowerment through meaningfulness. This is through **coaching and facilitation** to ensure the rewards which are valued and the rewards which are available are well-understood by both manager and employee. By this we mean facilitating and coaching communication between managers and employees, which will allow a clear discussion about what the employee wants and what the manager has at his or her disposal to offer. If an open conversation about desired rewards never takes place, an employee may not be aware that rewards that they value are available to them, or conversely may expect that rewards are available that actually are not, becoming frustrated when they do not receive them. This can be done by including courses on communication skills as part of the development portfolio as well as coaching managers to include these types of discussions as part of periodic reviews. In addition, there may be scenarios where a manager is uncertain whether policies in the organization give them the flexibility to offer certain rewards. In this case, the HR practitioner can act in a generalist role to share their knowledge of policy or provide visibility for unique situations which may require a decision (which raises the question of how empowered or constrained should managers be to provide flexible rewards to employees?). Our survey showed that the 86% of employees agreed or strongly agreed that they felt comfortable approaching their managers with their ideas and concerns, which is a positive sign for open communication. It would be valuable to understand whether the topic of desired rewards is a topic that would fall into that category.

Universal Justice

Universal justice as a type of empowerment relates to the rewards that can be achieved, but is different from self-systems control in that it represents the ability for employees to influence their rewards through effort, regardless of whether the desired outcomes are achieved. This is a potentially powerful form of empowerment in an environment where employees' objectives are highly dependent on the results of others or where environmental factors outside of the employee's control can influence their outcomes. It puts some control in the hands of the employee's despite these other factors, as they feel they will be rewarded as long as they put their best foot forward. This is a relevant factor in the organization that we have been working with as there are often large project teams made up of multiple functions from within IT and from other business units. Given the complexity of some of the initiatives and the number of points of failure, employees could have the potential to become very discouraged about not having any control of their rewards if they were not recognized for their efforts.

There are ways in which HR can intervene to make this a more empowering factor. The design and implementation of **rewards systems** can be affected. As we discussed in the self-systems control section, managers may be coached by HR to implement a discretionary bonus system which rewards employees that take initiative that benefits the organization or helps to achieve organizational goals. This type of discretionary bonus could also be applied to employees that put in extra time and effort regardless of outcome. This could also be extended to reward people that take risks that may not necessarily produce the intended results, but exemplify the type of initiative and risk-taking that the organization would like to see coming from their empowered

employees. A discretionary reward for extra effort does not necessarily need to be monetary. Through our interviews we heard on more than one occasion of employees were pleased when their manager told them to leave early or take some time off as a sign of appreciation for their hard work through a crisis.

Conclusion

For the HR Business Partner to encourage empowerment in the organization requires that person to act in a variety of roles. However, the HR Business Partner cannot be all things to all people. Therefore they must make informed and strategic decisions about how they will contribute to employee empowerment. The options are almost limitless.

HR may champion the implementation of ideas raised by employees and managers or champion practices that have never before been considered which may produce recognizable benefit. They may champion the seemingly mundane tasks of role definition which have the potential to dramatically impact employee productivity. They may also champion new leadership development approaches, such as the encouragement of power sharing.

As a facilitator they have the ability to influence. This includes influencing the vision for empowerment in the organization at senior levels through facilitation of the agreed upon motives and working definition. They also have the ability to influence how each manager implements empowering practices with their employees through coaching.

HR professionals, in many cases, still retain responsibility for implementing programs, such as rewards systems and performance appraisals. Where it is determined

that empowerment is a priority for the organization, it is up to the HR professional to build this into the rewards and performance appraisal strategies.

The HR generalist can provide a unique and available knowledge base for both managers and employees. It is their job to understand the benefits and methods of empowerment strategies. By remaining informed, current, and visible they keep the doors open for the consideration of these practices. This person is a valuable resource.

Whatever role or roles HR takes on, it is important for the HR professional to understand their function within the organization. It will be impossible to drive strategic empowerment initiatives when the business leaders view you as an administrator. Therefore, perhaps the first step in going down the road to employee empowerment is ensuring HR is empowered to take on this challenge.

CHAPTER 4 - REFLECTION & LEARNING'S ABOUT CONSULTING AND FIELD RESEARCH

Our field project presented us with an opportunity to work with an organization that was undergoing a cultural change initiative. We were able to analyze their organizational situation via interviews and surveys to provide the organization with objective feedback which may be used to help rectify the issues they are currently encountering. Over the course of three months we were able to interact with a variety of individuals and situations, some pleasant and some not. We encountered many highs and lows during the course of this field project, the followings sections articulate what we did right and areas for improvement going forward.

What We Did Right

Our field project commenced on May 1st, 2005. We had made arrangements to work with this particular organization as we had already successfully completed a previous project with them. Below is a list of four situations and experiences that we believe were successfully handled by this project team.

As with the other teams in LOC, our team consisted of three individuals assigned to complete the field project for our client. It was absolutely imperative that we establish a system of procedures for communication amongst our team and especially with the client. Within our team we developed work systems for creation and revision of documents to ensure that there was no duplication of effort at any given point during the project. This procedure would allow us to catch any discrepancies or mistakes that were present on documents. We also designated one individual as the primary contact for all

correspondence with the client to reduce possible duplication of emails from our team and ensure proper handling of communication.

Within our own team, we set up a weekly meeting schedule to debrief on the week's activities including any relevant research. Our team also engaged in real time conversations via the use of MSN Messenger©. This was a valuable tool for our team as one of the members was not fluent in spoken English. The tool provided this individual with the opportunity to contribute in ways that were more difficult if communicated verbally and allowed us to incorporate her feedback into decisions. It also allowed us to quickly notify and coordinate our efforts which minimized the duplication of work.

Another aspect that greatly aided our performance on this project was our group's ability to quickly adapt to the client's needs. Initially, the project client had requested our assistance with conducting a survey in order to gauge the reaction of employees to the most recent reorganization. Although this did not exactly fit with our plans because we intended to study the underlying behaviours of the culture and not the current culture, we happily obliged because we had previously agreed to provide the client with that information and it would require minimal effort on our part to administer the survey and then collect the information. We submitted our survey to the client for final approval and were surprised when she reconsidered the purpose of the survey. The client was interested in exploring the underlying behaviours that were driving the current culture, and that included expanding the scope of the survey to include the entire IT department. This presented a great opportunity for us because we were able to test our assumptions against the entire IT organization rather than relying on a smaller cross section of employees. Since we already had our issues identified we were able to modify the survey

and present the client with questions that would help explain some of the underlying issues. It was a win for us because we were able to obtain additional information to test our assumptions while utilizing our previous effort on this component of the project.

The survey was eventually launched via Survey Monkey, an online survey tool. We were amazed at the response rate that we received within the first 24 hours; it was completely gratifying to watch the number of respondents increase by the hour. It indicated to us that employees had something to say and this was the perfect forum for them to voice their opinions. Again we did not expect a very high response rate but were pleased when the response rate reached just over 31% of employees within the IT organization

We also had the opportunity to interview both management and employees to help analyze the current situation. Our client compiled a list of potential employees across different levels in the organization, including all five directors within the IT organization. We expected a response rate of 50% which was extremely optimistic and were shocked when we received a 100% acceptance rate from the individuals on our list. Throughout the course of the interviews many people expressed their gratitude for our presence on this project and were intrigued by the nature of our project and the implications for the company as marked by the inquisitive nature prior to the start of interviews. Employees wanted as much detail as possible to help with their understanding of the issues and to help them formulate their response. We were also surprised at level of honesty that was exhibited by all interviewees. Many answered in a very candid unrehearsed fashion letting us know both the good and the bad sides of their experiences, and overall most were extremely optimistic when providing us with suggestions for improvements. Our

expectations going into the interview process were that we would be confronted by very hostile individuals who would use our interview session to gripe about or skew their problems in order to gain sympathy; however this only occurred in one instance.

It was interesting to debrief with each other after each set of interviews and discuss the common themes that were developing, and the interviews also caused us to empathize with the employees' situations as some were more difficult than others. Going through this process made us approach each interview with care and consideration for what these people were going through. The attention to the "people" side of the interview process versus simply obtaining the data helped build our credibility with the interviewees and minimized the effect of being perceived as 'just another consultant' here to collect information. Most interviewees expressed their appreciation for our involvement on this project and sincerely hoped that HR/Management would take what was being said into consideration.

Overall, we were quite pleased with the outcome of the interviews as they provided us with a wealth of information regarding the issues at this company and allowed us to further explore these issues in our survey.

Areas for Improvement Going Forward

While we tried to mitigate some of the potential risks in this project through careful planning and scheduling there were situations where we were not prepared and consequently spent a lot of time and effort trying to get the project on track. The following represent areas for improvement for future projects.

As a multinational organization with major centers located in Europe and North America, a significant percentage of our interviewees were not fluent in English which posed a problem for effective two way communication. While the interviewees in Europe were able to communicate effectively about technical matters, their answers did not convey their true sentiment and emotion because many were unable to articulate in English what and how they felt about a particular situation. There were many instances where individuals were frustrated not with the interview process or questions but with their inability to articulate to us what they were really experiencing and feeling. The most common types of responses to these situations were “I do not know” or “I can’t find the right words in English to describe to you what is happening”. We attempted to assist but only in situations where people asked for clarification of a particular word that they were struggling with, and we avoided assisting in other situations to reduce the amount of influence or bias of their answers. Simply having the right tools such as a dictionary or a language translating device might have alleviated this issue and produced a higher quality response to our questions as well as bridging the gap between the two languages.

The different format for the MBA project was cause for concern because we did not have anything with which to benchmark our format or success against. Previous LOC projects have all focused on change audits while here we were exploring cultural aspects of organizing. There were many instances where having a previous document as a point of reference would have helped in terms of understanding what the expectations would be for the project and how previous students handled culture initiatives. This would have been a valuable asset to us during the project. While our project advisor was available to assist, we did not utilize him until much later. Approaching our project advisor would

have minimized the amount of confusion that we had in regards to a particular issue. Knowing what we know now, we would have requested one-on-one meetings or additional meetings for the entire LOC cohort with our project advisor to obtain the clarification that was necessary rather than relying on our peers for answers which were at times incorrect. As these incorrect assumptions were a source of stress and frustration at times, involving our project advisor at an earlier date would have also assisted in the clarification of deliverables.

We completely underestimated the amount and intensity of work required to accomplish this project. As a team, we worked together on a previous project for this company with relative ease and assumed that this project would also be simple. Once we understood the nature of the project and the requirements that were expected from the client we knew we were in serious trouble. For example, our primary method of data collection was interviews. We conducted interviews with a cross section of employees within the IT organization. While the number of interviews conducted was reasonable, the physical toll of conducting multiple interviews had a price. For example, for two straight weeks we were solely dedicated to conducting interviews and then analyzing the interview data, which rendered us incapable of working on other components of the project, not to mention the exhaustion that we experienced as a result of conducting interviews across multiple time zones. We both agree that conducting the interviews separately would have reduced the amount of fatigue we experienced, however it is unclear whether we would have received the same quality of data collected. In the future we would try to stagger the interview schedule across multiple weeks to reduce fatigue.

Another aspect of the project that took a considerable amount of time was researching which theoretical models would best suit our client's needs. There is an abundant supply of theoretical models, however very few actually met our requirements. With the help of our project advisor we were able to identify a model that would help us analyze the client's needs and provide further recommendations that could be implemented by the client. In retrospect, approaching our project advisor during the early stages of our project would have reduced the amount of effort expended.

Although we were warned, we did not fully comprehend the complexities of a culture change initiative until we became fully immersed in the project. Despite our agreement with the client about the project, the actual nature of the project did not focus on the culture of the company but the underlying issues that were creating the culture. This concept was particularly difficult to grasp until we fully understood the client's definition of culture. More upfront in-depth meetings with the clients about the exact nature and deliverables of the project would have helped us to narrow down the issues and develop an appropriate action plan for delivery of the issues.

As two project managers, one trained by extensive work experience and the other through formal education, we failed miserably at developing and maintaining a project schedule. We initially developed our project schedule 32 days after the official project start date and without a firm understanding of the issues and expectations. Needless to say we were not on track, after carefully reviewing the issues and requirements of the project we were able to develop an accurate project schedule. In hindsight, meeting with the sponsor and client prior to the start date of the MBA project would have alleviated some of the stress we experienced prior to submitting our first draft of the paper.

However with all the demands of a full semester, ultimately we are not sure if proper scheduling would have actually made a difference to the deliverable.

As mentioned earlier, the start date for our project was significantly delayed as a result of our inability to connect with the project sponsor. At times we were too lenient in our communication approach with the project sponsor in order to appear respectful and professional, waiting up to one week before following up with him. This lack of action on our part resulted in the delay of the project by three weeks which does not sound unreasonable but in the context of a fourteen week project makes a big difference. We learned very late in the game that firmly following up with the client was crucial to remain on schedule. While we did experience some delays (such as with the survey rollout) we were able to effectively manage the communication process with our client. Given the nature of this project, delays were unavoidable since the organization was in the midst of implementing its new organizational structure which meant that our client was unavailable at times.

Conclusion

The field project offered us the opportunity to utilize our classroom education in a real world scenario. While we were able to effectively communicate with one another and deliver a project to the client, there were a number of issues that we can improve on for our future project endeavours. Overall, this was a great learning experience for us working with the organization and with each other. Our hope is that the organization will benefit from our work and use the information provided to help solve some of the issues they have encountered this past year.

REFERENCES

- Ackers, P., Marchington, M., Wilkinson, A., Goodman, J. (1992). The use of cycles explaining employee involvement in the 1990s. *Industrial Relations Journal*, Winter92, Vol. 23 Issue 4; (AN 4671054), 268 – 283.
- Argyris, C. (1998). Empowerment: The emperor's new clothes. *Harvard Business Review*, 76(3), 98 - 105.
- Bogg, J. (1995). The practice of empowerment - making the most of human competence. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, 16(6), 46 - 48.
- Bushe, R. G., Havlovic, J. S., & Coetzer, G. (1996). Exploring empowerment from the inside--out. *The Journal for Quality and Participation*, 19(2), 36 -45.
- Bushe, R. G., Havlovic, J. S., & Coetzer, G. (1996). Exploring empowerment from the inside-out (part two). *The Journal for Quality and Participation*, 19(3), 78 -84.
- Conger, A. J., & Kanungo, N. R. (1988). The empowerment process: Integrating theory and practice. *Academy of Management. The Academy of Management Review*, 13(3), 471 - 482.
- Cooke, R.A., & Lafferty, J.C. (1986). Level V: Organizational Culture Inventory (Form III). Plymouth M.I.: *Human Synergistics*.
- Davis, R. (1995). Empowering your human resources. *Executive Excellence*, 12(3), 14.
- Ettorre, B. (1997). The empowerment gap: Hype versus reality. *American Management Association*, 86(7), 10 - 14.

- Fitzgerald, K. W., & Allen, S. (1993). Personal empowerment key to managers development. *HR Magazine: On Human Resource Management*, 38(11), 84 -88.
- Foxman, L. D., Polsky, W. L. (1991). Share the Power. *Personnel Journal*, Santa Monicaep 1991. Vol. 70, Iss. 9, p. 116 - 120
- Foxman, L. D.,& Polsky, W. L. (1991). HR Approaches for the Age of Globalization. *Personnel Journal*, 70(4), 38 - 41. Retrieved, from ABI/INFORM Global database. (Document ID: 716662).
- Geisler, D. (2005). The next level in employee empowerment. *Quality Progress*, 38(6), 48 - 53.
- Geroy, G. D., Wright, P. C., & Anderson, J. (1998). Strategic performance empowerment model. *Empowerment in Organizations*, 6(2), 57.
- Hansen, W. (2002). Developing new proficiencies for human resource and industrial relations professionals, *Human Resource Management Review*, Volume 12, Issue 4, 513-538.
- Herzberg F., Mausner, B., & Snyderman, B. (1998). *The Motivation to Work* (New York: Wiley, 959).
- Hickey, J. V. & Casner-Lotto, J. (1998). How to get true employee participation. *Training & Development*, 52(2), 58 - 62.
- Hiltrop, J.M., DespresPaul, C. (1995) The changing role of HR managers in Europe, *European Management Journal*, Volume 13, Issue 1, March 1995, Pages 91-98.
- Hirschhorn, L. and T. Gilmore (1992) "The new boundaries of the 'boundaryless' company." *Harvard Business Review*, May-June 104-115

- Hughes, J. M. C. (2002). HRM and universalism: Is there one best way? *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 14(5), 221 - 229.
- Jurow, S. (1999). *Delivering Results: A New Mandate for Human Resource Professionals*: edited by Dave Ulrich. Boston, MA: *Harvard Business School Press*, 1998. 349p., *The Journal of Academic Librarianship*, Volume 25, Issue 5, Pages 409-410.
- Klein, A. S., Masi, R. J., & Weidner II (1995). Organizational Culture, Distribution and Amount of Control, and Perceptions of Quality: An Empirical Study of Linkages. *Group and Organization Management*, Vol. 20 No. 2, June 1995, 122-148
- Kotter , J. P.; Cohen , D. S.. (2002). Creative ways to empower action to change the organization: Cases in point. *Journal of Organizational Excellence*; Winter 2002; 22, 1; ABI/INFORM Global, Page 73 – 82.
- Lashley, C. (1995). Towards an understanding of employee empowerment in hospitality. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 7(1), 27 - 32.
- Lawler, E.E. (2005). Creating high performance organizations. *Asia Pacific Journal of Human Resources*, 43(1), 10-17. Retrieved, from ABI/INFORM Global database. (Document ID: 829311491).
- Lawler, E.E. (1986). *High Involvement management: Participative Strategies for Improving Organizational Performance*. San Francisco, California, Jossey-Bass.
- Lawler, E.E. (1998). Choosing an Involvement Strategy. *The Academy of Management Executive*. August 1998. p 197 – 204.

Lawler, E.E. (1999). Employee involvement makes a difference. *The Journal for Quality and Participation*, 22(5), 18-20. Retrieved, from ABI/INFORM Global database. (Document ID: 44689028).

Lawler, E.E. (2005). From human resource management to organizational effectiveness. *Human Resource Management*, 44(2), 165-169. Retrieved, from ABI/INFORM Global database. (Document ID: 857254761).

Lawler, E.E., Mohrman, S.A. (1997). Transforming the Human Resource Function: Introduction. *Human Resource Management (1986-1998)*, 36 (1), 157 - 163. Retrieved, from ABI/INFORM Global database. (Document ID: 389601551)

Lawler, E.E., Mohrman, S.A. (2000). Beyond the vision: What makes HR effective? *HR. Human Resource Planning*, 23(4), 10-20. Retrieved , from ABI/INFORM Global database. (Document ID: 69727963).

Lawler, E.E., Mohrman, S.A. (2003). HR as a strategic partner: What does it take to make it happen? *HR. Human Resource Planning*, 26(3), 15-29. Retrieved, from ABI/INFORM Global database. (Document ID: 430984691).

Lin, C. Y. (1998). The essence of empowerment: A conceptual model and a case illustration. *Journal of Applied Management Studies*, 7(2), 223 - 238.

Portis, B. & Hill, N. (1989). Improving Organization Effectiveness Through Employee Involvement. *Business Quarterly*, 53(3), 58 - 62. Retrieved, from ABI/INFORM Global database. (Document ID: 990915).

Quinn, R. E., & Spreitzer, G. M. (1997). The road to empowerment: Seven questions every leader should consider. *Organizational Dynamics*, 26(2), 37 - 50.

- Schein E. (1990). Organizational Culture. *American Psychologist*. 45(2):109-119.
- Seibert, S. E., Silver, S. R., & Randolph, W. A. (2004). Taking empowerment to the next level: A multiple-level model of empowerment, performance, and satisfaction. *Academy of Management Journal*, 47(3), 332.
- Spreitzer, M. G. (1995). Psychological empowerment in the workplace: Dimensions, measurement, and validation. *Academy of Management Journal*, 38(5), 1442 - 1465.
- Stevens, M. J. & Campion, M. A. (1994). The knowledge, skill, and ability requirements for teamwork: Implications for human resource management. *Journal of Management*, 20(2), 503 - 531. Retrieved, from ABI/INFORM Global database. (Document ID: 52212).
- Strauss, J. S. & Burack, E. H. (1983). The Human Resource Planning Professional: A Challenge in Change. *HR. Human Resource Planning*, 6(1), 1 - 10. Retrieved, from ABI/INFORM Global database. (Document ID: 1108805).
- Thomas, K. W. & Velthouse, B. A. (1990). Cognitive Elements of Empowerment: An “Interpretive” Model of Intrinsic Task Motivation. *Academy of Management Review*, Oct90, Vol. 15 Issue 4, p666 - 681, 16p, 1 diagram; (AN 4310926)
- Tracey, B. & Nathan, E. (2002). The strategic and operational roles of human resources: An emerging model. *Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly*, 43(4), 17-26. Retrieved, from ABI/INFORM Global database. (Document ID: 196377981).

Tseo, G. K. Y., Ramos, & Lacerda, E. (1995). Employee empowerment: Solution to a burgeoning crisis? *Challenge*, 38(5), 25 -31.

Ulrich, D. (1988). *Delivering results: a new mandate for human resource professionals / edited with an introduction*. Boston, United States, Harvard Business School Press.

Valentino, C. L., & Brunelle, F. W. H. (2004). The role of middle managers in the transmission and integration of organizational culture. *Journal of Healthcare*.

APPENDIX I – INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Employee Interview

Intro

Describe purpose – to explore issues surrounding culture in an effort to provide feedback and recommendations to help develop the culture in IT going forward

Emphasize the focus on the confidentiality:

- Managers are not aware of those that are being interviewed
- All interviews (written and recorded) will be destroyed after paper is complete
- Individuals will not be identified – looking for general themes, perspectives, insights. Where individual opinions or statements are highlighted, they will not be attributed to individuals

Do you have any questions of us before we begin?

Opening/Warmer Question

1. Can you tell us a bit about your history with SoftTek and IT? How long have you been here, the roles you've held?

General Culture & Reorganization

1. What is your perspective on the most recent reorganization and how satisfied are you with the results?

- a. What changes are the most positive?

- b. What changes are the most negative?
 - c. Will the changes, overall, help to improve the culture, in your opinion?
2. How would you describe the culture in IT? Can you provide an example or story that illustrates the culture?
3. How much exposure have you had to the identified ideal “Constructive™” Culture”? How compelling a case or vision do you feel has been made for driving the organization toward a constructive culture?
4. What has IT Leadership done to influence/improve the culture in the past several months, since the culture was introduced as a priority?

Empowerment

Choicefulness

1. How much (choice) input/opinion/direction do you exercise in the tasks that you work on? Are you able to put your own spin on the situation or issue to best complete the task?
2. In terms of the work you engage in, how much do you work with your manager to determine which tasks fit you the best vs. being directed?
3. What aspects of your job or work would you like to have choices over?
4. How often do you feel unproductive? What makes you feel unproductive?

Effort

1. Do you feel able to accomplish the goals that you set out for yourself during your week?
2. In cases where your or your team has been unable to meet your deliverables, what do you think the biggest obstacles have been? What obstacles would you like to see removed to achieve your goals?

Impact

1. Do you feel like your contribution is valuable to the department and company as a whole? What makes you think that?
2. How do you think your manager perceives your contribution to the team?
3. When you finish a task or project, do you have results that you are proud of? What are some things that make you feel proud about your work?
4. Do you feel that there are obstacles in your way of achieving roles that you would like to have in the company or department in the future?
5. What impact do you see the work that you do have on the organization?
 - a. Now and going forward?
 - b. IT and the company

Self System Control

1. If you put in the effort and do an excellent job at some task, is your effort appropriately recognized?
2. Have you ever done a poor job on a task and received an award anyway?
3. Does the knowledge that you will be recognized or rewarded inspire you to put in more effort?

Meaningfulness

1. What type of rewards do you prefer? (Compensation, recognition, increased power, something else)
2. Have you ever been rewarded in way that made you feel worse? (-ve reinforcement)

Universal Justice

1. What is your perception of ITs rewards compared to other departments?
2. Have you been associated with a project where you did great work but factors out of your control meant that your work went to waste?
3. Do you believe people get rewarded more for effort or for meeting goals? Which do you think is more appropriate?

Employee Involvement

Formal

1. Describe your most recent encounter with your manager. Was it out of necessity? (performance reviews, conference calls, operational issues etc)
2. How often do you formally communicate with your manager? What modes of communication do you use (email, in person, voicemail etc) and why?
3. When you have ideas about process or system improvements, how do you usually approach your manager? (either informal/formal)

Informal

1. Do you make regular suggestions to your manager on an informal basis?
2. Describe your interactions with your manager. How often do you meet with your manager informally? Can you approach him/her about any issues/concerns you have?
3. Do you feel there is an open door policy to bring up any work related topics with your manager?

Direct/Representative

1. When you push for changes in the department, do you do it yourself or tell someone else your opinions and wait for them to implement it.
2. Is there someone that you view as a leader or representative for the department? Why is he/she a leader?

Final

1. If you could _____, one thing in the organization to positively effect culture what would it be?

- a. Start
- b. Stop
- c. Continue

APPENDIX II – SURVEY QUESTIONS

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Choices					
I have choices in my role about what I work on					
I have the information I require to make good decisions.					
The majority of my tasks are defined by my manager or team lead.					
I understand which areas I have the authority to make decisions and those I do not.					
I require more parameters to guide the choices I make					
Effort					
I am able to do my work without interruptions or emergencies					
The processes in place help me to be more productive in my job.					
I understand the organizational priorities well enough to make choices about where I should spend my time.					
I feel the work I am doing is often being duplicated in another department or region.					
Impact					
The work I do has a recognizable benefit for the organization.					
I feel that IT plays a critical role in helping SoftTek achieve its objectives.					
I am appreciated by my internal customers for the work that I do for them.					
IT is recognized as contributing valuable outputs for the organization.					
Self System Controls					
If I achieve or exceed my objectives , I am confident I will be rewarded					

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
appropriately.					
I utilize MBO's to set my objectives each period.					
It is clear to me what I need to do to achieve my career objectives in IT.					
My manager understands the work that I do and contributions I make					
Meaningfulness					
Public acknowledgement of a job well done is an important form of recognition.					
Morale/team-building events are a good use of resources.					
I would like to see more non-monetary rewards given for accomplishing tasks					
Formal compensation is the most important form of reward that I can receive.					
Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Universal Justice					
When I put in extra time and effort, I am rewarded for it, regardless of the outcomes.					
I am penalized when my goals have not been met due to circumstances outside of my control					
Information Sharing					
I have opportunities to share my ideas and suggestions in IT.					
I am comfortable approaching my manager with my ideas and concerns.					
Management shares information regarding the future direction of the department.					
Knowledge Development and Training					
There are appropriate opportunities available to me for training and development.					
I have the knowledge and skills					

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
required to do my job effectively.					
There are opportunities for me to develop skills in new roles within IT, if I desire.					
Rewards and Recognition					
I believe I will be rewarded for increasing my knowledge and skills.					
I believe I will be rewarded if I take on greater responsibility in IT					
Power Sharing					
I participate in making decisions that effect my job					
I participate in decisions that effect how IT operates					
I would like to have more decision-making responsibility					

Please select your geographic location

- 1 Canada
- 2 Europe
- 3 United States
- 4 Other Indicate

How long have you worked for the company?

- 1 less than 3 months
- 2 3 months-1 year
- 3 1-3 years
- 4 4-6 years
- 5 7-10 years
- 6 10+ years

Which functional team do you work for?

- 1 Applications
- 2 Operations
- 3 Governance
- 4 BI
- 5 Client Services

What level of employment describes your role?

- 1 Individual contributor
- 2 Team Lead
- 3 Manager
- 4 Director
- 5 Sr. Director

APPENDIX III - SUMMARY OF SURVEY RESULTS

1. I have choices in my role about what I work on.						
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Response Average
Answer	3% (2)	20% (13)	28% (18)	38% (24)	11% (7)	3.33
Total Respondents						64
(skipped this question)						1

2. The majority of my tasks are defined by my manager or team lead.						
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Response Average
Answer	3% (2)	27% (17)	33% (21)	33% (21)	5% (3)	3.09
Total Respondents						64
(skipped this question)						1

3. I have the information I require to make good decisions.						
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Response Average
Answer	3% (2)	16% (10)	34% (22)	42% (27)	5% (3)	3.30
Total Respondents						64
(skipped this question)						1

4. I understand which areas I have the authority to make decisions and those I do not.						
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Response Average
Answer	3% (2)	16% (10)	22% (14)	53% (34)	6% (4)	3.44
Total Respondents						64
(skipped this question)						1

5. I require more parameters to guide the choices I make.						
	Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Response Average
Answer	5% (3)	19% (12)	38% (24)	36% (23)	3% (2)	3.14
Total Respondents						64
(skipped this question)						1

6. I am able to do my work without interruptions or emergencies.						
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Response Average
Answer	34% (21)	48% (30)	6% (4)	11% (7)	0% (0)	1.95
Total Respondents						62
(skipped this question)						3

7. The processes in place help me to be more productive in my job.						
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Response Average
Answer	23% (14)	31% (19)	30% (18)	15% (9)	2% (1)	2.41
Total Respondents						61
(skipped this question)						4

8. I understand the organizational priorities well enough to make choices about where I should spend my time.						
	Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Response Average
Answer	3% (2)	13% (8)	16% (10)	59% (36)	8% (5)	3.56
Total Respondents						61
(skipped this question)						4

9. I feel the work I am doing is often being duplicated in another department or region.						
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Response Average
Answer	5% (3)	48% (29)	21% (13)	16% (10)	10% (6)	2.79
Total Respondents						61
(skipped this question)						4

10. The work I do has a recognizable benefit for the organization.						
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Response Average
Answer	0% (0)	3% (2)	8% (5)	67% (41)	21% (13)	4.07
Total Respondents						61
(skipped this question)						4

11. I feel that IT plays a critical role in helping SoftTek achieve its objectives.						
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Response Average
Answer	0% (0)	8% (5)	13% (8)	38% (23)	41% (25)	4.11
Total Respondents						61
(skipped this question)						4

12. I am appreciated by my internal customers for the work that I do for them.						
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Response Average
Answer	5% (3)	7% (4)	11% (7)	59% (36)	18% (11)	3.79
Total Respondents						61
(skipped this question)						4

13. IT is recognized as contributing valuable outputs for the organization.						
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Response Average
Answer	15% (9)	34% (21)	26% (16)	23% (14)	2% (1)	2.62
Total Respondents						61
(skipped this question)						4

14. If I achieve or exceed my objectives , I am confident I will be rewarded appropriately.						
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Response Average
Answer	19% (12)	24% (15)	16% (10)	32% (20)	8% (5)	2.85
Total Respondents						62
(skipped this question)						3

15. I utilize MBO's to set my objectives each period.						
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Response Average
Answer	18% (11)	15% (9)	34% (21)	31% (19)	2% (1)	2.84
Total Respondents						61
(skipped this question)						4

16. My manager utilized my MBO's to judge and reward my performance.						
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Response Average
Answer	17% (10)	17% (10)	32% (19)	30% (18)	5% (3)	2.90
Total Respondents						60
(skipped this question)						5

17. It is clear to me what I need to do to achieve my career objectives in IT.						
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Response Average
Answer	16% (10)	18% (11)	23% (14)	41% (25)	2% (1)	2.93
Total Respondents						61
(skipped this question)						4

18. My manager understands the work that I do and contributions I make.						
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Response Average
Answer	8% (5)	16% (10)	21% (13)	38% (23)	16% (10)	3.38
Total Respondents						61
(skipped this question)						4

19. Public acknowledgement of a job well done is an important form of recognition.						
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Response Average
Answer	0% (0)	3% (2)	15% (9)	57% (35)	25% (15)	4.03
Total Respondents						61
(skipped this question)						4

20. Morale and team-building events are good use of resources.						
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Response Average
Answer	2% (1)	2% (1)	11% (7)	56% (34)	30% (18)	4.10
Total Respondents						61
(skipped this question)						4

21. I would like to see more non-monetary rewards given for accomplishing tasks.						
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Response Average
Answer	5% (2)	11% (7)	30% (18)	53% (26)	2% (1)	3.01
Total Respondents						61
(skipped this question)						4

22. Formal compensation is the most important form of reward that I can receive.						
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Response Average
Answer	0% (0)	10% (6)	33% (20)	31% (19)	26% (16)	3.74
Total Respondents						61
(skipped this question)						4

23. When I put in extra time and effort, I am rewarded for it, regardless of the outcomes.						
	Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Response Average
Answer	10% (6)	25% (15)	33% (20)	16% (10)	26% (16)	2.62
Total Respondents						61
(skipped this question)						4

24. I am penalized when my goals have not been met due to circumstances outside of my control.						
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Response Average
Answer	7% (4)	25% (15)	46% (28)	18% (11)	5% (3)	2.90
Total Respondents						61
(skipped this question)						4

25. I have opportunities to share my ideas and suggestions in IT.						
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Response Average
Answer	5% (3)	18% (11)	20% (12)	54% (33)	3% (2)	3.33
Total Respondents						61
(skipped this question)						4

26. I am comfortable approaching my manager with my ideas and concerns.						
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Response Average
Answer	0% (0)	8% (5)	7% (4)	61% (37)	25% (15)	4.02
Total Respondents						61
(skipped this question)						4

27. Management shares information regarding the future direction of the department.						
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Response Average
Answer	15% (9)	23% (14)	26% (16)	31% (19)	5% (3)	2.89
Total Respondents						61
(skipped this question)						4

28. There are appropriate opportunities available to me for training and development.						
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Response Average
Answer	12% (7)	23% (14)	25% (15)	37% (22)	3% (2)	2.97
Total Respondents						60
(skipped this question)						5

29. I have the knowledge and skills required to do my job effectively.						
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Response Average
Answer	2% (1)	7% (4)	12% (7)	65% (39)	15% (9)	3.85
Total Respondents						60
(skipped this question)						5

30. There are opportunities for me to develop skills in new roles within IT, if I desire.						
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Response Average
Answer	18% (11)	18% (11)	33% (20)	28% (17)	2% (1)	2.77
Total Respondents						60
(skipped this question)						5

31. I believe I will be rewarded for increasing my knowledge and skills.						
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Response Average
Answer	13% (8)	18% (11)	36% (22)	31% (19)	2% (1)	2.90
Total Respondents						61
(skipped this question)						4






32. I believe I will be rewarded if I take on greater responsibility in IT.						
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Response Average
Answer	16% (10)	15% (9)	23% (14)	41% (25)	5% (3)	3.03
Total Respondents						61
(skipped this question)						4


33. I participate in making decisions that effect my job.						
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Response Average
Answer	2% (1)	10% (6)	35% (21)	52% (31)	2% (1)	3.42
Total Respondents						60
(skipped this question)						5






34. I participate in decisions that effect how IT operates.						
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Response Average
Answer	13% (8)	25% (15)	32% (19)	28% (17)	2% (1)	2.80
Total Respondents						60
(skipped this question)						5

35. I would like to have more decision-making responsibility.						
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Response Average
Answer	0% (0)	2% (1)	23% (14)	50% (30)	25% (15)	3.98
Total Respondents						60
(skipped this question)						5

36. Please select your geographic location.			Response Percent	Response Total
Canada			50.8%	30
Europe			20.3%	12
United States			10.2%	6
Other			8.5%	5
Other (please specify)			10.2%	6
Total Respondents			59	
(skipped this question)				6

37. How long have you worked for the company?		Response Percent	Response Total
less than 3 months		5.3%	3
3 months- 1 year		17.5%	10
1-3 years		21.1%	12
4-6 years		43.9%	25
7-10 years		12.3%	7
10+ years		0%	0
Total Respondents		57	
(skipped this question)			8

38. Which functional team do you work for?			Response Percent	Response Total
Applications		24.1%	14	
Operations		37.9%	22	
Governance		3.4%	2	
BI		3.4%	2	
Client Services		31%	18	
Total Respondents			58	
			(skipped this question)	7

39. What level of employment describes your role?		Response Percent	Response Total
Individual contributor		72.4%	42
Team Lead		13.8%	8
Manager		8.6%	5
Director		1.7%	1
Senior Director		3.4%	2
Total Respondents		58	
		(skipped this question)	
			7