

FROM COMPLIANCE TO COMMITMENT

People who act in *compliance* with a manager's directions complete tasks because they're told what to do (and often how); compliance tends to decrease energy and creativity.

When people are *committed* to their work, they *want* to do it, feel empowered, have a sense of enthusiasm/enjoyment for their work, and are more likely to do their best, learning in the process to do it even better.

Four aspects of empowerment can lead to full commitment, each with specific components a manager can influence: choice, competence, meaningfulness, and progress.¹

CHOICE

People are able to use their own judgment and act out of their own understanding of the task.

- They have authority, the right to make decisions on matters affecting their work.
- The manager shows trust in their judgment, giving them space to exercise it.
- They feel security in knowing the manager will support their efforts and not blame or punish them for honest mistakes.
- There is clear purpose and direction to guide decision making.
- They have all the information they need to make informed decisions.

COMPETENCE

People feel accomplishment in skillfully performing their tasks; they know they're doing good, quality work.

- They have models of how to perform through role modeling, mentoring, training, and/or shared learnings.
- They receive positive feedback – observations that are more "appreciative" (positive) than "deficiency-focused" (negative); the manager builds on what they do well, rather than highlighting mistakes and shortcomings.
- There is skill recognition. When things are going well they're given credit for their skill (rather than to luck, or an easy task, or others' interventions).
- They see growth opportunities in stretching by gradually taking on more demanding or challenging tasks.
- There are non-comparative standards. Because they're not put in competition with each other, they recognize that one person's competence is not a threat to others.

¹ Drawn from a Xicom Empowerment Inventory and Kenneth Thomas and Betty Velthouse's "Cognitive Elements of Empowerment" (*Academy of Management Review*, Vol. 15, Oct. 1990).

MEANINGFULNESS

They feel they're pursuing a valuable mission, on a path worth their time and energy.

- The manager promotes an optimistic (vs. cynical) climate that encourages idealism *and* caring.
- There are clear values about what's important, and these are *shared* values.
- People have an exciting vision of the future and how it will add value to the company.
- They have tasks relevant to the vision, know how they contribute to the vision, and are protected from tasks that have little value.
- They are given whole tasks whenever possible, or at least identifiable portions of a larger project.

PROGRESS

They feel accomplishment in moving the task forward and achieving their objectives.

- There's collaboration with and among team members – people work together to find solutions that meet everyone's needs.
- A clear picture is provided of key events, or milestones, that will occur in achieving the desired outcomes.
- There are celebrations of important milestones to draw attention to peoples' progress.
- They're made aware of customer appreciation as a measure of task success.
- There's a focus on continuous improvement based on valid, objective data from internal and external customers.