Research article

Approaches to Empowering Employees: A Case of Cortes, Surigao del Sur, Philippines

Delyn M. Bucay and Rodolfo B. Trinidad

College of Business Administration and Accountancy
Mindanao State University at Naawan
9023 Naawan, Misamis Oriental, Philippines

Corresponding authors: delyn.bucay@gmail.com and rb3nidad@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Empowerment of employees is vital in any organization, and as such, a study was conducted among the constituents of Cortes, Surigao del Sur to describe their empowerment in terms of job mastery, control and accountability, role models, social reinforcement and persuasion using survey questionnaires. All respondents are municipal head officers who empower employees, always help employees achieve job mastery wherein proper training are given, coaching and guided experiences that result into initial success. Respondents allow control and accountability to their employees, giving them discretion over job performance and holding them accountable for outcomes. Majority of the respondents always show themselves as successful role models to their employees allowing them to observe peer who already performed successfully their job. Using social reinforcement and persuasion like giving praises, encouragement and verbal feedback design to raise self-confidence are always used by the respondents for empowering mechanisms. With regards to giving emotional support, respondents seldom provide clear role definition, task assistance and honest caring to reduce stress and anxiety. Hence, it is recommended that municipal head officers must continually enhance the capability, skills and ability of their employees by exposing them to conferences, training and seminars available to ensure the update of their knowledge on their work. **Copyright © IJEBF, all rights reserved.**

Keywords: autonomy, business administration, empowerment, local governance

INTRODUCTION

The most powerful Chief Executive Officers expand the power of those around them (Porter et al 2007). Many of today's manager delegates to their workers the power and authority to make instant decision to quickly accommodate customers complains. This action of the managers encourages active participation from employees giving them an

opportunity to unleash their skills and ability to attain organizational goals and objectives. Traditional leaders direct and give instruction to their employees on how to meet organizational goals and objectives causing them to be dependent and less self-efficacy.

Employee development and work-driven attitude depend on the kind of leaders they have. Employees are motivated to work if empowered and not being instructed every time. Merely instruction makes employee suffocated with their works and pressured them on ways to accomplish their assigned tasks. Whereas, if you empower them, they must do the right things and take responsibilities on their actions.

Empowering employees means giving them the authority (the right to make decision without consulting the manager) and responsibility (the requirement to accept the consequences of one's actions) to respond quickly to customers' requests. In cooperation with employees, managers set up teams that work together to accomplish objectives and goals (Nickels et al, 2002). Empowerment enhances employees' feelings of self-efficacy. It helps employees cope up with situation and take control of problems as they arise.

Empowered employees need to be treated more as partners in the firm. Increasingly, managers' job is to train, support, coach and motivate lower-level employees. As many companies have discovered, it sometimes takes years to restructure an organization so that managers are willing to give up some of their authority and employees are willing to assume more responsibility.

Empowerment helps remove the conditions that cause powerlessness while enhancing employee feelings of self-efficacy. Empowerment authorizes employees to cope with situations and enable them to take control of problems as they arise. Five broad approaches to empowerment have been suggested by Newstrom (2007):

1. **Helping employees achieve** *job mastery* (giving proper training, coaching, and guided experience that will result in initial successes). Every organization needs well-adjusted, trained and experienced people to perform its activities. As a manager, one of your key responsibilities is to develop your staff. The Philosophy of Human Resources Management states that you can: "Encourage growth and career development of employees by coaching, and by helping employees achieve their personal goals at the organization and beyond   [you can develop] human resources by providing adequate training, encouragement of staff development, and opportunities for growth." These lead to increase in skills resulting in greater production efficiency to achieve organizational, individual and societal goals.

2. **Allowing more** *control* (giving them discretion over job performance and then holding them *accountable* for outcomes). The demand of employees to gain more power and use their talents is neither a passing fancy nor a competitive advantage to be ignored. It appears to be rooted deeply in the culture of free people around the world, and it is probably a basic drive in human beings. Employees want some control over things that affect them and some meaning in their work. As individuals begin to accept responsibility in an organization, they see in it a way to do what they want to do, that is, to accomplish a job for which they are responsible. This idea is a key step in developing it into a successful work unit. When people want to do something, they will find a way.

3. **Providing successful** *role models* (allowing them to observe peers who already perform successfully on the job). Where can employees get information regarding their work-related roles so that they will have accurate role perception? In addition to traditional sources, such as job descriptions and orientation sessions, many organizations have formal and informal mentorship programs. A mentor is a role model who guides another employee (a protege) by sharing valuable advice on roles to play and behaviors to avoid. The advantage of successful mentoring program includes stronger employee loyalty, faster movement up the learning curve, better succession planning through development of replacements and increase level of goals accomplishment.

4. **Using** *social reinforcement and persuasion* (giving praise, encouragement and verbal feedback design to raise self-confidence). One factor which may alleviate the effects of job stress is the amount of supervisory support an employee receives during stressful events and occurrences. That is, once employee stress is recognized and noticed, supervisors can provide the individual employee with both emotional and instrumental support that serves to buffer or reduce the effects that job stressors can have on job-related attitudes and outcomes. Thus, the association that exists between these stressors and adverse employee behaviors is moderated by the employee's perception of supervisory support, both emotional and instrumental, given to him/her through daily interactions in the work environment. Emotional support is often characterized by actively listening and caring about the needs of an employee,

whereas instrumental support is often characterized by the behaviors of giving tangible assistance and expertise in completing a job responsibility or task (Kaufmann and Beehr, 1986).

5. **Giving *emotional support*** (providing reduction of stress and anxiety through better role definition, task assistance and honest caring). When roles are inadequately defined or are substantially unknown, role ambiguity exists, because people are not sure how they should act on situations of this type. When role conflict and role ambiguity exist, job satisfaction and organizational commitment will likely decline. On the other hand, employees tend to be more satisfied with their jobs when their roles are clearly defined by job descriptions and statements of performance expectations. A better understanding of roles helps people know what they expect of them and how they should act. If any role misunderstanding exists when people interact, then problems are likely to occur.

When it is used effectively, the best results are acceptance of change, personal satisfaction and a strong commitment to goals that encourage better performance. Hence, this study is undertaken to know the approaches to employees' empowerment at the Municipal Hall of Cortes, Surigao del Sur, particularly describing their empowerment in terms of: job mastery, control and accountability, role models, social reinforcement and persuasion, and emotional support.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Method

This study used descriptive method, which is fact-finding with adequate interpretation. This method is something better than just gathering data since it involves data analysis and interpretation. The study covered the approaches to employee empowerment as perceived by the respective employer or department head of the Municipal Hall of Cortes, Surigao del Sur covering A. Y. 2010-2011. The Municipality of Cortes is a fourth class municipality in the province of Surigao del Sur. It has a population of 15, 913 and is a partially urban community. The town has twelve (12) barangays, nine (9) of which are coastal barangays and three (3) are considered as inland. The town proper is the Poblacion and is about 30 kilometers from the capital town of Surigao del Sur. It is located at the northeastern part of Surigao del Sur surrounded by rolling hills and mountains facing Pacific Ocean and falls under the second type of climate in the Philippines characterized by rainfall distributed throughout the year. Municipal Hall is located at the eastern part of Barangay Poblacion. It is composed of twelve (12) department heads including the employers with a total number of one hundred twenty-three (123) employees.

Data Collection Method

This study used both the primary and secondary sources. The primary data were gathered from the questionnaires distributed to respondents of the study; while the secondary data were obtained from books, thesis, internet and others. The questionnaires which are the sources of primary data were distributed and collected personally that covered 2010-2011 fiscal year.

Sampling Procedure and Statistical Treatment

The total size of the population of the Municipal Hall of Cortes, Surigao del Sur are twelve (12) department heads including the employers. This study is represented by the total number of the municipal heads. The questionnaires were distributed to the department heads including the employers of the Municipal Hall of Cortes, Surigao del Sur who have used employee empowerment approaches in their management.

The data elicited through the use of the questionnaires are tabulated and analyzed by the application of frequency percentage distribution and weighted mean.

To get the percentage, divide the frequency with the total number of respondents and multiply it by 100.
Thus, the working formula is:
$$P = (f / n) \times 100$$
where, P = Percentage
f = Frequency

n = Number of Respondents
100 = Constant

Weighted Mean:

$$Wm = (fx_1 + fx_2 + fx_3 + \ldots fx_n) / n$$

where, Wm = Weighted mean
f = Frequency
X_n = Weights (1,2,3,4)
n = Total Respondents

The range and verbal interpretation are the following:

Class Interval	Verbal Interpretation	Weights
3.25 – 4.00	Always	4
2.50 – 3.24	Often	3
1.75 – 2.49	Seldom	2
1.00 – 1.74	Never	1

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Frequency and percentage distribution according to job mastery.

Job Mastery Approaches	Frequency								Total		Wm	VI
	A		O		S		N					
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
1. Helps employees to adjust in their work and give guidance to perform activities that may lead to increase in skills resulting in greater productivity efficiency to achieve organizational, individual and societal goals.	6	50	6	50	--	--	--	--	12	100	3.5	A
2. Encourages growth and career development of employees by coaching and by helping achieve their personal goals by providing adequate training.	2	16.67	9	75	1	8.33	--	--	12	100	3.08	O
OVER- ALL WEIGHTED MEAN –					3.29							
OVER - ALL VERBAL INTERPRETATION -							ALWAYS					

Table 1 presents the summary results of respondents' responses in relation to the first approach which is job mastery. It shows that in the first question, which states that "job mastery helps employees to adjust in their work and give guidance to perform activities that may lead to increase in skills resulting in greater productivity efficiency to achieve organizational, individual and societal goals," six (6) or 50 % of the respondents *always* applies the approach and the other six (6) or 50 % *often* applies the said approach. The weighted mean of 3.5 is verbally interpreted as *always*. Based on the second question which states that "job mastery encourages growth and career development of employees

by coaching and by helping achieve their personal goals by providing adequate training; two (2) or 16.67 % of the respondents *always* employ it; nine (9) or 75 % *often* used it; and one (1) or 8.33 % *seldom* applied the said approach. The weighted mean is 3.08 with a verbal interpretation of *often*.

Over-all weighted mean of 3.29 and an over-all verbal interpretation of *always* implies that the different municipal head officers employ job mastery as an approach in empowering employees. This is due to training and conferences provided every time by the government to ensure the quality of output they are expecting the employees will be performing.

Table 2. Frequency and percentage distribution according to control and accountability.

Control and Accountability Approaches	Frequency								Total		Wm	VI
	A		O		S		N					
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%				
1. Employees are given the discretion over Job Performance and then hold them accountable for the outcomes.	5	41.67	7	58.33	--	--	--	--	12	100	**3.42**	**A**
2. Employees are given control over things that affect them and to see some meaning in their work	4	33.33	8	66.67	--	--	--	--	12	100	**3.33**	**A**

OVER - ALL WEIGHTED MEAN – 3.38

OVER - ALL VERBAL INTERPRETATION - ALWAYS

For its second approach, first question states that "employees are given the discretion over job performance and then hold them accountable for the outcomes," five (5) or 41.67 % agreed that they *always* give control and accountability to employees; seven (7) or 58.33 *often* assigned the said control and accountability having an average weighted mean of 3.42 and a verbal interpretation of *always*. Second question states that "employees are given control over things that affect them and to see some meaning in their work," four (4) or 33.33 % of the respondents responses are *always*; and eight (8) or 66.67 % are *often* gaining an average weighted mean of 3.33 and a verbal interpretation of *always*.

It shows that the over-all weighted mean is 3.38 resulting to an over-all verbal interpretation of *always*. This is because municipal heads are not at all times being able to handle jobs. They delegate the responsibility and authority to subordinates and tests employees' capability of responding to certain situations given the control and accountability.

Table 3. Frequency and percentage distribution according to role models.

Role Models Approaches	Frequency								Total		Wm	VI
	A		O		S		N					
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%				

1. Employees are provided with mentorship programs wherein they are allowed to observed how mentors perform the jobs, shares valuable advice on roles to play and what behavior to avoid	5	41.67	6	50	1	8.33	--	--	12	100	**3.33**	**A**
2. Successful mentoring/role modeling program foster stronger employees loyalty, faster movement up of the learning curve, better succession planning through development of replacements and increase level of goal accomplishments	4	33.33	7	58.33	1	8.33	--	--	12	100	**3.25**	**A**
OVER – ALL WEIGHTED MEAN –										**3.29**		
OVER – ALL VERBAL INTERPRETATION -										**ALWAYS**		

An average weighted mean of 3.33 and a verbal interpretation of *always* indicates that "employees are provided with mentorship programs wherein they are allowed to observe how mentors perform the jobs, shares valuable advice on roles to play and what behavior to avoid," where five (5) or 41.67 % of response is *always*; six (6) or 50 % response *often*; and one (1) or 8.33 % *seldom* provide mentorship program where employees are allowed to observe how mentors perform the job. Another average weighted mean of 3.25 and a verbal interpretation of *always* indicates that "successful mentoring/role modeling program foster stronger employees loyalty, faster movement up of the learning curve, better succession planning through development of replacements and increase level of goal accomplishment," where four (4) or 33.33 % give an *always* response; seven (7) or 58.33 % give an *often*; and one (1) or 8.33 % gives a *seldom* answer.

The over-all weighted mean is 3.29 and its verbal interpretation is always. The result indicates that municipal head officers expose its employees to mentors wherein they are allowed to observe how mentors perform their jobs and share valuable advices.

Table 4. Frequency and percentage distribution according to social reinforcement and persuasion.

Social Reinforcement and Persuasion Approaches	Frequency								Total		Wm	VI
	A		O		S		N					
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
1. Giving praises, encouragement and verbal feedback raises self confidence of employees	6	50	6	50	--	--	--	--	12	100	**3.5**	**A**
2. Providing employees supervisory support – such as emotional and instrumental support during stressful events and occurences serves	5	41.67	7	58.33	--	--	--	--	12	100	**3.42**	**A**

to buffer or reduce the effects of job stressors on job related attitude and outcomes

OVER – ALL WEIGHTED MEAN –	**3.46**
OVER – ALL VERBAL INTERPRETATION -	**ALWAYS**

Table 4 shows the summary results of respondents' responses in relation to the fourth approaches to employee empowerment which is social reinforcement and persuasion. The first question states that "giving praises, encouragement and verbal feedback raises self-confidence of employees." Six (6) or 50 % of them answered *always*; and six (6) or 50 % indicates an *often* answers. The average weighted mean is 3.5 and its verbal interpretation is *always*. The second question states that "providing employees supervisory support – such as emotional and instrumental support during stressful events and occurrences serves to buffer or reduce the effects of job stressors on job related attitude and outcomes." There are five (5) or 41.67 % of the respondents who *always* applied that approach and seven (7) or 58.33 % of them employ it *oftentimes*. Its average weighted mean is 3.42 while its verbal interpretation is *always*.

Thus, the over-all weighted mean of 3.46 gives a verbal interpretation of *always*. This indicates that the municipal head officers always give praises, encouragement and verbal feedback to their employees. This action helps their subordinates raises self-confidence and self-awareness.

Table 5. Frequency and percentage distribution according to emotional support.

Emotional Support Approaches	Frequency								Total		Wm	VI
	A		O		S		N					
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
1. Employees role is clearly defined through job description and statements of performance expectations resulting to better understanding of roles that helps employee know what to expect of them and how they should act	8	66.67	4	33.33	--	--	--	--	12	100	**3.67**	**A**
2. Employees role is inadequately defined, substantially unknown resulting to role ambiguity thereby job satisfaction and organizational commitment will likely decline	--	--	--	--	3	25	9	75	12	100	**1.25**	**N**

OVER – ALL WEIGHTED MEAN – 2.46

OVER – ALL VERBAL INTERPRETATION - SELDOM

Data as shown in Table 5 is giving emotional support as the fifth approach to empower employees, under the first question which states that "employees role is clearly defined through job description and statements of performance expectations resulting to better understanding of roles that helps employee know what to expect of them and how they should act," eight (8) or 66.67 % of the respondents *always* used this approach; and four (4) or 33.33 % of them *often* used the said approach. The average weighted mean of 3.67 and a verbal interpretation of *always* is indicated in

the results. However, the second question is stated negatively in which "employees role is inadequately defined, substantially unknown resulting to role ambiguity thereby job satisfaction and organizational commitment will likely decline," none of the respondents give an *always* and *often* for an answer; three (3) or 25 % of them *seldom* applied it and nine (9) or 75 % of the total respondents never applied it. The average weighted mean is 1.25 and the verbal interpretation is *never*.

The over – all weighted mean is 2.46 and over – all verbal interpretation is *seldom*. The result indicates that sometimes subordinates are given work without proper orientation on their work role thereby causing role ambiguity.

Table 6. Summary table of weighted mean and verbal interpretation on the approaches to employee empowerment.

Approaches to Employee Empowerment	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation
1. Job Mastery	3.29	ALWAYS
2. Control and Accountability	3.38	ALWAYS
3. Role Models	3.29	ALWAYS
4. Social Reinforcement and Persuasion	3.46	ALWAYS
5. Emotional Support	2.46	SELDOM

Table 6 summarizes all the tables in part two questions concerning the approaches to empower employees. It shows that the respondents always (Xw= 3.29) help employees achieve job mastery; always allow more control and accountability to employees (Xw = 3.38); always (Xw = 3.29) shows us successful role models to employees; always used social reinforcement and persuasion to employees (Xw = 3.46); and lastly seldom give emotional support to employees (Xw = 2.46).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Majority of the twelve (12) respondents are always applying job mastery, control and accountability, role models, social reinforcement and persuasion, while on the other way around, they seldom employ emotional support as an approach to empower employees. All respondents are municipal head officers who empower employees, always help employees achieve job mastery wherein proper training are given, coaching and guided experiences that will result in initial success. Respondents allow control and accountability to their employees, giving them discretion over job performance and then holding them accountable for outcomes. Majority of the respondents always show themselves as successful role models to their employees allowing them to observe peer who already perform successfully on the job. Using social reinforcement and persuasion like giving praises, encouragement and verbal feedback design to raise self-confidence are always used by the respondents in empowering. With regards to giving emotional support, respondents seldom provide clear role definition, task assistance and honest caring to reduce stress and anxiety.

Hence, the following recommendations are made:
1. It is recommended that municipal head officers must continually enhance the capability, skills and ability of their employees by exposing them to conferences, training and seminars available to ensure the update of their knowledge on their work.
2. Proper orientation as to the effect of delegated authority - giving them the control and accountability may be given however, municipal heads see to it that there will be no abuse of authority that might arise and that control will be used in the proper way.
3. Municipal heads should consider also exposure of employees in relation to their working that may help them observe intensively the kind of work role model they strive to project.
4. Mentoring/role modeling program should be considered always in the organization to help employees understood the right way of doing their jobs and help them increase the level of goal accomplishment.
5. Social reinforcement and persuasion should continually be given always to employees for self-awareness.

6. Department heads must consider giving emotional support to their employees where role is clearly defined to reduced stress and anxiety, take assistance and honest caring are presents.
7. Finally, study may be conducted in other organizations to compare their approaches used and to find out which approaches can be effectively used in a particular situation.

Acknowledgements

References

1. "The Case for a Three Dimensional Employee Empowerment Model."www.selfEmpowermentGuideBook.com.June 05, 2010.Online.July 25, 2010.http://www.articlesbase.com/human-resources-articles/the-case-for-a-   three-dimensional-employee-empowerment-model-part-i-2550858.html
2. "The traditional employee empowerment approach." www.humanresources.com.May 06, 2009.Online.July 25, 2010.http://www.articlesbase.com/human-   resources-articles/the-case-for-a-three-dimensional-employee-empowerment- model-part-i-550858.html#ixzz0Q9Tx1HlE
3. "What is employee empowerment." www.SelfEmpowermentGuidebook.com August 15, 2010.Online.August 25, 2010.www.emotionalmastercourse.com
4. Dess, Gregory G., G. T. Lumpkin and, Marilyn L. Taylor. Strategic management: Creating competitive advantage. New York: McGraw Hill Companies Inc. 2005.
5. Fox, John (1998) Employee Empowerment: An apprenticeship model. *Masteral thesis.* California, USA. Barney School of Business University of Hartford.
6. Heathfield, Susan M. "Top 10 principles to employee empowerment."www.humanresources.com.February 25,   2009.Online.July   25, 2010. http://humanresources.about.com/od/managementandleadership/tp/empowerment.htm
7. Heller, Robert. "Employee empowerment: giving power to   people." www.thinkingmanagers.com.November 08,2005.Online.July 25, 2010. http://www.thinkingmanagers.com/management/employee-empowerment.php
8. Newstrom, John W. Organizational behavior: Human behavior at Work. New York: McGraw Hill Companies Inc. 2007.
9. Nickels, William G., James M. Mchugh and Susan M. Mchugh. Understanding Business. New York: McGraw Hill Companies Inc. 2002.
10. Robbins, Stephen P. and Timothy A. Judge. Organizational behavior. Pearson Hall: Pearson Educational Inc. 2009.
11. Sujata, Belgamkar. "The power of employee empowerment." www.IDIOMMANAGERS.com.November 28, 2007.Online.July 25, 2010 http://www.flipkart.com/power-employee-empowerment-sujata-belgamkar-book-8131400883#
12. Weinrich, Heinz and Harold Koontz. Management: A global perspective. New York: McGraw Hill Companies Inc. 2005.