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Service Improvement  
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# Engagement and empowerment



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## What is it?

Organisational change can substantially impact on team members' sense of freedom and their ability to contribute. When your staff feel empowered and engaged, they feel they have made a real contribution and are more likely to support change and improvement. Using engagement approaches will help you to empower the individuals in your team.

## When to use it

The delivery of improvement work will involve doing many things differently. Applying the concepts of engagement and empowerment when you are leading change will improve the probability of success due to increased buy-in from staff.

## How to use it

Consider the type and extent of engagement and empowerment you want to encourage according to the nature of your organisation, its culture and the personalities and roles of the individuals involved.

There are three key areas to help you decide which approach to take.

### 1. Six basic motivators

Most people want a few basic things from their work:

- meaning
- results
- challenge and learning opportunities
- respect and recognition
- control (over your own part of the work)
- affiliation (being part of a bigger team).

Rick Maurer (2010) argues that these six items form the foundation of all good empowerment efforts. Fortunately, with regard to motivation, what's good for the individual is often usually also good for the organisation.

### 2. Vision and direction

Next, leaders must know why they want empowerment. Ask yourself:

- What do you want to achieve?
- What would empowerment look like here?
- How committed are you to making empowerment a reality?

### 3. Examine corporate actions

Consider your 'corporate actions'. Is there a conflict in the aims of current policies and strategies?

What shape is your organisation's structure? Flatter, less hierarchical structures promote engagement and empowerment than more traditional hierarchies.

Organisational fairness and consistent approaches help to provide a level playing field for staff, promoting a healthy working environment in which engagement and empowerment can thrive.

### What next?

Useful questions for you to begin a conversation about engagement and empowerment include:

- Do we agree that engagement and empowerment are key ingredients in our continued success? If so, why? If not, why not?
- Does our performance review process support or hinder the participation and commitment of all staff?
- Do we reward and promote those who embody the values we hold?
- What informal messages do people receive about our culture? What impact does this have on productivity and morale?
- What do we imagine employees say about our organisation when we're not in the room?
- Once people are trained and have proven their competency, do we have the courage to trust them?
- What happens when someone takes an educated risk and fails?

### Other tools and techniques that may help you

- [Gaining insights from/working with health service users](#)
- [Commitment, enrolment and compliance](#)
- [Discovery model](#)
- [Influence model](#)

### Additional resources

Maurer, R (2010) *Beyond the Wall of Resistance*, Bard Press: Texas

See also [www.rickmaurer.com](http://www.rickmaurer.com)