



*We exist to serve others so they may better serve the world.*®

*Written by: Dr. Bryan K. Williams, D.M.*

*June 2, 2010*

### ***Service Superstars Part 2: Treat them like they own it!***

“The trouble with having employees is that eventually you have to pay them.” Wow! I heard a manager make that comment not too long ago, and I had to look at him to see if he was serious. Unfortunately, he was. Recently, I wrote an article entitled *Work like you own it*, which basically means that regardless of your job title you should approach it with zeal, commitment, and pride. One thing I did not explain, however, is that if you are a manager, and you want your staff to work like they own it, then you have to treat them like they own it.

Service superstars who work like they own it need to be empowered, informed, challenged, involved, motivated, and appreciated. The most difficult one for many managers to effectively implement is to make their staff feel empowered. Allow me to give an example. Often times when I travel on business, I rent a car with a GPS unit. Usually, I have no problems with the GPS units, but on two separate occasions the GPS led me to multiple dead-end roads and gave me outdated routes. Basically, the units were not updated recently. At Rental Car Agency A, when I returned the car I informed the agent about my GPS problems, and she promptly:

1. Apologized (I’m so sorry for the inconvenience.)
2. Empathized (I can only imagine how frustrating that must have been.)
3. Fixed it (I’ll go ahead and remove the GPS charge. I apologize, once again, for the inconvenience.)

That employee obviously was empowered (aka trusted to make decisions), and it showed! Now let’s contrast my experience at Rental Car Agency A with Rental Car Agency B. When I returned the car, and told the Agency B agent about the GPS problem, she promptly replied, “Well, that’s not possible, they were just updated last month!” Then, she followed it up with, “Are you sure that YOU didn’t do something wrong?” For good measure, she ended with, “Well, I can’t do anything about that, so you’ll have to go see a desk agent”. In all, it took me speaking with three different people over the course of two days to get the stupid GPS charge removed. Now, which agency do you think I will use in the future, and which one do you think I will avoid?

Please note that the employees at Agency B did not necessarily set out each day to ruin their company’s reputation. They obviously were not empowered to do anything about my GPS issue. In fact, they may be legitimately disgruntled due to the lack of empowerment. They may be saying, “I want to help you, but THEY won’t let me do anything (Note: “They” is the managers. See my article *Service Ambassadors* for more information on that.)

Owners make things happen. They don't sit around and wait to gain approval for small things. I know many business owners who get very frustrated when a simple solution turns into a bureaucratic mess. Lack of empowerment (especially in a service business) kills morale and ultimately affects the customer's service experience. So if you are a manager and are reading this, I have three words for you... Empower Your Staff.

But be careful...empowering is more than just saying, "OK, now you are empowered". It is a conditioning process.

Here is what I recommend:

1. Start with a clear standard describing empowerment.
2. Make sure everyone knows the standard (No, one memo will not suffice).
3. Regularly (daily) share real examples of when you empowered yourself and other empowerment examples with the team. This builds competency by educating your staff on ways to use empowerment.
4. Recognize when employees show that they are trying.

When I was a hotel front desk agent, my manager said that I was empowered to make decisions. There wasn't much else direction. So one day, a guest complained that the toilet in his room was not working. I proceeded to "empower" myself to comp the remaining three nights of his stay, which was grossly more than the situation warranted.

What do you think my manager did when he heard about it?

- a) Yelled at me until my ears were numb.
- b) Told me that the room night revenue I lost would come out of my future paychecks.
- c) Thanked me for caring enough to do something about the situation.

The answer is C. He then immediately followed up by coaching me on various options I could try in the future. If he did A or B, my confidence would have been crushed and I probably would not be in any rush to empower myself again.

Use every opportunity you can to engage your team to make decisions. If you really want your team to be engaged, then you will empower them, inform them, challenge them, motivate them, and appreciate them. Imagine a team full of people who work with a vested interest. Sometimes the only key missing is for you (the manager) to treat your team like they own it.

Order Bryan's new book and other resources at: <http://www.engagemenow.com>  
**Engaging Service: 22 Ways to Become a Service Superstar**

Find more resources relating to service excellence at  
[www.bwenterprise.net](http://www.bwenterprise.net).

Also on the website, you can subscribe to the official  
B. Williams Enterprise emailing list. You will receive  
announcements, newsletters and other excellent resources.  
***-We exist to serve others so they may better serve the world®.-***

