

In today's world of digital disruption and generational change, learning how to become an empowering leader is a crucial stage in your development as an aspiring manager. In the past, managers saw leadership as being about having power over others but as Bill George, Professor of Management Practice at Harvard University advocates, today a leader's job is to support others so they have the confidence to step up and do the job. Empowering leaders are able to effectively communicate their organisation's vision, mission and values, increasingly important tasks in today's global economy.

Why become an empowering leader?

Empowering leaders have discovered that helping people find purpose delivers superior results compared to forcing subordinates to be loyal followers. By giving others the latitude to lead, they expand their own potential impact.

So, how can you empower others?

In *Discover Your True North*, Professor George profiles five things empowering leaders do to get the best out of other people.

1. Treat others as equals
2. Listen actively
3. Learn from people
4. Share life stories
5. Align around the mission

Becoming an empowering leader

The first step to becoming an empowering leader is to spend some time reflecting on your own leadership style. How autocratic or democratic are you? Do you prefer supporting and coaching or directing and controlling? Or do you prefer a laissez faire style of leadership?

As you ponder these questions, let's take another look at Bill George's five points.

Do you treat others as equals? Or do you see yourself as superior to people in your team and others in your organisation?

1. How actively do you listen to others? Do you hear simply what you want to hear or are you willing and able to change direction based on others feedback?
2. Are you someone who genuinely likes to learn from others? Or are you more likely to set your own course regardless of what others have suggested?
3. How comfortable are you with sharing your life stories – both good and bad?
4. Do you spend time with your team and others talking about your organisation's mission, vision and values so that there is stronger alignment?

No doubt many of us would like to think of ourselves as leaders who embrace Professor George's principles executed by empowering leaders. Truly self-aware leaders are willing to acknowledge where they're not always getting it right and are willing to invest time and energy into addressing those shortcomings while continuing to build on their strengths.

How does it feel to be empowered?

In order to become an empowering leader yourself, it's important to gain greater insight into how it feels to be empowered yourself. After all, if you don't feel empowered, it's much harder to help others feel the same.

In order to help you gain that insight, we've put together a short survey about your workplace experiences. While answering the statements, be as honest as possible.

Please rate the following statements in terms of how well they describe how you feel about your work. Choose the response that best describes how you feel using the following scale:

1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree

I am confident about my ability to perform well at work	1	2	3	4	5
My work is personally meaningful to me	1	2	3	4	5
I have a great deal of control over what happens in my job	1	2	3	4	5
I have significant autonomy in determining what work I do	1	2	3	4	5
I am self-assured about my capabilities to do my job well	1	2	3	4	5
I have considerable opportunity for freedom in my job	1	2	3	4	5
I have mastered the skills necessary to do my job	1	2	3	4	5
I have significant influence over what happens in my job	1	2	3	4	5

TOTAL SCORE:

Results:

If you scored between 32 and 40, you experience high levels of empowerment in your role as a leader. If you scored between 16 and 31, there is significant scope for you to become more empowered in your role. In other words, your leader and possibly your organisation need to take on board Bill George's advice on being an empowering leader. If you scored less than 16, your leader and most likely your organisation are still operating in the old command and control mindset. Wouldn't you be able to do your job better and produce superior results if your manager and your organisation gave you more latitude in your role?

Next Steps:

Now that you have a better understanding of how empowered you feel, ask your team to complete the survey anonymously and have someone work out the average score for each statement and the overall total. If you scored between 32 and 40, you're already an empowering leader. If you scored between 16 and 31, which statements scored between 2 and 3? Why do you think your team responded the way they did? What could you do to increase the average score? If you scored less than 16, don't despair – you've got a starting point and a great opportunity to lift the scores. Pick the two statements that you have the most direct influence over as manager. What do you need to do to improve the score? How can you use the five principles of empowering leadership?