

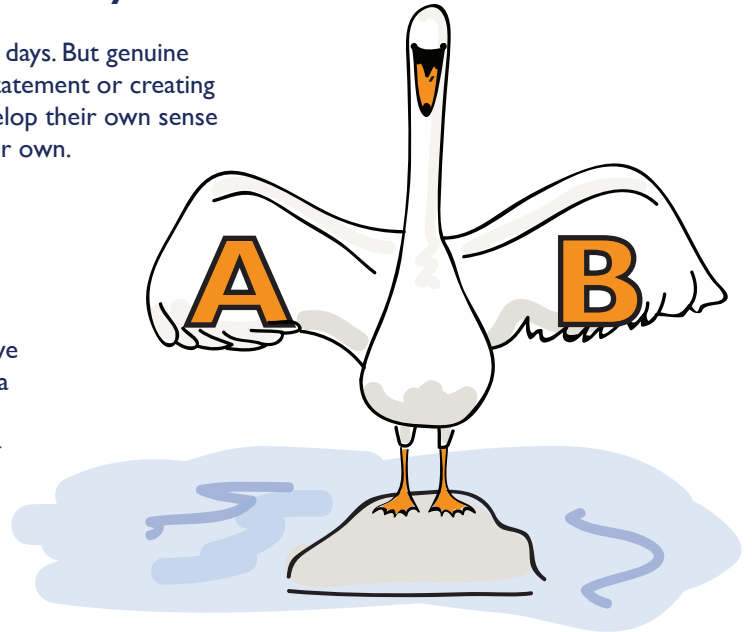
DO...

1. DO understand what 'empowerment' really means

Everyone is apparently 'empowering' everyone else these days. But genuine empowerment is about more than just making a values statement or creating a nice feeling. It involves helping people discover and develop their own sense of power – which often means being willing to give up our own.

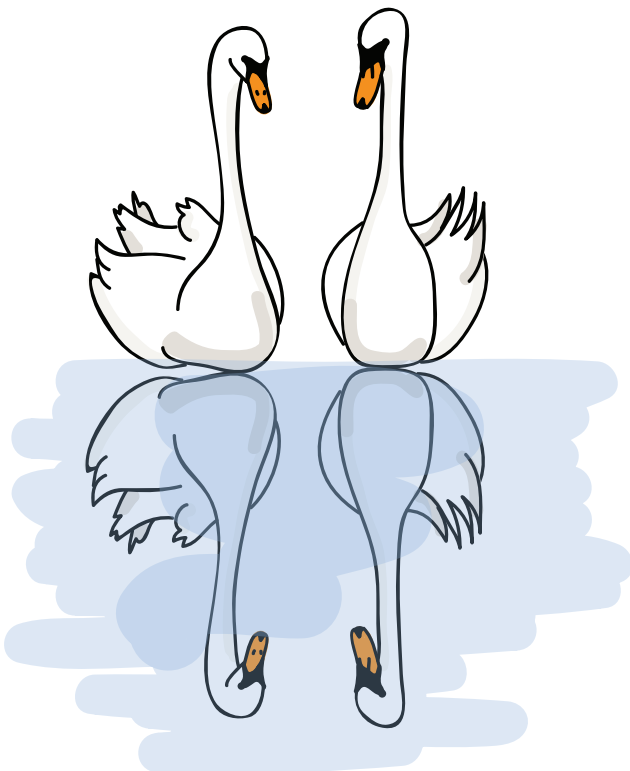
2. DO give them choices

Offering someone a set of options is a simple and effective way of shifting power their way. By asking them to make a choice, we raise their level of involvement and begin to share decision making. Choices still provide boundaries – they can't do whatever they please – but by asking their opinion we can invite them to take more ownership.



3. DO let them make mistakes

Many attempts to empower work whilst things are going well, but when it goes wrong power is quickly taken back. If we are serious about truly empowering people, they can and will make mistakes! An empowering mindset views failure as a growth opportunity and understands that the person making the error is usually best placed to fix it. Are we giving them the chance to?



4. DO reflect on a regular basis

Empowerment initiatives often start strong, but then drift towards disempowerment as they progress. By stopping to reflect on a regular basis, we can ensure we are maintaining an empowering mindset and resist the temptation to take back control.

5. DO focus on outcomes not process

To empower others, we need to recognise they will not always do things the same way as us. The key here is to keep our focus on the objectives rather than exactly how we achieve them. By expecting people to come to us with solutions rather than problems, we empower them to take action in their own unique way. You never know – they might have a much better way of doing it than you do!

DON'T...

1. DON'T underestimate what they can achieve

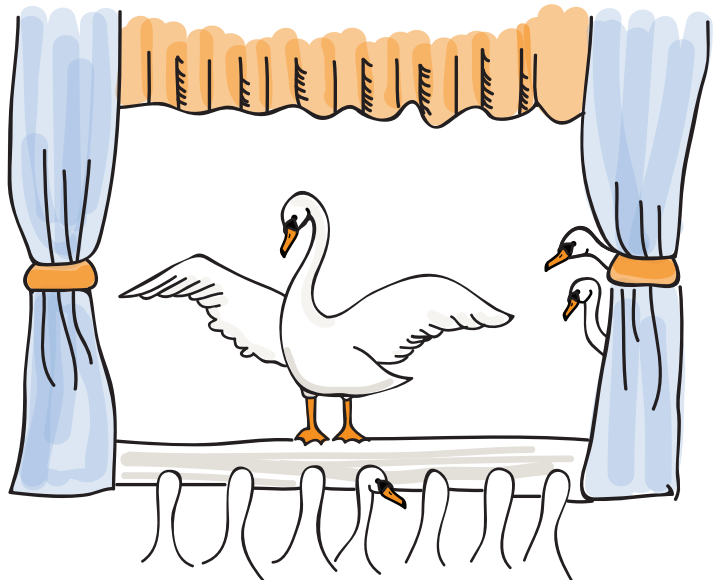
It can be tempting to set the bar low at first, to try and ensure an 'easy win'. But this can come across as patronising and reveal an underlying fear of failure on our part. Let them decide what they can and can't do, and ask them what support they need from you. Keep reflecting with them to make sure they continue to have the help and resources they need.

2. DON'T solve their problems for them

When someone has come to us with a problem, it is normally easier and quicker to tell them what to do and move on. But the lesson they will learn is whenever they have a problem, you have the answer! Think instead about what they will do next time they have a problem. Will they have learned to come up with a solution for themselves – or will they be knocking on your door once more?

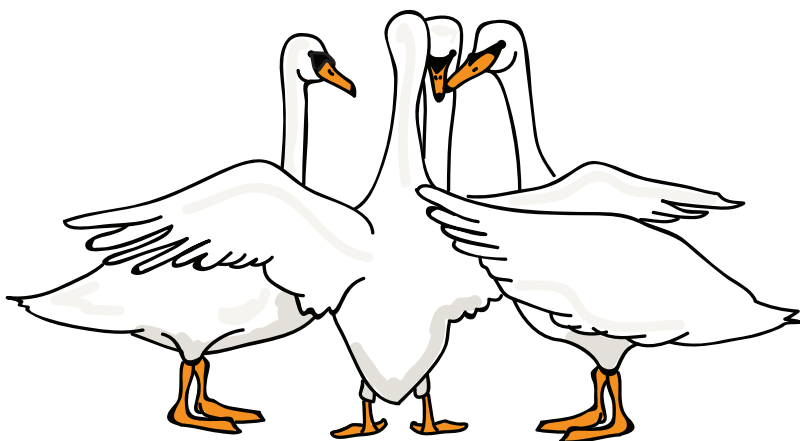
3. DON'T take credit for their success

When someone we have empowered is doing well, we will naturally feel proud of their accomplishments. But if we are not careful, we can easily steal their successes to make ourselves feel better and so deprive them of the recognition they have earned. Remember - if we take credit for the successes of others, we cannot expect them to repeat them.



4. DON'T take responsibility for their failures

None of us want someone else to feel bad, so it can be very tempting to take the blame when things go wrong. Whilst this might make us feel better, it actually deprives people of the opportunity to own and respond to their mistakes. If instead we take the role of 'critical friend', we can help them reflect on why it happened and bring into focus what needs to be different next time. Remember - if we take the blame for the failures of others, we cannot expect them to learn from them.



5. DON'T let them do it alone

Helping one person to find their sense of power is good, but it is much more powerful if they can cascade this learning to their peers. Encourage them to build strong relationships with colleagues so they can start empowering others for themselves. A team of empowered people is a force to be reckoned with!