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EXECUTIVE BOOK SUMMARY

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A Company of Leaders:

Five Disciplines for Unleashing the Power in Your Workforce.



CONTENTS

SUMMARY

In *A Company of Leaders*, Spreitzer and Quinn (2001) explored the importance of encouraging employees at all levels to take the initiative and act as leaders in the organization. The authors provided five disciplines that organizations could use to develop their workforce into a company of leaders. The primary aspect of implementing the disciplines is ensuring that the workforce is empowered and provided with an environment that allows them to perform optimally. The book emphasized the aspect of empowerment by drawing on decades of empirical research to show how employees can be transformed into a company of leaders. A significant section of the book was dedicated to discussing individual disciplines that enhance the creation of a company of leaders. Finally, the application of empowerment discipline in the organization was emphasized and demonstrated in the book.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Gretchen M. Spreitzer is the Keith E. and Valerie J. Alessi Professor of Business Administration and Management and Organizations at the University of Michigan. Her research focuses on the empowerment of employees and leadership development towards achieving organizational change.

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“The best companies create within themselves a *company of leaders* – an organization in which the employees at every level take the initiative and act as owners of the firm” (p. iv).

CHAPTER ONE

THE POWER WITHIN THE WORKFORCE

Creating a company of leaders in an organization begins with unleashing the power within the workforce. An organization where all employees show initiative can only be created by empowering the workforce, which is enhanced by unleashing the power within it (Spreitzer & Quinn, 2001, p. 1). As such, the organization can change the behavior of the workforce to unleash this power and promote the discipline of empowerment. Based on decades of empirical research, Spreitzer and Quinn (2001, p.2) established that empowered leadership is integral to identifying the power that the employees possess in taking initiatives and acting as owners of the firm. The book emphasized that achieving a company of leaders is possible for any organization, and it helps to improve the firm's competitive advantage within the market.

Examples of Companies

According to the authors, creating a company of leaders seem too good to be true, but their research demonstrated some companies that have succeeded in achieving it. Interaction with the top management in a pharmaceutical company portrayed an organization in which employees at different levels took the initiative and were committed to each other's growth and development (Spreitzer & Quinn, 2001, p. 3). An interview with the Fortune 500 company's senior executive also demonstrated an organization that values the input of the employees and allows them to have autonomy (Spreitzer & Quinn, 2001, p. 4). The two companies demonstrated organizations that utilize their potential fully. The organizations focused on allowing the employees to express their power for optimal performance (Spreitzer & Quinn, 2001, p. 5).

A Company of Leaders Matters

A company of leaders creates not only a competitive advantage in the market but also ensures that the organizations meet the 21st-century necessity of empowering employees (Spreitzer & Quinn, 2001, p. 5). As such, the actions and suggestions of the employees in organizational decision-making matter significantly. Organization leaders could create a company of leaders by driving behavior changes within the workforce. The change would only be steered through empowerment to allow the employees to identify and understand their power and abilities.

“Genuine empowerment consists of fundamental personal beliefs that employees have about their role in the organization” (p.13).

“Our statistical analyses reveal that the mindset of people who feel empowered has four dimensions; self-determination, meaning, competence, and impact” (p.14)



The four dimensions are interdependent, and they have to be fulfilled for an individual to feel genuinely empowered. If the dimensions are not multiplicative rather than additive, the empowerment efforts are likely to fail (Spreitzer & Quinn, 2001, p.21). The book described various reasons why empowerment may fail; ambivalence, bureaucratic culture, conflict, personal time constraints, and fundamental misunderstanding (Spreitzer & Quinn, 2001, p.9-13).

Genuine Empowerment has Positive Outcomes:

Employees would feel valued by achieving the four dimensions of empowerment. As such, empowered employees would be more effective in their roles, show less resistant to organizational change, become innovative and creative, incorporate transformational leadership, view their leaders as charismatic, and improved job satisfaction (Spreitzer & Quinn, 2001, p.22). As such, the managers would create environments that support self-empowerment for the employees to unleash their power and voice their suggestions as leaders (Spreitzer & Quinn, 2001, p.23).

George & Zakkariya (2018, p.13) argued that the four dimensions of empowerment result in improved employee job satisfaction and reduced job-related stress, which enhances performance and productivity.

“And in today’s business environment, a company of leaders can be an important source of competitive advantage” (p. 23)

CHAPTER TWO

FIVE DISCIPLINES TO UNLEASH YOUR WORKFORCE'S POWER



“These are the disciplines that our research shows are essential to creating a company of leaders” (p.29)

For an organization to implement the five disciplines, it has to show commitment, consistency, and investment (Spreitzer & Quinn, 2001, p.30). The authors compared the process of preparing for a marathon, which requires personal commitment, consistency, and time investment. The chapter provided an overview of the five disciplines; self-empowerment, continuous vision and challenge, continuous security and vision, continuous openness and trust, and guidance and control (Spreitzer & Quinn, 2001, p.34-37).



“Empowerment involves a sense of personal autonomy that requires trust and openness to risk” (p.37).

CHAPTER THREE

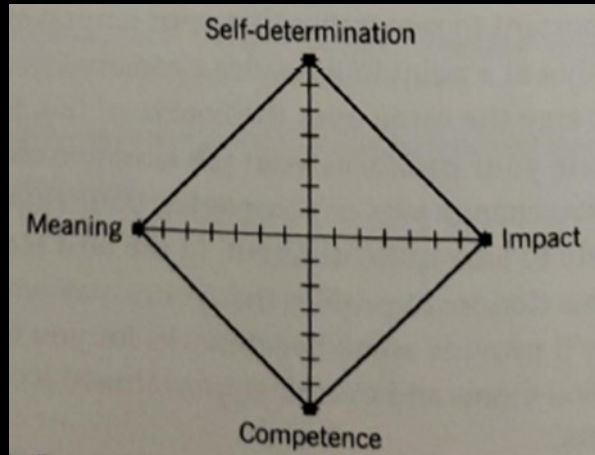
EMPOWERING THE PEOPLE THAT MATTER

“But knowing oneself is the most difficult task any of us faces. It requires deep introspection. It means being willing to see ourselves without bias and defensiveness, warts, and all” (p.51).

The first discipline, empowering the person who matters the most, focuses on ensuring that the leaders and managers within the organization are empowered enough to empower their workforce (Spreitzer & Quinn, 2001, p.47). The managers require knowledge and enough power to empower the employees. As such, they should first change their behaviors before embarking on organizational change (Spreitzer & Quinn, 2001, p.48). The chapter described stories of empowered managers and leaders that empowered themselves first before unleashing the power in their workforce. The managers ought to gain a good understand of themselves in relation to their work.

Understanding how one is empowered would require the use of the Psychological Empowerment Instrument (George & Zakkariya, 2018, p.13). The instrument provides an individual empowerment profile based on the four dimensions of empowerment. The tool should demonstrate how one is capitalizing on self-determination, meaning, competence, and impact (George & Zakkariya, 2018, p.20). The managers should also benchmark their empowerment level by comparing their scores with others who have taken the test. The results of the tool guide the individual development of empowerment for the managers to understand how they can empower themselves. The courses of action for empowerment development include; focusing on improving meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact (Spreitzer & Quinn, 2001, p.69-83).

EMPOWERED PERSON



All four dimensions of empowerment are balanced for an individual who is balanced (Spreitzer & Quinn, 2001, p.56). The profile describes an individual who can integrate all the tensions of empowerment.

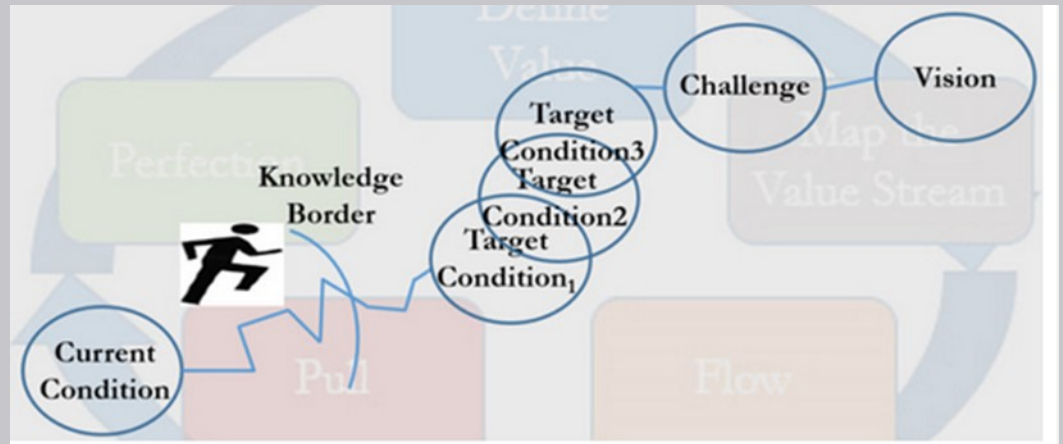
Benchmarking Percentile Scores for Empowerment

Percentile	Meaning	Competence	Self-determination	Impact	Empowerment
Lowest 5%	3.67	4.33	3.67	2.00	4.17
10%	4.67	4.50	4.33	2.67	4.50
15%	4.80	4.75	4.67	3.00	4.60
20%	5.00	5.00	4.75	3.33	4.83
25%	5.25	5.25	4.85	3.67	5.00
30%	5.33	5.33	5.00	4.00	5.08
35%	5.50	5.51	5.30	4.33	5.19
40%	5.67	5.67	5.33	4.67	5.33
45%	5.75	5.71	5.50	4.82	5.42
50%	5.91	5.75	5.67	5.00	5.50
55%	6.00	5.82	5.72	5.03	5.58
60%	6.11	6.00	5.75	5.33	5.67
65%	6.22	6.25	5.93	5.50	5.81
70%	6.33	6.33	6.00	5.67	5.88
75%	6.50	6.50	6.08	5.78	6.00
80%	6.67	6.67	6.33	6.00	6.08
85%	6.78	6.75	6.38	6.35	6.19
90%	6.89	6.91	6.67	6.50	6.38
Highest 95%	7.00	7.00	7.00	7.00	6.58

“Making an impact means having the courage to seek initiative” (p.83).

CHAPTER FOUR

SECOND DISCIPLINE: CONTINUOUS VISION AND CHALLENGE



“We cannot create a company of leaders by directly empowering others. What we can do is create an environment that increases the probability that people will choose to empower themselves” (p.85).

Having continuous vision and challenge is critical for individuals to achieve empowerment (Spreitzer & Quinn, 2001, p.86). The organization should identify the challenges associated with the process of empowerment and develop a vision to guide the employees. To ensure reduced resistance to organizational change, there should be effective and adequate communication of the vision for the company.

“Vision is thus the first requirement in creating a context in which people can act in empowered ways” (p.87).

In the empowerment model, vision focuses on the future and the flexibility to change rather than remaining in the status quo (Spreitzer & Quinn, 2001, p.88). As such, the vision quadrant focuses on moving the workforce into new directions. Self-empowerment begins with an assessment of the current position of the individual. An empowering vision should constitute passion, challenge, and legacy (Spreitzer & Quinn, 2001, p.92-93). The process of developing an empowering vision is critical to the organization to ensure an idealized process that is specific to the workforce. Vision is also an aspect of discipline that requires commitment, courage, and persistence (Spreitzer & Quinn, 2001, p.101).

CHAPTER FIVE

THIRD DISCIPLINE: CONTINUOUS SUPPORT AND SECURITY

“A system that fosters empowerment is one that manages competing tensions and keeps opposing forces in a delicate balance” (p.106).

The third discipline focuses on recognizing the need for security and support that is adequate to nurture an environment of leadership amidst the issues associated with change (Spreitzer & Quinn, 2001, p.106). As the organization focuses on vision development, it would also be imperative to ensure support and security to have adequate control of the employees. However, there should be a balance between the focus on support and security and vision development to avoid the loss of control and stagnation in the organization (Spreitzer & Quinn, 2001, p.106).

“A system that encourages empowerment is one that brings together the energy of vision with a sense of support and security” (p.106).

Elements that Create a Secure and Supportive Work Environment:

- **Support network**
- **Resources to meet the basic human needs**
- **Training**
- **A reward system**
- **An organizational culture that encourages mistakes to foster learning (Spreitzer & Quinn, 2001, p.107).**

The security and support in the work environment translate into the quality of work and performance by the employees (Wiskow, Albrecht, & De Pietro, 2010, p.3).

“Creating the sense of community that comes with the discipline of security and support requires continuous attention” (p.122).

Security and support as an aspect of discipline are continuous as it is monitored throughout to ensure a balance with the other disciplines.

CHAPTER SIX

FOURTH DISCIPLINE: CONTINUOUS OPENNESS AND TRUST

"On the one hand, creating openness and trust means giving up control in order to share it with subordinates; on the other hand, managers must maintain a suitable degree of control to provide adequate guidance and structure" (p.125).

Openness and trust within an organization help to address the two main barriers identified in research; centralization of decision-making by leaders and lack of openness to disclose information to the employees (Spreitzer & Quinn, 2001, p.126). An empowering environment requires leaders and employees to be open and trusting with each other (Javed, Rawwas, Khandai, Shahid, & Tayyeb, 2018, p.388). Openness creates an organization that is transparent for leaders and employees to engage in effective communication regarding all the issues impacting business (Spreitzer & Quinn, 2001, p.127). Employees derive value and appreciation from organizational transparency, as they can make suggestions in decision-making.

Similarly, transparency yields mutual trust in the organization as the employees are engaged in decision-making (Javed et al., 2018, p.390).

"Asking people to act like leaders also involves a significant degree of trust on everyone's part" (p.129).

Mutual trust fosters empowerment since the managers develop comfort in giving the employees control and autonomy to take the initiative (Spreitzer & Quinn, 2001, p.130). The managers trust their subordinates to be responsible, reliable, and competent while portraying integrity regarding the roles and responsibilities assigned.

"Typically, trust builds through a history of interaction that indicates reliability, honesty, and good faith" (p.130).

CHAPTER SEVEN

FIFTH DISCIPLINE: CONTINUOUS GUIDANCE AND CONTROL

Empowering environments to require a continuous discipline of guidance and control to ensure that the employees have the right knowledge and support to embrace leadership roles (Cai, Cai, Sun, & Ma, 2018, p.1304). The organization should develop structures and processes to support guidance and control for employees to experience liberation rather than overwhelming issues (Spreitzer & Quinn, 2001, p.149).

Managers and organizations can create empowering boundaries to guide the employees on the appropriate actions and decisions to make (Spreitzer & Quinn, 2001, p.149). The employees require the boundaries to understand their responsibility as the organizations break the levels of hierarchy (Cai et al., 2018, p.1305). There is a need for the managers to set boundaries concerning the decisions that employees can make and the extent to which employees can make decisions (Spreitzer & Quinn, 2001, p.152).

“Many people share the misunderstanding implied by our initial supposition than empowering systems are places of total freedom” (p.148)

Boundaries should be set by considering a few aspects, ensure they are wide to allow employees’ discretion and initiative, and employees’ understanding of the boundaries (Spreitzer & Quinn, 2001, p.154). Fostering guidance and control could also be achieved by providing empowering feedback and structures. As a discipline, guidance, and control requires continuous assessment and adaptation of the management style to develop boundaries, feedback, and appropriate structures (Spreitzer & Quinn, 2001, p.166).

CHAPTER EIGHT

APPLICATION OF THE DISCIPLINES OF EMPOWERMENT TO YOUR ORGANIZATION

For an organization to apply the disciplines of empowerment effectively, a tool for the assessment of the state of the organization's state of the disciplines is used (Spreitzer & Quinn, 2001, p.169). The assessment helps to understand the organization's position regarding the application of the disciplines of empowerment. However, the authors recommended that organizations can complete the assessment anonymously to enhance honesty since self-assessments provide limited results illustrating only one side of the evaluation (Spreitzer & Quinn, 2001, p.173). Building an empowering environment requires the integration of all the disciplines of empowerment.

“Our experience is that when an organization begins an effort to empower its workforce, its employees may respond in a variety of ways” (p.178)

The managers should begin the empowerment with employees who respond positively. While others may be a challenge due to resistance to change, the managers would focus on helping them understand the importance of empowerment (Lincoln, Travers, Ackers, & Wilkinson, 2002, p.275).

Application of the Five Disciplines of Empowerment

Discipline	Actions
Continuous vision and challenge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Develop a vision -Live the vision -Apply the vision across the organization -Ensure the vision is dynamic -Challenge and stretch (Spreitzer & Quinn, 2001, p.175-176).
Continuous support and security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Develop support networks -Provide job security -Encourage risk-taking -Ensure working hours are reasonable -Train -Reward good performance -Prioritize safety -Provide adequate resource -Ensure buffering from unnecessary changes (Spreitzer & Quinn, 2001, p.176-177).
Continuous openness and trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Set the tone -Be open with information -Treat employees as partners -Build trust (Spreitzer & Quinn, 2001, p.177).
Continuous guidance and control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Clarify expectations -Evaluate and reevaluate boundaries -Develop empowering structures -Create accountability

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