

Strategic snippet #6



Five strategies to empower employees to make decisions



davidlancefield.com

Creating more autonomy — a hallmark of an innovative culture — involves empowering people to make decisions.

But many employees aren't accustomed to making decisions given authority is often tightly controlled.

This gap between the desire and capability is called the *decision deficit*.

WHICH FIVE WAYS
CAN HELP YOU

reduce
your decision
deficit?



Prepare yourself to empower others

Executives find it difficult to give up control. Prepare yourself by:

- Reflecting on what has held you back from empowering people in the past.
- Planning for a staggered transition of responsibilities.
- Considering it an opportunity to increase the quality of your decision-making and to explore other aspects of your role.
- Reminding yourself why you're doing this.

Develop a set of decision principles

Your role as the leader is to encourage your people to think for themselves (not to enact a set of rules for them) by:

- Encouraging them to consider what is in customers' and the organisation's best interests.
- Establishing bounds for return and risk.
- Insisting on transparency so they're able to communicate not only the decision, but the reasoning.





Clarify decision-making roles

It's essential to clarify decision roles, rights and accountability. This starts at the top by:

- Writing down the decisions you're responsible for – individually and collectively.
- Considering whether you're the best person to make these decisions. Whether or not to delegate a decision depends on your role, your (and others') capabilities, the materiality of the decision, and the expectations of others.
- Identifying who you can give more decision-making responsibility to.

Show your belief in people

Showing your employees you believe in them as they make this step up builds confidence and trust in their abilities. Set up the person to win by:

- Working out whether they're capable of taking on the responsibility.
- Encouraging them to think afresh about how best to make the decision in their remit.
- Sharing information and insight openly as necessary so they understand the full picture and the importance of the decision.
- Being available for consultation.
- Giving them your support even if the outcome isn't what you expected.
- Rewarding and publicly acknowledging success — and effort.



WE ARE ONE
WE ARE ONE
WE ARE ONE
WE ARE ONE
WE ARE ONE

ANTHONY BURRELL



davidlancefield.com

Create learning opportunities

Clarity and belief go a long way. But there may be gaps in decision-making capability and judgment, which can be addressed by:

- Coaching people as they prepare to make decisions.
- Encouraging them to *reflect* on decisions, especially when the outcomes were not as intended.
- Opening up the decision-making process.
- Structuring meetings around decisions to amplify their importance and give people opportunities to make decisions.
- Communicating high-profile, critical decisions clearly so that people can learn how judgements were made.



READY FOR MORE?



This is based on an article called 'Five strategies to empower employees to make decisions' in the *Harvard Business Review*.

For more resources go to davidlancefield.com:

- Listen to, and watch, the *Lancefield on the Line* podcast.
- Take the *Extraordinary Essentials* test to identify your strengths and development points.
- Read my articles in *HBR* and *Strategy+Business*.

If you're a CEO or founder looking for help as you tackle a complex strategic challenge or pursue a transformational opportunity do get in touch on david@davidlancefield.com

David Lancefield

CATALYST / STRATEGIST / COACH

+44 (0)7712 140560
david@davidlancefield.com



davidlancefield.com