

Empowerment from a Maestro

Orchestra conductors may look like they have great power over their musicians, but Alan Gilbert, music director of the New York Philharmonic, believes it's all about empowerment. He manages 106 creative musicians by being a skillful leader. Gilbert firmly believes in democracy, and recognizes that his musicians have considerable experience playing classical music. Gilbert believes only an idiot would fail to make use of their experience and gets the musicians to buy in by asking them for their help. He says it's a delicate balance because although conductors are expected to put their "brand" on the orchestra, he believes that the best music is played when all the musicians are able to access their own points of view about the music. "I actually think it's possible to get more out



Alan Gilbert, music director of the New York Philharmonic.

Henry Leutwyler/ContourPhotos.com

of the musicians by really showing them you know who they are and you identify with them and you trust them," he says.

A thoroughly modern conductor, Gilbert has an informal style. He appeared in a series of fun videos posted on YouTube to promote upcoming performances. His blog, featured on Musical America, focuses on what it's like to be a musical director. During concerts in the parks in New York City, he gives the audience a chance to vote through text messages and to choose the orchestra's encore piece, empowering the audience as well.

SOURCE: J. Shambora, "Advice from a Maestro," *Fortune* (April 11, 2011): 37–39; http://nyphil.org/about/alan_gilbert.cfm.

Individuals closest to the work and to the customers should make the decisions and that this makes the best use of employees' skills and talents. You can empower yourself by developing your sense of self-efficacy. You 11.2 helps you assess your progress in terms of self-empowerment.

Four dimensions comprise the essence of empowerment: meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact.⁷⁷

- **Meaning** is a fit between the work role and the employee's values and beliefs. It is the engine of empowerment that energizes employees about their jobs. If employees' hearts are not in their work, they cannot feel empowered.
- **Competence** is the belief that one has the ability to do the job well. Without competence, employees will feel inadequate and lack a sense of empowerment.
- **Self-determination** is having control over the way employees do their work. Employees who feel they're just following orders from the boss cannot feel empowered.
- **Impact** is the belief that one's job makes a difference within the organization. Without a sense of contributing to a goal, employees cannot feel empowered.

Employees need to experience all four of the empowerment dimensions in order to feel truly empowered. Only then will organizations reap the anticipated rewards from empowerment efforts. Empowerment increases organizational commitment and job performance and reduces job stress.⁷⁸