chapter 6

Discussion and Analysis
Practicing Empowerment: People Centric Strategies

Over a period of time, there have been lots of ups and downs in the Industrial sector. Some organizations have closed down completely; some partially; whereas, some companies have been successful in these turbulent times. The reasons for such a situation are several1. Some organizations responded quickly to the change, whereas some did not respond and paid for their tardiness. Also, the way in which the human resources were developed and the organizations were managed became crucial for corporate success. The workplace practices and approaches towards human resources issues are critical to the survival of the Corporates, and the answer for facing present day challenges is employee empowerment, per se2.

Empowerment is a practice most organizations are looking for due to various positive benefits and advantages (Block, 1987; Caudron, 1995; Jeffery, 1995; Ann, 1996; and Argyris, 1998). Some view empowerment from the organization development point, where in the empowered employee takes the full responsibility of running and managing the organization (Kanter, 1989, 1995; Lawler, 1994). Some say that empowerment is like the emperors new clothes.... We talk loudly about it in public, but none can actually see it when it comes to actual sharing of power, no manager likes to delegate the power (Argyris, 1998). Sometimes the issue is how to make a beginning in instituting and practicing empowerment in the organization.

Empowerment itself is not an independent entity by itself. The success of the


2Michael Goold and Andrew Campbell (2002). “Do you have a well designed organization”? Harvard Business Review, 80(3); March, pp. 117-124
empowerment depends on various other systems. In fact, sharing power could be the main agenda in such an exercise. But other factors are equally important for empowerment to succeed.

PPL—Polyhydron Private Limited (1981), a twenty-year-old organization, is situated in the industrially concentrated city of Belgaum in Karnataka State, India. The wide ranges of products manufactured include economical hydraulic system and components conforming to International standards such as ISO, CETOP, DIN, and SAE. Radical piston pumps, hand operated DVC, Pressure switches, Pressure relief valves, Pressure control valves and Cartridge valves. Sri Suresh B Hundre, CEO and MD, a Mechanical Engineer turned Entrepreneur, has built PPL as an organization with sound principles and values. To him goes the credit of creating a Best-managed organization run on Ethical Principles, shared values, transparent ethos and are having empowered employees. Equally too are the employees who have joined hands in this exercise. The most question is - how was it possible for the CEO to create a winning organization and what are the practices and strategies he adopted in creating a high performance workforce?. What were the responses of the employees in these experiments and the responses? Indeed, PPL is hailed as a successful organization today for its innovative human resources practices. The systems and practices like High value to people, Vision based approach by creating an island of excellence through focus on customer and continuous improvements have been the hallmark of the organization. An organization, which manufactured 10-12 components in 1981, is now manufacturing almost 700 products. This is no mean achievement in today's competitive world, in fact it seems like a fairy tale. Yet, it is not a fairy tale- it is a reality, which was possible only through strategic
planning, hard work, high performance work systems, and a joint efforts of employees and the management.

In the present study, several areas were identified to understand the systems, strategies, employee empowerment and the outcomes, which included understanding the system of accountability within the organization, decision making process, delegation and sharing of responsibility, ethical standards adopted, mode of information sharing, leadership development at all spheres, feed-back system adopted, management and organizational ethos practiced, power distribution, climate of politics, degree of trust and loyalty, team working, employee participation, open lines of communication, faith and trustworthiness, enhancing the quality of work life, liberty and freedom one enjoyed, organization climate, respect for humans, participative culture and the like. Is an empowered organization different for other organizations? The answer could vary, but, based on the findings in the present study, the answer is "Yes".

The characteristics that are predominant in an empowered organization are: lean and agile structure, high performing work systems, models of excellence, everyone working towards a shared vision, autonomous work teams at all levels, continuous improvement and learning, flat organizational hierarchy, open and transparent interactions, high belief and trust in people's actions, enhancement of leadership at all levels, climate of collaboration and close knit web relationships. Further, qualities like kindness, spirit of enjoyment, an atmosphere of openness, authenticity and acceptance, freedom from all the threat and insecurity, work excellence and effectiveness, a holistic climate of mutual respect and supportive can be observed at PPL. It is an organization where human beings are valued as the prime asset. An empowered organization works at creating strategic vision from the
bottom-up, values autonomy, has clear ethical cornerstones, broad career paths, practices egalitarianism, continuous improvement through constant feedback, has high level of job satisfaction, a transparent culture where all things are open, verified and can be questioned by all. These characteristic features of an empowered organization are clearly visible at PPL.

The work culture and management systems are quite unique and the organization has been following global systems in managing and developing human resources. People are treated with high respect and as equal partners in all organizational endeavors. The transfer and acceptance of power to the lowest appropriate level is the salient feature of an empowered organization, and it is clearly visible at PPL. The organizational responsibility is shared and each worker is an independent decision maker in attaining the shared goals at PPL. The uniqueness of the empowered organization is also reflected in its predominant climate of freedom, resulting in individual employees enjoying full autonomy, a sense of ownership and an increased sense of need fulfillment. The work culture in an empowered organization is quite structured, and this regard, PPL has proved the benefits of a sharing and caring culture. The studies undertaken by Lowe, 1994; Athreya, et al 1995; Gates, 1995; and Douglas, and Mc Cauley, 1997 reflect similar views that culture paradigm is critical in building high performance work systems and enhancing employee empowerment.

In an empowered organization, a climate of trust, mutuality and freedom of expression are widely accepted norms. The workplace values that glue everything together are honesty, respect for all the employees, truthfulness, absence of a

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The belief systems communicate core values and inspire all participants to be committed to organizational purpose. Transparent ethos is another characteristic of an empowered organization visible at PPL. Secrecy and confidentiality are never practiced and are not found in any of the organizations activity. Open lines of communication and participation are a way of life in an empowered organization. There is nothing, which is restricted to a privileged few. Freedom to decide one's course of action is sharply visible and a high level of trust and faith forms the basis of most activities and human relations. The high performance work systems and an ideal set of work practices are other added features of PPL. Flexible scheduling of work, uncompromising employee integrity, low turn-over, self motivated workforce, participative decision making systems, boundary-less relationships and no nitpicking work rules are part of the PPL culture. The results of the present study match the findings of Lowe, 1994; Gates, 1995; and Kahn, 1998, who also speak of how such practices reflected positively on employee morale and organization productivity. The empowered employees have certain prominent traits and attitudes like, high commitment, being proactive, concern for quality and continuous improvement, high level of trust and faith in others actions, genuine liking for people, transparent ethos, open communicator, objective approach, positive thinking, feeling good about what is done, self confident and having confidence in others. Certain other characteristic found in PPL employees includes: seeking responsibility, accepting leaders and leadership, loyalty towards organization, internal and external shared commitment, dedication to the cause of organization, involvement in the

organizations growth, seeking opportunity for new challenges, growing-developing-learning continuously, and having a lot of self-worth and self esteem. The other predominant traits of PPL employees include high morale at workplace, high sense of responsibility, confidence, imparting trust, wanting new things to be done, not following a defined mindset, constant learning and seeking new opportunities, ever desiring to excel, ethical approach at work, value based behavior and the like. Similar traits were found in the study undertaken by Peterman (1999) on employee empowerment.

The very behavior of such empowered people makes sharp differences to the workplace atmosphere. There is a sense of rejuvenation, excitement, and risk taking, as they generate a lot of ideas, are imaginative, seek freedom to do the assignment and also render freedom to others, are less egoistic, seek information from all sides, and have a benchmark approach. The empowered employee also has a strong drive for perfection, works on own initiative, sets own exacting targets, plans ahead, is outward looking, likes responsibility and above all, appreciates and express happiness on the work done by others. Such traits are predominant, and found in all their day-to-day activities and work behavior. They seek to be criticized and work on the criticism. What makes a person empowered is the learning process he seeks in all activities and at all stages. The traits and behavior of employees in an organization sends a clear message about the prevailing workplace culture. The HR systems followed at PPL like transparency, liberty, and accountability for one's action, faith in action, sense of responsibility, and the like makes the organization different from any conventional workplace systems.

In the growth and development of the organization, the workplace culture plays an important factor in determining the success of organization as reflected in the studies undertaken by Clare, 1993; Carr, 1994; Argyris, 1998; Marty O'Neill, 1999; and Kanter, 2003. The atmosphere of freedom, the workplace culture, the enlightened CEO and employees- all vouch for the success of PPL. It is easy to see why PPL has set a new benchmark of excellence for other organizations to emulate and follow.

The Results: Demystifying Empowerment Picture

The study put forth certain assumptions to test the relation between organizational practices, human resource management and empowerment of employees. At this stage, all the enquiry areas and hypothesis are polled out and the post effects of empowerment practices have been discussed at length.

The organizational culture at workplace is a strong indicator and ingredient for empowering employees. Studies undertaken by Quarrey (1992); Lawler (1994); and Reynolds (1999) say that culture impacts positively in empowering employees. The present study probed this aspect and the results reveal that the workplace culture at PPL, as discussed, is quite unique and progressive. Employees are given prime importance and are treated with great respect, a fact that has been ratified by almost all the employees of the organization. Only one employee did not agree and gave a negative in response. This could be because he has to understand the system on a macro perceptive.

Being accountable for one’s action calls for great responsibility on one’s part. The culture in PPL was such that each was accountable for his actions and was not
allowed to blame anyone for his misdeeds. This is quite a unique workplace culture because by empowering the employees, and distributing power to them, they are given responsibility and have to be objective in undertaking various activities towards organizational goals. When power is granted and things do go wrong, one is not allowed to blame others. A larger chunk of 98% of the workers felt that the system did not give room for blaming anyone if things went wrong, nor the group or team blamed. This is a unique workplace practice largely responsible for the success of empowerment on a macro level. While power has been passed to employees to act in one’s and also in the organizations interest, one is also made responsible for one’s actions and is not allowed to blame anyone for any kind of failure in this exercise. The results tally with the results of the study undertaken by Marjorie Reynolds (1991); Bowen and Lawler (1992); Howard and Welkins (1994); Gates (1995); Wall and Jackson (1995); Kahn (1998); and Kanter (2003) that empowering employees signifies that one has to be accountable for one’s actions, weather it is the individual, group or the team.

Organizations can develop, grow and can stand for better standards, if certain value based principles are adopted, followed and continuously inculcated in work life. Values not only tell what an organization is, but they also communicate what the organization stands for and the credibility of individuals. When the degree and intensity of values followed at workplace in terms of honesty and truthfulness were put to test, the responses were quite noteworthy. As many as 98% of the employees expressed that honesty and truthfulness is the only policy that is followed in the organization. There are many instances to support this and practices like no cross checking of employees action, allowing use of the
organizational resources without being asked, no verification of leave or absence, but only checking for official purpose and the like, show how each employee has been an integral part of organizationwide practices. In the words of CEO, who has formulated the policy on honesty in consultation with every other member - "Honesty is not the Best policy. It is the policy. We are honest; we are transparent; we do not pay Bribe" (CMD, 2 Oct 1998).

The results of the studies undertaken by Rothstein (1995) and Frank (1996) tally with the results of the present study. Their studies at different organizations also proved that employee empowerment success depended largely on the trust that employees placed in the organizations and ethos of valuing human that was followed in the respective organizations. It is only on the trust premises that one can distribute power and delegate responsibility.  

Further, the power distribution and accountability in the organization are based on a clean environment and unnecessary gossips are to be avoided. How gossip regulated the organization life at workplace, was also researched in the study. More than 70% of the employees averred that no gossips at anytime by any employee were allowed. Management was also keen in preventing such incidences. Quite a few respondents (13.3%) that was unable to decide on the issue. About 15% of the employees felt that gossip was prevalent, but not to the extent of damaging or becoming a hindrance in the progress and the development of the organization. Gossip is unhealthy, and in the process of empowering employees, this has to be cut out.

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Further, the response of many employees left the impression that, gossip by any employee at any time, was seen as a serious matter, and jeopardized his employment. An organization can develop to great heights only if the thinking is of a high standard and for this, the attitudes, perception and thinking should be of high professional standards. In fact, no one in the organization is allowed to play with the weakness of the other person (employee), and whether big or small, highly qualified or not, contributing more or less, everyone is a member of the Polyhydron family and each is respected equally. The absence of gossip also makes everyone feel secure. While the tendency of gossip gets diffused through equal treatment, productivity and growth are clearly visible.

The treatment of employees at workplace also reflects the organizational culture. It was found that more than 85% of the employees never felt insecure to work with the organization, nor did the management ever make any one feel insecure through their behavior. Employees were happy because of the non-threatening (fearless) environment, which motivated them to walk that extra mile. This also shows that a democratic and progressive workplace has been created over a period of time. Almost all took pride to be with the organization. In studies undertaken by James (1991); Gates (1995); Hewitt Research Associates (1998); and Reynolds (1999) the findings say that management's role in creating a non-threaten atmosphere is crucial. Management should make employees feel secure, while power is administered. In turn, if they had the power to act but did not feel secure enough to use it, then one cannot be called an empowered employee, nor is it an empowered workplace or a high performance work system. The present study results match with the results of the study mentioned herewith.
The studies undertaken by Bowen and Lawler (1992) in Fortune organizations and Reynolds (1999) at Procter and Gamble (P and G) showed how the functioning of management and various empowering workplace policies contributed for the success of these Corporates. Their studies found that the global success of these companies was largely due to their human resources, which was highly motivated due to their management’s positive attitude and progressive workplace practices. While the style of management functioning and various workplace policies adopted in an organization have demonstrated positive contribution for growth and development, the same was put to test regarding the management of human resources at PPL. It was observed that neither a rigid bureaucratic style nor red-tapism existed, and this was ratified by more than 90% of the employees. While 5% were unable to give a clear answer, 3% of them felt that a bureaucratic approach did exist. The system adopted was so pro-employees that, it made everyone feel like the boss of the organization, opined nearly 90% of the employees. This signifies how the ownership concept has successfully taken root at PPL.

The obvious co-relation between the style of management and the positive feelings of employees are endorsed also in the studies of Rosen 1993; Simons, 1995; and Yoon, 2001. When rigid bureaucratic style is followed, the employees also tend to have rigid attitudes and look for clear-cut job assignments. On the other hand, when the management follows flexible and progressive workplace practices, the employees feel confident about handling even complex issues at work, and traditionally this has been the traits found in the employees of PPL. This also makes people flexible in their outlook, non conservative and transparent in their actions, which was seen in the responses of more than 50% employees. About 28% of the
employees were unable to decide on this issue. Since, everything is negotiable and things move smoothly, as many as 48% felt that every matter could be discussed with the management freely without any reservations, but almost 33% employees felt that some matters were rigid and non-negotiable in PPL.

Studies undertaken by Eichen (1989) found that people tend to come out with lots of ideas and concrete solutions when they are empowered, and this depended mainly on the management style of functioning. The results of the present study fall in line with the results of above studies and prove that the philosophy of management greatly determines the success of employee empowerment, especially so on the macro level.

It is the attitudes of employees that determine the degree of organizational success because attitude speaks about the altitude of the person. The philosophy and principles followed in an organization are clear indicators of how sensitive the management is in understanding the feelings and impulses of the employees. It also indicates how the employees might behave in the future and what their actions could be towards organizational goals.

Another important facet that was examined in the study concerned the empowered employee's emotional reaction and response towards the organization. Some of the aspects that were probed were regarding the employee’s loyalty, loyalty, feelings and attachment for the organization. The results were opposite to the assumptions, where 50% felt that they were paid just to work, while 45% strongly disagreed saying that it wasn’t just for the pay that they have come to work.

But, when the employees were questioned regarding their commitment towards the

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organization, more than 58% said that they stayed back beyond the prescribed work
time limits, and worked for extra hours whenever there was a need. A minimum of
30% said that they did not make any attempt to stay back after the prescribed time
limit. This needs to be examined because empowered employees always walk that
extra mile as endorsed by studies undertaken by Bowen, and Lawler, 1992; Gates,
1995; Howard, and Welkins, 1994; Kahn, 1998; and Kanter, 2003, and it is not
money or pay, which is the prime motivating factor. Instead, the workplace culture
governed by clean and transparent behavior binds them to be with the organization
(Rothwell, 1993; Lowe, 1994; Nelson, 1994; Owen, 1994; Lorsch, 1995; and Mayer,
et al 1995).

The study next looked into the nature of workplace democracy that existed in
PPL. Various studies in this direction have proved that workplace democratic
systems positively impact the success rate of the organization growth and employee
empowerment practices, per se (Eichen, 1989; Howard, and Welkins, 1994; Kahn,
1998; and Lawler, 1994). More than 65% of the employees at PPL expressed that,
there was no distinction amongst employees at the workplace, and common rooms
were shared equally during the course of the workday. Everything existed on the
basis of equal opportunity for all and no discrimination ever was done, either by the
management or by any employee. Everyone, irrespective of the grade and level they
worked in, came together on a common platform and did their job. There is no
separate policy for any particular category of workers. There is no designated
positions or special work area for one to work in. If at all anyone gets an exclusive
work area, it is because the job needs to be done at a particular place on a
particular machine. This also holds good in the case of visitors to the organization.
They have all liberty to move around the organization and interact on matters related
to business. Even the employees have the freedom to enter into contracts with the customers without any formal permission from the management and start working on it. The management is kept informed for the sake of official records.

Participation in all organizational activities in PPL is a way of life. Everyone has the liberty to form committees, draw up their own plans, strategies or programmes towards organizational goals, averred more than 75% of the employees. They have liberty to select members, and decide the course of action. Thus, the responsibilities and functions of the employees are very high in the organization.

The responses of most employees tell the true story of the participative culture prevailing at PPL. Employees also attend the annual general meeting and any unnecessary expenditure by the management is questioned. What is still more remarkable is the high level of satisfaction each employee feels in taking part in these activities. Employees are eager to learn lessons from other committees and they benchmark the best practices of the other committees. Initially, the management decided all the organizational activities, but, over a period of time, organization strategy preparation, designing the organization's goals, mission statements, code of conduct, value statement and code of discipline are now under the purview of the employees. There are no fixed committees and each employee can decide to form a committee, and its composition, functions and the scope of work. The composition of the committee is strictly according to requirement in terms of skill and competence, and personal likes and dislikes do not come into the picture. The findings by Frey 1993; Caudron 1995; Cynde Payne 1998; and Nelson 1998 match the results of present study in this regard.
Another unique factor that was examined was the level of trust each person felt that the management had in him or her. The responses were quite telling- a whopping 98% affirmed that they were trusted implicitly and that no actions were suspected or cross checked or examined. This is indeed a noteworthy finding as it is ratified by the PPL employees themselves, and is a milestone in the empowerment process. An interesting feature observed was that clocks were thrown out long back. Trusting is a way of life and many instances prove this. When an employee wants to take a 'day off', he does not follow any paper procedure of applying for a leave. The group decides on the subject (in some case, the section does). The group is empowered to decide on the leave of employees. Even the CEO is unaware of such leave, and gets to know about it from the office records. The trust level is high because nobody suspects or cross checks the absence of a person nor is there any question of its validity. For example, every employee can use the resources of the organization equally and no one doubts the action. Another important feature at PPL is the philosophy that failures in course of work do happen and the reasons could be several. As many as 98% of the employees stated that no one blamed for the failure and infact they help each others to the fullest extent. As many as 65% expressed that no one is victimized for wrong doing, and all take responsibility for an action, felt more than 85% of the employees. In this course of action, ethical approach towards any activity in the organization is of prime importance. Ethical practices like honesty, truthfulness, means are as good as ends, faith in one's and other's actions, and respect for people are the important practices and approaches followed in the organization. These are systems crucial for empowerment to succeed on the macro level.
To develop a winning workforce and organization, management’s attitude and managing style matters much. In this regard, the study focused on management behavior towards employees. When questioned regarding this, more than 60% of the respondents opined that management was always objective in its behavior towards workplace issues and employees. Whenever it took up employee’s issues, it was objective in its approach and never yielded to any pressure or favoritism. While 25% felt that management was subjective sometimes, about 13% were undecided on this issue. Even more than 75% felt that management duly recognized the hard work put in by employees, while 11% felt that management sometimes did not recognize the hard work put in. More than 80% of the employees felt that, the reason why they always tried new ways of doing work was because of the management’s positive attitudes towards them. Management always encouraged employees to do innovative work and never questioned the validity of the outcome.

The study recorded more than 98% of the employees stating that management was open and welcomed new ideas, while sharing all the organizational information. Management was transparent in its behavior, felt 75% of the employees, and as many as 61% further felt that management was objective in all its organizational activities. The decisions taken by the management were objective, as felt nearly 53% of the employees.

When asked about management’s transparent behavior while taking decisions, 76% of the employees felt that management was objective in all its approach and actions, while nearly 21% felt that management was not transparent sometimes and tended to be biased. While 60% of the employees felt that management was clean in its behavior, it also shared all confidential matters with
them. While 90% of employees felt that the management never created an atmosphere of fear. In fact, nothing seems to be confidential and no papers and policy are untraceable. All matters relating to meetings, policies or future plans are kept open for everyone to see and verify. Everyone has a right to question the validity of the actions and decisions. Further, if one has an idea or a point to make, one can do so without anyone's formal permission. Management has no objection to anyone communicating any idea at anytime. They can even put it at the appropriate place meant for it in the organization. To the question whether management had any closed-door discussions, all the employees (100%) in the organization said that management (CEO) has an open door policy, where nothing is secret and everything is kept open.

Team and team work is an important ingredient in organizational success. It not only helps in individual enhancement, but also helps in overall productivity of the organization. Studies by Cummings and Griggs 1977; Conger and Kanungo 1988; Betof and Harwood 1992; Athreya and Das 1995; Gates 1995; Collins and Porras 1996; Juhl et al 1997; Korukonda et al 1999; and Menon and Kanungo 2000 have demonstrated the positive benefits of team, empowerment and productivity.

Teamwork is not a new concept in organizations. But, the different and innovative ways it is undertaken makes one still look at how it is presently practiced at PPL. The focus of enquiry was management's views on people working in teams and its efforts towards such a practice. A total of 70% of the employees were of the view that management encouraged teams at all levels in the organization, whereas 29% were undecided on the issue. While more than 80% said that the atmosphere in the team was cordial and positive as complete faith in each other bound the team.
members together. More than 90% of the employees felt that having faith and trust in one's team members encouraged continuous learning and development.

It was also observed that each person was free to join the team of his choice. While choosing and forming the composition of members, it was always ensured that they took account of the nature of the work and the skill needed was taken into account. No member was included on the basis of likes and dislikes. Everyone is a member of PPL and each is respected. This has made the organization soar to great heights and achieve fame and name in the business world. Further, each team is made accountable for its actions. Everyone felt that the functioning of the team was transparent and each employee knew the status of the other teams and the progress of the work undertaken. Team and group working is a part of the PPL work culture, and total transparency of team activity made each learn lessons from other teams. This success of teamwork is reflected in 700 plus different products manufactured in the organization.

Further, the study tried to find out, how the boss behavior towards the employees was and whether the employee had the power to question for his actions. The responses were noteworthy. More than 67% of the employees stated that the boss was also questioned for his actions, where it was felt that he was not right. About 21% averred that the boss was always right and was not to be questioned. As many as 76% of the respondents agreed that no one was protected or sidelined on the basis of likes and dislikes, and that of the management treated everyone equally. There was no incidence management ever sidelining anyone. As many as 86% of the respondents said that the management never crosschecked the activities of employees, and 85% of them verified that management was very clean.
and ethical in its policies. There was not a single policy, which was shown in one way and practiced in another way.

Empowerment, freedom and liberty go hand in hand. The liberty one enjoyed at workplace was also examined. As many as 80% of the employees felt that they took risk and experimented while at work because the attitude and behavior of management encouraged them to do so. But, a minority of 11% expressed their unhappiness over management not allowing them to take risks. Risk was understood to be the climate of freedom for one to try new and innovative ways of work, where a rule does not matter much, and no punishments are given for failure. Management even allows one to have his own mission, goals and objectives in line with organizational goals, expressed 80% employees. The results of the study conducted by Lawler (1994) tallies with the results of the present study on this matter. Further, it was also felt by 75% of the respondents that continuous improvement was everyone's responsibility and not just management's alone.

Further, 72% of the employees said that each recognition for the good work done was made known to all employees in the organization by posting it on the notice board and by announcing it at an appropriate forum. As many as 71% and 75% of the respondents expressed that they had the liberty to set their own standards and develop new products respectively. Management also gave a helping hand in these activities. The studies undertaken by Eichen (1989); Rothstein (1995); and Frank (1996) came out with similar results, that liberty enjoyed by employees in undertaking a job had positive implications on individual productivity, and people were motivated to a large extent, when the work was undertaken in their own style. These studies aver that each employee should have engaging experiences on a daily basis and the corporate should embody the principles of freedom one should
enjoy while working towards organization goals. As against the conventional way of management deciding all the organizational matters and workplace issues, if the employees are given the freedom instead to set their own work standards and develop the products for the customers. The findings agree with the results of the study by Hamel ⁸, who saw the relationship between employee empowerment, progressive culture and productivity.

Another fact that is positively related to empowerment is access to information about the mission, value, goals and objectives of the organization. Communication in the organization should be clear and open for one and all to understand the organizational activities. Infact, transparency and open lines of communication are crucial for organizational success. When the information sharing system in the employee-empowered PPL was scrutinized, more than 90% of the employees affirmed that all the information in the organization was open to everyone and was shared equally amongst all. The organization does not have any secret or confidential practices. The level of information sharing was such that everyone is aware of each activity. Meetings and their outcome, including future plans are kept open and everyone can see it and react. Infact, transparency in communication is a way of life in the organization.

Further, the observation regarding open lines of communication and practices of transparency in the organization reveals that all organizational information shared even with a watchman for that matter, who is aware of every other person's contributions. Shunu Sen, CEO, Quadra Advisory Pvt Ltd, also believes that defining a business strategy that is fair, transparent, open and based on trust is the need of

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the hour for Corporates to build a strong image. Validating the success of the ownership culture, 80% of the employees felt that they had all that power and freedom to permit any visitor without anyone's permission. While more than 85% expressed that new ideas were welcomed and never dismissed without valid reasons for doing so, and 75% of the employees averred that they had the liberty of doing the job in their own way and never looked for direction, supervision or guidance from superiors, and that they sought guidance, only when needed. A huge majority of 96% of the employees felt that they were also made part of the organizational development process, and were responsible for shaping the destiny of the organization. Infact, the workplace planning, scheduling, distribution of the work and redesigning of the product are all exclusively the employee's responsibility. Even the level of transparency in organization is such that 82% felt that they knew about each person's work, job and what he is doing in the organization. This, indeed, reflects positively on the culture of the organization and its environment.

The studies conducted by Lawler (1988); Pati (1997); Dwivedi (1998); and Bo Burlingham (1998) established an open feedback and appraisal of the employees as an exercise of empowering employees. While people tend to be afraid of a closed appraisal system, open and transparent appraisal will remove unnecessary doubt and suspicion. By being open and sharing the status of the employee's contribution, management literally drives people towards the organization's vision. This holds good, because more than 56% of the employees stated that they did not know who appraised their work performance, while 15% disagreed that they never knew who appraised them and that they were not aware

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that such transparency existed in the system, where as 28% were undecided on this particular issue.

Worker's participation in different echelons of the organization's activities constitutes an important ingredient for organizational success. More than 76% expressed that they had liberty to participate in different organizationwide activities. Infact, any participation by any employee concerning organizational matters does not require any formal permission from the management. Employees have the liberty to do so. The Mickey Manaster (1998) study also speaks of how employee participation at American Tool and Engineers contributed to the success of the organization. The present findings of the study confirm with this result in demonstrating employee participation's crucial role in the empowerment exercise.

There are various ways through which continuous improvement at the workplace is planned and worked out. Suggestions from all sides in the organization are a positive indication of organizational development. It also shows the philosophy of organization and the principles it stands on (Lawler, 1988; Rothstein, 1995). The suggestion system existing at PPL was examined along with the freedom one had in giving suggestions. 93% of the employees stated that all the employees give regularly suggestions. Further, employees expressed that they were free to suggest workplace improvements to the top boss without any reservations or fear. With such a system of suggesting workplace improvement practice, nearly 66% of the employees felt that management was always objective in selecting a given suggestion without unnecessary discrimination, but 30% of the employees also felt that selection of suggestions was subjective and was not professional.

Yet, a total 81% of the employees believed that reasons and explanations given for the rejection of all those suggestions. This is quite an enlightened practice
and transparent ethos that is followed at PPL. Also, more than 65% of the employees affirmed that no one was victimized for wrongdoing and each such act was looked upon as a learning experience. But, 25% felt that one is sometimes punished for wrongdoing. The results of a study undertaken by James (1991); Lawler (1994); and Mohapatra (1998) shows how employees came out with good suggestions and improvement areas because of management's philosophy in welcoming suggestions from employees. Suggestions not only tell what one has to do they also tell when and how things are to be taken up. Giving suggestions also makes one responsible.

A noteworthy finding is the degree of liberty that employees enjoy in participating and contributing towards the organizational success. As many as 75% verified that they had the liberty to participate in all the organizational activities, irrespective of whether one is the member of the forum or the team or not. Infact, there is no designated forum and everyone can organize activities depending on the need. Added to this, there are no incidences in the organization to show that management ever victimized employees for giving frank feedbacks. As many as 68% of the employees further expressed that feedbacks given are thoroughly studied and merit due is given to them. No feedback is ever dismissed for any personal reasons and at the same time, reasons are clearly given as to why some suggestions were not taken up. This shows the management's concern for the employee's feelings and expressions.

Infact, the policies in the organization are such that everyone comes under the common purview and no one is looked up or looked down upon for any reasons. The organization does not have any double standards felt more than 88% of the employees. All the policies, irrespective of the position one holds, applied
equally to one and all. When it comes to publicising one's achievements at work, the policy again remains the same for all. As many as 90% expressed they had the full liberty to publicise their personal contribution towards the organization. 60% of the employees further said that they could even publish the 'value' of their contribution towards the organization. This shows management's commitment towards empowering employees and creating an ownership culture.

Freedom at the workplace in an organization can be practiced in different ways. While 78% expressed that everyone had the liberty to meet customers freely, more than 90% of the employees said that the feedback given by customers was freely discussed and put forth before the management. 68% of the employees felt that they even promised best service to the customers on behalf of the management. A unique feature is the liberty the customers have to make public the organization's standards and products. While 78% of the employees felt that the management allowed the customers to express their dissatisfaction about the company's performance, about 10% of them felt that customers did not have liberty to do so.

The findings of the present study are similar to the findings of studies undertaken in the area of human resources development, empowerment, and productivity, by Cummings and Griggs (1977); Conger and Kanungo (1988); Betof and Harwood (1992); Athreya et al. (1995); Juhl et al. (1997); and Menon and Kanungo (2000).

**Hypothesis Testing**

Using a statistical model, this study examined the correlates and consequences of empowerment among a group of 60 employees. Among the demographic characteristic believed to influence feelings of empowerment are
A sense of belonging created by management through various management practices and ethos is likely to create feelings of empowerment in the employees. Conger and Kanungo (1988) examined this factor and found the positive correlation between feelings of empowerment and management ethos. Thus, the hypothesis: Empowerment is a sense of belonging developed in the employee as a result of various coherent organisational practices conducive to creating such a feeling.

The results in the study prove that overall the groups did not differ in perceiving the practices and there were no significant differences in the group members thinking, as also amongst the group thinking as far as the empowerment practice was concerned. Across all the respondents, the responses tended to be similar, either in agreeing or disagreeing with the organisational practices. Where the age level, work experience, educational standards and employee working in different departments was concerned, the group did not differ much and all held similar views regarding the practice of employee empowerment by the management. The obtained F-ratio value for these variables, viz: .630; 1.799; 1.078; and .061 respectively showed insignificant differences in responses of the employees and organisational practices, thus, proving that across the respondents, employees perceived the feelings of empowerment due to organizational ethos. The
significance percentage values of .536; .185; .347; and .805 respectively also showed insignificant differences in responses at different category levels, thus, strongly supporting the hypothesis.

The responses give a true picture of the various practices that are instituted at PPL. What is noteworthy is the similarity of responses across different categories of workforce. While agreeing or disagreeing with the enquiry, the responses are homogeneous in all the categories of respondents. It is a fact that the practices of empowering employee are clearly visible at PPL and every employee has felt the positive implications. Therefore, hypothesis 1 is proved positively with significantly high scores.

\( \text{Ha2} \)

The feelings of empowerment are not only affected by the characteristic of the individual, but also by the nature and quality of climate the organization develops. Employees are more likely to feel empowered in an organization, where the climate encourages positive behavior. Fery (1993) and Frank (1996) suggested that good organization climate would stimulate employee's positive behavior, leading to feelings of empowerment. Accordingly, the hypothesis: A good organisational climate would promote positive behavior and attitude towards organizational growth and development leading to employee empowerment.

The results in the study prove that overall the groups did not differ in perceiving the practices and there were no significant differences in the group members thinking, as also amongst the group thinking as far as the empowerment practices concerned. Across all the respondents, the responses tended to be similar, either in agreeing or disagreeing with the organisational practices. Where
the age level, work experience, educational standards and employee working in
different departments were concerned, the groups did not differ much and all held
similar views regarding the employee empowerment by the management. The
obtained F-ratio values of .551; .574; .891; and .169 respectively proved insignificant
differences in responses of the employees and organizational climate, thus, proving
that across the board, employees perceived strong feelings of empowerment due
to organization climate. The significance percentage values of .580; .452; .416 and
.683 respectively also proved insignificant differences in the responses of different
groups, thus, support for hypothesis was found to be strong. Therefore, hypothesis 2
is proved positively with significantly high scores, barring a few exceptions, where
the responses did not match the assumptions.

Ha 3

Perceptions of empowerment can enhance the value of work done by the
individual, increase job satisfaction and contribute to work productivity and success.
People look for transparency, openness and freedom to be aware of all the
organizational activities. Lawler (1992) suggested that two specific type of
information are critical for empowerment: (1) Information about the organizations
mission, and (2) Information about performance.

Information about mission is an important antecedent of empowerment
because it helps to create a sense of meaning and purpose (Conger and Kanungo,
1988). Performance information is fundamental to reinforcing a sense of
competence and believing that one is a valued part of the organization. Thus, the
hypotheses: Access to information about the mission, value, goals and vision of an organisation is positively related to empowerment.

The results in the study prove that by and large the groups did not differ in perceiving the practices and there was no significant difference in the group members' thinking, as also amongst the group thinking regarding the empowerment practices. Where the age level, work experience, educational standards and employee working in different departments was concerned, the groups did not differ much and all held similar views regarding the practice of employee empowerment by the management at PPL. The obtained F-ratio values of .585; .419; .259; and .497 respectively proved insignificant differences in the responses of the employees to transparent and open behavior of the management. The significance percentage values of .560; .520; .773; and .484 respectively also proved insignificant differences in responses of different category groups, thus, support for hypothesis was found to be strong. Therefore, hypothesis 3 is proved positively barring a few negative responses, which differed from the study assumptions.

**Ha 4**

Lawler (1994) proposed that, organizations with innovative and quick response to change, are likely to stay in turbulent times. Hoerr (1998) found that the organizations that are likely to remain in business are the ones who adopt different types of workplace practices, while creating high performance work systems. Hence, the hypothesis: If an organisation aspires for fundamental changes, it must change the fundamentals.

The results of the study prove that the groups did not differ much in perceiving the practices and there were no significant differences in the group
members thinking, as also amongst the group thinking as far as the employee empowerment practices were concerned. Across the board, the responses tended to be similar, either in agreeing or disagreeing with the organisational practices. Where the age level, work experience, educational standards and employee working in different departments was concerned, the groups did not differ much and almost all the employees held similar views as far as practicing employee empowerment by the management in the organisation is concerned. The obtained F-ratio values for these variables, viz: .731; .816; 1.060; and .589 respectively proved insignificant differences in responses of the employees and on the fundamentals it functioned. The significance percentage values of .486; .370; .353; and .446 respectively also proved insignificant differences in responses at different category groups, thus, support for hypothesis 4 was found. Therefore, hypothesis 4 is proved positively with only a few responses not in line with the assumptions.

Overall Analysis of Hypothesis

In the present study, as many as four hypotheses were put to test, viz: Empowerment is a sense of belonging developed by the employee as a result of various coherent organisational practices conducive to creating such an feeling; A good organisational climate would shape and develop positive behavior and attitudes towards organisational growth leading to employee empowerment; Access to information about the mission, value, goals, and vision of an organisation is positively related to empowerment; and If an organisation aspires to fundamental changes, it must change the fundamentals.
Several variables reflecting empowerment practices at the workplace were examined. To know the statistical significance, the mean and SD values were collated. While the hypotheses were tested using ANOVA and the F-ratio values, the results were analyzed by dividing each variable, i.e. age, experience, education and department and to know the significant difference between the group and amongst the group members. This was an important research to understand whether all the respondents under the purview of the study differed and the reasons, per se. The results are quite interesting in that, irrespective of categories and group, all employees held similar views regarding the practices. There was no significant difference and the employees in the organisation shared almost identical views, barring a few exceptions.

Employees Perception on Management

Several studies including those by Eichen (1989); James (1991); Marjorie Reynolds (1991); Bowen and Lawler (1992); Quarrey (1992); Howard and Welkins (1994); Gates (1995); Rothstein (1995); Wall and Jackson (1995); Kahn (1998); and Kanter (2003) have demonstrated how a responsible organization can be created through a responsible management and a leader through apt leadership. In most Fortune organizations, the main agenda is to create a leadership adept in crafting an organization fit for the competitive world. In most troubled organizations, the management tries to bring substantial growth through strategic HR interventions. Also in several cases employees view management’s leadership qualities and its responsibility towards organization will tell the success level of the organization. 10

There was an attempt in the present study to understand the overall employee perception about management styles with respect to developing the organization and managing the human resources. It is assumed that employee's positive perception of the various ethoses followed by the management is crucial for organizational success. Over a period of time, employees working with the organization in various capacities were asked to express what their experience and views of the management. This was quite crucial because an employee may or may-not be happy in an event or situation, and might have negative perception the management. Hence, the study tried to find out the overall employee impression of the management over a period of time and not based on a single-issue. As many as twenty odd areas were identified, which ranged from result-oriented management to vision-based organization. The questions included: was the management uncritical, subjective, empathetic, result oriented, doubt provoking, and valued individuals, did it encouraged participative approach, and was it motivation oriented, human resource oriented, self-interested, looked for new challenges, loyal and truthful, accepting criticism, an open communicator and a visionary.

When enquired about the result-oriented behavior of the management, more than 86% of the employees averred that the management was result oriented and looked for positive results from employees, while about 8% of them differed and 5%...
of them were undecided on the issue. Among the employees who expressed that management was result oriented, 36% further felt that it was true to a large extent, whereas 50% employees felt it to be true to a moderate extent. If the management is not result oriented, employees cannot be empowered because it is the management that should usher in this exercise of employee empowerment. Richard Branson, CEO, Virgin Airlines, writes to all the employees a chatty letter once a month on his notepad and invites them to write or call him with their problems, ideas, and dreams and how the organization should march towards a better future. The employees did and new VIRGIN success was born. Management has to be result oriented and should look for positive results from its employees. In their studies Eichen 1989; Marjorie Reynolds 1991; Bowen and Lawler 1992; Howard and Welkins 1994; Wall and Jackson 1995; and Kanter 2003 have focused on the issue of Management Leadership, as it is crucial in empowering employees and in creating a winning organization.

The question whether management was uncritical fetched more than 83% positive responses, whereas 13% answered in the negative. Among these 83% positive responses, 36% of the employees further felt that management was uncritical to a greater degree, whereas 46% felt that it was only to a moderate extent. More than 65% felt that management was only not subjective in its approach and dealt with all workplace issues objectively, irrespective of the person or position of the person concerned. A small chunk of 20% said that management was subjective in its approach.

A noteworthy finding was in the area of sensitivity of the management towards the employees. More than 90% regarded the management to be empathetic towards employees and any errors caused in due course of work were not punished.
Instead, management saw such experience as a learning exercise and allowed employees to gain and learn lessons from their shortcomings. But about 5% of the respondents were skeptical in this regard. Regarding respecting each individual in the organization irrespective of one's position and contribution towards the organization, more than 96% held positive views regarding management's behavior in respecting each human being. While about 3% were unsure on this issue, none of the employees expressed their dissatisfaction with the management for not respecting employees in the organization. More than 50% felt that management respected individuals to a moderate degree, whereas nearly 43% felt that management respected each and every worker to a great extent.

Allowing workers to participate in different activities is a noble work that the management can do towards employee's growth. Through participation, the work gets distributed and each has the chance of contributing his share. It also lightens the burden and gets the work done on time. While participation makes way for new and innovative ideas from all the sides, it also contributes towards the organizations vision. Studies also have demonstrated the positive benefits of employees being given a chance to contribute their share towards organizational goals through participation in different activities (Lawler, 1992; Perry, 1992; Blasi, 1993; Bhan, 1994; and Chamber, 1996). The same was put to test to see if the management at PPL allowed the employees to participate in corporate exercises. As many as 96% opined that management allowed everyone to participate in organizational activities, while 3% were undecided, but none believed that management restricted anyone from participating. Even the enquiry regarding management's sincere approach towards organization and human resources fetched 96% positive responses.
Other areas of enquiry revealed the following results: 48% said that management was innovative in all its activities; 95% expressed that management encouraged all the employees in the organization; 91% opined that management motivated others; 93% responded that management was human resource oriented; 58% of them told that management was not self interested; 96% stated that management always looked for new challenges; 98% said that management was loyal and truthful; and nearly 72% opined that management was visionary and was clear regarding the future course and directions the organization should take.

Though not evident, the underlying assumptions powerfully shape a system's inner working efficacy and reflect on the outcomes. The results speak loud about the impression that the management's style and practices have left on the employee's. Because these feelings of the employees are not only the hopes of corporate success, but also tell about the rate and direction of growth, which are extremely important. It is not just enough to follow the practices and systems, equally others should understand and realize these practices and systems and each one in the organization should equally perceive them and understand the core objectives behind these systems and practices. The philosophy behind such practices should be visible for everyone to see and practice and should be clearly understood by each and everyone.

Hypothesis Testing

The CEO's job is like no other in the organization. It is infinite. The CEOs are, by definition, ultimately responsible for every decision and action of every member of the company. An extensive study of about 160 CEO by Farkas and Wetlaufer
(1996) led to the conclusion that the CEO's attitude, activities, and behavior determine the success of the organization. The study hypothesized that there might turn out to be 160 different approaches to leadership. Only five distinct approaches emerged, viz: the strategy approach; the human assets approach; the expertise approach; the box approach; and the change approach. To identify what's really going on, it is critical to observe the dynamics between the CEO in question and those around him. Keeping track of effective behavior as well as ineffective ones will help one to develop a full picture of the person in question. Thus, the hypothesis: Empowerment at workplace makes leaders redundant. This was examined and tested in four different categories, viz: Employees' views on Leadership of CEO; Employees' views on Management Ethos and Practices; Employees' views on Management's Futuristic Behavior; and Employees' views on Management's HR Savvy Behavior.

☆Employees views on the Leadership of the CEO

The obtained F-ratio value for these variables, viz: .3.557; 5.904; .509; and .541 respectively proved insignificant differences in responses of the employees towards leadership of the CEO. The significance percentage value of .036; .018; .604; and .465 respectively also proved insignificant differences in the responses at different category groups.

☆Employees views on the Management's Ethos and Practices

The obtained F-ratio value for these variables, viz: 1.819; 3.234; .551; and .246 respectively proved insignificant differences in responses of the employees towards management ethos and practices. The significance percentage value of
.172; .077; .579; and .662 respectively also proved insignificant differences in responses at different category groups.

Employees views on the Management's Futuristic Behavior

The obtained F-ratio value for these variables, viz: 1.752; 2.726; .735; and .959 respectively proved insignificant differences in responses of the employees towards futuristic behavior of management. The significance percentage value of .183; .104; .484; and .332 respectively also proved insignificant differences in responses at different category groups.

Employees views on the Management's HR Savvy Behavior

The obtained F-ratio values for these variables, viz: .734; 1.884; 3.836; and 1.998 respectively proved insignificant differences in the responses of the employees towards management's HR savvy behavior. The significance percentage value of .485; .175; .027; and .163 respectively also proved insignificant differences in the responses of different groups.
The subject of empowerment is receiving a lot of attention (Betof, and Harwood, 1992; Blasi, 1993; Clare, 1993; Barner, 1994; Carr, 1994; Lawler, 1994; Chiristina, 1997; Argyris, 1998; London, and Smither, 1999; and Kanter, 2003). It is because of the post-benefits one gets when employees are empowered. Infact, the outcome of empowerment practices is far reaching. It benefits the individual, organization and the management. On the Macro level, the productivity goes up and overall progress through quality output in the organization is clearly visible, which is also reflected in the economy of the country. The studies in this direction have showed the most positive benefits in empowering employees (Perry, 1992; Taylor, and Ramsey, 1993; Peter, 1994; Juhl, et al 1997; Kanungo, and Menon, 2000; and Kanter, 2003). Even Lawler and Bowen (1992) have demonstrated the positive benefits of employee empowerment. Studies undertaken by Chiristina 1997, and Christopher and Loren 1998 have demonstrated the positive outcomes of empowerment practices, *per se*.

Based on the observations of the results, the macro outcome of such practices at PPL are far reaching and the reflected in the organization's manufacturing more than 700 products, all being initiated by its employees. A noteworthy feature of empowerment practices is that employees control all the means of production and run the organization. The striking feature is the macro feeling of ownership concept.

The outcome of such empowerment practices, which are visible at PPL, is in the improvements at the workplace. Infact, people work on their own, know their responsibility towards the organization and hence don’t require any direction,
supervision or guidance at each stage. This was possible due to the refined culture and the reason for high motivation. When they are made part of the organization's development process, they put their full strength, which is another area of positive benefit. This feeling is what is required to boost the morale and motivate employees, which in turn leads to higher commitment. It is also true that each knows the work of other employee and their contribution towards organization, which can be internally benchmarked.

Ownership culture is another benefit of such a system and each feels that he is the boss. In the words of Jim Kelly, CEO, United Parcel Services-UPS, “around here, we don’t think of ourselves as individuals doing too much on our own. We think of ourselves as people working together to get things accomplished” 11. This feeling is very important for inner motivation and keeping hopes high in the employees. This also helps them to be responsible and duty-bound. The benefits are also far reaching in the area of how employees look at their job. They gave regular suggestions because their voices were genuinely heard. As has already been seen, such suggestions and workplace improvements have made the organization manufacture more than 700 different products, most of them being initiated by employees creative behavior.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Honored</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>President Award for Entrepreneurship</td>
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<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Naeco Sims Award for excellence in Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993-94</td>
<td>First prize in Industrial Exhibition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Diligent TAXpayer award by Commercial Department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Honor by Institute of Engineers</td>
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The trustworthiness was also high and almost all felt that they were trusted. This is an important finding in the study, because once the employee in the organization develops such a feeling, great strides can be achieved. They not only work hard, but the commitment is also high. It was seen in several instances that the committed employees have helped the corporate to regain the business success. Innovative approach and the creative output are closely associated with such empowered workplace culture and the employees go in for innovative approach towards workplace issues. While doing so, employees feel good about management and it is this feeling of the employees, which helped them to see the management as a transparent body. This transparent approach of management was truly the cause of employee’s commitment and quality output.

Further, while practicing the principles of empowerment, people came together and worked in teams and the trust level, faith, and confidence in team members was very high, as seen in the majority of responses12. A better work relationship was developed with less infighting and ego hassles. People started trusting each other and spying was not resorted to. Moreover, management never doubted the employee’s action and faith amongst all in organization kept each within the web.

The other positive post-effect benefits that were visible included: development of leadership at all levels; employee’s planning their career by themselves; had their own rules and regulations in working towards organization goals; everyone formulated his own objectives, goals and vision towards own work standards in developing new products. This also minimized the managements work

and the management did not bother that all the activities should be directed by it.

Studies undertaken by Robert 1990; Rothwell 1993; Caudron 1995; Simon 1995; Smilor 1996; Argyris 1998; and Ashton, et al 2003 have come out with similar results on the after-math positive outcome of employee empowerment, per se.

The outcomes of empowerment practices are always far reaching. What matters is the way these benefits are seen in the exercise of organizational growth. It is also to be observed that the journey towards creating such an environment in the organization is not an overnight exercise. Well planning, crystal clear work areas, well-designed work systems and high ethical professional ethos have to be practiced. What also matters is how employees understand the exercise and the systems, per se. Abraham Lincoln very rightly said, 'nearly all men can stand adversity, but if you want to test a man's character, give him power'. Employees in Polyhydron organization have proved that, when given the power, they have utilized it for the development of organization.
Surprise Responses of Employees on Empowerment Practices

Everything in the process of empowering employees starts with the type of culture that an organization possesses. The workplace is a combination of many facets of each individual's thinking and perceptions. While everyone in an organization will share the organizational culture, not all will do so to the same degree. In fact, empowerment goes along with freedom and liberty, and certain assumptions were made, i.e. everyone has a freedom to criticize the system to bring more improvements better; the boss' action can also be questioned; responsibility is equally shared; transparency exists organizationwide; objective approach prevails in all the activities; and objective feedback is the norm in an empowerment environment.¹³

The present study observed the cause-effect relationships of the practices and looked for unexpected responses. An effort was made to find out if employees had the power to criticize the boss's action, necessary, and the results showed that 70% responded in the negative saying that such a practice was not encouraged. Also, 48% of the employees felt that everything in the organization was not negotiable and some matters were rigid. While the feeling of the employees in an empowered organization is quite different from that of the employees in conventional organization, 53% of the employees agreed that they were paid to work and that was the primary reason for their presence in the organization. This could be a significant observation because pay is not the primary motive with which people come to work in an empowered organization such as PPL. Instead, the culture, the

¹³Rob Cross and Laurence Prusak (2002)."The People Who make Organization Go-or Stop", Harvard Business Review, 80(6); Jun pp. 104-112
management style, the leadership, the ethos, the social and informal relationships, the transparent boss-employee relationships are the predominant motivating reasons for the employees to be with the organization.

The value placed on people is an important element, which is the prime force that attracts the employees in the organization. These practices also have a considerable effect on one's thinking and perception in developing commitment and affiliation towards the organization. Pay should be stated as the last reason but the results tell a different story, thus disproving the assumptions.

Further, the aspect of equal treatment for the employees by the management was examined. While common rooms and workplaces were shared throughout the organization as expected in an empowered organization, about 25% of the employees felt that commonality and equal sharing was not there in some cases, and 30% were undecided on the issue of workers participation in all the organizational activities. Around 30% stated that while employees made suggestions, the management was at times subjective in implementing them at the final stage. Transparent behavior goes with the empowerment culture, but a total of 31% of the employees felt not free to express what was in their mind, which showed lack of transparency in the organization. While means adopted towards reaching ends is an agreed pattern followed in an empowered organization, 73% of the employees agreed that ends are different from means and that they did not go together in a few instances. Delegated and shared responsibility is another characteristic of an empowered organization. About 28% of the employees felt that responsibility was not shared equally in the organization; whereas 31% employees also felt that management had their own people who sometimes worked in the interest of the management. This is not an expected behavior and culture that is
found in an organization, where people are empowered and management looks for creating an ownership culture.

While the issue feedback was put to test, 38% of the employees opined positively, whereas 25% of employees felt that the management was subjective on a few issues. While an empowered organization always looks for shared leadership, 43% employees felt that the management did not encourage them to be independent or exhibit leadership qualities, and 30% also said that management did not allow employees to set their own rules and regulations. Even through transparency is practiced in all the activities at PPL, 50% said that they never knew when the bonus would be paid next. While it was believed that improvement and development was everyone's responsibility, 21% disagreed. Liberty is synonymous to empowerment, but 65% of the employees said that they did not have complete liberty to cultivate a work habit of their choice. As many as 48% of the employees also felt that at times recognition for the work was subjective.

Normally, every cause has a certain probable effect, and the responses discussed here could be true. But, the respondents may require some time to understand the system and the true spirit behind such practices. It is also important to know whether some of the employees really understood the practices, and their views differed from the majority. Whatever be the outcome, these responses should be thoroughly studied and worked out in order to strengthen the organization even more.
Pause for a moment to think about companies you know about or you have heard about as being wonderful places to work in. Perhaps companies such as SAS Institute, Southwest Airlines, Deloitte and Touche or HP readily come to mind. These companies were in the 1999 Fortune magazines list of top ten of the 100 Best Companies to work, according to the research conducted by the Management-consulting firm Hewitt Associates (1998). Take for example, the companies in India and the list would includes: Infosys Technologies limited, Hindustan Lever Limited, Reliance, ITC, Ranbaxy, HDFC and the like. These companies were named as 'India's most valuable companies'. The most important characteristic of these companies is their practice of having a shared leadership that supports a performance driven corporate culture, giving the message that employees are valued. Infact, most executives can sense when their organizations are not working well, but few know how to correct the situation. Promising oppournities die for lack of managerial attention and for most companies, developing HR is neither a Science nor an Art, it is an oxymoron. Besides not viewing workers as easily expendable, other signals of valuing employees also include best leadership practices that minimize artificial distinction in the workforce, offer the same dining and parking privileges for all and giving an equal career development opportunities. At INTEL, for example, in order to maintain the cooperative and egalitarian culture, there are no reserved parking spaces, no executive lunchrooms and no corner offices.

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14 500 India's most valuable companies, Business Today (special issue), Vol. 11. No 22, 10, Nov 2002.

Even at the well-known IT Company of India, Infosys Technologies limited, there is no distinction between anyone as far as positions and persons are concerned. It is the human being and his work, which gets recognized in the organization.

In view of this, the present study examined the experiences of the CEO before he initiated such practices, and why he thought of empowering employees at PPL. Many issues were identified for the CEO to give his opinions on.

The CEO feels that, telling employees merely to do the job does not motivate them. Instead, allowing each individual to undertake a work (job) in the way he wants to do it, will create a sort of interest and boost the morale of the employees to walk that extra mile. While sharing his experiences, the CEO said that initially employees at PPL did work for the pay given. They never involved themselves in any of the organizational activities unless specifically told to do so. The organization was managed in a conventional way. No one was given any independent power to act and each work was routed through the top man. The top man decided all the activities. The employee’s involvement towards organizational development was not appreciated. People were there simply to work and not to decide about organizational growth.

People saw organization merely as a place to earn their livelihood in. With this work culture, things in the organization moved, but not towards visible growth. The experience of the CEO in some visionary organizations aboard regarding management of the human resources through systems like shared vision, participative culture, ownership concept, power distribution, delegated and shared responsibility enlightened him to think on similar lines for PPL. The CEO’s experiences helped him in understanding the significance and importance of the
development of human resources, and stimulated him to think of similar innovative approaches towards management of human resources and development at PPL.

The experiment of empowering employees had a small beginning way back in 1981. Initially, it was slow, but a few areas were identified for employees to take on the responsibility of their work. While responding to the ideas of empowerment, giving responsibility, keeping faith in employees’ action, freedom to decide workplace issues, decision making concerning their work, and asking for open feedback on the system were the areas initially implemented. While narrating his experiences of how empowerment was instituted, the CEO said that shared culture was important and that was created first. Thus, it is quite crucial for any organization to have shared workplace culture while instituting employee empowerment, per se. The reasons for such practices were communicated at the first instance to all the employees. A series of discussions were held from time to time in order to make the employees understand the system. The workplace culture, which includes freedom to undertake the work in one’s own way, value to human beings and liberty were the initial empowerment paradigm development in the organization. While talking about the policies needed for an empowered organization, examples of all such policies adopted at PPL were cited. The policies not only communicate what the organization is looking for, but also point out what needs to be done for the successful running of an organization by empowering employees.

While management style and functioning is crucial for organizational success, a value based work system is a must. Hence, trusting employee’s action without suspecting them, having belief in what the employees do, valuing human beings, respecting all, no compromising on the quality, objective approach, having open
lines of communication, transparent behavior, means are as good as ends and an ethical approach are the workplace systems that are widely practiced at PPL.

The organization's ethical principles were studied as at PPL focus was on an ethical approach and clean behavior in running the business. It is seen as the prime ingredient, which gives the quality output in the exercise of empowerment. It is true that employee empowerment and ethical standards go hand in hand, and high standards of ethical approach add to the success of the system. At the macro level, the degree of freedom one enjoys is another factor, which contributes to the organization's success. While the degree of employee maturity has to be looked at while freedom is given, initially it could be in lesser percentage and once the employee understands the true spirit of the system, then complete freedom can be given to him to decide the course of action.

Examples of empowerment strategy and practices adopted in PPL includes an open door policy, trusting employee's action, open and transparent communications in all activities, sharing common rooms, equality in opportunity, objective assessment of employee's work, flat organizational work systems, lack of bureaucracy and red tapism, no designated position for one to work in, anyone can use the work space in fulfilling organization objectives, shared participation of employees in organization endeavor, employees having the freedom to decide on organizational issues and open feedback, which have added to the spirit of empowerment at PPL.

The CEO, in responses to an enquiry regarding the language that is found in an empowered organization like PPL cited some examples:

- you have done a mistake and let us all look at it;
- my door is always open for discussions;
let us all discuss on your idea;
how to solve your problem.... your problem is our problem;
any ideas from your side to contribute;
you are the boss of the organization;
I look for everyone in joining hands with me;
you have done a good work, let us all learn lessons from you;
let me join you in helping you;
please teach me the new techniques that you have learnt;
let me announce your achievements to others;
I will arrange a programme for sharing your successful story.

Other examples of language in an empowered includes: I do not require to ask anyone before changing the work procedure; let me remark on the boss 'action; let me write a strategy for the organization; I have made a new product; let me also chair the meeting; let me write the mission statement for the organization; let me record my observations in the annual general meeting proceedings; we will all share the achievements; come let me cheer the excellent work done; let me arrange for an informal social event on behalf of all; let me start a forum to discuss syndicate work; I will put up everyone's performance figures for the week; and the like is widely visible at PPL. Empowerment, at PPL, does not exist in words alone, it is reflected in people's action, and in the CEO's egalitarian approach. The employees at PPL believe in 'WE' rather than in 'I'.

The benefits of such practices are plenty. High productivity, quality output, high level of employee job satisfaction, no industrial relation problems and no problems of labour turnover are some of the benefits enjoyed by PPL. Targets can be set with employees and are usually reached. What also has been the outcome is the extra energy that the employees put and the extra mile that they walk for fulfilling
organizational goals. While empowerment is seen as an answer to most problems faced by organizations, the journey is not all that easy. The resistance from the employees is reflected in their speech:

- I don't want power and responsibility;
- I am not the right man for such work;
- It's not my job to have power.

These are the hurdles to empowerment.

Whatever be the cause-effect relations, the principal reason why the organization has been able to create such an empowered environment is the quality of the leader and his leadership equally supported by all the employees. The leader has been like a bandmaster, leading the band and walking in front of it. Certain positive traits are essential in the top man's behavior, for the system to be a success. The traits that are visible in the CEO include assertiveness, transparent approach, growth oriented, ego less, open communicator, team worker, willingness to take risks, open to ideas and most important of all - letting the power be equally distributed. On the other hand, the characteristic features of the CEO, which are seen in his behavior towards the organization and employees include: a result oriented behavior; uncritical in seeing things; more objective in dealing with all workplace issues; empathetic towards employees; respects all, not too concerned about the return quantum from any corner; sincere in all the activities; innovative and looks for newer approach at workplace; encourages each to take-up new assignments; human resource oriented, sees people as an asset and value them; loyal and truthful towards everyone in the organization; and above all, a visionary, which is reflected in his action plans for the organization till 2010, and the way he is working towards it. He has a positive, vision based approach, which is reflected in
his future plans for the organization. This not only shows how the top man sees the future of the organization, but it also shows how shared vision is an integral part of all organizational activities.

The leader and the leadership reflected at PPL is truly an extraordinary example of how with structured and well thought out human resource interventions, an organization of global standards can be created. PPL is a standing example of a truly empowered leadership approach. The methods followed by the leader would be considered revolutionary anywhere in the World, and even more so in India. In fact, one sometimes wonders how the whole effort did not end in chaos. The company has apparently succeeded in almost all areas, devoid of the foibles of most other humans. As Peter Drucker puts it best, "It is more important to be digging the hole in the right place than to be digging the hole right." * Drucker, Peter F (2000). Managing in Turbulent Times, UK; Butter Worth Heinemann (Classic Edition) The CEO of PPL has proved this right.