Empowered: Unleash Your Employees, Energize Your Customers, and Transform Your Business

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Is Your Company EMPOWERED for Success?

You know it's happening within your organization. Your people, armed with cheap, accessible technology, are connecting with customers and building innovative new solutions. But who are these creative problem-solvers? How can you be one? And just as important--how can you lead them?

We call them HEROes: highly empowered and resourceful operatives. Your company needs them because in the age of Twitter, iPhones, Facebook, YouTube, and an ever-evolving torrent of Web information, your customers now step up to the counter armed with more data and access than ever before, and in many cases, your company is overmatched.

In *Empowered*, Forrester's Josh Bernoff--coauthor of the pioneering book *Groundswell*--and Ted Schadler explain how to transform your company by unleashing the mighty force of these HEROes. Like John Bernier and Ben Hedrington at Best Buy, who built an army of 2,500 tweeting employees to reach out to customers online. Or Ross Inglis, who tapped into Internet computing resources to open an entirely new customer channel for Thomson Reuters. Or John Stadick, who equipped 600 sales staff with iPhones and boosted profits at his construction rental company.

The truth is, one in three of your information workers already use easily accessible technologies that your company does not sanction. *Empowered* gives you a prescription for embracing this covert innovation. At the heart of a HERO-powered business is a new pact between these critical employees, company managers, and the IT department: HEROes build new solutions to meet customer needs, management sets clear rules while encouraging more experimentation, and IT expands its role to both support and secure these business solutions.

Fueled by data from Forrester Research, *Empowered* is packed with the business tools and information necessary to move your organization several steps ahead of the competition:

- Statistical analysis of the 16% of customers who account for 80% of the online influence

- The four-step IDEA process to transform customer-facing service, marketing, and mobile applications

- A tool to score HERO projects on value and effort, to offer guidance on which projects to support

- The HERO index: A scorecard of the industries and departments with the most--and the fewest--HEROes

- Roadmaps for collaboration systems that stimulate and support HERO innovation

- The game plan for IT's new role as a key partner in technology ideas throughout the company

- Dozens of case studies and examples from firms in every industry, from retail to business services

Armed with an arsenal of exciting and valuable new technologies, your employees are already transforming the way you do business. You can lead them or block them--it's your choice. *Empowered* will help you make the right decision.

Empowered: Unleash Your Employees, Energize Your Customers, and Transform Your Business Details

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Steve Whiting says

Pretty good book on creating a more agile and responsive enterprise by empowering staff. It covers all the bases well - several times I read a chapter and thought "yes, but what about....", only to find that they covered that soon afterwards.

I'm not a fan of the tortured acronym HERO (which you will read many, many times by the end of the book), but otherwise it's an easy read and with a couple of minor reservations gives a great introduction. The reservations I have are (1) I think they could have covered the negative side of autonomous staff a bit more - I would have liked to have seen a case study of a major disaster and how the situation was or wasn't recovered and what lessons were learnt; there is some brief discussion in this area, but I think it needs more depth to counter the overwhelming positivity of the rest; and (2) I think they understate the difficulty of engaging existing staff into internal social media, and particularly they dismiss the use of anonymous postings too readily; in most cases, identity is paramount, but has the danger of supressing negative opinions which need to be surfaced somehow.

Andrew O'Hearn says

I read "Empowered" over the September 11-12 weekend. Although I was already familiar with many of the concepts through "Groundswell," the "boom boom pow" of this edition was the HERO Compact: IT, managers, and highly empowered and resourceful operatives (HEROes).

In the authors' words, "technology populism" is not a fad: employees (and their end customers) are mastering new aspects of technology every day. Left unchecked, this innovation could result in chaos. The authors correctly note that "it must align with corporate strategy . . . leadership has to communicate its goals and strategies more effectively or there will be a lot of wasted innovation."

Pulling disenfranchised, rogue and locked-down employees into the HERO employees quadrant (acting more resourceful and feeling more empowered) is more than just pop psychology: it's a value generator and competitive differentiator (especially with Customer Service, where less than one in five employees are HEROes).

Another telling statement: "innovation is about speed (fast, cheap experiments and high velocity), collaboration (feedback from across the organization; a business strategy: a way to improve the productivity of people and teams and accelerate the flow of information throughout the company), and systems (software that supports innovation).

The "aha" moment was showing how the groundswell technology trends of smart mobile devices, pervasive video, cloud computing services, and social technology empower and serve customers, and develop workers in the process. To quote the book and Malcolm Harkins, chief information security officer at Intel, we need to "run toward the risk so [we] can shape it" -- and resist the urge to treat these fundamental shifts in the way

business is conducted as a fad or a dot-com-like "blip" in the Information Age.

As great as "Groundswell" was, this book has eclipsed it in terms of sheer business value. Read it, share it, put it into practice. Your customers are already doing so.

Derrick Trimble says

Companies that empower their staff to make decisions are companies that I like to be loyal to....hands down. You call or visit customer service and those empowered staff members deal with your problem or complaint with efficiency and a smile. I suspect they wear a smile mainly because they know they have the power to create a positive outcome for the customer.

The flip side are those companies that are stuck in their ways, don't care about the customer, or are focused on short, easy money at the expense of long-term customer loyalty. Bernoff and Schadler present a good argument for the highly empowered resourceful operative (HERO) against the backdrop of an empowered (informed and plugged in) consumer base. Their analysis of the empowered customer and the effectiveness of HERO oriented companies is without question a compelling proposition.

The reasons for the low rating are:

- this was essentially covered better in Groundswell
- the examples and case-studies are mainly of Fortune 500 type of companies and therefore hard to translate to small businesses
- the book doesn't create a compelling enough argument for companies that do not apply these principles. Virgin Mobile, for instance, a massive company in a massive brand could certainly benefit from a bit more HERO orientation and less money grabbing. Two negative experiences with Virgin Mobile have clinched my disdain
- the perspective is primarily of an American-centric company orientation. While their are numerous global companies, most examples used of their international collaboration are on internal communications. I have yet to see the empowered masses impact corporate behavior in the UK or European market.

Still looking.

Derrick Trimble says

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Still looking.

Jennifer Fong says

Josh Bernoff has done it again! Empowered is a fascinating look at how employees with great ideas in your organization can be encouraged to innovate and transform your business to better serve customers. As it says in the book, with the rise of social technologies, customer service is the new marketing. And by following the clearly-outlined process in this book, managers can work with employee innovators (HEROs, they're called in the book) and IT stakeholders to allow customers to be better served, so they talk about your business in positive ways online. I loved all the case studies and practical examples that show how this can work in the real world.

I'm a social media consultant. I was in a meeting with a client only yesterday, and I found myself referencing and pulling this book out multiple times, referencing the handy checklists, charts, and questions. My clients can't wait to get their own copies! Truly, this is a resource that every business person needs.

Rick Austin says

From the authors of Groundswell comes this book about how to enable what they call highly empowered and resourceful operatives or HEROes in your company. Fantastic examples of employees that take it upon themselves to do what is right for the company even if it might be considered out of line with company policy. It recognizes that innovation comes from your employees, not just some "innovation team". Yeah, go off in that corner and innovate, that will be great.

The book is chock full of examples of real people that have made a difference in their companies. It describes how empowered employees need to be supported and if not then you will find they leave for those companies that do.

They define critical elements of innovation as being speed, collaboration, and systems. Each of these is addressed and recommendations for how your company can support these concepts which result in empowering your HEROes.

Dane Cobain says

Empowered is the sequel to Groundswell, the best-selling and groundbreaking book by Josh Bernoff and Charlene Li of Forrester Research. This book is equally well-researched and informative, creating a new groundswell in its own little way.

Empowered tells you all you need to know about today's empowered consumer, and it explains how businesses can do worse than to empower their own staff to use social technology and the internet to provide support to and to build a relationship with both existing and potential customers.

Empowered was released in 2010, a couple of years later than its predecessor, and although three years is a long time in the age of the connected consumer, Empowered does well to stay fresh and relevant, even more so than Groundswell, which is still considered to be a breakout thought-leader in the social media 'space'.

Josh and Ted promise to teach you how to unleash your employees, energize your customers and transform your business, and the two authors don't disappoint. It's not too in-depth, either - there's a good balance between providing enough detail to help you to convince your CEO and keeping it short enough so that you can read it in a couple of days during your commute.

Overall, empowered comes highly recommended, from myself and from the hundreds of small and medium-sized business owners who've used these techniques to revolutionise the way they work.

Keith Swenson says

Are you responsible for the success of business in today's market? Is it important for people to know about you and your product? Is it important for you to know what your customers are thinking? Is your reputation a factor in your business?

If "yes", then "empowered" is a "must-read" because it highlights the dangers of web 2.0, as well as the benefits if you are wise enough to prepare for it. Ignore it at your own peril. To be completely honest with you: I can't really say yes to all the above. Still, I found "empowered" engaging and illuminating about how social media is transforming the world and fundamentally changing the way that organizations interact withing themselves and with their customers.

Josh Bernoff and Ted Schadler offer a collection of insights into adoption and use of social technology. I was

most interested in the section of the book that covered how IBM Software Group VP wanted to teach sales teams to be more productive. He identified a motivation for change: Salespeople were frustrated by how much time they spent seeking people and information.

He appointed someone who started by identifying 100 people in the organization that already had a blog or used wikis, and were already familiar with the benefit and potential. From those 100 she hired 6 of them as full time staff to drive change. She leveraged the rest of the 100 as fans of the new way of doing business, and they became the core of an ambassador program of 1200 volunteers throughout the organization to help train and introduce the new technology to 400,000 employees. See my blog post that expands on this: http://social-biz.org/2011/01/09/stra...

They introduce a clever acronym "HERO" which stands for Highly Empowered Resourceful Operatives. Social technology makes these early adopters far more effective than they would have been in earlier years at spreading information and influencing opinion. The point of the book is to leverage the HEROs within your organization to make you more effective, and to respond quickly to HEROs outside the organization to make sure they are pleased with your service.

Felt it was good enough, I bought the earlier book "groundswell" by Charlene Li & Josh Bernoff. I am hoping it will be as good.

Greg says

Skip it. There are better books on customer service out there.

This one is all about "empowering" employees to use techno-fads to improve company processes and provide customer service. The overriding message of this book is "if you're not responding to social media complaints, then you may be the next 'United Breaks Guitars' social media debacle."

I'm tired of hearing about social media. The extent to which social media is transforming business has been blown way out of proportion. Most people on social media are squandering their time quoting inspirational phrases or trying to explain their lives in darkly mysterious but inevitably typo-ridden Facebook updates. Yes, they sometimes bitch about customer service problems, but since people in general instantly become the most dramatic ("WORST. RESTAURANT. EVER.") and cruel ("Your [sic] an idiot. Your mom should have aborted you.") versions of themselves on the internet, they have a serious credibility problem.

My being tired of hearing about social media is a fair complaint about this book, because the marketing for this book did not mention what a heavy focus it would have on social media. So the book I received was not really the book I was led to expect I was ordering.

***My complaint may seem strange based on the description of the book on Goodreads, which makes it clear that it's mostly about engaging with customers online. I bought it from a source where it was billed mostly as a book allowing front-line employees more authority and responsibility for solving customer problems and maintaining those relationships. It was some list of hot new business books, but I ordered it more than a year ago.

Leonardo Alfonseca says

It was bland and I did not think it was too useful in terms of application of the concepts.

John says

While the basic premise is not untrue, the actual content of the book reads like it was intended to get out of touch senior managers fired up about sprinting toward buzzwords and fads, rather than creating a framework with which to solve actual business problems and create real value. Though I am curious if the authors will reach out to me now, in the spirit of #twelpforce...

Bill Rand says

Good business book with a bunch of great examples about how the power of consumers is increasing and how to give your employees the power to adapt.

Félix says

Too weak. A lot of 'musts', but not practical counsel. I would not recommend it.

Katherine Kelly says

This is a must-read business book. Josh really starts to tackle what the internal structure of a company needs to be in order to support successful use of social media. Or scratch that, he tackles what the internal structure of a company needs to be to be successful in today's market of connected consumers.