



HUMAN RESOURCES
TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY

Empowering Employees: Skill Overview

Skill Introduction (Step 1)

Empowerment means creating a workplace where employees feel supported to take initiative, develop skills, and own their work. It is rooted in the concept of psychological safety, the assurance that an employee can try, learn, and grow without fear of negative consequences. For supervisors in higher education, fostering empowerment helps to build a staff that is both confident and deeply engaged in their role.

Empowerment happens through intentional strategies that offer employees both the opportunity to grow and the encouragement to take on new challenges. Two of the most effective strategies for empowering employees are task delegation and motivational alignment. Delegation can provide meaningful opportunities to build skills and increase responsibility, while motivation connects work assignments to what matters most to each individual. Together, these strategies create the conditions for employees to take ownership, invest energy, and pursue excellence.

Delegation is often used to assign projects or distribute workload, **but when done purposefully, it transforms into a tool for growth.** For example, if a staff member expresses interest in developing presentation skills, a supervisor might delegate a portion of an upcoming meeting for them to lead. The supervisor can offer guidance beforehand, observe the meeting, and provide direct feedback afterwards.

Likewise, **motivation is not just encouragement**, it is about understanding what drives each employee and fuels their commitment. In the same example, an employee who is hesitant to present may feel more willing when the task is framed as a way to develop a skill they care

about. Aligning a task to an employee's personal goals and values can shift resistance into engagement.

Supervisors who use delegation and motivation effectively often demonstrate these signs:

- Tasks are assigned with clear purpose, aligned to employees' growth and strengths
- They strike a healthy balance between offering support and allowing autonomy
- Employees show initiative, engagement, and confidence in their work
- Motivation strategies are tailored, not based on convenience or habit

Delegation and motivation are most effective when they are intentional and individualized. When supervisors align tasks with employees' strengths and aspirations, they create a space for ownership. This approach can also build trust, enhance worker capability, and signals to employees that this supervisor values investing in their success.

Skill Development (Step 2)

It can be challenging to assess where we might fall in any given skill, and the types of practice or behaviors we should seek in order to improve our ability to practice each skill. I have provided a rubric that assigns descriptions and common behaviors or outcomes for each skill level below.

<i>Skill Level</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Behaviors and Indicators</i>
<i>Inexperienced</i>	Sees importance of employee growth but struggles to translate that into daily practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Assigns work without a clear connection to development or strengths- Reluctant to give autonomy or share decision-making- Offers general encouragement but rarely links work to personal drivers
<i>Competent</i>	Demonstrates awareness and effort of how delegation and motivation build confidence and capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Begins matching tasks to employee interests or developmental needs- Checks in to provide support and clarify expectations

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Asks questions to understand what motivates each team member
Proficient	Applies delegation and motivational strategies thoughtfully and consistently	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Delegates with a clear purpose and adjusts support based on experience level - Reinforces initiative and self-direction across the team - Links assignments to employee goals and individual drivers
Expert	Builds a team culture where empowerment is embedded into how work is structured and decisions are made	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Uses delegation to develop long-term skills and distribute leadership - Integrates motivational alignment into performance and development conversations - Models trust in employees by giving them meaningful responsibility - Coaches other leaders in empowering employees and cultivating systems that support it

LinkedIn Learning Course & Prompts (Step 3)

For this session, we will be focused on [Motivation](#) by Daniel Pink (31 minutes) and [Delegating Tasks](#) by Dorie Clark (34 minutes).

Using your TWU LinkedIn Learning account, you may access both of these courses. Please view instructions for first-time sign-in using [this TWU Knowledge Base article](#). As you watch both videos, I recommend considering the following questions:

1. What is one strategy or concept from the course that stood out to you, and why do you think it resonated?
2. How might you apply what you learned to your current role, team management, or interactions with others?
3. Did anything challenge an existing perspective or approach to delegation or motivating employees? If so, how?
4. What opportunities do you see for us as an institution to use these concepts to improve our work and meet our goals?

Exercises and Supplemental Resources (Step 4)

These exercises are optional, but recommended, as low-stakes opportunities to synthesize the material and provide an avenue for reflection and practice. The exercises should be done after reviewing the skill introduction section, skill development section, and answering the prompts for the course above.

Reflection Exercise:

To be effective in motivating others, getting in touch with what motivates ourselves can be helpful. Think back to a time where you worked on and completed a project you struggled to finish.

- What about that type of work was particularly challenging?
- What encouraged you to push through and finish the job?
- How did you remind yourself to push forward when you wanted to stop?
- Why was this thing effective at getting you to act or focus?

Practice Exercise:

Practice delegating a task in a way that builds ownership and supports motivation.

- Identify a real, non-urgent task or responsibility that can be delegated and has some level of learning or visibility attached to it.
- Plan a one-on-one conversation with the employee using the following structure:
 - Context: Explain the task and why it is important.
 - Connection: Share why you thought of them for it (a strength, their goals, something they expressed interest in, etc.).
 - Support: Offer guidance and ask what they would need to feel confident to complete the task.

- Meaning: Highlight how this connects directly to their development or long-term goals.
- Feedback: **After the task is completed**, ask them these three questions:
 - What did you learn from the experience?
 - What went well and what could be improved?
 - Would you take on a similar opportunity in the future?

Example Language:

"I recall you mentioning that you wanted to grow your skills in presenting at meetings. We have an upcoming orientation for new graduate students, and I would like you to design and co-facilitate a presentation on campus resources. I will walk you through the content and give you time to prepare. I think this could be a great step towards growing into the kind of work you have shown interest in."

Supplemental Resources:

If this topic is interesting to you, and you wish to learn more, consider one of these resources for furthering learning:

- The LinkedIn Learning course on [Delegation Strategies for People Leaders](#) or this course on [Strategies for Female Empowerment](#) in the workplace.
- Explore [31 different motivational strategies](#) for supervisors provided by the AIHR.
- Check out [Dare to Lead](#) by Brene Brown via TWU Libraries, a great resource for those interested in inspiring courage through their leadership style.
- Play a game of (delegation) poker, find the instructions and a free downloadable set of cards [here](#).
- Use CareerOneStop to [assess your work values and interests](#). While these assessments are geared towards job seekers and students, self-assessments can help you articulate what's important to you easier.