

Hey! What's New? 2025-45

How To Adopt An 'Authorship Is Ownership' Culture

A recent article in *Chief Executive*, written by Abbey Bonham and Anne Wilson, asks us to imagine a workplace where every decision must be run up the ladder before action can be taken. "Team members wait for instructions, unable to progress without explicit consent from top leadership. The leadership team has to approve everything, from new business cards to new hires. We've worked with teams like this and have seen how it stifles innovation, slows progress and causes disengagement."

Now, it says, "imagine a workplace where teams are empowered to make decisions faster and closer to the customer. It's not about giving free rein to every idea but involving employees early in shaping the strategies and initiatives they'll later execute. We call this 'authorship is ownership' – people are more invested in ideas and outcomes they've helped create. This shift can lead to faster execution, quicker adaptation to market changes and more effective decision-making companywide."

For leaders, Bonham and Wilson add, "this means reducing bottlenecks, increasing agility and fostering a culture where employees are proactive problem solvers rather than passive participants. In today's fast-paced market, this can make the difference between staying ahead of competitors or falling behind." To embed "authorship is ownership" into your team's DNA, they suggest following these steps:

Involve Team Members in Decision-Making. Rather than relying solely on top-down directives, create structured opportunities for employees from relevant departments to share their experiences and insights. These, they suggest, "could be focused input sessions or small, cross-functional workshops where team members closest to the work or customer can offer their unique perspectives on what's working and what needs improvement. While not all input will directly shape the final decision, gathering these perspectives ensures that decisions are better informed and that the rationale behind them acknowledges the diverse viewpoints considered. By intentionally engaging employees this way, they develop a sense of ownership and are more likely to support and act on the outcomes."

Empower Teams with Clear Guidance and Flexibility. Bonham and Wilson say that successful organizations strike a balance between providing strategic direction and encouraging the adaptability needed to meet changing demands. "This begins with giving clear direction and guardrails on the 'what' is expected and then allowing the team to figure out the 'how' to get there. This often involves outlining specific constraints or defining the key metrics and values that are most critical in a given situation."

Foster a Culture of Trust and Shared Responsibility. Trust is the foundation of "authorship is ownership." To build it, say Bonham and Wilson, "leaders must demonstrate confidence in their teams' judgment and capabilities. Traditional top-down approaches often result in resistance and disengagement. Instead, cultivating a sense of joint responsibility ensures everyone is invested in the outcome."

During critical projects, they advise, "rather than making decisions in a vacuum, actively seek your team's opinions and solutions. Communicate trust by saying, 'I value your expertise and

need your insights to solve this issue.” Put that to the further test by asking for insights first, before offering your own. Regularly hold team meetings to discuss progress, challenges and next steps so that success is a shared responsibility. Ask, “If we fail, why are we going to fail?”

Measure and Adapt Based on Feedback. Establish clear measures to assess the impact of your ownership initiatives, ensuring they align with your broader organizational goals. Bonham and Wilson tell us to “begin by identifying what you aim to achieve through fostering a culture of ownership, both in terms of tangible business results and more qualitative outcomes, such as employee engagement and connection to the company’s mission.”

To capture these insights, they tell us to “ask pulse survey questions that measure how connected employees feel to the organization’s strategy, how valued they feel and whether they believe they can effectively contribute their expertise. Complement this feedback with quantitative data, including project timelines, budget adherence and performance metrics. Consider sharing these findings across the organization, using them as a basis for open discussions with your teams. Ask questions like, ‘What barriers are you facing?’ and ‘How can we better support you?’”

This inclusive feedback loop, they say, “identifies areas for improvement while reinforcing a culture where continuous improvement and employee input are valued....This approach not only invites diverse perspectives, but also creates a sense of ownership throughout the team.”

To learn more, check out [How To Adopt An ‘Authorship Is Ownership’ Culture](#).