Empowering the IT staff is essential for maximizing the productivity, value, and growth of the organization. Real authority and responsibility is the prime catalyst for employee engagement and development, and HR leaders must lay the foundations for this deep delegation proactively — for the long-term health of the department. The first foundation is farsightedness — the ability to understand all IT work in the context of business goals, and align the work with these strategic ends. The second is a project management mentality, where all work is grounded in and managed against clear metrics and deliverables. The final foundation is communication: HR leaders must build real relationships with staff and establish constant two-way dialogue about goals, concerns, and needs. Employee empowerment is critical for IT success. Without real delegation, without stretch goals and real responsibility, employees stagnate, and the department’s ability to produce leadership, creativity, and business value suffers immeasurably.
About the Authors

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Prior to joining GCS, Mr. Dunmire was in the Internet card marketing division of one of the world’s top-five financial institutions. He also has deep experience in the teleservices industry, having served in operations and human resources capacities for one of the nation’s largest teleservices agencies.  

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Edward Macnamara has been the chief technology officer of Wilmer Cutler Pickering Hale and Dorr since May 2004, when Wilmer Cutler Pickering merged with Hale and Dorr. He joined Wilmer Cutler Pickering in 1990. Mr. Macnamara began his work at the firm in litigation support, where he helped develop software to support electronic document reviews. Since 1996, he has been a member of the information technology department, where he has worked to help focus the firm’s technology on business goals. He was named chief technology officer of Wilmer Cutler Pickering in May 2001.  
In his role at WilmerHale Mr. Macnamara leads the teams responsible for integrating business strategy with the firm’s technology strategy. These groups include information security, project management, enterprise architecture, and business relationship.  
Mr. Macnamara works closely with Mr. Peters, the firm’s Boston-based CTO, and the firm’s CIO, Ash Banerjee, to ensure that the direction of the firm’s technology is in concert with the strategic goals of the firm. Together they ensure that the firm’s technology meets the business needs of the firm whenever and wherever the firm’s lawyers work.  

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**Gerard Forster**  
*Vice President of IT, Tarsadia Hotels*

Gerard Forster joined Tarsadia Hotels in 2006 and leads the information technology team, which is responsible for Tarsadia’s technological infrastructure, future IT development, and overall support of the properties and corporate headquarters. Prior to joining Tarsadia, Mr. Forster was the vice president of IT and a member of the senior leadership team for Acoustic Home Loans, a $3 billion mortgage company located in Orange, California. While at Acoustic, Mr. Forster was the chief architect, engineer, and project manager for the company’s technological transformation and led the development of Acoustic’s automated underwriting system.  

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Empowering IT

I fully believe that you have to focus on the business and make sure that your IT team doesn’t get too involved in just the technology for the day-to-day jobs that they have. There is a greater good that we are working on and we are all on the same team. We try to base our decisions on what is best for the company. I try to communicate the bigger picture.

One of the things that I focus on right now is highlighting the difference between the poor economic news, which is a little scary, and our company’s news. At our company we are talking about looking at sites to gradually expand one of our current centers. It is easy to see the grass as greener on the other side, particularly in technology where you can get very involved in the day-to-day tasks and short deadlines, to the extent that you don’t realize that you are in a good environment.

We are a growing company. You sometimes have to live the life of a downsized employee to really appreciate what a growing company provides. Most important is job stability.

We pride ourselves in the fact that whenever there is a crisis or any of the technology team members is in trouble, other people will pitch in and bail them out. Teamwork is sometimes hard to accomplish, but I think when you get into technology it is even harder. We focus on teamwork, working together, and taking care of our brothers and sisters on the team. I think this view is the same as that of other C-level executives at this company. I have been in this industry for quite a long time and I have been in some of the other groups, and I do think that this is part of their culture as well.

Employee Standard Operating Procedures

Our SOP is following various processes. We have to allow some individuality, as that is part of the creative process. We have about eight developers on staff, and no code is allowed to be released until it is reviewed by a senior-level person. If a senior person writes the code, then it is reviewed by another senior-level person, so one of four people can review code and it can’t be published or put into production until it is tested and reviewed; then only the senior-level person who did not write it can release it. That is in place for accountability and for some standardization, but it also protects our clients and our company as well. Without reviewing and testing code, you could release something that could be very damaging.

Best Practices for Delegating Responsibility

The people who report from an IT perspective service all of the networking, PCs, Thin Clients, and hardware, so if it plugs into a wall, they deal with it for the most part. The director of applications development is responsible for all of the programming, the client’s requests, the output, client reporting, client deliverables, and quality review of all of the reports. The other person in my department is the senior systems specialist and they perform database backups, maintenance, and are the core leaders for internal and external projects. This position is a senior-level position that requires a lot of industry experience and the ability to jump into many different roles depending on the pressures.

We plan to add two developer positions and one network analyst position. We have been able to keep our group relatively the
same size that we had when we were just five centers, but now we have slightly more complex systems — we have 12 domestic centers and one center overseas. We have been able to keep the group the same size for the most part because each group is identical in how they are set up. We went from SQL 7 to SQL 2005 with two new servers about three years ago. The new server combined with up-to-date software has helped slow our technology growth.

Now we are at the point where the system is still pretty quick, but we have more clients and more centers, and we are trying to keep up the pace. We are running out of resources, and we have had some turnover — some of which has been voluntary, and some of which has been involuntary. As the company grows, you have to grow with it; some companies are able to do that and some are not.

Assigning More Staff Responsibility

The responsibility has definitely grown on the staff. You have to make sure that your team feels they are a part of the bigger picture. We do that by trying to be leaders, by communicating, by working as a team, and by keeping the business in mind. That has resulted in more responsibility for certain individuals, as well as some larger workloads for certain individuals.

However, we have to know when it is too much for our staff as well. There are companies with technology teams working 12 hours a day thinking they are doing a great job. I have to keep people in this group happy, particularly at the senior-level, and ensure that they want to stay here because it is so hard to replace a good technology resource.

I believe that you are a happier person if you feel like your input matters and you are leading. We try to make sure that we do that, and it is a delicate balance. Basically, if there is a major project we have to finish, our staff knows that we will deliver and that they will do whatever they need to get it done, but if that becomes an everyday situation, then people are not going to stay. You have to be delicate with how hard you push and how much responsibility you give, because it can backfire on you very quickly.

On-Time and On-Budget Projects

Next year, I believe that we will complete 80 percent of our projects on time overall for client projects. For internal projects and other projects we have great intentions, but the clients come first. I believe that we will complete 80 to 90 percent of our projects on budget.

Mainly our on-time and on-budget rates are so high because we make sure that we prioritize. If you don’t manage up and make sure that your bosses are prioritizing properly you will fall into a trap. You will have too many projects and you won’t finish any of them. If you prioritize properly, assign the resources, and make sure that there is enough employee time dedicated to each project, it is likely that you will be successful. If you spread your resources too thin, take on too many projects, or overstate savings or understate costs, then you will run into problems. There is never a
project without a glitch and we try to prepare for that as best we can. If you go to a large corporation, projects may be a year or six months in length. We try to turn around most of our projects within 30 to 60 days.

**Top Strategies for Improving IT Function**

Some strategies for improving IT function include making sure that employees take a leadership role, making sure that teamwork is emphasized, making sure that any confrontation is handled immediately, making sure that communication is full and 100 percent, and making sure any roadblocks are removed.

I can give you an example regarding communication. If you have employee A call you and report that employee B did something, and he or she doesn’t think that is the way to do it, you have an opportunity to resolve a conflict. There are a couple of ways to do that. You can take the easy way out and say that you will talk to the employee, or you can say that you are going to conference in the employee so that everyone can talk it out and work out a decision immediately. That is what we choose to do; we discuss the issue immediately and reach a decision. That is what I mean by resolving conflicts quickly, whether it involves an employee on my team or an employee on someone else’s team.
Laying the Ground Rules

Empowering the IT team is critical to ensuring the success of the IT department. The firm expects that each person they encounter in the IT department will take all the steps necessary to address any IT issue. When we limit the ability of the department staff to make reasonable decisions within their area of expertise, the department is labeled as a bureaucracy and the employee’s self-respect is diminished.

Although there are processes that need to be followed for any issue or request, we try to provide enough latitude within those processes and job specifications so that our team meets the firm’s needs efficiently. Our goal is to increase the information available to each member of the department so that they can make the appropriate decision. One of our key tools is our internal knowledge base. Our first step in addressing any issue or request is an examination of the knowledge base. If the answer isn’t in the knowledge base, we expect them to use their own skills, along with their understanding of our technology and the way it works to provide an answer to that request. Once the request is answered, they are required to feed the answer back into the knowledge base. For our employees, it’s a part of their evaluation, so they know they need to get those answers into the knowledge base.

Our managers and our business relationship group have quite a bit more freedom to investigate and solve user issues. However, each of them knows that within their world the decisions they reach and steps they take must be guided by the needs of the business. Each of the teams within IT knows they are expected to stay on top of the technology tools that affect their area so we encourage innovation within the process framework we have established. For example, the infrastructure team roadmap is tied closely to the business advantages of their changes.

Allowing for Discretion

Wilmer Hale is the result of a 2004 merger of two talented law firms that have become more successful since the merger. As the IT department worked through our own part of the merger we found that as each firm had grown in the past, each side had developed a set of internal IT experts. Since the IT shops were relatively small these people were the experts in a wide variety of the firm’s technologies. Whenever anything went wrong, you called the expert and the expert fixed it. As a result of the merger we combined two organizations, two infrastructures, and two sets of systems and because of that the experts’ solutions became less valuable. Each of them knew the ways to make things work in their own system, but no one understood the intricacies of both systems. When the expert applied their skills and history to a system they hadn’t been an integral part of, often their recommendations were wrong.

As a result of our size we can no longer have experts in all of our technology. Instead, we are becoming a process-oriented department. Over the past two years we have been working to develop the processes of the department following the ITIL framework. ITIL is the abbreviation for the IT Infrastructure Library guideline that was developed by the OGC (Office of Governance Commerce) in Norwich (England) on behalf of
the British government. ITIL is a set of best practice guidelines for the planning, provision, and support of IT services. WilmerHale has not completed the development and implementation of these guidelines but we are already seeing an impact on the people in our department.

Our past experience with internal experts meant there was no documentation, no process; non-expert employees in the department had a limited opportunity to learn and understand how and why things are being done in the department. The development of processes for the department has created transparency about the work and the department’s decisions. People are clear on the standard steps that need to be followed and how much discretion they have in following the process. Most importantly they know when they are stepping out of bounds. Again, in our history the expert wasn’t required to get permission before implementing their decisions, so in their haste to solve problems, they often made decisions that caused other problems. The processes document those areas where discretion is allowed and where permission and/or discussion is required.

The Benefits of Project Managers

As part of our move to a process-oriented shop we are formalizing our project management efforts. Our past project management efforts focused on only our biggest projects. Unfortunately there are many small projects which use our daily resources. Under our new plan the project management team will be tracking all projects within the department, including all internal IT projects so that we can track the utilization of all our IT resources.

Our goal is to track in detail where our resources are being used. In addition, we intend to produce status reports, available to the IT management team, which provides the status of all our projects and our resources. Then we can focus management direction and time on those projects that need attention — either because they are high priority or because they have fallen behind. If a high priority project is on time and doing well, we don’t need to focus as much effort on it. Again this gives the project team some discretion. If they can manage the project within their assigned resources and stay on schedule and budget, they will be left alone. If a project needs help, we can more easily turn management attention to it, knowing that the other projects will continue on target.

Letting Your Employees Grow

For the department to be successful in the short and long run, each individual within the department has to have the ability to grow. Some people will grow quickly and there may no longer be a place at the firm for them. As a department, we often let these people leave the firm. Although we are sorry to see them go, we realize caging them or creating an exception for them doesn’t produce the best result for them or the other members of the department.

For the majority of the people in the department, we spend quite a bit of time on internal training and mentoring to help them make the best use of their skills. Where external training is appropriate we pay for that as well. Generally we try to have people stretch their
skills each year. During our performance review, we detail three to five goals for each person for the coming year. At least one of those goals is for the person’s growth. In turn the manager’s get measured on how well their staff did on meeting their goals, including the personal growth of their team.

**Knowing Your Progress**

Firms are measured in many ways both externally and internally. The IS department is no different. We have embarked on our own measurement system driven by Performance Key Indicators (PKI).

Our progress is measured in two major ways. First, our own internal metrics on our performance; we measure the typical items: up time as measured by the users, number of support calls, projects delivered on schedule or on budget; we track many metrics of this type. We also have engaged a number of consulting and survey organizations to gather outside information we can use to compare our performance. These companies are providing us data on other law firms, other professional services firms, and corporations. Then as we compare ourselves to the benchmarks for professional services industries we can see whether we believe we are getting the proper value in an area where we exceed the benchmark. For example, are we spending more money on customer support than is typical in our industry or in industries across the board, and if we are spending more or spending less, do we have a valid reason that we can go back to management and explain why we’re different?

One of the consultants we worked with had a very good analogy for why rules are a good idea and why it actually fosters effective innovation. They said, “Everyone believes that science is all about innovation, but it’s also well known that there’s a clear set of scientific processes and procedures that are followed for hypothesis and experimentation, and nobody criticizes them for having processes and procedures that they follow.” Why can’t we be innovative within processes and procedures within the law firm? We are seeing much success while innovating through our processes.

Edward F. Macnamara
Chief Technology Officer
Wilmer Cutler Pickering Hale and Dorr LLP
Empowering the Team

We empower our IT team by providing each member with the right training, processes, tools, and vision to set goals. These goals support the larger mission of the company. We do this in a way that encourages them to make their own decisions about the best tactics to reach these goals.

Empowering our employees requires a significant amount of groundwork to be laid before turning them loose. If you haven’t laid this groundwork, the only team members who will be successful are those that are true IT superstars, or those who never take any risks. The majority of your staff will fail miserably. In our department, we have developed three important operating procedures which allow each team member to operate independently while retaining accountability on their projects.

Providing Checklists

The first procedure we have is to make sure each staff member has a daily and weekly checklist they perform which ensures they are paying attention to the basics. For example, our network engineers must check the event logs and run agreed-upon tests against all the systems and devices under their administrative responsibilities when they arrive for work each day.

After completing these checks, they complete an online report indicating that they’ve examined the systems and detailing any exceptions to normal operating parameters. It is these exceptions that the manager needs to notice. In this manner, the manager doesn’t need to micro-manage the employee. At the same time, the manager feels confident that good, consistent maintenance is being performed and that any problems which arise will immediately come to his or her attention. When the system runs smoothly, it frees time for the team member to focus on larger project management.

Key Success Factors Process

This is where our next major empowerment tool comes into play. This tool is called our Key Success Factors (KSF) process. Each employee meets with their manager at least once per month to develop a list of KSFs to focus on in the coming period. In the IT department, these KSFs center upon certain functional competencies that we feel best support the strategic mission of the company. For example, currently the functional competencies that some of our team members focus on are:

1) Server/network uptime
2) Associate/property support
3) Documentation and centralization
4) Cost savings/infrastructure initiatives
5) Helping people reach their full potential

Once the KSFs are agreed upon, it is up to the team member to develop a list of tactics that take them through a step-by-step process to achieve the KSF. At our company, we’ve put a lot of effort into this tool and have even developed some proprietary software to track tactics and their due dates on a task list, and even e-mail the manager when objectives are completed. Through this very formal process, we provide each employee with a framework for success. They know exactly what to focus on each month. They are empowered to develop strategies to meet their goals and they have a formal feedback loop with their manager. As a final part of the process, performance against these KSFs is tied directly into bonus and merit compensation. Each team member should focus on making these tactical moves and the manager should focus on ensuring they are meeting the KSFs.
At Tarsadia, we tie IT team member bonuses directly to competencies in our KSF system, which are then tied to the corporate mission and strategic plan. Overall, our team members are very positive about this process. They clearly know the rules of the game and know exactly what it takes to get rewarded for high performance. It takes much of the subjectivity out of performance reviews and helps develop a very high-performance team.

Gerard Forster  
Vice President of IT, Tarsadia Hotels

The member knows exactly what it takes to get bonuses and raises.

**Project Management**

Our third tool for empowering IT team members is the Tarsadia IT Project Management Framework we have created. Through this framework, each project leader is empowered to lead successful projects. There are 13 simple steps to this project and they are as follows:

1. Identify the problem(s)
2. Develop strategies, options and tactics to address/solve/remedy these problems
3. Identify any costs associated with step two
4. Identify the stakeholders of the problem and those affected by possible solutions
5. Get approval for a plan of action and scope of work
6. Establish a timeline for the project
7. Get agreement from stakeholders and manager on the scope of work and carefully define with them what the successful project will look like
8. Establish timeline for implementation and communicate this to all stakeholders and impacted departments
9. Begin implementation and document all changes to systems along the way
10. Incorporate a testing methodology into process which includes "user acceptance testing" in a non-production environment
11. Keep all those who need to know informed during process, especially any changes
12. Complete project and schedule a debriefing sessions with all stakeholders to determine if project met deliverables identified in step seven, and what could have been done better next time
13. Train other IT staff member as to any changes to process, etc.

Each team member is trained to check in with their manager at each step of the process until they get the hang of things and then they usually only need to check in at step 7, 10, 12, and 13. After implementing this framework I’ve found that the timeliness of projects and the satisfaction of our customers increase dramatically. I also find that our customers feel more confident when working with new staff members because they recognize the process for themselves.

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**Example 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Server/Network Uptime</th>
<th>Priority</th>
<th>Objectives / Due</th>
<th>Tactics</th>
<th>Comments</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>Done</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td></td>
<td>Prerequisite: Unix Console Management Due: June 2008</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7/3/2008</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>● QBO is rolled out to open port 2597 on all Corporate computers</td>
<td>Choose someone at physical inspection</td>
<td>7/10/2008</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>● Get updated list of computers and details from QBO, make sure all computers on the list are included in the example</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>● Delete old computers and document instructions for all IT staff to ensure that I am notified when new computers are deployed so I can ensure they are added to proper groups.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>● Ensure all Computer and Servers are members of proper symmetric groups. Move computers that are under the wrong groups.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>● Ensure planned process for all computers to have virus Definitions up to date within 7 days.</td>
<td></td>
<td>7/23/2008</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>● Make part of daily Check list and develop remediation plan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Gerard Forster  
ExecBlueprints  
10
Role of CTO/CIO

My role in this process is to ensure that projects are scoped properly, that the process is followed, and that projects are never looked at in isolation. Before any project begins it is my role to determine if it needs to be part of a larger project and that the results of the system or process which is put in place can easily communicate with existing processes and systems. I ensure that we take a structured approach to small projects (through our 13-step process), and that we take an entrepreneurial approach to large projects by figuring out ways to make sure they are done on time and on budget. If I do my job correctly, any project can be delegated. But I usually pay very close attention to any project which crosses department lines and will require an interface between systems.
Empowering Your Team

Empowering a team means ensuring that it has the training and expertise it needs to do the job, and a manager willing to back up his or her team with action. For teams that perform well, knowledge is empowerment. A team that understands its role, has expert-level knowledge about the technology it supports, and has a mechanism to provide feedback to its senior management is a team that operates at peak efficiency. When all these pieces fit together, it is an empowered team.

To ensure that the team feels supported, I meet regularly with each group with their manager present part of the time. The goal is for them to know that they have open access to me and for them to tell me what I can do as the CIO to help them do their job better. During the second part of the meeting, their manager is excused and everyone is open to ask anything they want. This helps them vent if they wish to or express ideas they feel we should consider. I also offer to meet with them one-on-one confidentially. I also write personal notes after each such meeting listing their ideas that they expressed and thanking them for it. This helps them know that their ideas are being listened to.

When my team started to implement a migration to Office 2007, there were faculty members who were resistant to the migration. Unlike other organizations, in a university environment, we cannot mandate use of certain software or platforms. We have to work to get folks to recognize the value. The IT staff encountered a significant amount of backlash. When I was made aware of this situation, I recognized need for personal intervention. I went to each faculty member personally and explained to them why the migration was important. I pointed out to them that while Office 2007 is different, it will allow them to communicate with the rest of the campus much more efficiently. I also explained to them that certain features in Powerpoint in Office 2007 are much nicer to use. Once they saw the advantage of switching, the rest was easy. My staff felt supported and very much appreciated my quick reaction. Sometimes a manager has to roll up his or her sleeves and engage on behalf of the team. When a team sees you doing that on their behalf, they feel empowered and are even more motivated to help you achieve your goals. Since this event, more folks are coming forward with ideas and suggestions since they are convinced they are supported and encouraged.

Making Ideas Accountable

Empowered teams are able to strike a balance between autonomy and...
accountability. On a college or university campus, freedom of expression is the norm because it encourages the free flow of ideas. Even in an environment that encourages the exchange of ideas, a manager has to be accountable at times in order to preserve the integrity of his or her team. Simply put, the buck stops with the manager. If your team is aware that you will take responsibility rather than shifting the blame to them, it will perform at an exemplary level.

A phrase I often use is “When things are working, my team is doing a great job; when they are not, it is my fault.” For example, several years ago we had a serious security breach. It was only my second day on the job. I could have pointed the finger elsewhere. I took full responsibility and didn’t blame the team for what had happened. Conversely, when good things happen it’s acceptable for me to graciously accept the accolades with my team. Our ERP implementation went so well that a state legislator held it up as an example of how a project should be managed, implemented, and completed under budget and in time.

**Empowerment and Delegation**

Empowerment combined with effective delegation yields initiatives that are completed on time. My organization has a reputation for getting things done; about 90 percent of our projects are completed on schedule, and when we cannot complete on time our on-campus clients receive honest, unambiguous communication about why we have a delay and how we are trying to get back on schedule.

Managing schedules closely is important in a state budget environment because we have to come in at or under budget — there are simply no opportunities for us to use sloppy operational practices and bring a project in late for more than we expected to spend. We must use all available resources to project an image of a cohesive team that is working together, has goals that are transparent, and is sensitive to user feedback. The team should feel supported and empowered as they implement projects.
I. The Groundwork for Autonomy

Line of sight
• IT leaders must ensure that strategic corporate goals are integrated into every facet of IT planning.
• Business goals must underlie all departmental thinking.
• This gives the department unity and focus.

Rigorous goals
• Every employee must be in constant dialogue with managers around goals and success factors.
• This gets them used to being examined around functional competencies that support the strategic mission of the company.
• It also creates a department where dialogue, feedback, and partnership is valued.

Project Management
• A project management framework can empower every project leader to lead successful projects.
• This allows a clear, measurable, manageable framework for empowering employees with minimal business risk.

II. The Bottom Line
Getting the IT team operating at peak efficiency requires:
• Understanding its role
• Expert-level knowledge about the technology it supports
• A mechanism to provide feedback to senior management

When all these pieces fit together, it is an empowered team.

• Empowering a team means ensuring that it has the training and expertise it needs to do the job, and a manager willing to back up his or her team with action.
• Empowerment is essential for ensuring that the IT team delivers its maximum value to the business, and has the greatest impact on the bottom line.

III. Must-Haves for Effective Project Management

Clear targets
• Hard metrics and targets should be built into projects from the start.
• IT workers should learn to align with goals, and focus all their efforts on effecting business results.

Resource tracking
• The business must have a formal system for tracking resources and results in detail.
• The IT management team should always be aware of the status of projects and resources, and clearly understand which require attention.

Management involvement
• Managers must be involved in a real dialogue with project teams, and tune their level of involvement to the individual project.
• Focus management time and attention in a rigorous way on those projects that need attention.

IV. The Golden Rules for Empowering Employees

• Tie the staff to the bigger picture.
• Make sure that your team feels that they are a part of the bigger picture.
• This requires communicating, teamwork, and keeping the business in mind.
• Find the right individual balance.
• There is a delicate balance between a stretch goal and an impossible task.
• Each employee has a different ability to handle responsibility, and tasks should be fine-tuned to individual needs and abilities.
• The individual knowledge comes out of close relationships between managers and staff at all levels.

Build a true team.
• Forging a strong team demands strong and continuous communication.
• Make sure that employees take a leadership role, emphasize teamwork, and settle confrontations immediately.

V. Essential Take-Aways
Empowering the IT team begins with building a shared sense of purpose.

Teamwork and a clear alignment with business goals bond the IT team into a high-functioning unit.

For the IT department to be successful, each individual within it must have the ability to grow.
10 Key Questions and Discussion Points

1. What does “empowering your IT team” mean to you? How does your concept vary and how is similar to that of other C-level executives at your company? From that of your employees? From that of other CTOs/CIOs?

2. What standard operating procedures are currently in place to allow your employees autonomy – while retaining accountability – on their projects? How effective are they?

3. What role do you, as CTO/CIO, play in overseeing progress on IT projects? How do you determine which projects need your attention – and which you can delegate?

4. How do you motivate employees to work autonomously on projects and accept responsibility for their progress and completion? How are performance expectations established and communicated? What sort of incentives do you offer for high performance?

5. What has your department accomplished in the last five years? How has the nature of your employees’ tasks – and their degree of responsibility for completing these tasks – changed during that time? What factors, such as improved teamwork and accountability, made substantive contributions to your accomplishments?

6. Why is it important for you, as CTO/CIO, to assign more responsibility for projects to your staff? How have these priorities shifted in the past five years?

7. In the next 12 months, what proportion of your projects do you anticipate will be completed on time and on budget? What factors are contributing to this number? What steps can you take to increase it?

8. What are your top five strategies for improving the IT function at your company? What are your current goals? How will empowering your employees contribute to these goals?

9. What ROI do your employees generate for the department? How does this vary by function and position?

10. How is overall IT performance benchmarked at your company? Against past performance? Against targets? Against that of comparable companies in your industry?