

Notes for Empowerment PowerPoint Presentation*

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Slide 1 – Kappa Omicron Nu

(This slide is designed for a presentation at the Initiation Ceremony, but can be changed to fit other occasions.)

This is a joyous occasion, and I congratulate the new members. Parents, too, have reason to celebrate. And I am very pleased to greet you and the university officials who have generously made a commitment of time and energy to this installation.

I hope you will permit me to take a little time to be serious. Kappa Omicron Nu membership is a recognition, an obligation, and an opportunity. Let me explain.

Slide 2 - Credit

Slide 3 – Mission of Kappa Omicron Nu

The Kappa Omicron Nu mission, ***empowered leaders***, reflects the intention of the organization. The mission or outcome of the program and activities of the organization are ambitious; members are challenged to make this mission a life-long quest.

Slide 4 - Definition

The adjective, empowered, in this connection is defined as "focusing . . . energy in . . . [one's] Circle of Influence. . . . it's acting with integrity to create the environment in which we and others can develop character and competence and synergy (Covey, Merrill, & Merrill, 1994, p. 238).

Slide 5 – Outcome of Empowerment

And the ultimate outcome of empowerment is a community "worthy of the best we humans have to offer" (Terry, 1993, p. 275).

Slide 6 – Essence of Empowerment

Block (1987) refers to the essence of empowerment as *enacting the vision*.

Slide 7 – Elements of Empowerment

He further explains that definition with his insights that we must develop a personal vision of greatness and must balance autonomy and dependence. It takes courage, too. Although the following discussion is directed for the most part to individuals, these same elements direct the empowerment of organizations and groups.

Slide 8 – Vision is Defined

When we take a stand for a preferred future--something we want, we are creating a vision. We are willing, therefore, to take a risk for that something.

Slide 9 – Vision Implies

Block challenges us to identify *a vision of greatness* because it forces us to eliminate caution. It also has the effect of implicitly identifying our disappointment with what exists now. This vision of greatness makes us be accountable for acting in congruence with it. When we are driven by a vision of choice, we have to take responsibility--we can't protect ourselves from disappointment and failure.

This first step in choosing empowerment implies that, like it or not, leadership to achieve our vision is solely up to us. If we are unwilling to choose a vision of greatness, we are really saying that we are willing to stand on our laurels. The added benefit of having a vision is that we have given meaning to what we are doing. And meaning seems to be an important component for reclaiming our human capacity.

It is generally agreed that without vision there is no change. Individuals and organizations tend to resist change, especially change as pervasive as a new vision (Nanus, 1992). Recently, Nanus (1995) made a stronger point by saying that even though group members resist change and persist in not rocking the boat, "it can be downright dangerous to your organization's future health and vitality" (p. vi). Nanus would also claim this notion for individuals.

Slide 10 - Autonomy

One of the marks of a professional is autonomy in decision making and action relative to service, i.e., decisions are made and actions are taken based on expertise--knowledge and reason. Because some of us are not operating as authentic professionals (often through no fault of our own), autonomy has not become a universally comfortable behavior. In other words, the power of acting on our own hasn't been experienced fully. Block (1987) believes that our own dependency is a source of interference to empowerment.

Slide 11 - Dependence

Our own dependency grows out of a reluctance to risk or to take responsibility for the future. We are conditioned from childhood to treat people (bosses or colleagues with more experience) with respect and attention. And dependency is increased by the fact that, realistically, our survival is often in someone else's hands. But as organizations change to becoming more participative, more responsibility has not always been welcomed. In a sense, we keep ourselves in bondage to dependency.

In order for organizations to be transformed and empowerment to be actualized, we will need to assure that when control has been offered that we confront our own wishes to be dependent and examine the choices we really have. Block (1987) claimed that "the most popular fictional character in organizational life is *they*" (p. 154). Dependency is often expressed through talk about "they"--they won't make up their minds, they don't want to hear problems, they just want solutions. This "chorus of nonresponsibility" is understandable--it's learned. But the alternative is available with careful self-reflection.

Slide 12 – Useful Dependency

Dependency is not to be totally rejected because it is useful and functional in certain ways. We are dependent on each other, that's human; a sense of community makes a satisfying work environment. And organizations need cooperation and collaboration to get the work done. Useful dependency helps us clarify the organizational framework, confirms and validates us, helps us feel connected, protects us from unreasonable problems, and helps us learn from others.

Slide 13 – Teamwork and Interdependence

Focusing on the negative aspects of dependency does not argue against interdependency in the organizational culture. But teamwork and interdependence are most effective when we operate out of a position of strength. "Being autonomous gives us the freedom to choose whom we want to be with and how we want to be with them" (Block, 1987, p. 174).

Slide 14 - Courage

To take the empowerment road, we are not choosing the easy route. Because we have the innate sense to take the safe path, we have to become comfortable with danger and unpredictability. The safe paths lie in rationality and data, in following the norms, in simply following the rules. It is true that dependency is often rewarded. So our integrity will be tested when we act with courage to achieve our vision. These acts will include such things as

facing the harsh reality of the situation, examining our own contribution to problems, and putting our authentic view into words in a straightforward manner. And, of course, our courage is expressed best when others are treated well.

Slide 15 – Enacting the Vision

There is no guarantee that what we have set out to do will work, but we have made the commitment because we chose our vision of greatness with care and with the realization that we had to do it to be true to self. Our doubts and pessimism will sometimes get in the way. But we will carry on because we choose to live in a way that gives real meaning to our lives. "We are most free, and most fully human, when we are faithfully and consistently living in accordance with the highest values we have recognized and noblest aspirations we have embraced. . . . Consistency of the highest sort is empowerment" (Morris, 1994, p. 154).

Slide 16 – Kappa Omicron Nu Chapters

Enacting the vision in organizations and groups is described by Nanus (1992): "A vision is little more than an empty dream until it is widely shared and accepted. Only then does it acquire the force necessary to change an organization and move it in the intended direction" (p.134). He goes on to say that a vision to be achieved requires empowered people, appropriate organizational changes, and strategic thinking. Strategic thinking throughout the organization will serve as the process for developing strategies to enact the vision and change the organization.

Kouzes and Posner (1995) also connect empowerment to enactment: "Credible leaders choose to give [power] away in service of others and for a purpose larger than themselves. They take the power that flows to them and connect it to others, becoming power generators from which [others] draw energy" (p. 185).

The danger in articulating empowerment as a mission is that the concept will not be supported with the kind and depth of education that will move it from a fad to a sustained behavior. The challenge is, therefore, to make leadership development a priority.

Slide 17 – Welcome to Kappa Omicron Nu

The challenge to members is to make the Kappa Omicron Nu mission of empowerment a life-long quest. Your Academic Unit has obligated itself to the Kappa Omicron Nu mission, which can be accomplished with the partnership of National Kappa Omicron Nu.

Slide 18 – The Target

Most important, however, is the Kappa Omicron Nu commitment that the target and priority is YOU—the new members of this Chapter. Thank you.

Slide 19 - References

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