

Creating a Culture of Empowerment

How the open-source philosophy can be applied to management and organizational culture

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Before we get started

- * This is an unusual talk for a DrupalCon. It's not about Drupal. Or the web. Or technology. Or even process. It's about how we can apply the open-source philosophy to management, teams, and people.
- * You will to hear me talk a lot about what we do at Four Kitchens. We're not bragging. Instead, this presentation is the result of eight years of trial and error. Successes and failures. We don't have all the answers, but we're trying to find them.
- * Finally, my opinions are based on my experience working in the United States. The culture of work varies in different countries — sometimes even in different cities. What I will say may not apply to everyone in this room.

**I want to help people run
better companies by making
teams and leaders happier.**

I am here today because...

...How many of you are business owners? Leaders?

Two snacks per day

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What is culture?

Culture is “the **behaviors and beliefs** characteristic of a social, ethnic, or age group”

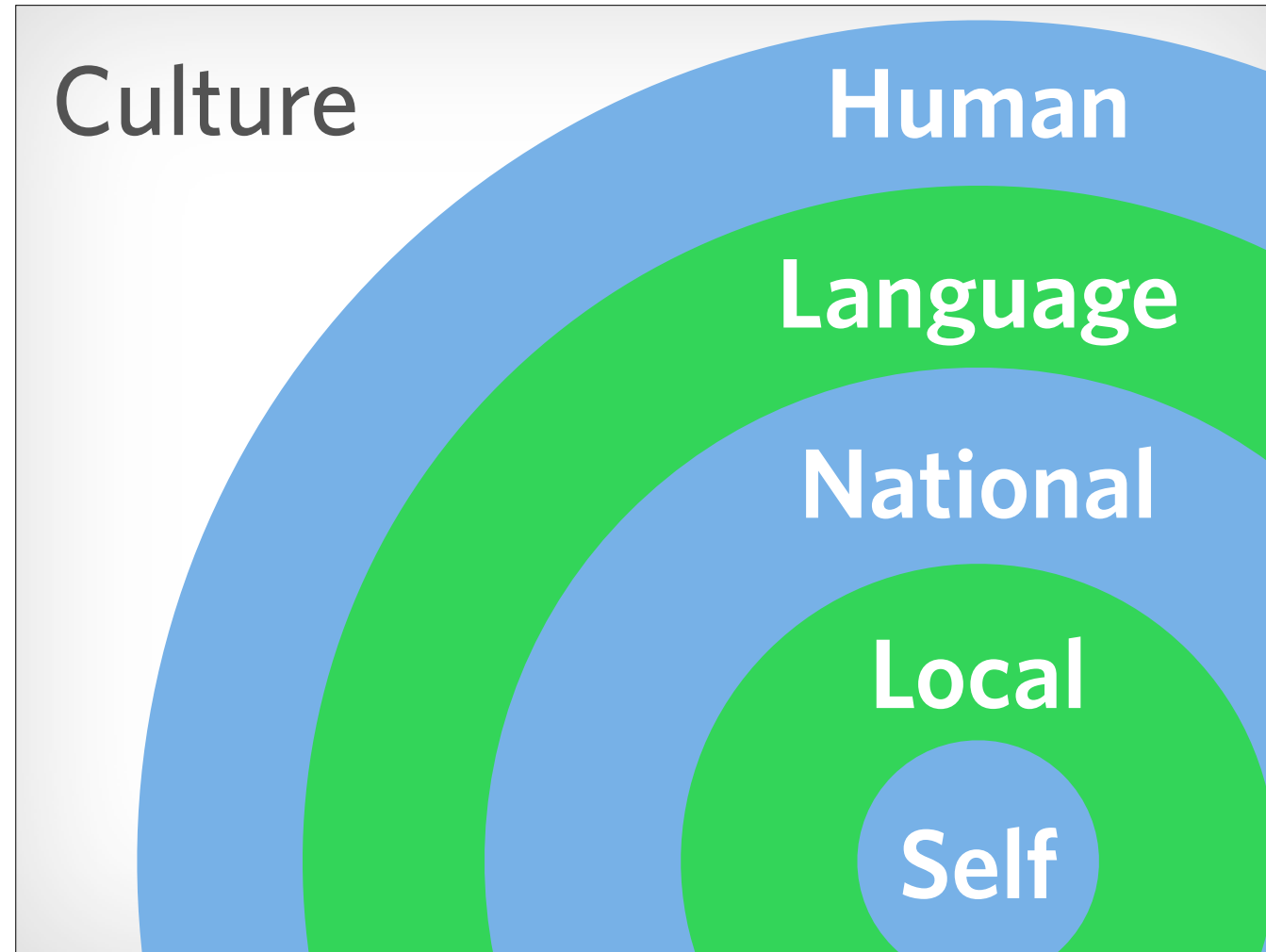
Source: [Dictionary.com](https://www.dictionary.com)

* Your workplace is a social group.

Culture affects how you
think and feel about a
group

Culture has many layers

That experiment was about national culture. However, culture is influenced by many layers.



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What is empowerment?

**Empowerment is “the
giving or delegation of
power or authority”**

Source: [Dictionary.com](https://www.dictionary.com)

- * That's what's being given, but what's being received? What does it mean to BE empowered?

Autonomy to decide what
you will do and how you will
do it

Freedom to challenge without fear of reprisal

Sharing thoughts and feelings. Not being afraid to challenge. Speaking your mind.

Power to affect change

Ownership of outcomes

Autonomy

Freedom

Power

Ownership

- * Empowerment comes from autonomy, freedom, power, and ownership.
- * Autonomy to decide what you will do and how you will do it
- * Freedom to challenge without fear of reprisal
- * Power to affect change
- * Ownership of outcomes
- * In other words...

**Empowerment means
controlling your destiny.**

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Why empowerment matters

Empowerment makes
teams happy

This increases productivity, quality, and retention.

Empowerment makes clients happy

The happiness of your team is infectious, and the quality of their work will be higher. Plus, everyone on your team has the power to do what it takes to solve the client's problems.

Empowerment enables leadership

This means less work for business managers and owners. More time to focus on long-term goals.

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The guiding principles of empowerment

Build a company you would want to work for

- * Why did you start a business?
- * Was it because you didn't want to work for anyone else?
- * Would you want to work for yourself?

Give people control over their destiny

- * Treat your coworkers as responsible professionals. They're adults you can collaborate with, not children you should manage. This will lead to mutual respect. In the knowledge industry (design, development, etc.), people are self-motivated, self-directed professionals. They want the freedom of freelancing, the security of a full-time job, and the career satisfaction of working with a team.
- * Let them succeed or fail.

Make trust the center of your culture

- * Trust will facilitate empowerment. You can't actually empower someone until you trust them, and they won't act on that empowerment until they trust you to let them succeed or fail.
- * Own your mistakes. Admit failure. Solve; don't blame.

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How to cultivate empowerment

Language is everything

- * Language /is/ thought. The language we use changes how we think and feel. It physically changes our brains.
- * “We,” not “I”; “Team,” not “employees.”

Ask for input every day

- * People want to be heard more than they want to be agreed with.
- * Having an open door policy is one thing; inviting people inside is another
- * Even in the creation of this presentation, I asked: What does empowerment mean to you? How do we empower you, and how are we failing to do so?
- * Ask questions that demand real answers.

Provide feedback channels
that are accessible, non-
argumentative, and genuine

- * Feedback should result in change OR a clear explanation of why change can't/won't be done
- * Toyota's andon cord
- * Encourage people to know it's in their control to voice concerns and make change
- * Someone creates a prototype and maybe it can become something

Hire the right people

- * Do you share values?
- * The airport test.
- * Slow to hire, fast to fire.
- * Hire people for your team who are smarter and better than you.

Go virtual

- * Allow your team the flexibility to work from home — or anywhere in the world.

Let your team set their own schedules

- * Flexible work schedules.
- * Open vacation policy.
- * If they abuse your policies, they aren't the right people. Some people are just along for the ride.

Invest time and money in
your team's success

* Professional development budget

Encourage personal brands

- * You shouldn't be afraid that people will leave. If you're afraid people will become "too good," then you're not offering something they want — and you know it.
- * This helps eliminate the “I am not my job” divide. In our line of work, we ARE indeed our jobs! Or at least many people like this.
- * Work/life balance does not mean work/life separation.

Adopt agile methodologies

- * Allow teams to self-organize around projects and problems. Agile. How we run our projects. Self-organizing aspects. Retrospective aspects. These facilitate empowerment.

Don't tell people how to do things

- * Emphasis on setting goals.
- * Tech/tool decisions are made based on employee input. If they don't work, switch.

Set boundaries *beyond* what
the person currently feels

- * Some people take power; some people need empowerment to happen through expectation setting and handing off the torch

Accept that your team
knows more about your
work than you do

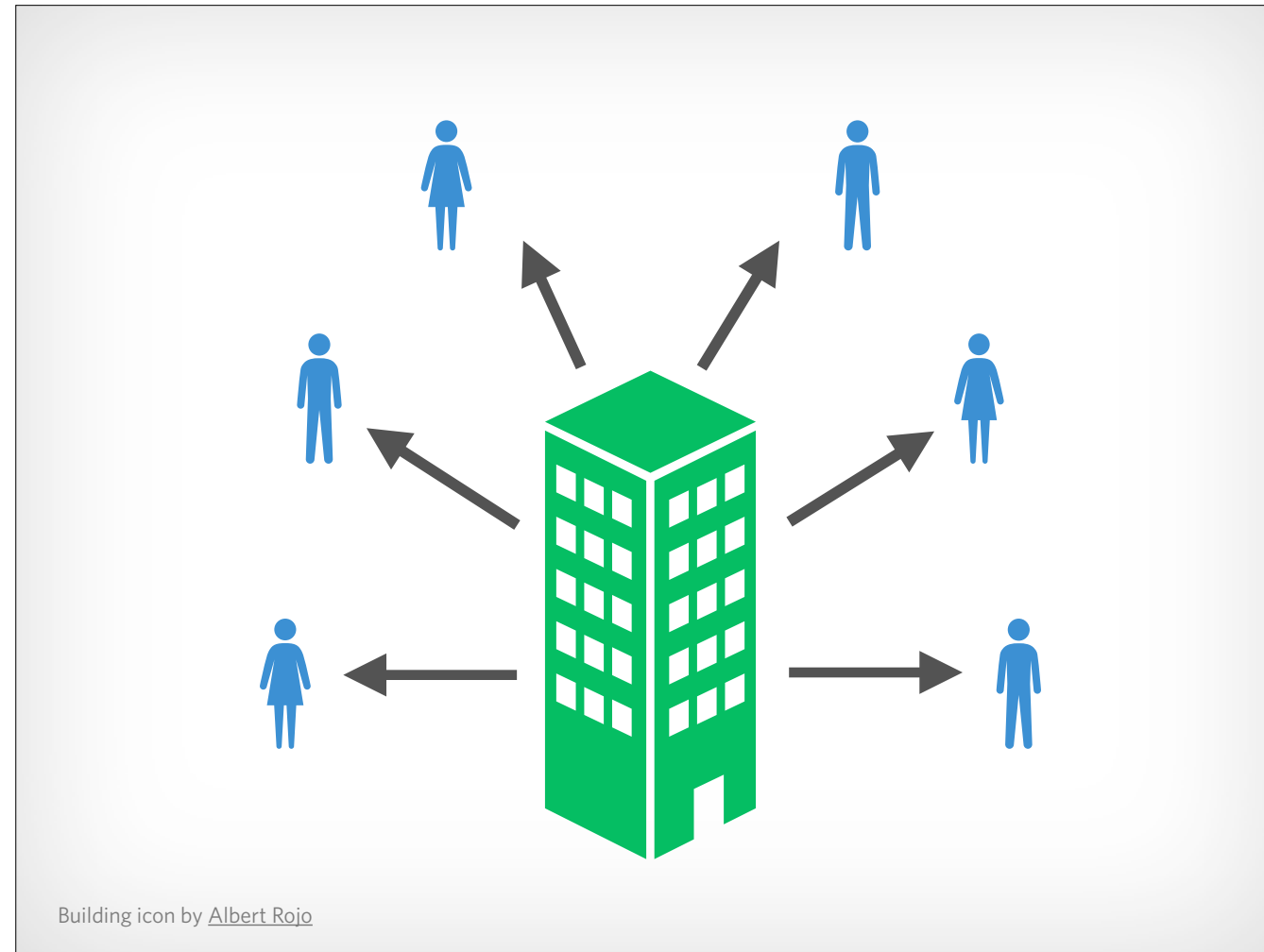
* They decide what the company does as a whole

Constantly exemplify,
pursue, and praise
empowerment

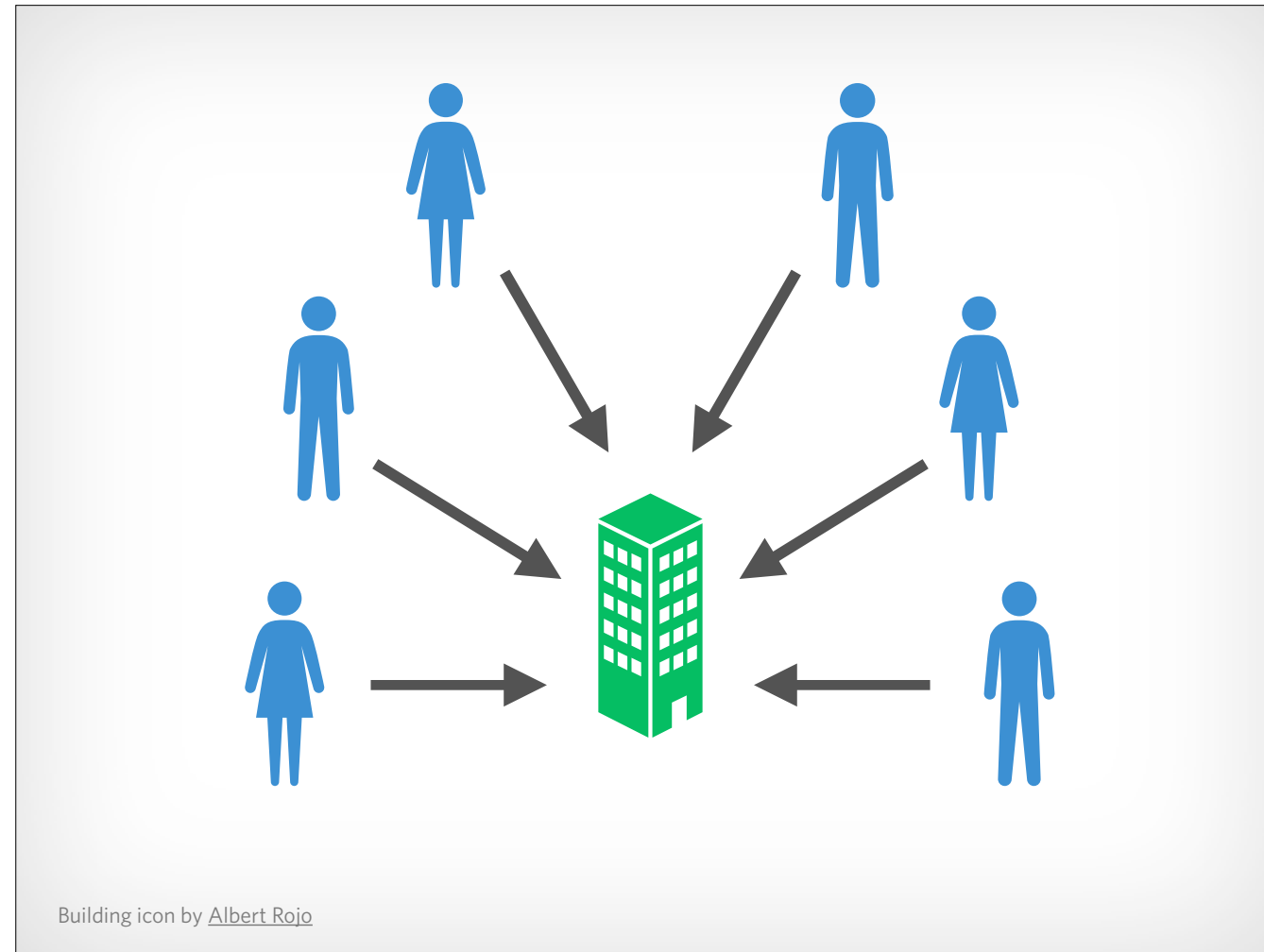
- * Reinforce.
- * Regular conversation about the valuation of empowerment it how it's maintained.
- * Asking for help is not a sign of weakness. It's a sign of empowerment.

**Empowerment changes
everything**

**When empowered, a person
benefits the company, not
the other way around.**



Traditionally, the company benefits the person. The person relies on the company for their income, professional development, and career growth.



When a person is empowered, however, /they/ benefit the /company/. They control their own destiny — and the destiny of the company.

**Empowerment makes
everyone happier and better
at their jobs.**

- * This change is worth it.
- * Teams: Increased productivity, quality, and retention.
- * Clients: Quality of work will be higher because everyone is happier and better able to solve the client's problems.
- * Leadership: Less work for business managers and owners. More time to focus on long-term goals.

Questions?



Thank you!



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