

Effective Delegation: The Secret Tool for Growth

Effective delegation can be a springboard that launches your success to new heights. Successful people master delegation, while mediocre performers desperately hang on to tasks which are important but better left to administrative experts. Over the years, I've found that often people don't or won't delegate tasks because they're not quite sure what to do with the free time they'd create for themselves. Being clear as to how you'd be more productive if you had the time is key to getting motivated about delegating. Spend a few minutes reflecting on why you were chosen for the position you're in. Is it because of your great administrative skills? Is it because you're really good at organizing papers, filing applications or filling in reports? Hardly. You are where you are because of your people skills, your communication skills, your leadership abilities, and your selling abilities.

Why Delegate?

There are three very important reasons not only to delegate, but to become excellent at it. First of all, delegating appropriate tasks simply allows you to accomplish more. You leverage your time. It frees you to work on tasks that produce income. Secondly, delegating allows you to also work on the bigger picture, rather than getting bogged down in the routine tasks. It creates the opportunity for you to work on your business rather than always working in it. And finally, effective delegating allows you, as a leader, to develop people by expanding their expertise, their independence and their areas of responsibility.

The key, of course, to achieving these goals is to delegate effectively. There's nothing worse than delegating a task and having it done wrong, done poorly or even worse, not done at all...

Causes of Poor Delegation:

- **"I can do it better" syndrome** - You know this kind of thinking. "If I ask someone else to do this, I'll just have to redo it anyway..." This is either due to poor communications on your end or having the wrong people on your team.
- **"Too hard to pass off/teach"** - You've seen this one, too. "It will take me longer to teach him/her how to do this than it will for me to do it myself." That may be so, but when you add up a year of doing it compared to teaching it one time, it's no contest.
- **Too few people** - Everyone's overloaded already, so I just can't delegate anything else. You need to reduce their load by streamlining and creating systems or you need to hire more folks.
- **Wrong people working for you** - Sometimes you come to a realization that the person working for you is really not the right one for the job.
- **Poor communications** - (see below)
- **Inadequate timeframe** - Don't wait until the last minute to delegate. Work to create a habit of taking action sooner than later.

How to Effectively Delegate:

1. Choose the right tasks to delegate

Clearly not all tasks are good candidates for delegation. A rule of thumb that I've used for years is that a task which does not involve judgment is usually a good candidate for delegation. It's not that the other person can't make a decision, but you are in the position you're in because someone trusts your judgment. Ultimately the responsibility

falls on your shoulders. Also, don't delegate production-oriented activities; those stay on your plate, too.

2. Select the right individual(s) for the task

Make sure you choose a delegate whose talents match the skill set needed for the task. If necessary, rearrange delegated tasks to give the right person the time for the new task.

3. Be clear in your communications

Ever give someone a task or report to do and have them do something completely different than what you wanted? Be clear on what you're requesting and have them repeat their understanding of your request. Also, get in the habit of checking in on the progress of important tasks. (See #6 below.)

4. Make certain each person has the right tools and sufficient knowledge to use them properly

Sometimes the right person doesn't have the tools or knowledge required for the task. (and they may be reluctant to admit it!) If you suspect that may be the case, make sure they know who to go to or where to go to find the information and/or tools.

5. Create accountability

There are few things worse than delegating a task and finding out it's not finished when you need it. Most of us have experienced this challenge. It's important to be clear on the importance of the deadline associated with the task. Regardless of whether the delegate "should" be on track or not, a missed deadline falls on your shoulders. You're the one who will ultimately feel the stress caused by a missed timeline. Make sure you stay on top of important delegated tasks. In addition, if you state that a task is important but then neglect to give it the attention it deserves, it reflects on your integrity. It demonstrates that you will say one thing but will do another. Do what you say you will do and say what you mean to say.

6. Provide ongoing communication and feedback

In order to ensure that your deadline is met and the work is being done properly, it's important to check in on the progress of the assignment. Course corrections are critical to the successful and timely completion of important tasks.

Effective delegation will leverage your time and your efforts. It will work to develop your team and make them more valuable, more productive and more loyal. If you want to boost your production, spend more of your time on efforts that produce and less time on tasks that are administrative.

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