
This Ain't Your Father's Way of Delegating

Then again, if you're fortunate enough to have had a father who knew how to delegate the right way, it just might be. Lucky you!

Five principles that will help you get more done in less time, and build a strong team focused on results.

For those whose primary responsibility is getting results with and through others, there comes a time when you realize that there are more demands on your time than you can possibly fulfill. The solution to this challenge is developing a process of effective delegation.



Delegation is an important tool that many leaders hesitate to use, and that reluctance has been the downfall of many... from front line supervisors to company presidents. However, effective delegation is very different from simply assigning someone a task or a project.

The biggest barrier to delegating is overcoming the attitude that you must do it all. It becomes a curse when you adhere to the old adage, "If you want something done right, do it yourself". Here are the five most common excuses that people use when asked if they believe delegation is an effective tool. Have you ever thought or made any of these statements?

- * "It takes too long. By the time I explain it, I could have just done it myself."
- * "None of my people are capable."
- * "Everyone on my team has enough to do, and I can't dump anything more on them."
- * "What if I delegate something and it gets messed up?"
- * "It is my responsibility to get it done."

When you delegate, you give someone else one of your job tasks to complete with the authority and control to complete it properly. Delegation is not abdication. You share accountability for the assignment, which is why you must establish checkpoints to monitor overall progress. Just as the overall outcomes of your area of responsibility belong to you, so too you are responsible for the ultimate success of the delegation process.

There are a multitude of benefits for you and the people who work for you when you delegate effectively. The two most important are helping to relieve your workload so you can focus on goals and objectives that will accelerate the results of your entire team, and also allowing your people to contribute at a higher level and grow in their role and responsibilities. You are measured on the results you get, and the results you achieve are a direct result of your ability to grow and develop the people on your team. Delegation, if done properly and for the right reasons, helps foster a climate of trust and create growth opportunities for your employees.



Here are five principles that can help you create an effective delegation process.

1. **Determine what you will delegate.** Effective delegation begins with clearly defining your responsibilities. Write down all of your activities and responsibilities. Review this master list and categorize all of the items into two secondary lists... things that you alone must do, and things that others could do or help you complete. Honestly ask yourself, "What items on my master list can be done as well or better by someone else?". The items you identify by answering that questions provide the opportunity for delegation.
2. **Choose the right person.** Andrew Carnegie said, "The secret of success is not in doing your own work, but in recognizing the right person to do it." The key to finding the right person to delegate an assignment to is in matching skills and attitude to the task at hand. Also consider the work habits of your people, and make delegation selections based on the best fit between employee and task. That is not to say that you shouldn't look for opportunities to develop your more 'difficult' employees. Often we have found that the key to turning these people into profitable contributors is in providing a meaningful opportunity that challenges them beyond their current role.
3. **Clarify the desired result.** Determine the results you consider necessary for the successful completion of the task or project. When results are clear, it allows the person to use his or own creativity and resources to accomplish the task. An added benefit of effective delegation is that they may find a better and more effective way to accomplish the task or achieve the desired results. On the other hand, if it is important for the employee to complete the task a certain way, make sure that the steps needed is as clear as the desired end result. Take time to explain why a certain process is necessary, so they understand the importance of not deviating. Whenever possible delegate without dictating how they are going to get there.
4. **Clearly define the person's responsibility and authority as it relates to the delegated task.** Clearly communicate the expectations, responsibilities, and timeline. Be sure to ask the person to share their understanding of requirements of the project. Make sure they have the commensurate authority that will be necessary to accomplish the task. Telling someone to *do what it takes* may be too broad and cause challenges in the long run, but micro-managing something you have delegated will only undermine the climate of trust and growth.
5. **Establish a system of follow-up meetings or touch points.** Follow-up meetings should focus on two things,,, monitoring progress and determining the need for assistance. The number and frequency of follow-up meetings will vary based on the scope task or project and the employee's level of experience in that area. Follow-up meetings provide and opportunity for both the delegator and delegatee to ask questions and share ideas while ensuring successful completion in the designated time frame.

Once you have created a solid process for delegation, stick to it. Avoid reverse delegation, where a person tries to dump the delegated task back to you. You may well feel tempted to take it back, especially if they seem to be struggling. Use the follow-up meetings to manage the process, provide encouragement, and monitor results. Your team's accomplishments fuel the fires for future creativity and innovation. Success breeds success!

