

The Art of Delegation

by Del Suggs

Why is delegation important?

One of the most crucial and challenging tasks for leaders and supervisors is to share the work among those they manage and supervise. Many leaders complain that they are tasked with workloads which exceed the time they have to complete them. Unchecked, this feeling leads to stress and ineffectiveness. In many cases, organizational leaders could greatly reduce their stress by practicing a critical management skill - delegation.

Delegation is not what most people think it is. It's not simply assigning a task to someone else. It rather the assignment of authority and responsibility to another person to carry out a specific task. The person who delegated the work remains accountable for the outcome of the delegated work, but the responsibility for completing the work shifts to the subordinate. Delegation empowers a subordinate to make decisions. For all practical matters, it is a shift of decision-making authority from one organizational level to a lower one.

The opposite of effective delegation is micromanagement, where a manager provides too much input, direction, and review of delegated work. If you've ever been told what to do, and then been told how to do it, then you know about micromanagement.

If you're not sure when to delegate, then consider these questions:

Are you are spending too much time on day-to-day tasks with no

time to think about the big picture?

Do you have someone working for you who could do higher value work?

Can you can see the potential of someone and you will lose that person unless he or she is stretched?

Do you need a new way of tackling a task that comes up regularly?

Do you want to see what a promising person is capable of doing?

If you answered "yes" to any of these questions, then you need to begin delegation.

Basics of Delegation

Delegation involves three important concepts and practices: **responsibility, authority, and accountability.** When you delegate, you share responsibility and authority with others and you hold them accountable for their performance. The ultimate accountability, however, still lies with the manager who should clearly understand that :

-Responsibility refers to the assignment itself and the intended results. That means setting clear expectations. It also means that you should avoid prescribing the employee HOW the assignment should be completed.

Authority refers to the appropriate power given to the individual or group including the right to act and make decisions. It is very important to

communicate boundaries and criteria such as budgetary considerations.

Accountability refers to the fact that the relevant individual must ' answer ' for his/her/their actions and decisions along with the rewards or penalties that accompany those actions or decisions.

Here is a step-by-step method for delegation.

step 1. Determine the task. That means determine exactly what you want accomplished, your expectations, your requirements, and more. Be as exact as you can be with the outcome.

Step 2. Choose the correct person for the job. You know your subordinates. Make the choice wisely, based on interest and ability.

Step 3. Meet with that person. Explain the task at hand, and explain why you have selected them to do the job.

Step 4. Make sure that the subordinate understands the assignment. Notify those affected by the transfer of authority.

Step 5. Ask the subordinate how they will perform the assignment, perhaps asking what their initial approach will be.

Step 6. Listen actively to their response.

Step 7. Confirm their commitment to the task, and offer any assistance they might need.

Step 8. Let them know that you

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are confident in their ability to complete the task you have assigned.

Step 9. Create checkpoints and a time line for completion of the task. This gives you the means to monitor their performance.

Step 10. Observe the checkpoints, but resist the urge to micromanage.

Step 11. Recognize and reward the person when they complete the assignment.

After you begin to delegate, you may find that it's not as easy as it sounds. Often it seems that delegation is actually more difficult than simply doing the task yourself. If you find that to be true, then consider these pitfalls of delegation. These are common mistakes.

Reverse Delegation: When the person you've assigned the task is constantly coming to you for guidance and input. You end up doing the task yourself. This is sometimes known as "upward delegation."

Dumping: When the person you have assigned the task feels like you have simply lightened your load by dumping a dirty job on them.

Grabbing the Glory: When the person you've assigned the task completes it, and you take the credit.

Delegation is a wonderful opportunity for subordinates to learn new skills and develop confidence.

Never forget that delegation is

essential. No leader-- regardless of their gifts-- can do it all. You need help, and you've got gifted people around you. Learn to delegate properly.

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