



How to Delegate

Let's face it – there are only so many hours in a day and so much of us to go round. For most people the list of things that need attention tends to be far longer than the time we have available. No sooner is one task completed than another two are added to the list. With some clever planning and a little time investment many of these things could be delegated to others – from small everyday tasks to more significant projects.

Delegation is simply entrusting another person with a task and giving them the right information and authority to complete it. By delegating some of our workload to others we have more time to concentrate on what we're really good at.

Here are some tips on what to consider when delegating:

IF YOU DON'T ASK...

The first step to delegating is finding someone to ask for help. The obvious place to look within a company structure is at internal resources. If an organisation already has people with the ability and capacity to do the work, then delegation should be pretty straightforward. If a suitable person doesn't already exist within the organisation, then outsourcing is a very practical solution. Businesses have been doing it for years for IT, design, accounting etc, and these days it's also possible to outsource many other aspects of work too.

LET THINGS GO

The most common argument against delegating is the cliché 'if you want a job done well, do it yourself'. Of course there will be instances when we really are the only person a task can be entrusted to and for the rest we may well be the only person who can do them right now. By taking a little time to train someone else, they too will be able to do the less important work – and perhaps, perish the thought, do it better and faster than before.

EXPECTATION = OUTCOME

Make sure you know the desired outcome. It's OK not to know how you'd like to get there but it's always of benefit to have analysed the job in hand and have a clear vision of what you expect the finished article to be. Once you have that, it's much easier to explain it to someone else and it minimises any potential disappointment on receiving back work that doesn't quite match your expectations.

IT'S ABOUT THE DESTINATION, NOT THE JOURNEY

Avoid micro managing, it's time consuming and counter productive. Delegate the desired outcome rather than the process. By all means demonstrate how you would do things, if you feel it's necessary, but then give your helper free rein to do things their own way unless it's critical your own procedures are followed. For lengthier projects, build in some interim progress reviews so you can be confident things are on the right track for a successful result.

DELEGATE, DON'T ABDICATE

Remember you're still responsible for the end result of a delegated task. Yes, you need to step back and let your helper get on with things but not so much that you're no longer part of the process. Setting review periods for progress reports gives everyone involved an opportunity to catch up with how tasks are going and hopefully to deal with issues before they become problems. If at review things aren't quite right, discuss what needs tweaking rather than taking the work away, tempting as it might be to wrestle things back under your control.

PLAN B

Unexpected things happen so it's wise to have a contingency in place for illness or glitches in technology. Agree a backup plan with your helper so they know what to do if something untoward should happen. Perhaps they have their own back up person, or you've agreed to step back in as needed to meet deadlines. Having such a plan will help you to feel in control and on top of things.

FEEDBACK

Giving feedback at the end of each project helps to improve future results. Bringing up negative aspects is OK so long as they're balanced, where possible, with praise for the positive elements too.

ASSIGNMENT

So, here's your mission should you choose to accept it.....

Look at your to-do list and see if each task has been broken down sufficiently into stages/elements. Then decide whether or not you're the only person who can complete each task. Chances are there will be a few things that could be done by someone else. Is there anyone in your organisation who would welcome the opportunity to help? If so ask them. If not, then there is a wealth of talent to be found at the click of a mouse.

We each have the ability to make our lives easier, just let things go a little and trust in others. Good things will come of it!



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