

# How to Delegate More Effectively ©

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**Delegation not only helps managers be more efficient in the workplace, it also gives employees a better sense of worth and cultivates skills in new areas.**

When it comes to achieving goals or getting things done, we all think we can do it better. Perhaps we could, if we had 40 hours in a day, but we don't. The key to getting more done is to maximize your time and energy. One of the best ways to do this is to delegate.



**Reasons to Delegate** - Everyone can benefit from delegating. Here are a few good reasons you should consider delegating:

- It frees up your time and energy to perform at a higher level
- It maintains and builds others' skills and esteem.
- It can reduce delay.
- It can help get more done in less time.

**Why you don't delegate** - Many managers do not delegate because of:

- **Attitude** - "No one can do it as well as I can." As a result, no one else ever gets the chance to try.
- **Inexperience** – They may simply lack practice or training on how to delegate.
- **Fear** - Fear of making mistakes, taking risks or being outdone.
- **Impatience** -They do not have the patience to take the time necessary to explain and teach others how to do the task. Some managers delegate, and if it doesn't get done, assume people are unqualified.

## **Where to begin?**

A good place to start is to take a look at your job and list everything that you could delegate. Next to each item, place the name of the person who you are delegating the work to now or would like to delegate to in the future

Delegate is not dumping problems onto other people. Be sure you recognize the difference between delegating and dumping. Delegating is maximizing your time and talents by choosing tasks that others can do to help you and the organization achieve its goals.

The first time you delegate a task, start with something small. When the task is complete, give the person who completed the work feedback, and let them know how well they did it.

## **Degrees of Authority**

Effective delegators delegate authority, not just responsibilities. You do not have to delegate all the authority at one time. Many people think either I will do it or I will delegate it to someone else to do it. This "all or nothing" thinking can get you into trouble.

I encourage people to consider delegating with varying "degrees of authority" based on the project, the person and the time constraints.

You want to delegate enough authority for the person to be able to accomplish the intended results yet not more than they can handle.

Here are a few examples of the varying degrees of authority:

- **Low End** - On the low end of the authority scale, you might tell an employee
  - “Look into this problem and get me all the facts so I can decide what to do.” Or you might say
  - “Look into the issue, let me know the alternatives available and recommend one for my approval.”
- In these examples you are still keeping most of the authority. This might be a good approach for a new employee or for someone working on a task that is new to them. This also could be a good approach if you are delegating a complicated task.
- **High End** - On the higher end of the authority scale you might say
  - “Look into this situation, let me know what you intend to do and do it unless I say not to.” Or you could say
  - “Take care of this and let me know what you did.”
- In both cases you are giving the employee more authority to get the job done.

The key is to stop “all or nothing” thinking when it comes to delegating. There are many options between the extremes that can help you and the person you are delegating to get the task done right.

### Delegation Process

The following process can help you become a better at delegating:

1) **Chose the right people**. Not everyone can "do it" as well as you think you can. However some can come close. If you are new to delegating, you might try breaking the job into parts and delegate pieces.

When you start to consider who to choose, take into consideration:

- What are the skills and knowledge needed to complete the task?
- What outcome do you expect?
- What do you want them to do?
- What resources do they need to do it?
- Who matches this description?
- Do they need any training? If so, build in time for the training, or you could be setting yourself up for failure

Finally, only delegate to people you can trust.

2) **Set goals and objectives together**. Clearly define your expectations, what authority the employee has, your priorities, the budget, and time limits.

- Don't always tell employees exactly how to do the task. Instead, briefly explain how you want them to go about the task and let them tell you how they are going to handle it. Expect results, but not perfection. There are many ways to get results, so don't insist that everyone does it "your way." You never know - someone else may well see a quicker, more effective way of tackling a task!
- Mutually discuss deadlines and checkpoints along the way. People need to be involved in making decisions that affect them. Together establish deadlines, discuss how to monitor any progress, anticipated obstacles and how you together might overcome these obstacles... Participation develops a sense of ownership and pride.
- Remind them that they are accountable for the success of this task.
- Let the person ask questions, or ask them to summarize their understanding of the project. This will help ensure you both see the project clearly.
- Get it in writing. – Whenever necessary or possible document the details in writing. Get them involved in this process. Be sure you both have a copy.

3) **Build a feedback loop.** Be sure feedback takes place during the task not just after it. Again, ask the delegatee to develop the milestones, midpoints and stages, even if you know what they should be. Develop a reporting system, so that you can catch small problems before they become big problems. Regular feedback reduces the margin of error. Feedback can be both written and oral.

- Set up check points. Example: "Bring me the initial plans on Tuesday so we can review them before we move onto Phase II."
- Give reminders about upcoming deadlines. Give support and direction, but don't fall into the trap of doing the work
- Be careful not to supervise every detail
- Be tactful in giving feedback.
- Don't hover! Leave the person alone to get on with the work, but be available to answer questions.

You will probably need to spend more time with the delegatee than you think you should. However, getting the delegatee to help create the feedback loop increases their ownership.

4) **Assign with confidence.** Let them know you have confidence in their abilities right from the start. People tend to live up to the expectations placed on them.

5) **Really delegate.** Delegating is a "*process not an event*". People will make mistakes. Help them learn from their mistakes so they can do a better job next time. If you can tolerate the learning process (mistakes), you will find delegating a skill you cannot live without.

Finally, remember to give lots of specific praise throughout the project and at the end for a job well done.

***"Give a person a fish and they will eat for a day. But teach a person to fish and they can eat for a lifetime."***

Initially, delegating does take some additional time. However, like most good investments the payoff in the long run is greater than the investment. The more you use these skills and techniques the more they become second nature to you. Like any skill, over time it becomes easier and quicker to do.

If you have followed the above process, given clear instructions at the beginning of the delegation and checked in during the process, you should have a successful outcome.

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