Delegation: Getting Results Through Other People

Leaders who master the art of delegation achieve greater results for the organization, better maximize their time, and develop more skilled employees. Delegation is a key responsibility of leaders, allowing them to achieve results through other people as opposed to doing everything themselves. This leaves them more time to focus on business strategy, planning, and guiding overall business execution, while transferring knowledge and skills throughout the organization. Leaders, who struggle with delegation work more hours, are always buried, are “professional firefighters”, and find themselves micro-managing the details of their employees.

Most employees are promoted into leadership roles, not because they are great trainers or seasoned leaders, but because they excelled in their technical skill. Many fail as leaders because organizations do not train them in how to get things done through others. We promote our top sales person to Sales Manager, not to grow sales, but to grow sales people. Sales Managers can make a greater overall impact through transferring knowledge and skills to other sales people than they do by selling. Delegation is not just about freeing up time, it’s about developing people so they can become self-sufficient.

Effective Delegation

Have you ever turned over a task to an employee, only to see them fall flat on their face? Perhaps their failure had more to do with your delegation method than their ability to do the task. You can’t just turn over a task expecting success unless you have clearly transferred knowledge, given effective coaching, and provided resources needed for the person to get the job done. The following delegation steps and techniques will help ensure greater success.

Delegation Steps & Techniques:

1) Delegate the right task to the right person. Know your employees’ strengths, weaknesses and ambitions. Delegate tasks that utilize their strengths and allow them to grow in areas where they aspire to develop. Make sure the person selected understands why they were selected, how it helps the company or team, and how they will benefit.

2) Set clear goals and expectations. Clearly define the task or project expectations including: goals & outcomes, what the final projects will look like, how performance will be measured, and when it should be completed. Establish action plan milestones and review dates for routine progress evaluation and feedback. Ask for their ideas and involve them throughout the process for stronger commitment and buy-in.

3) Empower people to find their own solutions. With goals and measures clear, let them own how it gets done. Avoid the tendency to describe exactly how you want everything done. Avoid micro-managing their every move, or you will derail their success and their trust in you and themselves.

4) Provide needed training & coaching. Delegating a task does not mean you give the assignment and walk away. Help the employee by giving them any needed training, resources and coaching. Be a resource they can openly come to with questions or challenges. Providing intermittent coaching as
needed helps ensure their success. Remember to discuss current work load and identify any needed freeing up of their tasks or workload so they can accomplish their new assignments.

5) **Define any resource needs.** Discuss and agree on resources required to get the job done. All relevant resources should be taken into consideration, including staffing, physical space, equipment, materials, inventory, storage and other related activities and services.

6) **Support and Communicate.** As part of the communication and support process, alert the individual to any unusual matters of politics or protocol within the organization of which he or she should be cognizant. Inform your own manager and your own peers of the new assignment to a direct report, if the task assigned is one of high visibility and warrants this level of support and introduction.

7) **Monitor progress.** Build into the task or project assignment a process for on-going monitoring, meetings and accountability discussions. Don’t leave them to sink or swim; inspect what you expect. Have set times where you meet with the employee, allowing them the opportunity to report on progress, ask questions and receive any needed coaching. If you delegate to someone who lacks the skills to accomplish the job, even after the needed training and coaching occurs, you may have to make a change in the assignment. When you delegate, you’re still responsible.

8) **Be patient and encouraging.** There are always challenges in learning new skills and taking on something you’ve never done before. Expect some set-backs and mistakes without over-reacting. Remember, you didn’t learn the skill overnight either. Stay positive, showing confidence in the employee and their ability to get through the tough times. When they approach you with problems, ask what they suggest. This shows confidence in them and helps them to take more ownership.

9) **Provide feedback and reinforcement.** As you monitor employees’ on-going task completion efforts, provide feedback anytime you are surprised with results. Give praise and recognition when you are pleasantly surprised, and constructive feedback and coaching whenever performance is subpar. Like any performance situation, there should be no surprises at the end. Make sure the employee knows how you feel and how he or she is doing along the way.

10) **Assess lessons learned at the end of a given project.** Ask the employee to review what went well, what could have gone better and how things should be done differently the next time. This helps with the development of the employee while ensuring continued organizational improvement. Make sure to let the employee receive credit and recognition for the project results. Nothing will undermine future delegation efforts faster than a leader who delegates, then claims all the glory for the task being done. Each time a project is completed, the manager should attempt to engage the employee in a task that is incrementally more challenging than the previous one.

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**Leader Delegation Training**

For assistance training leaders in delegation and other important people management practices and techniques contact: HR Service, Inc. at (801) 685-8400 or visit us online at [www.HRServiceInc.com](http://www.HRServiceInc.com)