



## & The Business Shed

*- A Creative Initiative*

### Delegation 101 - How to Delegate

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**The inability to delegate is one of the most common problems for leaders – whether they lead a company or manage a small team.**

In essence, leadership is all about getting results by organising and supervising a workforce.

Poor delegation or no delegation is inefficient and expensive.

One single person (who will be male for the sake of simplicity of writing) cannot physically carry out all the tasks within the organisation or team over which he has charge, even if he knows how to do the job.

When delegation is absent, a huge opportunity is lost to the company – that of training and succession planning.

There are many reasons for people not delegating:

- They feel at ease doing routine tasks rather than supervising the work of others;
- They aren't familiar with the skills of their workers – they don't know how much they know;
- This makes them unsure of other people's ability to take on more responsibility;
- They hate correcting other people's work;
- They know they can do some things better than others.

Some of this is obvious if the leader / manager has come into the organisation and has had little input into the hiring of those that report to him. When this is not the case, senior leadership needs to ask the obvious question – why did he hire those people in the first place?

Make no mistake, delegation is hard work. It takes effort, trust and a set of processes and control to ensure that when things go wrong, everyone knows where to look for help.

But delegating is critical to helping an organisation grow and improve. You can tell people what to do, you can show people what to do, but by far the best way to teach people is to simply let them do the work themselves.

Here we come back to the opportunity that delegation provides the avenue to training.

There are at least three good reasons to delegate:

- It gets the job done more efficiently;
- It provides training opportunities;
- It provides new experiences for the workforce.

Many managers and leaders waste time (and lots of energy) performing tasks that an employee could perform just as well (and perhaps better); this waste of time lowers productivity and raises operating costs.

The ability to delegate tasks and control productivity simultaneously is an essential skill for leaders / managers.

It is not unlike juggling three or more balls in the air at once; or like ordering a takeaway from a drive-through window whilst talking on your mobile at the same time. There can be interesting consequences when things get out of control.

But there are also some basic steps to help leaders and managers ease their workload through delegation while maintaining control.

Here are the six parts of an effective delegation and control system:

#### Goal Setting (Planning)

If everyone is involved in the planning of a project, it is much more likely that everyone will buy into the work involved – everyone knows why.

### Responsibility AND Authority (the AND is vitally important)

Before any delegation is made, everyone needs to know which way responsibility flows – who reports to whom? And who in the chain has the authority to make decisions? Organisations will often produce a Delegated Authorities document which is signed off from Board Level downward the “lowest” leader / manager to whom delegation has been given. A mistake organisations make is to limit this to simply financial delegation and exclude the processes that actually make money. Some people need more direction than others, so it is important to match the task to the person.

### Negotiate

Ask the question – can you do this (whatever this is)? Give and take is a necessary part of the delegation process. Both the “delegat-or” and the “delegat-ee” need to know what each knows. There is little point in delegating something to someone who has no clue how to get that particular task done!

### The Exception Rule

Only the unusual problem or case is brought to the top – jumping the delegated chain where necessary, but never without informing first. There are some decisions that people at the top do get paid to make – and only them.

### Coaching / Consulting

In the same way that a GP, with a good “bedside” manner, gets the information from the patient and perhaps the wider family, so too a good leader / manager needs to know how the “delegat-ee” is doing. Listen, encourage, make suggestions, offer training – but above all listen to the answers to sensible, probing questions that are meaningful, not trite.

### Control and Review

This is one step “back” or distanced from coaching and consulting. By reviewing and controlling the work done, the leader / manager can ensure good results. Reviews need to address the results and the actual methods should not be overtly criticised – that can be done separately, later as a part of a review of processes. Often by delegating a task or a series of tasks, there will be discovered a better, smarter way of doing things – and these need to be invested back into the processes and systems the organisation uses. This is often referred to a “process re-engineering” – but does not necessarily require a team of consultants to achieve!

What about mistakes? Sure, delegation can result in some mistakes being made, but these should be seen as learning / training opportunities.

Companies can make huge gains from finding out in a positive way how the mistakes occurred and what could have been done (could still be done) to improve things.

One often forgotten action is to praise the delegat-ee for jobs well done. This makes that person feel valued and worthy and more likely to continue doing well in the delegated role.

Interestingly, each time delegation happens within an organisation, there is a chance that everyone will improve their standing in that organization. This might take some thinking, but there is a real chance that everyone will grow, because the organisation has become “a better place”, with less stress and tension.

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## *Creating Possibilities and Finding Solutions*

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