



Delegation that Works

What is Effective Delegation?

It is impractical for a supervisor to handle all of the work directly; they need to free themselves up to *manage* the work instead, leveraging their team members to achieve more than the supervisor could achieve alone. In order to meet your company's goals, and to develop individuals, supervisors need to delegate responsibility and authority. Responsibility is the obligation to complete assigned projects. Authority is the legitimate power to make decisions, give orders, allocate resources and take action within a given scope. Meanwhile, the supervisor still remains accountable for the outcome. Accountability is answering for the result of actions or omissions.

If we know how important delegation is, **why don't we delegate?** Common excuses include:

- No time – I have no time to teach a team member how to do it
- No time for follow-up – it takes a lot of energy to follow-up and keep team members on task for success
- I can do it better myself – I know what needs to be done and can do it better and faster, so I'll just do it
- Why should I train someone to do my job?

What are the benefits of effective delegation?

- You multiply the amount of work that can get done. The more you delegate, the more you create team members who can accomplish much more in less time.
- You create motivated people, and this leads to individuals who will take more initiative, be more creative and take on more responsibilities, leading to a higher performing business overall.
- You personally gain more balance by prioritising which tasks you should continue to work on, and which to delegate. You will go home at the end of the day having accomplished more as a team, while still getting balance into your life.
- You will be known as a person who delegates to others – people around the business will want to work for you.
- You create opportunities for yourself and for others. You will be able to take on projects with a higher level of authority yourself, proving your own worth and advancing your own career opportunities, as well as creating successors for yourself, so that you can move on at the appropriate time.

Developing Effective Delegation Skills

Use the following check-list to help you to get delegation right:

1. Understand the task

You need to be able to communicate the task to the person you delegate to. So before you delegate, ensure that you understand the:

- outcome that is needed
- deadline
- context, and where this fits into the business strategy
- barriers to success
- resources that are required
- tools available
- people who might be affected



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Delegate early, because the employee will need more time to complete this the first time around.

Delegate whole tasks – if you truly want the experience to be meaningful to the employee, transfer as much of the task as possible (e.g., rather than only delegating the creation of a report, delegate the analysis of it and the presentation of the themes in a meeting etc).

2. Choose the right person

Delegate to people who want to take on more challenging tasks, and who want to develop their skills. Find the person who is motivated to take on the task. It is easier to train someone to do a task that they are motivated to complete, than to motivate someone unmotivated, who can do the job already.

Consider delegating to people who have a strength that you are missing, who could do this task much better and quicker than you could.

3. Communicate the task

- Take time to communicate the expectations of this task – the results required - and all the information you gathered above
- Set a SMART goal (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, time-bound) with the team member for this task, so that the individual understands it completely and can be recognised formally for achieving it later
- Communicate that you are passing on responsibility and authority for this task
- Point out what's in it for the delegatee
- Be as specific as possible about deadlines and set sub-deadlines for milestones along the way. Identify how you will both monitor progress. Ask what the individual would feel most comfortable with. Make sure you schedule follow-ups before you leave the meeting

4. Provide resources, remove barriers

- Make sure the person has the time, people, technology etc to complete the task, so that they can take complete ownership of the success of the task
- Discuss the reallocation or reprioritization of some of their other tasks to make room for this one
- Ensure that others know that you have delegated authority to this person and that they should work with them
- Communicate that you are available to the person if they need your advice or coaching along the way (and make sure you are congruent with this promise)
- Let the person know you have confidence in them

5. Guarantee understanding

Make sure the individual understands exactly what is expected before they leave the meeting. Instead of asking “do you understand?” ask “Mike, please share with me your understanding of what is required to make this task successful”. Clarify any misunderstandings and check that they feel they have enough direction and support to proceed.

6. Follow-up and reward

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Clare Norman
coaching associates ltd.

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- Give the delegatee the freedom to decide on the process (it may not be the same as you would have chosen, but the issue is whether they are successful in achieving the outcome)
- Leave them to get on with it. Don't keep asking them how it is going – that's why you agreed on follow-up meetings
- Reward progress at each follow-up meeting and in public if possible
- Correct to get back on track
- Give them frequent feedback
- Be on their side when dealing with clients, colleagues etc
- Give back-up support if they need it – let them know they do not need to fight all the battles alone, but remember there is a difference between rescuing and supporting
- Help the delegatee to come to their own solutions, rather than advising them, or worse still taking the task back