

# Delegating: Why Bother?

Delegating is as beneficial to you as it is to your team. To be a strong leader, delegation skills are important to have. Not only will delegating allow you to grow, but it will also help your team succeed and grow with you. Don't allow excuses to get in your way of becoming a great leader.

**T**o be an effective leader, you have to delegate work. Delegating not only helps you and your team grow, but it also demonstrates that you, as a leader, know how to get work done efficiently, build employee morale and self-esteem, earn employee respect, prepare new leaders, expand viewpoints, and possibly obtain new methodologies.

Failing to delegate can have a negative impact on both you and your team. Delegation gives you more energy to devote to more important tasks. By not delegating, you lose valuable time. Too many times, managers deal with crisis management instead of working on strategic analysis and future planning. Without delegation, your employees can't grow, and you could be excluded from or miss an opportunity for a possible promotion. By trying to do everything, you can become stressed, overworked, or fall

behind. You might start missing deadlines, feel unappreciated, or work excessive hours that can lead to your entire department falling behind.

## Why Delegate?

People don't bother to delegate work for various reasons.

I'm sure at one point or another we've all used the following excuses or have heard others use them to avoid delegating work:

- ◆ I don't have the time to train someone else.
- ◆ I do it better than anyone else.
- ◆ I like doing this part of the job.
- ◆ My employees don't have the time to take on another responsibility.
- ◆ Until I understand the process, I can't delegate it.
- ◆ They won't understand how to do it.
- ◆ If someone else screws it up, the accountability for the error will still come back to me.

Each of these might appear to be valid reasons, but they're simply rationalizations and excuses. Following them can have a negative impact on you and your team. Let's take a look.

**I don't have the time to train someone else.** Do you have the

time to do your job? By using this excuse, your employees become more dependent on you and can become unmotivated and disengaged. As a team leader, it's your responsibility to help your employees learn and grow. If you don't have the time, you aren't doing your job.

**I do it better than anyone else.** Everyone wants to believe they're perfectionists, but often this assumption is more about competition than perfectionism. If you assign a task to your employees with the belief that they are to do their best at the job, then it will produce your expected results.

**I like doing this part of the job.** Everyone has a niche at work, especially if it satisfies us to see the result. When you pass on responsibilities to your employees, you'll be giving them the opportunity to enjoy their work and new responsibilities as well.

**My employees don't have the time to take on another responsibility.** This is when cross-training is effective. If possible, conduct a task and time study to see how much time is being spent on each task and whether improvements or efficiencies can be found. The benefits of cross-training include



the satisfaction from learning and accomplishing new tasks, as well as ensuring your team won't be shorthanded if someone is out, including you—especially at a critical deadline. We can't control the unexpected, but we can plan for it.

**Until I understand the process, I can't delegate.** This is when brainstorming sessions for new processes are effective. When a team brainstorms, everyone has input. By observing others' abilities to comprehend the new process and listening to their suggestions, you can discern the best person(s) to accomplish the new task or process.

**They won't understand how to do it.** You hired a team of capable individuals. With some training and an open door policy for when they have questions, they'll learn how to accomplish the task. You're their leader and instructor, and part of your job is to provide training.

**If someone else screws it up, the accountability for the error will still come back to me.** The fear of looking bad and maybe not getting a raise, promotion, or bonus is just that—a fear. The answer to overcoming that fear lies in effective training and delegation, not in trying to do all the work yourself.

## What to Delegate

What are some of the tasks you should consider delegating? Anytime an employee takes on a new task, it will require additional time to perform. When you think of delegating, start looking at the more routine tasks you deal with. Routine tasks don't require much

time for transition. If the task isn't essential and requires a skill set you don't have, enlist one of your employees. Don't assign tasks with an immediate timeline; your employees can learn without the pressure of a deadline and can learn project management skills.

Also look at the skills of your employees. With the growth of technology, someone in your department may have a higher skill set than you, making it easier to delegate. In addition, delegating work prepares your employees for potential future positions in the company. Consider assigning a task to an employee who expressed interest from one of the brainstorming sessions noted earlier. People who show an interest are usually more successful in understanding and completing the task. If delegation helps an employee learn a new skill or understand a new process, then delegate. This can include nontechnical skills such as running meetings, learning time management, and interacting with other departments for understanding. These soft skills help your employees advance and were, I hope, part of your training as you progressed to your current level.

There are certain tasks that aren't appropriate for delegation. Don't delegate unpleasant or demeaning tasks. Don't delegate anything that's a mismatch of the project needs and the employee's skill set. Don't delegate anything that can be eliminated. No one wants an assignment that doesn't have benefits. That's a waste of time and could be disrespectful.

## The Art of Delegation

When you learn to delegate effectively and overcome a "why bother" attitude by ignoring the excuses you may have made, you improve your company's business intelligence; more people are aware of what the company needs to do to be a success; you improve planning for your company; and you enhance your skill set and those of your team members. By cross-training and delegating, you have a better perspective of what's needed from your team and for other company team leaders.

Delegation also serves other critical needs. We should all have a plan to replace ourselves so we can progress into new opportunities knowing that our position will be filled capably. Delegation also demonstrates your ability to work at a higher level and shows your managers the ways you meet the needs of the job. When you delegate to an employee with the right skill set, it promotes a "win" environment. Your employee's success is also your success.

Three valuable, intangible benefits from delegation are respect for you, respect for your team members, and enhanced self-esteem for all people involved. Don't pass up the opportunity to delegate. You'll prove that you're the leader your company hired. **SF**

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