

Passing the Baton

Exercises

With increasing demands on our time and resources, it becomes next to impossible to achieve all we set out to do without the help and assistance of others. This is especially true if you have just been given another area to cover or project to manage. Are you ready to delegate? Use this exercise with a group of managers who are faced with taking on new or growing responsibilities.

Delegation is an individual skill—determining the best way to handle a project or a task, and then discovering the best way to solicit help from others when and where we need it. We all have to ask others to do things for us—everything from taking messages/phone calls to sitting in for us at a meeting, or even taking over a large or complex project. In these circumstances, when you ask someone to help, you are really delegating part of your job to others.

Work through this exercise to make delegation a routine part of your management style.

Assign or Not to Assign?

In an informal organization, Delegation does not follow a system of seniority. People delegate tasks to more senior people in the team or the enterprise if it's appropriate. More significantly, people tend to spend more time discussing options and choices about what should be done, how it is done, and who does it. This is when you can empower your team members to get involved.

Empowerment is delegation taken to its ultimate stage: People are made fully accountable for what they are doing. However, empowerment is not achieved overnight. The first step involves letting go of authority to some extent, and learning to trust people. The same is very much the case with delegation.

The first step in delegation is to be ready to assign tasks to others. On the next page is a short questionnaire to help you discover whether more or better delegation can help you.

Delegation Questionnaire

Should You Delegate?

This simple questionnaire seeks to measure a number of areas that are generally regarded as important in determining an individual's overall need to delegate.

YES NO

1. Do you work longer hours than you should?
2. Do you often feel exhausted with the sheer amount of tasks you have to do?
3. Do you have unfinished jobs mounting up that you are unable to get to?
4. Do you spend some of your time doing things for others that they could do for themselves?
5. Do you struggle to meet deadlines?
6. Do you often get behind on projects, and have to work harder than you'd like, just to catch up?
7. Do you find yourself working on details, rather than the bigger picture?
8. Do you back off from asking others for help because of how they might react?
9. Do you work at things because you enjoy them, rather than because you need to do them?
10. Do you worry about making mistakes?
11. Do you hold on to work tasks because you want to stay in control?
12. Do you lack confidence in others to do a good job for you?

This is not intended to be more than a very simple assessment. The more "Yes" boxes you checked, the more likely that delegation will provide an opportunity to be more efficient and effective in your work.

Delegation offers all sorts of possibilities. So, what are the implications for the person delegating, and the implications for those on the receiving end?

By delegating you are:

- **freeing yourself up to do the more important jobs in your schedule**
- **developing the skills of others**
- **making jobs more interesting**

- **giving tasks to people who are possibly more skilled than you**
- **demonstrating confidence in others**

For other people, delegation means:

- **they get the chance to do things they wouldn't normally do**
- **they start to take on new skills and responsibilities**
- **they have the chance to prove themselves**
- **they receive training in new skills**
- **they are more interested in the job or in enrichment**

The delegator and the person(s) to whom the work is delegated can together achieve a win/win outcome. This is particularly the case if delegation occurs in a positive and empowering way.

And why NOT delegate?

It's often all too easy to give reasons why you don't delegate—why you take on the whole job or task by yourself. This is typical of what we refer to as “loner” behavior, and has to be overcome quickly if delegation is to happen at all. Have you ever experienced any of these feelings?

1. You want to maintain the impression of being overworked.
2. You simply have too much to do and do not make the time/effort to delegate.
3. You enjoy the job so much, it's difficult to let go.
4. You believe that you're indispensable.
5. You don't trust others.
6. You fear losing your job.
7. You fear losing face.
8. You impose unnecessarily high standards.
9. You are concerned about overburdening other people.
10. You fear criticism by others.

The most frequent reason people give for not delegating is that there are not enough people around to delegate to. "We have to do more with less" is often true, but people assume that the only way to delegate is for the boss to delegate to subordinates. (This isn't easy to do when there is no one to supervise!)

Organizations are increasingly flattening out their structures, pushing toward teams/ teamworking and gradually releasing the energy of their people. Asking colleagues and those above us for help is critical in today's organizations.

Consider own delegation style. Are you getting the most out of everyone's time and energy? You could be, if you have matched each team member (including yourself) to the part of the project that best suits them.