

Delegate – it's in your interest

Share the knowledge around. Learning to delegate can reduce stress, improve staff morale and, by upgrading employee skills, open the way to your own upwards progress.

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If you hear someone say, 'If you want the job done properly – do it yourself', it's likely they haven't learnt how to delegate properly and could be on the fast track to burnout.

One of the most challenging tasks for business owners and managers is to apportion work among the employees they manage. Many managers complain that they have too much to do and not enough time in which to do it, yet if they effectively delegated tasks to employees, it could eliminate this stress and increase work effectiveness.

Several ways to share decisions and tasks

Delegation is assigning authority to another person to carry out specific job-related activities. It allows a subordinate to make decisions and is a shift of decision-making authority from one organisational level to another, lower one.

It should not be confused with participation. In participative decision-making, there is a sharing of authority. With delegation subordinates make decisions on their own.

Delegation should also not be confused with task assignment. Task assignment is simply assigning work to an individual within the duties and responsibilities of their position.

Passing responsibility, authority and accountability

Rather than ask the employee to complete a particular job, when delegating, a manager will pass that person the responsibility and authority to do something that is normally part of the



manager's job and then hold the employee accountable to get the work done.

Historically, delegation has been vertical, with managers delegating to subordinates in a clearly defined hierarchical structure. Today's successful businesses emphasise both horizontal and vertical delegation. With the growing emphasis on teamwork, the ability to influence and delegate to others over whom you have no direct control is critical to a team's success.

Whether delegating vertically or horizontally, delegation must be accompanied by the appropriate coaching – it won't be effective unless employees are helped to develop the skills needed to get the job done.

Delegation – the process

There are several steps to take when delegating a task:

- Identify what should and should not be delegated.

- Plan how you are going to present the assignment, including your requirements, parameters, authority level, checkpoints and expectations.
- Write these down and give a copy to the person you are delegating to. This helps minimise miscommunication.
- Choose the right person by assessing the skills and the experience of your employees as objectively as possible to see beyond the person you know you can always depend on.

Benefits for all

Good delegation benefits everyone – from the business owners to the managers and the people they manage.

For managers and owners, it develops trust and rapport with employees and grooms successors so that they can move on up. Often, managers and supervisors derail their own advancement by not having someone to take their place.

Benefits for employees include enhanced professional knowledge and value to the organisation. Involving employees in decision-making leads to higher levels of commitment and increased morale.

Delegation can be a liberating and powerful tool in a manager's bag of skills. With the necessary consideration, it can be used with confidence in your business for everyone's advantage and to improve profitability. ◀