

Effective Delegation

Lee Iacocca, retired President of Chrysler Corporation, shared his learning experience on delegation in his autobiography, *Iacocca*. He said early in his career, one of his supervisors preached against trying to be a one-man band. "You don't know how to delegate. You're the best guy I've got. Maybe you're even as good as two guys put together. But even so, that's still only 2 guys. You've got a hundred people working for you right now, what happens when you get 10,000." Iacocca states that taught him how to stop trying to do everybody's job and how to give others a goal and motivate them to achieve it. He reminds us that the leader/manager has to be able to *motivate* others. "You may be able to do the work of two people, but you can't *be* two people. Instead you have to inspire the next [person] down the line and get him to inspire [those under him]"

Effective delegation involves clarifying your goal or identifying what success should look like when you are delegating a task. Then you must be able to communicate this to another person or group while getting their input and "buy in" for success.

Idaho Extension Service 4-H shares these guidelines for delegation, from their **Volunteers for the Future** Middle Management Training Package.

Define the assignment in terms of results. Delegation is the art of giving the authority to carry out a mutually agreed upon responsibility. The most basic skill is defining the responsibility in terms of an outcome or something to accomplish. It should define the desired end product, not the means of achieving it.

Define the level of control. The second step in delegating effectively is to define how much authority your volunteer has in carrying out the responsibility. The volunteer may accomplish the result on his or her own without reporting to you, will figure it out and then report progress, or will submit a strategy to you in advance and then report progress. In all of these cases, it is important to keep the authority for the work in the hands of the worker.

Communicate guidelines. If there are relevant policies, laws, or values that the volunteer should work within, communicate these clearly in the beginning.

Make resources available. If you know of any resources that would make the volunteer's role easier or would help him/her be more likely to succeed, you should communicate these in the beginning. Stress your role as a resource. If the volunteer encounters difficulty, he or she should feel free to come to you for advice. When giving advice, however, be sure to keep the authority for the work in the hands of the worker. Avoid telling the worker what to do!

Determine criteria for success. The volunteer should know how his or her work will be judged. He or she should be involved in determining the criteria, and should have access to the data that indicates success or failure as he or she attempts to fulfill the responsibility.

Establish checkpoints. The volunteer should note the date of the expected progress report on his or her calendar. The frequency of these checkpoints depends on your anxiety about the volunteer fulfilling the particular responsibility.

The goal of effective delegation is to build in the controls (roles, responsibilities, deadlines, etc.) **so you can let go of control.** You *empower* others to carry out the task.

The Ohio State **4-H BLAST** program (Building Leadership and Skills Together) offers the following reasons, advantages, and disadvantages of delegation.



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REASONS WHY MANAGERS DON'T DELEGATE

- Fear people will think they are slighting their job
- Believe others don't have the information or skills for the job
- Think it's easier to do it themselves
- Want recognition for themselves
- Assume they have all the good ideas

REASONS TO DELEGATE

- More people can contribute and have ownership
- Wider interests and expertise may be tapped
- Decision-making can be shared
- More scheduling flexibility is possible
- Manager can devote time to the overall effort

DISADVANTAGES OF DELEGATION

- Action may be slower
- Responsibility may be scattered
- Managers may find it difficult to keep track of many people
- Importance of the project might become overblown

Occasionally delegation will fail. When that happens, review your role in the process. Before "grabbing back" the task while muttering "I knew I should have done it myself," ask the person how you can help *them* get back on schedule and complete the task successfully. This keeps the "ball in their court" and the responsibility is still theirs. Did you give the individual all the information, support, and resources necessary for them to successfully complete the task? Perhaps they needed stronger support than you realized. You may find that you left out something that will help you the next time you delegate. Perhaps there are some extenuating circumstances that you are unaware of such as an illness or family crisis. If that is the case you may have to take back and complete it yourself or reassign it to someone else. The person may indeed be grateful to you for recognizing this.

Remember that no one wants volunteers to fail. Everyone wants to succeed. If you follow the steps for effective delegation you will empower people, help them grow and increase their skill, and your program will succeed as well.



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Delegation

Rate your own delegation skills by using this checklist.

SKILLS IN DELEGAING AND COORDINATING	I do!	I don't!	I'm going to work hard on this one!!
I clearly define the role to be done.			
I clearly define responsibilities and accountability procedures.			
I usually develop clear role descriptions or work assignments in writing.			
I develop clear time lines, and set deadlines.			
I choose appropriate people to take the delegated roles.			
I train thoroughly before giving the role.			
I discuss new assignments with the volunteers.			
I keep in touch informally to access progress.			
I establish a routine reporting system.			
I re-evaluate assignments regularly.			
I establish emergency procedures (including ways volunteers can reach me in an emergency).			
I clearly define time requirements of the role.			
I arrange face-to-face meetings occasionally.			
I prioritize tasks and delegate whenever possible.			
I keep clear records.			
I create work teams with complementary personalities.			
I support and motivate the volunteers.			
I plan and prioritize time carefully so I am free to spend time with my volunteers.			
I say no when it's appropriate.			
I establish rapport with my volunteers so they will feel comfortable asking for help and share difficulties.			

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Delegating

Delegation is the assignment of work and authority, making maximum use of abilities. It's positioning people where they can maximize their talents. Typical steps included in the delegation process are:

1. Describe the task.
2. Outline expected results.
3. Discuss resources.
4. Confirm understanding.
5. Solicit ideas.
6. Establish methods of working and reporting.
7. Follow up and support for the other person. Solicit ideas...about what.

It also includes **pre-delegation**. Managers who are too busy to answer the following questions are less successful. Those managers often hoard unreasonable amounts of work on themselves or "dump" assignments on unprepared salaried or volunteer staff without enough warning to adjust work schedules.

Questions to ask yourself during the **pre-delegation** strategy include:

What work needs to be done?

What can/should be delegated?

What is the best match of work with ability and interest?

What is the best approach in delegating to this specific person?

Do I need to improve communication with the person, or build trust?

How does the person feel about the work I'll be delegating?

What is the person's current work load and level of performance?

The heart of the delegation process is **interaction**. The face-to-face discussion of the assignment of work determines the success of a task. Questions to consider while preparing for this interaction include:

What is the task to be delegated?

How can I clearly describe this assignment?

What helpful resources can I offer?

What levels of authority, accountability, and responsibility will I give with the assignment?

What impact will our relationship have on the discussion?

How can I create an atmosphere of trust conducive to better communication?

What is the best time period and location for the discussion?

What information should I provide before the meeting?

You haven't delegated successfully unless the work is accepted willingly and competently. Relationships and communication skills have a major impact. Clarity and a sense of commitment to the agreement are needed. Contracting on how and when the work will be completed must include an agreement on standards and time frames.



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A major factor in successful delegation is **giving authority**. Too often, managers undermine a project by creating an authority gap . . . unreasonably withholding enough authority to complete the task. People who perform with consistent competence deserve and expect the freedom and authority to carry out their responsibilities.

When delegation is clear and trusting, people feel a sense of involvement and responsibility. Hold people accountable for results more than methods.

Some people can carry out even the most difficult assignments without management **follow-through**; many can't. Following through with the support, information, authority and resources promised in the discussion helps prevent frustration and failure. Use these questions before other pressures and demands distract you:

Does he or she have the needed resources and authority?

What other support is needed?

When is the task to be completed?

When will we conduct reporting meetings?

How is progress measured and monitored?

What is the right balance of freedom, structure and support?

How flexible am I willing to be, in giving decision-making freedom?

Some things shouldn't be delegated: final decisions, tasks with unclear goals; hiring; discipline, and firing; tasks in which necessary confidentiality may be jeopardized; personal representation when your presence is important; personal tasks, and emergencies.

Delegate the formulation of goals, but not the final determination of those goals. Delegate tasks after goals are set and major decisions are made; delegate preparation of first drafts, fact-finding and analysis. Delegate work that others can do better and work which will help others gain exposure, experience and growth.

Effective delegation involves building in controls and letting go of control. If the parameters, time lines, and expectations have been communicated the tasks of the program will be successful.

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Rate Yourself as a Delegator

Give yourself from 0 to 7 points on each of these delegation skills.

Pre-delegation Skills	Score
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Clearly defining the task, role or job to be done and what can be delegated. _____

Matching tasks or assignments with people's abilities and interests. _____

Assessing trust levels, communication skills, current work load and competence. _____

Prioritizing your own tasks and delegating what's appropriate to best accomplish the work, and to help others gain exposure, experience and growth. _____

Interaction Skills	Score
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Clearly describing the assignment. _____

Determining and offering helpful resources. _____

Determining levels of authority and responsibility to give with the assignment and communicating them clearly. _____

Assessing relationship's impact and creating an atmosphere conducive to communication. _____

Using a meeting location and time period conducive to discussion. Do you allow enough time? _____

Conveying trust, support, and concern for the person. _____

Authority-giving Skills	Score
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Giving freedom to make decisions . . . holding people accountable for results more than methods. _____

Giving authority to carry out responsibilities. _____

Acknowledging authority given with actions, and words, among other staff and clientele. _____

Follow-through Skills	Score
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Making sure there are adequate resources, authority and support during the work process? _____

Showing continued interest in effort and progress, by conducting pre-scheduled reporting sessions. _____

Balancing freedom, support and structure? _____

Rewarding consistent competence with autonomy. _____

Total Score	Score
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Congratulate yourself if you scored 91 or more points. If not, keep reading, re-thinking, practicing good delegation skills, and watching other good delegators in action!



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