

The process of delegation

Achieving results through others

Harold L. Taylor



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The process of delegation: Achieving results through others

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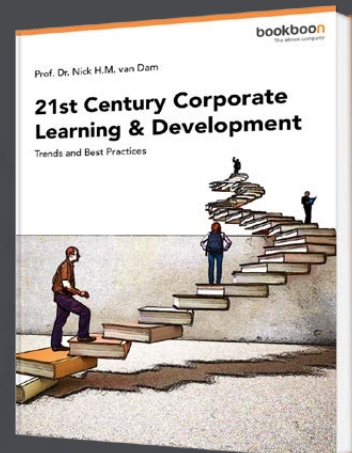
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Introduction

In his book, *Good boss, bad boss*, Robert Sutton referred to a meta-analysis that found about 75% of the workforce sees their immediate supervisor is the most stressful part of their job. He claims that if you have a good boss, you have at least a 20% lower risk of getting a heart attack, and if you stay with your boss for four years, you have a 39% lower risk.

Matthew Lieberman in his book, *Social: Why our brains are wired to connect*, mentioned a poll asking employees which they would prefer, a raise or a better boss. Evidently two thirds of the employees answered that they would prefer a better boss to a higher salary.

But the bosses also experience stress as they must assume responsibility for not only their own work, but the performance of their employees as well. Add to that the stress of constant pressure from the shareholders and top management to increase productivity, reduce costs and maintain maximum profits, and you may have one reason why recent surveys show that work frustrates rather than fulfils almost 90% of the world's workplace (*Scientific American Mind*, October, 2015).

Effective delegation on the part of the managers should improve the plight of both employees and managers. Job satisfaction has been touted as the chief motivator for the past fifty years or more, and job satisfaction has been shown to come from autonomy, variety, security, appreciation, positive relationships and opportunities for advancement. Personal fulfillment for both managers and staff alike is a by-product of an effective delegation process. And the delegation process is what this book is all about.

1 The basics of delegation

1.1 What is delegation?

Delegation is the process of turning work over to others. The operative word is *process*. It does not mean dumping work on to someone without prior training or guidelines, or constantly delegating to the same employees. Nor does it mean always assigning boring, meaningless tasks.

The work that is turned over to others is work that is within a manager's area of responsibility. Otherwise, he or she would be in no position to delegate it. And although, in so doing, the manager holds the employee responsible for successful completion and accountability for the results, the ultimate responsibility still rests with the manager – who is held accountable by his or her boss in turn.

For the purposes of this book, delegated work and assignments are considered to be essentially the same thing; but with these differences: assignments may require less of an employee's time, a lesser degree of training and the granting of little authority if any.

1.2 Responsibility and authority

As a manager, how much authority should you delegate to your supervisors or staff? Obviously as much as needed in order to carry out the assigned responsibility. Assigning or delegating responsibility without the commensurate authority is not delegation at all – since the projects involved could not be carried out efficiently and effectively.

For example, you cannot hold a person responsible for the efficient operation of a manufacturing facility without including the authority to hire and fire personnel, change methods, and spend money. You cannot hold a person responsible for improving the appearance of a newsletter without also granting the authority to choose the type style, pick out the colors, and revise the layout. You cannot assign responsibility for organizing a staff luncheon without providing the authority to choose a menu and arrange the seating plan.

You must delegate the amount of authority necessary to carry out the assigned responsibility. There is nothing as frustrating for an employee – and as damaging to an organization – as being assigned responsibility for projects or tasks without sufficient authority to carry them out. This produces a situation where the employee is continually running to his or her boss for further direction.

1.3 Limits of authority

There must be limitations to the authority granted. Perhaps the plant manager cannot expand the plant facilities, the public relations supervisor cannot change the editorial theme, and the office manager cannot hold a staff meeting in Hawaii. These limits of authority must be spelled out in advance.

The more authority an employee has, the less involvement is required on the part of the manager, and consequently the more time he or she will have in order to fulfil managerial responsibilities – particularly those most often neglected due to a lack of time, such as planning, training, controlling and innovation.

Conversely, the more authority a person has been given, the greater the impact on company profits if he or she makes a mistake. And therein lies one of the problems. Managers are reluctant to turn the wheel over to a new driver if their own safety is at stake. And yet no one can fully master the skill of driving without driving. The risk is reduced by adequate training; but there will always be a risk. It takes courage to delegate. It takes a willingness to make oneself vulnerable. But successful companies are built by individuals willing to take risks.

Don't be afraid to share your authority with the people you are training. Have as much confidence in them as you would like *your* boss to have in you.

1.4 The benefits of delegation

Delegation is not easy. It requires time, effort and confidence in your staff. If you are not convinced that there are benefits to delegation, you won't be motivated enough to put forth the effort and take the necessary risks. Here are some major advantages for your consideration.

Releases time for managing.

The lack of delegation not only develops tunnel vision, it physically prevents managers from performing the functions they were hired to carry out. Managers should be planning, organizing, staffing, directing, controlling and innovating. Instead, they are frequently involved in doing trivial jobs, fighting fires, responding to interruptions and correcting errors made by others.

Managers who delegate have more time to fulfill their responsibilities and develop their own skills, and as a result are more valuable to the company. Delegation is one of the most important functions of a manager – as well as being one of the greatest time management strategies.

Relieves pressure.

Most managers are action oriented. They prefer to be in the thick of things, doing instead of supervising. Lack of delegation allows this tendency to get out of hand. Managers are involved in so many activities that the pressure of having too many jobs and too little time keeps them constantly harried and hassled. This can result in stress-induced health problems and make them less effective. They may also be perceived by others as being disorganized and out-of-control.

Delegation, once mastered, relieves such time pressures, and the managers are able to control the job instead of the job controlling them.

Develops people.

Delegation provides employees with the opportunity to grow – to expand their skills and decision-making capability. It allows them to gradually accept more responsibility in a nonthreatening environment, preparing them for further advancement. It encourages them to be creative, and to practise their problem solving skills.

No amount of educational off-the-job training can develop an employee more quickly, thoroughly and effectively than practical on-the-job experience. People learn by doing. And delegation provides that opportunity.

Provides a motivational climate.

Motivation can be as simple as helping others become what they're capable of becoming. Since delegation requires knowing the employee's personal goals, abilities and aspirations, the manager is better able to provide the opportunities for individuals to expand their horizons in areas that interest them.

Since delegation forces managers to spend time with their employees, it also tends to improve interpersonal relationships because most people require encouragement in order to excel. They crave attention. Those who claim they would rather be left alone and contacted only when they make errors are in the minority. People need constant feedback, and consistent reinforcement assures them they are doing okay. The process of delegation provides that constant contact which reaffirms an employee's value as an individual.

Provides a way of measuring performance.

Without delegation, managers would have to evaluate their employees based on activity rather than on results. By delegating specific tasks and responsibilities along with the necessary authority to carry them out, the manager can evaluate an employee based on actual accomplishments. Evaluation becomes meaningful, and compensation can be tied to merit rather than to busyness.

Increases results.

Effective time-use moves the organization towards the attainment of its goals. These goals are normally reflected outside an organization; profit for shareholders, service to customers, and so on. Managers must think outwards and not be so preoccupied with internal activities as to lose sight of the real goals. Preoccupation with internal procedures leads to efficiency, not effectiveness. Instead of first seeking better methods of processing data, using social media or producing a product, there should be a constant barrage of questions: Is this information necessary? Do these media contribute to the attainment of the goal? Is this particular product the best one relative to the goals we are tempting to achieve? Effective thinking is results-oriented thinking, and results-oriented thinking must encompass the organization as a whole.

Unfortunately, managers are frequently too busy doing the tasks at hand to question their necessity and their impact on organizational goals. Delegation releases managers from the tyranny of activity and elevates them to a level where they can assess the effect of activity on organizational goals. Delegation extends a manager's results from what they can do personally to what they can control.

Develops the organization.

Delegation makes the fullest use of an organization's personnel while lack of delegation stifles initiative. Encouraging the process of delegation allows every employee to excel, and to devote his or her talents, skills and innovative ability to the good of the organization.

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2 Why managers don't delegate

2.1 Indicators of faulty delegation

There is no greater timesaver than effective delegation. It frees up some of your time so you can concentrate on important, meaningful activities. Unfortunately, some people think they are delegating when, in fact, they are simply handing out assignments. Some people dump jobs onto their employees without sufficient training, explanation or follow-up.

What are the indicators of faulty delegation? Here are 25 of them. If you can answer true to several of these statements, there is a good chance you're not delegating as effectively as you could be.

- I have a good idea of what I want to accomplish, but I don't seem to be getting anywhere.
- I always seem to be giving orders of one kind or another.
- I am always checking up on my team members to make sure they are carrying out their assigned tasks properly.
- I leave my employees alone. If they have problems, they can always contact me. Otherwise I assume everything is okay.
- I take a lot of work home in the evenings and on weekends.
- I work under constant pressure. When I am away from the office, jobs tend to pile up.
- I tend to be very critical of my employees.
- I don't have policies to guide my people. If they're in doubt about anything, they can call me.
- My people feel restricted by the policies, procedures and rules that I issue.
- My employees don't really understand my objectives, and they don't have clear objectives of their own.
- My employees are slow or reluctant to make decisions on their own. I have to make too many decisions for them.
- When I am away from the office, I call in frequently.
- I try to limit my span of control and like to keep close tabs on everyone.
- I don't encourage my employees to participate in meetings with contacts at higher levels even when the subject falls within their own area of competence. I like to do that myself.
- My employees don't have the authority to purchase items without my approval.
- I tend to give orders in my boss's name rather than my own.
- I get so bogged down in details of the jobs below me that I don't have adequate time for organizing, directing and controlling.
- All tasks are equally important so I don't bother setting priorities when making assignments.
- I am always getting partially completed projects from my employees. No one seems to finish things without checking with me first.
- One of my biggest time wasters is continual interruptions by my employees.
- I don't have any qualified people who could replace me if I were promoted.

- Every day seems to bring a series of crises or emergencies that I have to handle.
- I can't afford to take a long vacation or an extended leave of absence because the place would fall apart.
- I believe if you want something done right, you have to do it yourself.
- By the time I put in a week at this job, I'm just too exhausted to go anywhere with my family on weekends.

If you are not delegating effectively, you must first determine the reasons. There are certainly grounds for not delegating everything. Perhaps an activity can only be carried out by a manager at your level in the organization. Perhaps it involves confidential information. Perhaps it is a personal responsibility such as conducting performance appraisals, disciplining or hiring or firing. But in the majority of the cases, the lack of delegation is simply due to a reluctance to delegate.

A failure to delegate is a failure to manage.

2.2 The "Do it myself" syndrome

Doing something by yourself is rarely justified unless it is unique to you or to your position. If you are a manager with people reporting to you, your goal should be to delegate as much as possible. Assuming you receive a higher salary than your employees, you simply cannot afford yourself. Don't spend \$100-an-hour labor on \$25-an-hour jobs. A manager's job is to get things done through other people, not necessarily to do the work personally.

If delegation is such an ideal way of developing employees while freeing the manager to work on priorities, why is there such a reluctance to delegate? Here are some common excuses and a comment or two about the fallacy of each.

There is no time to delegate.

A common excuse, since delegation requires training and training takes time. It is faster to do a job than to train someone else to do it. It makes sense if it's a once in a lifetime job. But if the task is repetitive, there's a breakeven point at which the amount of time spent training personnel equals the total time saved by having the task done by someone else. And from then on it's all savings.

I can do the job better than anyone else.

Of course you can; after all, look how long you've been doing it. But with training and experience, your employee will be able to do it just as well, or better. In the meantime, you will have to accept something less than perfect. Compare the job they do with the job you used to do when you started so many years ago. Don't compare it to your current performance.

I enjoy doing it.

Good. Now think how much your employees may enjoy doing it as well. Nothing motivates more than a challenging and interesting task. And you will be able to take on even more interesting, challenging, and profitable tasks in turn.

It's company policy.

A policy is a guideline, not a rule. Job descriptions are not carved in stone. Change the policy or job description if necessary. People should control policies; policies shouldn't control people.

It's a force of habit.

Quite likely. The more frequently you do something, the more habitual it becomes. But habits can be broken when you consciously set your mind to do so. Form a new habit of sitting down with your employees for 15 minutes every day to train him or her to do the job.


My employees are not capable.

Don't sell them short. Is your opinion based on their present performance or what they could do with some good, consistent training? Someone once showed faith in you; show faith in others in turn.

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My people are too busy to take on more jobs.

No doubt. But what are they busy at? Are there some low pay off jobs that can be eliminated without any detrimental impact on company goals? Your employees should be working on important, essential tasks, not those that are simply nice to have done.

If I delegate too much, my job could be threatened.

If you delegate too *little*, your job could be lost. And don't kid yourself; if your employees do a good job, it makes *you* look good. If other people are able to take over your job, you are not promotable. So help them take over your job by delegating to them.

My boss may think I am lazy.

If you don't delegate, your boss will *know* you are lazy. Doing a familiar job only takes time; training another person to do the job takes skill and effort.

My boss told me to do it.

Are you sure the boss didn't tell you to get it done? A manager's responsibilities normally exceed his or her capacity to do them personally. In most cases, managers can only fulfil their bosses' expectations through delegation.

I am afraid of losing control.

You won't lose control if you explain to your employees their limits of authority and insist on feedback. You're delegating, not abdicating. You're still ultimately responsible for the jobs that you delegate.

I haven't the heart to dump jobs on to somebody else.

Amazing how we don't have such consideration for ourselves. You're not dumping, you are delegating – which also involves an assessment of your employee's current workload, and a determination of what can be eliminated, simplified or reassigned.

Doing it myself gives me a high profile.

It also gives you high blood pressure. There is even more prestige in delegating a prestigious task so don't hang onto jobs just for the recognition.

I want to keep busy.

How about running up a “down” escalator? It is better for cardiovascular fitness. Workaholics are poor delegators and usually ineffective managers.

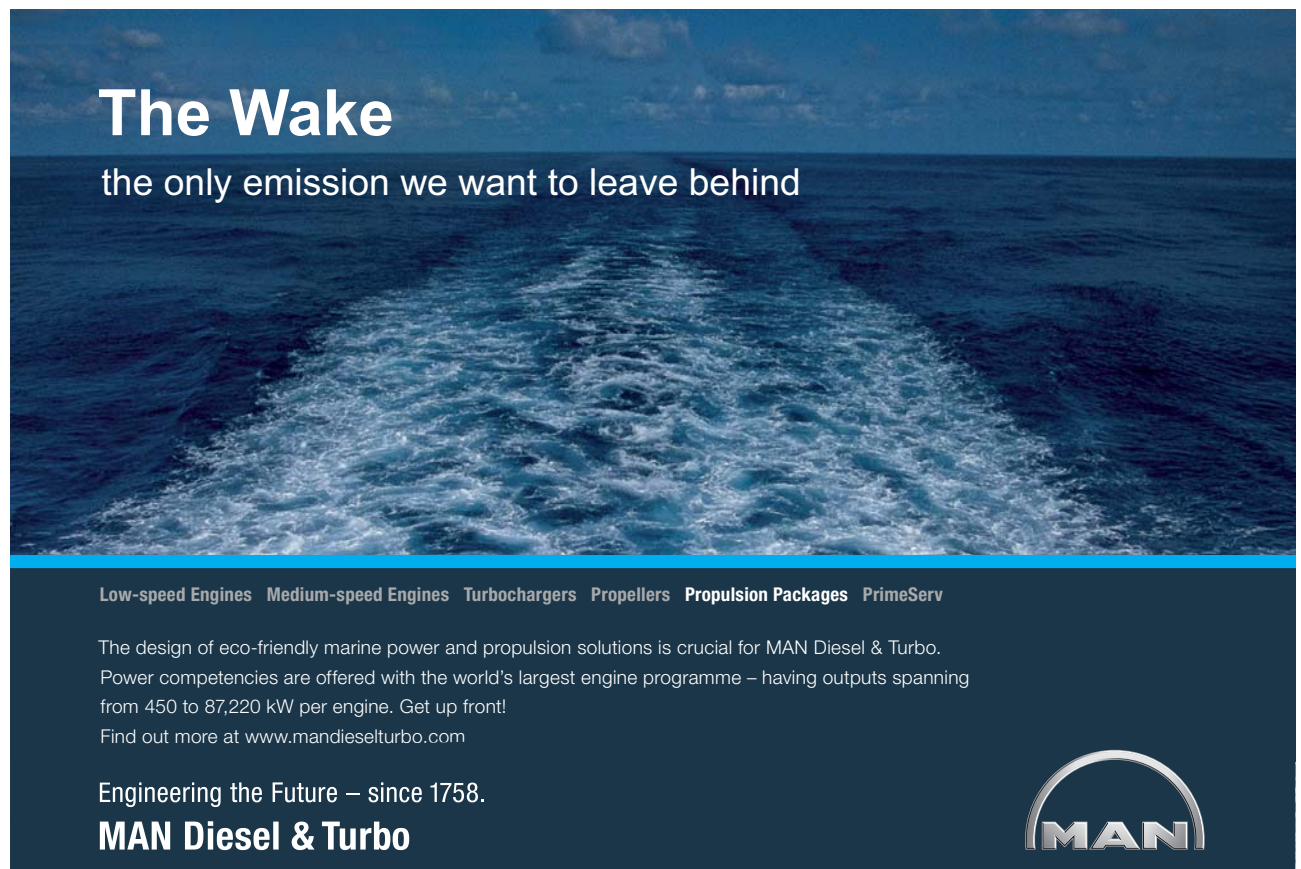
My employees would complain if I gave them more work to do.

You not giving them *more* work, you're giving them *better* work. And when is the last time you discussed it with them? The only way to discover your employee's aspirations is to talk to them. Make sure that what they are doing is important. Not everyone aspires to the presidency. But they could still be valuable to the organization in a position that affords no opportunity for further promotion.

My employees don't have the information at hand to make decisions.

Can you give it to them? Or is the information exclusive to your level in the organization? If so, it could very well be that the task should not be delegated. Some jobs, such as those that are confidential or personal in nature have to be retained by yourself.

Question your reasons for not delegating. Are they legitimate? Or are they simply rationalizations for maintaining the status quo?




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3 The delegation process

3.1 Deciding what to delegate

One of the first steps to take when deciding what to delegate is to do a complete job activity analysis. Draw up a form with six vertical columns. The columns would be headed as follows:

1. Activities I perform on a regular basis.
2. Time spent monthly on these activities.
3. Reasons I do these jobs myself.
4. Can an employee do it? (Yes or no).
5. Can an employee be trained to do? (Yes or no).
6. Who?

In the left hand column, list all the activities that you perform and decisions you make on a regular basis. Don't leave anything out. If you unlock the office door in the morning, write it down. If you occasionally answer your boss's telephone, write it down. Take a good 20 minutes or half hour to do nothing but record your activities and recurring decisions. When you're finished, slip the sheet into your top drawer and forget about it for a week. To prevent forgetting it all together, scribble a follow-up note in your weekly planning calendar or smart phone. A week later, take out the sheet, reread it, and start jotting down those other jobs and decisions that pop into your mind. At this stage you may have written several more pages of activities stapled together.

Never delegate what you can eliminate.
--

Once again toss the form into your top drawer and retrieve it about three or four weeks later. Reread the list. Even more items will come to mind – activities that you only perform every few weeks or once per month. And you may still think of more of those insignificant little jobs that take only a few minutes of your time. Include them all. It's the minutes that add up to hours so include everything.

Next, for each activity, estimate the time it takes each month to perform it, and record that figure in the column to the right of it. This will probably be the first time you've ever thought about the amount of time you are actually spending on the various activities. This gives you an idea of what they are costing you and the company. Is it worth three hours – perhaps \$150 or more each month – to have that monthly summary of product returns? Is it worth \$300 to have a "Lates & Absentees" report? These figures will also tell you approximately how much time someone else will have to free up in order to take over those jobs from you.

Next comes a time for honest self-appraisal. Why are you doing these jobs yourself? Was your reason discussed in the last chapter? Or is there some other reason? Note the reply in the third column. It's at this point that you will be able to judge the category to which the activity belongs. Is it actually a time waster, which contributes nothing to company goals? Can it be eliminated with no detrimental effect on your targets of performance and company objectives? If so, write the word "eliminate" in the last column to the far right. Be careful not to delegate something that can be eliminated. If you need your boss's approval to eliminate a report or activity, explain to your boss that the payback does not justify the cost of continuing it.

3.2 Delegate some things you don't want to delegate

Be careful not to rationalize hanging on to a job that could be delegated. Be honest with yourself. No one else needs to see the sheets. It's between you and yourself. Are you really hanging onto a job because it gives your ego a boost? Is there a certain amount of prestige attached to doing the job? Do you obtain visibility, recognition or acceptance? Or is it really a key activity that can only be performed at your level in the organization? At this stage, you should also question whether the time being spent on the activity can be reduced. Even essential activities can often be performed more efficiently.



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After you have completed the first three columns for all activities, move on to the fourth column. Can someone reporting to you actually do the job? This does not mean after going back to night school for three years. It means after a brief orientation period of a few days at the most. Is an employee able to do it? This is assuming he or she has a time and desire to do it and you have the desire to train them. If the answer is yes, record this in the column. If the answer is a definite no, record that response instead.

Now, if the answer is no, ask yourself another question. Can someone be trained to do it? Here again, training does not mean returning to university for a PhD in physics or undergoing a five year management training program. But, if spending three or four hours each week for several months to personally train an employee will enable that person to take the job off your hands, the answer would be yes. Record this in the column. If the answer is still no, record this instead.

Move to the final column. Who on your staff do you have in mind for the job? If it could be done by more than one person, jot down all the names. Don't enter the same person's name for most of the activities simply because you think that they could do the best job. Delegation includes a process of training and development, and all your employees should be included in the process. You will have to balance the workload at the time the delegation actually takes place. It's not practical to assign everything to one person. However, if there is only one person you feel has the education, background and capability necessary to be trained for the specific task in question, enter only that one name.

3.3 Schedule time for training

The development and training of people take time initially. But the investment is well worth it when you see the results. A capable employee gets the job done faster, makes fewer errors and doesn't waste your time with incessant questions. For every hour spent in training, you will receive countless hours of good performance in return. Don't procrastinate. You'll be just as busy two months from now. Plan now. Which skills need development? What's the best method of training your staff? Think it through, then schedule the necessary time for the training to take place.

Don't spend all your time on those employees who need training and neglect those top performers. If 20% of your employees produce 80% of the results, an extension of Pareto's law, there is no doubt you should be developing the other 80% of your employees to make them more effective. But look at it another way. Just think of the impact on the organization if those 20% were given a little extra help. Don't neglect your strongest people. A little training for that group could produce a tremendous increase in overall results.

Also, beware that you don't fall into the trap of delegating most of the tasks to the same people. It is an easy trap to fall into because there is usually one or two people who are more willing, capable and faster than the rest. But eventually those people become overloaded and ineffective, and may even quit. Meanwhile, while the strong are getting stronger, the weak are getting weaker. You have responsibility as a manager to develop *all* of your people.

Training is an ongoing process that requires constant reinforcement.
--

3.4 Select the people you will train

To ensure an even distribution of the tasks, draw up another form with the same number of columns as you have employees. In the left-hand column, list the parts of your job which you feel can be delegated. These can be taken from the sheets you prepared previously. Along the top of the columns, list the people who report to you, and whose names you included in the last column of the previous form. Then plan to delegate by assigning the tasks to these candidates, recording the amount of time each task will take, and the total time required on a monthly basis for all the tasks assigned to each person.

Once you know the approximate amount of time, you will have to determine how you are going to free up enough of the employee's time. It could be that they already have enough time available; but more than likely you will have to eliminate, combine, or reassign some of the jobs they are currently performing. The important thing is to make sure they are working on essential activities, not trivial tasks.

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3.5 Clarify your assignments

At the time you assign a task to an employee, make sure you provide all the information necessary for the completion of the task.

Never assume your employees have completely understood your explanation of the task. Provide details. Repeat information. Talk slowly. If you rush through an explanation, the employee will assume that you feel it is easy and doesn't merit a lengthy discussion. This in turn inhibits questions. Even if the employees don't understand, it's possible they won't admit it for fear of appearing stupid. After all, they can figure it out later. Or so they think.

Although it is important that people understand what you say, don't risk embarrassing them by asking them to repeat the information. This may be a common practice but I feel it's a demeaning one. If you are in doubt about the effectiveness of your communication, use yourself as the fall guy. Ask something like "Did I mention that we copy Finance on all online purchases? They will likely respond with, "Yes, you said to copy Finance as well as Receiving."

There are all kinds of questions you can ask to get feedback from them that appears to question your own attentiveness, not theirs, such as "I can't recall if I told you about the return policy" or "There's something else I wanted to mention. Did I explain the review process with you yesterday?" As a manager, you have to shoulder as much responsibility as it takes. Remember, your job is to build up their self-confidence and self-esteem, not yours.

Don't let your impatience show, even if you are impatient. Your job as a manager is to communicate, and communication hasn't taken place until the people understand exactly what's expected of them. They will not be receptive if you criticize them, show impatience, disrespect them, or in any way threaten their self-image.

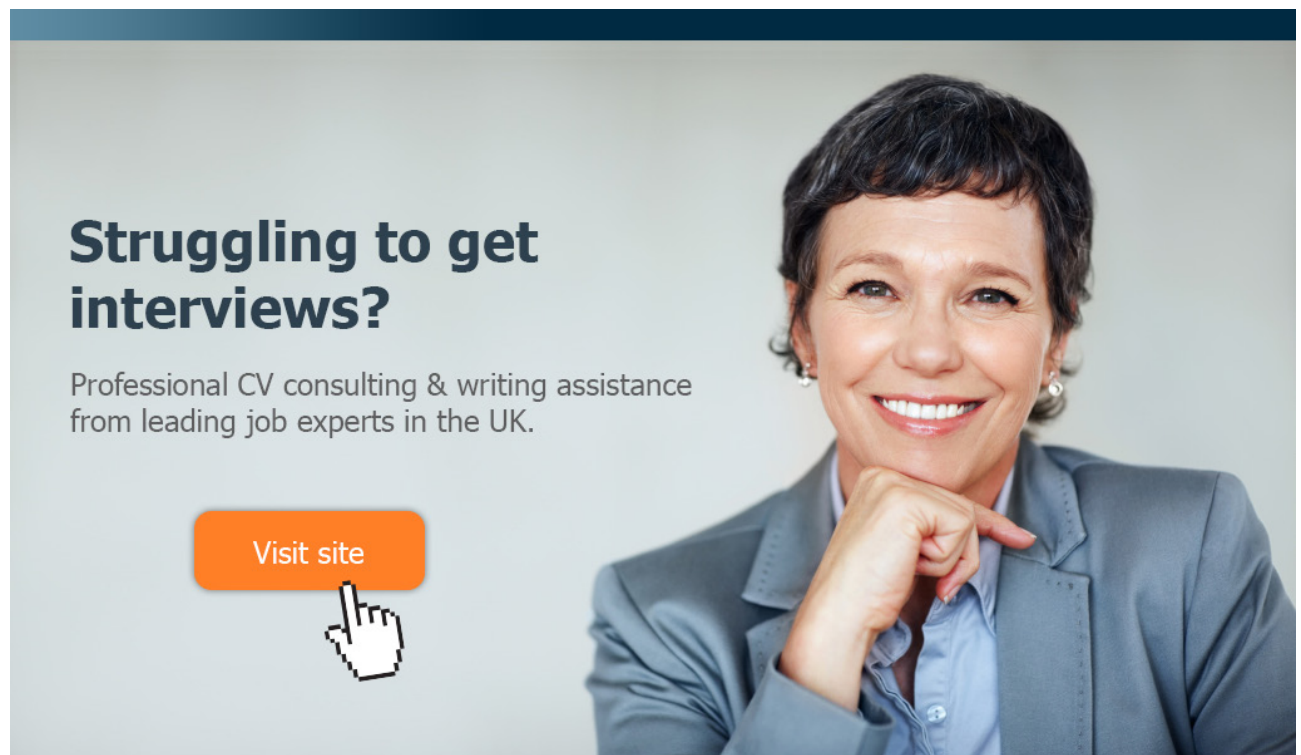
Whenever you assign a task to one of your employees, be sure to outline the feedback expected. If you start imposing controls later on, your employee may feel you lack confidence in his/her ability.

Use the following checklist to ensure that you have explained the assignment clearly:

- Exact date the employee is to assume the new responsibility and the duration of this new assignment.
- The purpose of the task, and how it relates to the organization's goals.
- A detailed explanation of how the task is currently done – if, in fact, it is.
- A comment to the effect that you welcome any suggestions as to how the method might be improved.

- An explanation of the various resources and sources of information available to the employee should he or she encounter problems.
- A summary of the types of problems encountered in the past and how they were handled.
- An explanation of any unusual circumstances or problem areas that might arise in the future.
- The limits of the employee's authority – which types of decisions are to be made by him or her and which ones have to go to a higher level.
- Any new reporting relationships and lines of communication involved in the new assignment.
- The type and frequency of feedback expected.
- How the employee's performance will be evaluated.

It seems as though anything worthwhile is either expensive or difficult. Delegation is both. But its expense lies in the value of the time being spent in training and explaining, and this cost will soon be recovered. Its difficulty lies in the fact that most of us are impatient, and overly time conscious. The difficulty often disappears once we learn to control ourselves – to recognize that it is the results, not activity, that determine our effectiveness.



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4 Releasing your job to others

4.1 Let your employees decide

The hardest part of delegation is letting go. Even though we may have confidence in individuals and have explained the objective of the task, we frequently insist on being involved in the decision-making process.

“Janet, we just don’t seem to have enough space in the office to store things. There are boxes of supplies on the floor behind the desks; cabinets are jutting into the aisles, and piles of books seem to be stored on top of everything. The place is a mess. Would you look at the situation and figure out how we can arrange the furniture to accommodate some additional shelving, cabinets, files or whatever we need so we can make the office look presentable? You might contact a few office equipment suppliers to see what they have to offer in the way of movable files or portable shelving. But we can’t afford to spend more than \$2000 on this.”

So far so good. You’ve explained what it is you are trying to accomplish and why. You’ve set a guideline in terms of money that could be spent. And you have even offered a suggestion as to how Janet might start. And it’s a good task to delegate. You could spend hours rearranging furniture, viewing office supply websites, thinning out files and getting rid of clutter. But your time is too valuable for that kind of nonsense. And this might be a challenge for Janet, who might not have been given very much responsibility since recently been promoted to assistant office manager. You now have an opportunity to show confidence in her as your assistant. The office staff will view her as a person of authority, and her visibility and importance to the organization will both be enhanced.

Unfortunately, you don’t leave it at that. For instance, “Janet, I think this bank of filing cabinets should be moved against the back wall. Then there would be room for some closed-in shelving to accommodate all forms, printer supplies, and other office supplies. Mark all the cartons so everyone knows what they contain. Get quotes from Jackson Shelving and Amalgamated Interiors on a floor-to-ceiling unit. These boxes of old files on the top of the bookcase should be...” And so on.

Delegate the objective, not the method.

Suddenly you’re not only telling her what you want accomplished, you’re telling her step-by-step how to do it. You’re forcing your ideas upon her, repressing her own creativity. After all, will she disagree with her boss and suggest a better way? She might; but you’re taking a chance. If she does come out with, “Wouldn’t it be better if..., chances are you will jump to the defensive and start rationalizing why your suggestion is better. After all, you’re the boss, and you have been office manager for eight years. It just wouldn’t do to be outdone by the recent addition to your department.

You may not feel that insecure, and you may readily accept her suggestions over your own once you assess the ideas objectively. But the point is, you will become involved in the decision-making process. And you will probably stay involved until the project is completed. Janet will continue to bounce the various alternatives off you. “Bill what do you think about moving the copier machine into the print shop?” Or, “Is it okay if we have some shelving built in the reception area?”

Can you afford the time? Can you afford Janet’s dependency upon you that you are nurturing? Can you afford to do without the fresh ideas that could be stifled?

Let Janet complete the project on her own. This doesn’t mean you should sit idly by while two chops up three desks for firewood and rips out two walls. But only intervene if actions jeopardize the success of the assignment. Be available to answer any questions she may have concerning the objectives of the task. But refrain from interjecting every day with your own ideas. Evaluate the results. They may not be the same results you would have attained. They may be better or they may be worse. The important thing is that they are *her* results, achieved by using her own common sense, experience and ingenuity.

When you evaluate the results, start with the positives. Don’t start with “Janet, the way you’ve arranged the shelving is going to interfere with deliveries...” Instead, start with a comment such as, “I like the way you have recessed the cabinets so they don’t interfere with traffic...” Be honest with your appraisal, but place emphasis on the positives. Delegation is a process of developing your employees. If they could already do what you do, as well as you do it, there would be no need to delegate. You could simply turn over your job to that person and move on to another position in the organization.

4.2 Let your employees excel

We are reluctant to admit that someone else can do a better job than we can, especially if that person reports to us and especially if that job is one that we held ourselves for about 10 years. But let’s face it; once we delegate a job to someone else, from that point on we know less and less about the job, and our employees know more and more.

Don’t try to remain the expert on a task that you have delegated. Don’t look over your employee’s shoulder offering advice or criticizing his or her methods unless you sincerely feel that failure to intervene would cause a significant setback to the goal of the task.

There is little doubt that your employees will make mistakes and some of those mistakes may be costly. But compared to the value you will receive as employees learn from their mistakes and continue to improve, the cost will be minimal. As employees spend more and more time on the job, and you are involved less and less, your interference should decrease. Otherwise you will risk saddling your employees with decisions that are inferior to their own. After all, will your decisions always be better, even after your employees have been working on those particular tasks even longer than you have?

As a manager you should recognize that you cannot do everything and still do it well. You must continually train your employees to take on greater responsibility so that you, in turn, can replace those responsibilities with ones even greater value to the organization. Once you have grown into a job, you should plan to grow out of it.

Believing the best of people brings out the best in people.

Managers must manage. And to manage is to accomplish significant results through other people. It is not a competitive sport to see who can do the best job. Nor is a manager meant to be the great guru with all the answers. It is not our job to impress our employees with our knowledge or to constantly come through with the right decisions every time an employee falters. An effective leader is not one who simply earns an employee's confidence, but one who develops employees so that they gain confidence in themselves.

If you have made the objective of the job clear, trained the employee adequately, and have encouraged them to change the method to more effectively achieve the objective, eventually they should be doing the jobs better than you did. But make sure the employees are allowed to do the things their own way as long as the quality of the jobs do not suffer.

There is more than one way to accomplish something. Left to himself an employee will usually find a better way. Recognize and acknowledge that effort. Encourage and reward it. Don't block it, resent it, or envy it. A good manager does not necessarily *do* the best work; but he or she encourages and helps the employees to do *their* best work.

Let your employees excel.

5 Guidelines for delegation

5.1 Recognize the need to delegate

Physicians have assistants to relieve them of paperwork and other routine activities so they can spend their time with patients. Other busy professionals also rely on assistants in the conduct of their practices.

So why not managers? If you're spending too much time on administrative detail and not enough time on the high payback, priority activities, perhaps you need an assistant. But if you have one, make sure you delegate most of the non-managerial activities to him or her. As a manager, the bulk of your time should be spent planning, organizing, staffing, directing, controlling, innovating and representing your company. You shouldn't be spending your time answering routine email messages and telephone calls, attending low priority meetings or searching the Internet for information.

The general rule should be as follows:

- a) If it's not necessary, eliminate it.
- b) If it's necessary, but can be done by others, delegate it.
- c) If it can't be delegated, and is critical to the attainment of your objective, do-it-yourself as effectively as possible.



The advertisement features a central image of a smiling female teacher leaning over a laptop to assist two young students, a boy and a girl. The background is a vibrant yellow and orange swirl. In the top left corner, there is a logo for 'e-learning for kids' consisting of a grid of colored squares. To the right of the main image, there are two smaller circular inset images: one showing three children looking at a book together, and another showing children working at computers in a classroom. Below these insets, a green oval contains three bullet points: 'The number 1 MOOC for Primary Education', 'Free Digital Learning for Children 5-12', and '15 Million Children Reached'. At the bottom left of the advertisement, there is a paragraph of text about the organization's history and mission.

About e-Learning for Kids Established in 2004, e-Learning for Kids is a global nonprofit foundation dedicated to fun and free learning on the Internet for children ages 5 - 12 with courses in math, science, language arts, computers, health and environmental skills. Since 2005, more than 15 million children in over 190 countries have benefitted from eLessons provided by EFK! An all-volunteer staff consists of education and e-learning experts and business professionals from around the world committed to making difference. eLearning for Kids is actively seeking funding, volunteers, sponsors and courseware developers; get involved! For more information, please visit www.e-learningforkids.org.



5.2 Some specific guidelines to follow when delegating

5.2.1 Know your people

Before you start to delegate to anyone, it is imperative that you get to know your employees. Talk to them. Observe them, and above all, listen to them. What are their personal goals? What are their career plans? Where do they want to be within that organization one year, five years, and 10 years from now? Are they able to accept greater responsibility? Do they actually want any more responsibility? What are their needs? What motivates them? How do they feel about self-development?

Never assume that everyone wants more responsibility or wants to be promoted. Some of your staff may be scared to death of it. Talk to them. Find out how they feel about taking on certain tasks and activities. Involve them at the “considering” stage. Don’t make your decision arbitrarily and then thrust the new project onto them. You need their involvement if you want their commitment.

5.2.2 Take the time to communicate clearly

Needless interruptions are a waste of time. And they are frequently caused by poor communications. If you don’t explain an assignment properly, your employees will have to interrupt you later for clarification. If you don’t supply complete information, they will have to interrupt you to ask – resulting in even greater time loss. They might postpone the task, take too long to do it, avoid it completely or do it incorrectly.

We sometimes communicate under stress. We’re pressured, in a hurry or on the move. It pays to take the time to communicate clearly. An investment of time at the outset pays dividends later.

5.2.3 Be specific when giving assignments

Whenever you assign a task to an employee, be sure to

- a) Get a commitment as to the expected completion date.
- b) Have a follow-up system to ensure commitments are honoured, and
- c) Insist that any revisions to the due date are negotiated in advance, not on or after the due date.

In most cases, employees know well in advance that a due date cannot be met. That’s the time they should advise you, so you can make adjustments to your schedule. Don’t accept excuses after the deadline has passed. Insist that employees plan. Once they get in the habit of planning and scheduling their activities, they won’t have as much trouble meeting deadlines.

5.2.4 Delegate, don't abdicate

Dumping jobs onto your employees and then disappearing is not delegation. Delegation must be planned. Consult your employees first; select people you think are both capable of doing the job and would like to do the job. Train them. Delegate gradually, insist on feedback, and then leave them alone. But leaving them alone does not mean ceasing to communicate.

Get in sync with people who report to you. Hold a daily five minute stand-up meeting each morning. Compare notes. Discuss priorities. Make sure you all agree on the day's important objectives, and are aware of each other's schedules.

Accountability works both ways. Employees are accountable to the manager for the successful completion of delegated assignments. But managers are also responsible for adequate feedback – explaining to their employees why certain decisions were made and actions taken.

5.2.5 Watch what you delegate

Don't delegate what you can eliminate. If it's not important enough for you to do personally, it may not be important enough for your people to do either. Respect their time as well as their ability. Don't waste it on non-productive or unprofitable tasks. Your success can be multiplied tenfold if you concentrate on the high return jobs, and encourage your employees to do likewise. Don't spoil it by using your employees as a dumping ground for garbage jobs.

On the other hand, be careful not to delegate tasks that are critical to the success of the organization, can only be performed adequately at your level or above, and that you are expected to perform personally. Producing highly confidential information, conducting performance appraisals, and handling key customer accounts are examples of these types of tasks.

5.2.6 Delegate important tasks

Don't limit your delegation to those trivial, repetitive tasks that have very little impact on your organization's effectiveness. Some managers are reluctant to part with key jobs that have a high degree of visibility. They feel that these jobs are too important to be entrusted to their employees.

And yet there are some critical jobs with low visibility, such as collecting unpaid bills, that are entrusted to other people. Selling is important, but a manager wouldn't think of doing it himself. Financial statements are important but the VP of Finance would not think of keeping the books himself.

Delegation is sharing your job with the people who work for you. This includes the highly visible, important tasks as well as the routine ones.

5.2.7 Delegate enjoyable tasks

Delegate some of the things you don't want to delegate. We tend to hang onto the things we like doing, even when they interfere with more important tasks and even though our employees could probably do them just as well. Share the interesting work with your employees. One of the most important advantages of effective delegation is the fact that it enriches your employee's jobs. Don't confine your delegation to the boring, repetitive tasks; look for the interesting ones first.

If we get to like certain activities too much, we hate to part with them. Consequently we spend time that could be better utilized on something else. It's great to like our jobs; but let's not fall in love with too many low priority activities. Consider delegating some of those pleasant tasks to others. They'll probably enjoy them just as much, perhaps more so. And you can use the time gained to take on more valuable jobs that earn a greater return on the time invested. And chances are, they will prove to be even more enjoyable.

5.2.8 Recognize that everything takes time

There's no such thing as spare time. Perhaps it had meaning at one point in the past. Perhaps employees had certain jobs to do, and when they were completed they had spare time to use as they pleased. But do you see anyone sitting around today wondering what to do with their spare time? Certainly not in this digital age of speed.

Don't insult your employees by asking them to do anything in their spare time; because it suggests they don't have enough meaningful work to fill their day. Ask them instead to schedule a job for completion by a certain date. This may involve some rescheduling on their part. Your higher priority tasks may displace some less important ones. Be prepared to discuss priorities with them. You may even end up changing the due dates on a few items. But ask for something to be done in their spare time, and you may never see that task completed.

5.2.9 Don't always delegate to the most capable employee's

Delegation is one of the most effective methods of developing your people. So don't continually delegate to the most capable ones or they'll get stronger, while the weak ones get weaker. Take the extra effort to spread delegation across the board, and develop a strong team with no weak links.

5.2.10 Trust your employees

Delegation not only saves time, it develops your employees; but it frequently fails because managers are too willing to take a task back if it is not going well. Take the time to explain fully what is required of your employee, and then be willing to accept results that are not as good as you could have achieved yourself. Don't over-supervise; allow a few mistakes, and be willing to let your employees develop at their own pace.

Be sure to delegate the authority as well as the responsibility. Don't continually look over the employees' shoulders, interfere with their methods, or jump on them when they make a mistake. Be prepared to trade short-term errors for long-term results. Maintain control without stifling initiative.

5.2.11 Delegate the objective, not the procedure

One of the bonuses you receive from effective delegation is that in many cases the job is done better in the hands of someone else. Don't resent it, encourage it. Delegate the whole task for specific results, deemphasizing the actual procedure. Your employee, under less pressure, less harried, and with a fresh in viewpoint, will likely improve upon the method you've been using. Review results, not the manner in which he or she arrives at them.

5.2.12 Encourage your employees to plan

If you are continually being interrupted by people needing instant approvals, take corrective action immediately. You cannot work effectively while responding to others. Rush jobs normally result from lack of planning. Don't suffer because of someone else's failure to schedule properly. Let it be known that you need two days advance notice to peruse and approve reports, budgets, and projects and so on. Leave some unscheduled time on your planning calendar to accommodate those requests; but don't interrupt your previously scheduled priority task simply because they need approval right away. They should have included the two day approval time in their schedule. There will be exceptions, but keep them to a minimum. If you always acquiesce, it will always be expected of you.

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5.2.13 Ask for solutions, not problems

Resist the urge to answer questions posed concerning the delegated task. First, force the employees to think it through. Ask what they would suggest. Delegation has not taken place until employees are not only able to perform the job, but are able to make the decisions that you alone used to make.

If you want to remind your employees to think about the problems they encounter before bringing them to you to be resolved, post a sign on your door: “Please enter. But before you do, be sure that you have thought about the problem and are now prepared to recommend a solution.”

5.2.14 Let them make a few mistakes

If you can review your own past years performance and honestly say you didn't make any mistakes, it's time to be concerned. Every manager who innovates, introduces changes, delegates and make significant decisions, makes mistakes. It goes with the job. If you never make mistakes, you're not managing, you're coasting.

Similarly, don't be afraid of letting your employees make mistakes. Encourage them to continually try something new and to take advantage of opportunities. Remember that good judgment is the outcome of experience, experience is the outcome of bad judgment.

5.2.15 Give credit, and absorb blame

Once you have delegated the task, it is as though you were still doing it yourself as far as other people are concerned. You cannot delegate your responsibility. So when someone calls to complain that the report is not as professional as it used to be, accept the criticism. Thank the person for pointing it out, and promise an improvement. Resisted the urge to blame it on your employee. Act as a buffer; provide feedback to the employee in the form of suggestions for improvement rather than the form of criticism and complaint.

When someone calls to congratulate you on a fantastic job, be quick to point out that “Sam is doing that now.” Delegate the credit, but not the blame. When outsiders start complementing Sam directly, motivation is on the upswing.

5.2.16 Develop your employees

Are your employees approaching the limits of their potential or are the only performing at 20% of their potential? Unfortunately, not many get by on their natural ability; but they could increase that ability through continuing education and by further development in skills related to their jobs. When your employees set objectives for the next year, don't let them limit those objectives to quality and quantity and cost and productivity. Make sure there are some professional development goals there as well.

Bad leaders are the product of a lack of good training, and the absence of performance standards. Good leaders are created through continuous training and development and a willingness to keep pace with the changing work environment.

6 Controlling performance

6.1 Keeping track of assignments

Almost everyone procrastinates to some degree, and many of us are forgetful as well. So it's essential that you have a record of the various projects and tasks that you have delegated to others, along with the promised completion dates. Make up a delegation record similar to the one shown below with columns for the date the task was assigned, a brief description of the task, the date the task is due to be completed, the actual date that the task was completed, and comments about the quality of the completed job.

TAYLOR Delegation Record

Manager _____ Month _____

Date Assigned	Assignment	Due Date	Date Completed	Comments

"INSTANT" TASKS Check box at right when completed

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This form is not meant to be used for those projects of an ongoing nature, which are spelled out in a job description, but only for those one-time assignments that you could easily lose track of. It's bad enough if an employee forgets or delays an assignment; but it's even worse if you forget about it yourself. This form will not only keep you from forgetting to follow-up, it will also eliminate the necessity of continually interrupting your employees throughout the day.

When you first think of the project or task to be assigned, record the day's date and a few words about the task itself. Then continue your work until it's time to make the actual assignment. The normal impulse is to interrupt yourself as well as the employee right away so you won't forget. And it would probably be one of many such interruptions throughout the day. Instead, wait until you are ready to discuss it with your employee. Then ask him or her what a likely or possible completion date would be. Don't dictate a due date unless it's urgent: get a commitment from the employee instead. Record the agreed-upon date, and then leave the employee alone.

Make sure the employee agrees in advance to adhere to a specific deadline. Insist that he or she notify you in advance if changing priorities indicate they will not be able to meet the deadlines as planned. Learning *after the fact* that the job was not completed is unacceptable. Knowing in advance will allow you to adjust your own schedule or juggle the employee's priorities so the job does get done on time.



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If employees schedule the various assignments in their planning calendars, either paper or electronic, they will know in advance if a due date is realistic and can or cannot be met. The morning the job is due, make a follow-up call. Simply say, “John, I realize it’s still early in the day, but I was wondering if you are going to have any trouble getting that XYZ job to me today?” John may even have forgotten that the job is due (although he’ll rarely admit it) so your follow-up call will insure that the job is delivered on time. Don’t wait until the deadline is past; the purpose is to get the job done on time, not to chastise employees for *not* getting it done on time.

For more time-consuming assignments, you may want to follow up days or weeks in advance. In this case, record the follow-up date as well as a due date on the delegation record. Each morning make a habit of glancing at the form to see whether any follow-up calls are due that day.

Follow up; but don’t hover over them.

Have a separate sheet for each person reporting to you keep these together in a binder and use a new sheet each month. Refer to these forms of performance appraisal time, and give credit for prompt and effective completion of assignments. You will usually remember the follow-ups, but it’s much more difficult to recall assignments that are completed expeditiously without error.

The delegation record will also reveal whether you’re distributing assignments evenly among your employees. You may be assigning the majority of tasks to one or two people without realizing it. It’s easy to do if you have an employee who is eager to learn, never complains, always does a good job, and doesn’t know when to say no. It’s the path of least resistance. But as mentioned earlier, you may so overwhelm a few employees with the same assignments that they end up developing health problems – if they don’t simply quit long before that happens.

The “instant tasks” section at the bottom of the delegation record provides space to record those minor assignments that can hardly be classed as delegation, such as “Check the cost of flight insurance or “Notify Bill Jackson that his order is ready” or “How many valves are in stock?” and so on. This is a “things to do” list for the people reporting to you – items that require little time and effort, few instructions or decisions, and that can be reported to you almost immediately.

These are the types of assignments or questions that normally cause continual interruptions throughout the day. But instead of interrupting everyone, simply jot these things to do in the “instant task” section as they occur to you, and review them all at one time – say in the late afternoon. The next day, during your regular five minute meeting, you can review the previous day’s assignments and check them off as they are completed.

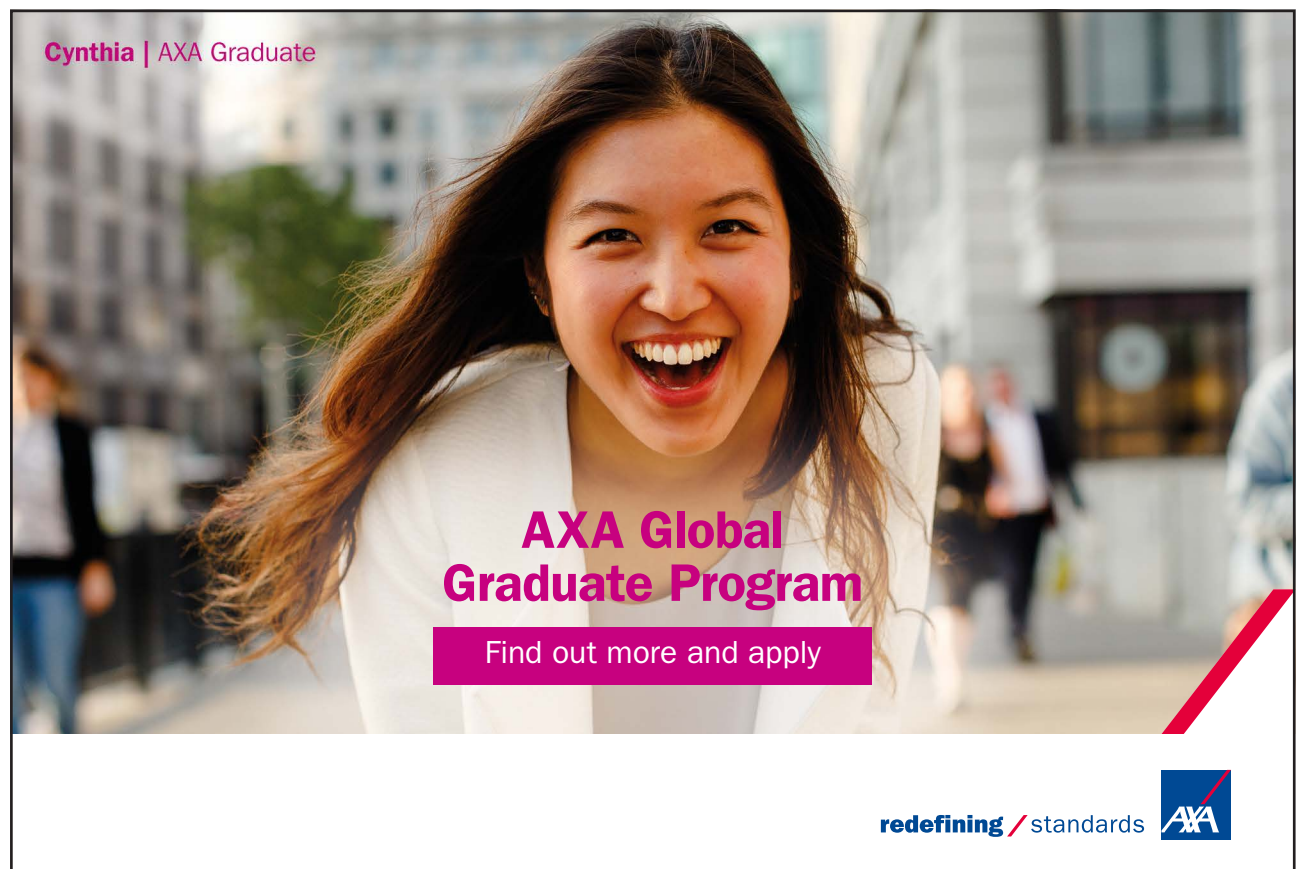
Don’t rely on your memory. It only takes a few seconds to record something, and it could save hours and countless dollars later.

6.2 Keep your expectations high

You probably heard about the experiment where average students were introduced to a teacher as handpicked, high-IQ students. The teacher was told that these particular students could be expected to show dramatic improvements over the course of the school year. Since the teacher expected great things from these “special” students, they were treated accordingly. The students improved remarkably.

It’s the old self-fulfilling prophecy at work: expect little and you will get little; expect much and you’ll get much. It’s true in business as well as in school. If you label your employees as incompetent, and not worth the time to train, they won’t disappoint you. But if you approach your employees as though they were handpicked, high-IQ people who are capable of achieving great things, you will have a completely different calibre of employee on your staff.

Always assume you have above-average employees. And when things go wrong, look first to yourself as the reason. Did you explain the situation properly? Did you rush through the instructions? Did you forget to warn the employee about those exceptional circumstances that might occur? Did you take certain information for granted? Were your instructions ambiguous?



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If you find yourself blameless, then it is only one possible explanation. Even clever, above-average employees slip up once in a while. It might even happen to you on occasion. So see it as it is – an honest error that could have happened to anyone. Don't get upset, point the blame, or berate the employee; nothing you can do now can turn back the clock and prevent the error from happening; it has already happened. But you can help prevent the same error from recurring. You could make it a learning experience for the employee. And you can protect the employee's self-esteem by condemning the error, but not the person who made it.

Always give your employees the benefit of the doubt. Few employees would make a mistake on purpose. When they do make a mistake, their self-image suffers. What they need at this point is not your criticism, but your reassurance. Help build up their self-confidence. Let them know that you're not blaming them for the mistake – since it could have happened to anyone. Then ask them if they have any suggestions as to how you can reduce the chances of this error happening again.

People learn from their mistakes. What they learn is up to you. They could learn that making mistakes is painful and demeaning and that they shouldn't take risks, and that if they do make an error they should try to cover it up so they don't get raked over the coals. Or they could learn that to err is human and the name of the game is to make as few mistakes as possible, to learn from the mistakes that do occur, and to continue to strive to be creative and innovative.

Assume your employees are a handpicked group of clever, creative, dedicated individuals, and eventually you may prove yourself to be right.

6.3 Performance appraisals

As a manager, your effectiveness depends upon how well your employees perform their delegated responsibilities. For them to perform adequately, they must have constant feedback on how they are doing and what they can do to increase their effectiveness.

That's where performance appraisals come in. Not only do formalized performance appraisals provide feedback and set the stage for personal development, they provide information on which to base salary increases and promotions.

I say "formalized" since many managers claim they don't need a formal review because they are constantly providing feedback and counsel on a daily basis. This can hardly be called performance reviews, and managers who claim it is, frequently have employees who claim that they've never been told where they stand.

A performance review is a two-way process. Employees should be given advance notice, have an opportunity to evaluate themselves, exchange information and ideas, clear up areas of disagreement or misunderstanding, and participate in goalsetting for the future. Unless you set aside a definite time for this review, chances are it will never take place – especially if performance has been less than desirable. We all hate to be the bearer of bad news and the tendency to procrastinate is increased.

This does not mean that we should not provide daily feedback. On the contrary, the idea of withholding comments on incidents of poor or good behavior until the annual review is a bad one. Your employee may have quit long ago. Or if not, the impact of commenting on behaviour that occurred several months previously would be minimal.

The practice of providing immediate feedback on employee behavior still holds true. There should be no real surprises at review time. The fact that you have set a predetermined time for an annual or semi-annual review forces you to provide meaningful feedback throughout the year, which in turn culminates in the year and review. This review formalizes the process and sets the stage for goalsetting and personal development.

Appraisal forms should be kept simple. They only serve the purpose of ensuring that a review has taken place and that the information is recorded. Avoid rating personality traits. It is unrealistic to try to differentiate between such things as “excellent affability” and “above average affability.” It does nothing to explain the effect this has had on performance or to help correct a fault.

Instead, the appraisal discussion should revolve around an evaluation of results achieved versus the goals previously established mutually by the employee and yourself. Don’t forget to evaluate how these goals were achieved. Goals achieved at the expense of moral, creativity or company reputation in the marketplace can hardly be indicative of above average performance.

When setting goals for the next year, don’t be restricted to one-year goals. Your goals might have completion dates of only a few months and others may go beyond one year. The tendency is to have goalsetting, performance reviews and salary increases all coinciding. This is not always wise.

6.4 Break reviews into two or more sessions

Performance appraisals and salary increases should never be covered in the same meeting. Once salary is mentioned, it's difficult for an employee to concentrate on anything else. Two or three meetings should be scheduled. In the latter case, the first meeting would involve the evaluation of results achieved and goalsetting for the next year. The second meeting might focus on plans for personal development. The final meeting would then discuss salary adjustments for the ensuing year.

Regardless of the format or the forms used, the important thing about performance appraisals is to have them – and at regular intervals and with advance notice to the employees so they are not caught off guard.

People like to know where they stand in the eyes of the boss. They can't be expected to improve their effectiveness if they have no criteria against which to compare their present level of competence or effectiveness. Their effectiveness is your effectiveness, since, through delegated responsibilities, they are doing parts of your job.

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7 Advice for the delegatee

7.1 What to do when your boss won't delegate

Delegation is not only a great time saver it is a great people developer as well. Nothing develops decision-making skills and promotes ability more than taking on greater responsibilities along with the authority to carry them out. But you cannot always assume your boss will delegate to you. If your boss fails to delegate, take the initiative and explain that you are ready for more responsibility. Make suggestions as to the job you feel you'll be capable of handling if provided with adequate training. In fact, there may be jobs that you are capable of handling right now without any training.

7.2 Delegation is not a spectator sport

Don't just sit back and wait for things to happen. If you want responsibility and authority, you may have to ask for it. Managers are reluctant to delegate for a variety of reasons already discussed – ranging from no time to train employees, to the people are too busy as it is. We are all human and subject to error no matter where we sit on the organization chart. So assume your boss has a problem delegating and help him or her out.

Why bother? Because it's your career that's being stifled. If you know very little about your boss's job and have no experience handling problems and participating in decision-making at the level above you, your chances of promotion are greatly diminished.

Management is a team effort: no manager can operate effectively in isolation. You must learn all you can about your boss's job. Suggest activities or decisions that you might be able to take over, freeing him or her for more important activities. But do so with finesse: don't give the impression that you're after the boss's job. Your immediate motive is to make the boss more effective by taking on more of the minor responsibilities. The more effective your boss becomes, the greater the chances of him or her being promoted – making room for your promotion in turn.

Don't count on your effectiveness standing out like glistening crystal against the dull performance of your boss. He or she can make you look bad – or good. You're in it together as a team. It is easier to push someone up the ladder ahead of you than to scramble from beneath the weight of a falling body.

But before you even approach the boss, make sure you have done your homework. First of all, do you have a list of personal goals? This is vital, since you will want to take on those responsibilities which will contribute to the attainment of these goals.

7.3 Manage yourself and your job

Next, take a look at your present job to ensure that you don't take on more tasks that you can handle effectively. Are there some low pay off activities that you can eliminate? Can some jobs be transferred to someone else? It would be a good idea to jot down all the activities you perform on a regular basis, along with the approximate time spent on them. Question everything you do. Your time is too valuable to be wasted on trivial items.

When you assume new jobs, don't hesitate to suggest alternative ways of doing them. In order to do this however, you must know the purpose of the job – what is it that you are trying to accomplish. When assigning jobs, the boss may explain the procedure, but not the results expected. Make sure you understand the reason for the task.

Don't try to turn the world upside down all at once. Too many suggested changes too soon may threaten the boss and create resistance. After all, he or she may not like the inference that many of the tasks could have been performed better using other methods. It might be a good idea to follow the traditional procedure until you're sure of what you're doing. Then introduce the suggested changes gradually.

Be sure to verify the type and frequency of feedback expected and the limits of your authority. Don't assume anything. One of the main reasons for not delegating is a lack of time for proper communication and training, so chances are the boss will not spend enough time during the delegation process. It's up to you to make sure that you have all the information needed.

7.4 Bring the boss solutions, not problems

When a problem arises, think about it before rushing to the boss for advice. What would you do if you were the boss? Then go to him or her with suggested solutions instead of leaving all the decision-making to the manager. Don't waste time mulling over the problem for days, however; if you need advice, ask for it. But there are other sources besides your boss. Cultivate a network of friends and business associates and don't hesitate to call them. Some of us have an innate reluctance to ask for anything. We'd rather search for a street than stop at a service station to ask directions. We'd sooner waste 10 minutes looking for product in a store rather than ask a salesperson. And we would even search for items in our home before asking our spouse or children if they had seen them anywhere.

Our tendency to be independent wastes time. If you need information, ask. Utilize other people's knowledge and experience. Build up a list of contacts. Meet as many people as possible at association meetings or conferences – and don't be afraid to ask for their advice and utilize their knowledge. You are fortunate to have a world of information at your fingertips with Google, You Tube and social media. Take advantage of the marvel of the Internet.

Also make sure you hand in completed assignments. Half-finished reports or outlines handed to the boss for comments are rarely appreciated. After all, that's why you got the job – to relieve pressure and take a burden off his or her shoulders.

If you want to develop yourself and your career, you may have to take the initiative. By doing so, you're helping the organization as well. If you find yourself with a boss who refuses to delegate regardless, you have a decision to make. Either be happy with the level you have attained in the organization, or move to another organization.

7.5 How to get experience

There's an old saying that when a man with experience deals with a man who has money, the man with experience ends up with the money and the man who had the money ends up with experience. Acquiring experience is a valuable learning process. Or at least it can be. But some individuals feel experience means simply putting in time. Others find they have the same experiences over and over again. How can we ensure that we gain the kind of experience that will lead to self-development, career development and personal success?

The key is in taking control of our lives. We must decide what we want out of life, and plan experiences that would lead us to those goals.

Don't be satisfied to just drift through life, waiting for opportunities to present themselves. That's a copout. You're simply letting others determine what you will do and when you will do it. Take responsibility for what happens to you; then make it happen.

Regardless of what your goals may be, experience will help you attain them. And there's more to experience than putting in time. You must actively pursue it. Listen to people. Talk to people. Anticipate. Observe. Don't be content to just sit and absorb.

One of the best ways of gaining experience from a standpoint of a return on invested time is to read. By reading you are exposed to the distilled experiences of hundreds of others – their most creative ideas, profound thoughts and valuable suggestions. By reading books related to your chosen field you can gain in one year what it would take 10 years to accumulate by putting in time. And reading is not a passive activity – it is an active one. You must search for new ideas and information. Keep a record of useful information by summarizing them on index cards or in computer files. Apply the information and ideas in your own life. It is not the information or experience itself that leads to self-development; it's what you do with that information and experience.

Create a plan to improve yourself by reading on a regular basis. Set aside a definite period each day to read about a subject that interests you – that relates to your lifetime goals. The deeper you delve into the subject the more interested you will become. And one subject may lead to other subjects.

The other key method of gaining valuable experience involves interaction with people. If you don't like people, your experience will always be limited. Cultivate an interest in others. Ask questions. Discuss. Debate. Take advantage of any opportunity to find out more about your business friends, associates and competitors. Spend more time listening than talking. Discover how they have solved the problem you're facing or how they solved one you might face in the future. Be on the lookout for more contacts. Meet as many people as you can. Don't rely on your memory; list their names, occupations and interests in your contacts file for future reference. Never sit idle while the world revolves around you.

Participate at meetings, social events and in educational classes. Be a front-seater. You have to work hard to get experience. It doesn't come to you on a silver platter. Sometimes the most successful people are those who are too busy to notice.

I'm not suggesting you work 10 hours per day seven days per week or that you even extend the hours you're working now; but I am suggesting that you use the time you're presently devoting to your career as effectively as possible. Read, observe and listen actively.

Be prepared to handle the delegated authority and responsibility that will soon be yours. And it will be yours, if top management feels you are qualified – if you have the necessary experience and the will to succeed.

To succeed at anything, you need the desire, determination, and experience – the know-how – to make it all happen. Don't wait for experiences to find you. You find the experiences.

7.6 Excel in your present job

It's okay to be future oriented; but don't be so future oriented that you ignore the present. Sometimes employees take courses to prepare themselves for advancement before they fully master the job that they already have now. Excel at what you do. Always do a better job than the position requires. Take online courses, read books, blog articles, attend seminars related to your field. You will soon be so skilled, knowledgeable and proficient at what you do that you will force yourself into a higher position – if not with your present company, then with a different one.

You will never be fully trained for a higher-level job until after you get that job. Then you will grow into it quickly through actual hands-on experience, reinforced by the confidence you have already gained at having excelled in your previous job, and complemented by training directed at this new level.

There is a danger in advancing too quickly. It is important that you build up self-confidence and a strong self-image before taking on a complete set of new responsibilities. Otherwise you may fall victim to Lawrence Peter's "Peter Principle" and find yourself at your level of incompetence.

In a way, it's similar to high school – if you have not fully understood grade 9 mathematics, promotion to the next grade will cause you even more confusion and you will not only fail higher mathematics, but perhaps those subjects that require mathematics or for which mathematics is an asset.

Be prepared to grow into a job, and then to grow out of it; but don't underestimate the time it takes to grow into it. This time can be reduced if your boss is an effective delegator. It can also be reduced if you accept the responsibility for developing yourself.



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8 Delegate or stagnate

8.1 Building a strong future

A responsibility of every person on this earth is to pass along to the next generation as much of his or her acquired knowledge as possible. If the lessons learned and information acquired through experience, education, and training were to be buried with each one of us, what a loss to humanity! Each of us experiences life differently. If we were to isolate ourselves from everyone else, we would acquire little. We must pool our knowledge, add it to the rapidly expanding body of knowledge already accumulated, and make it available as a resource for the generations to follow.

We pass along information and know-how to our children by instinct. We teach, train, and coach continuously in an environment of love. We delegate every day of the week. We have patience through their early years when they are immature, uncoordinated and inexperienced. We have faith in them. We realize that one day they will mature, and that the rate at which they do mature and become self-reliant will largely depend upon how diligent we are in our role as parents.

In our role as managers, we should approach our jobs with the same measure of diligence, patience and understanding. We must be willing to nurture our employees to maturity in respect to the jobs that we delegate to them.

8.2 Help develop greatness in others

Just as the world builds on the knowledge passed down from generation to generation, so an organization relies the knowledge passed down from incumbent to incumbent. An organization cannot grow if its members operate in isolation, jealously guarding their knowledge and know-how and taking their skills with them upon promotion or upon retirement.

Delegation is team activity

Each of us has a responsibility to delegate – and to share our knowledge and experience with those who report to us. This knowledge and experience, combined with their own, will produce even better managers to replace us as we fade from the scene. Our goal is not to look good ourselves, but to develop greatness in others. A football coach does not have to score touchdowns himself to win games.

Delegation must take place at all levels within an organization. If the president delegates and the vice presidents don't, growth will be stunted. The vice presidents will be overworked and ineffective; the managers will be frustrated and confused; the employees will be unmotivated and unhappy.

Delegation is the lifeblood of any organization. Authority and responsibility must flow from the top to the bottom, circulating among the members of the organization like blood circulates through the body. To cut off the circulation at any point causes problems further on.

Delegation is a simple process; but carrying out that process is difficult because people are not naturally inclined to give away a part of themselves. Delegation requires that we share our skills, knowledge and experience – our uniqueness – with others. And then to give them a part of our job to boot. This is asking a lot. Yet we must realize that we, in turn, receive a part of someone else's uniqueness – and job. The final payoff is a strong organization consisting of the integrated talents and experiences of every individual member of the organization. And the total effectiveness is greater than the sum of the parts.

8.3 Delegation grows teams more than individuals

We can no longer afford the luxury of even a few individuals working in isolation from the rest of the organization. Business is in the big league now. Technological know-how, managerial skills, product quality, manufacturing capabilities and marketing techniques are at a new high. Competition is keen. The economic climate is unstable. Only the strong organizations will survive.

Strength is not in the individuals, but in the teams. Put a group of superstars together on your team – whether baseball, hockey, football or soccer – and they will still lose if they operate as individual superstars. But once they start operating as a team they can become unbeatable.

Without delegation, small businesses remain small, unprofitable businesses remain unprofitable and mediocre employees remain mediocre. The success of any organization rests with you, the manager.

Delegate or stagnate.



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9 About the author

Harold Taylor, CSP, CEO of *Harold Taylor Time Consultants Ltd.*, and partner, *Taylor in Time*, has been speaking, writing and conducting training programs on the topic of effective time management for over 35 years. He has written 18 books, including a Canadian bestseller, *Making Time Work for You*. He has developed over 50 time management products, including the popular *Taylor Planner*, which has sold in 38 countries around the world. He has had over 300 articles accepted for publication.

He served for 12 years as Quality Control Manager and Plant Manager in industry, and 8 years as teaching master in the business division of Humber College of Applied Arts & Technology in Toronto, Canada before launching his own consulting firm.

A past director of the *National Association of Professional Organizers*, Harold Taylor received their *Founder's Award* in 1999 for outstanding contributions to the organizing profession. He received the CSP (Certified Speaking Professional) designation in 1987 from the *National Speakers Association*. In 1998 the *Canadian Association of Professional Speakers* inducted him into the Canadian Speaking Hall of Fame. And in 2001, he received the first *Founder's Award* from the *Professional Organizers in Canada*. The award has been named the "Harold Taylor Award" in his honor.

Since 1981, when he incorporated the original time management company, he has personally presented over 2000 workshops, speeches and keynotes on the topic of time and life management.