

“The best executive is the one who has sense enough to pick good men to do what he wants done, and self-restraint enough to keep him from meddling with them while they do it” (Theodore Roosevelt).”

Reality Check

I am on track if:

- I clearly communicate the desired outcome and my expectations about standards of performance
- I am delegating whole pieces of work or an entire job rather than simply tasks and activities
- I clearly define limits of authority that go with the delegated job (Are there budget constraints? What can and can't be changed?)
- I have confidence that the person to whom I have delegated will deliver the outcome that has been agreed
- I seek feedback and review progress at appropriate, agreed checkpoints
- People are coming to me with options and suggestions when a problem exists rather than just asking me for the answer
- People are willing to put their hand up and take on further challenges

Warning signs are if:

- My people are continually checking with me about what I have requested
- The work isn't being completed and deadlines are being missed
- I am continuing to work longer hours and not confident of a way forward to rectify this (Am I doing too much myself?)
- I am regularly correcting the final work I have delegated
- I am frequently telling people not just what needs to be done, but also how it needs to be done
- I am delegating things that are not appropriate for others to do, eg performance appraisals and difficult conversations

- I am frequently checking on where things are up to – more than we had originally agreed

Things I can do to improve my effectiveness in delegation:

- **Carefully identify appropriate content for delegation.** Which tasks must be done by me? Which tasks can be done by someone else? What sorts of things are suitable / unsuitable to delegate? Can someone else be trained to do some of those suitable tasks? Does the time frame allow for learning, exploration and review?
- **Set the team member up for success.** Are they willing? Are they able? Are they right for this task? What level of supervision and support do they require? How do I ensure there is a mutual commitment and understanding of what is expected? When should we have progress checks? Remember delegation is not abdication. You are still ultimately responsible for the outcome.
- **Don't avoid delegating something because you can't give them the entire piece of work or project.** There are occasions and individuals for whom this is not possible. For people with a lower level of capability and confidence, let them start with a small chunk, then look to build on this experience where there are opportunities to delegate larger pieces of work and responsibility
- **If you can't measure it, don't delegate it.** The manager needs to specify quality, quality and targeted time of completion. Make sure the system to monitor progress facilitates opportunities for feedback against these dimensions¹.
- **Be sure to delegate the authority along with the responsibility.** Don't make people come back to you for too many minor approvals. Who else needs to be informed to help facilitate this? How do you ensure they are linked to the necessary resources?
- **Ask, don't tell.** Delegate the objective, not the procedure. Set clear goals, but leave the path to achievement undefined. Delegating entails allowing another to complete a task their way, not necessarily exactly as you would have it done. **And sometimes you need to delegate something you personally don't know how to do.** Let go! Practice your coaching skills.
- **Define work to be done in terms of the outcomes rather than the process.** For example, think of employee goals as a lane in the bowling alley. *Clearly outline the goal* – i.e. to the knock down as many of the 10 pins as possible in 2 or

¹ Executive Leadership, Jacques and Clement, Blackwell Business p181

less shots, by rolling the ball. *And define the boundaries* – like setting up the bumper guards in the lane. *Then leave them to it.* They can decide to roll the ball fast or slow; use a heavy or light one; bowl a curve or straight ball, bounce it off the bumper guard! Leave those decisions in their hands.² This helps them to know how to make decisions within clear parameters and seek guidance when they have something outside these parameters or their area of expertise / comfort level. Stop micro-managing! Cooperation, creativity and commitment increases when the results are sharply defined yet people are given latitude on *how* to complete the task.

- **If you have executed the delegation process steps well, trust it.** Never take back a delegation because you get impatient and think you can do it better or faster. Delegating allows for the growth of others. Help the person learn to do it better. Don't punish mistakes.
- **Beware of the “seagull” effect.** Let go. Trust people to do well and don't look over their shoulders or check up with them along the way, unless they ask.

The Delegation Process

1. Decide **what** to delegate
2. Decide **who** to delegate to
3. **Communicate** your expected **outcomes** clearly
 - inform others if necessary
4. **Manage** the job
 - Get out of their way
 - Review work at appropriate checkpoints to ensure quality and standards of work are met
5. **Recognise and reward**

Keep in mind that your goal should be to delegate more effectively, rather than to delegate more frequently

² Micro-Managing your Remote team – how to avoid this common pitfall, www.remote-employee-management.blogspot.com/

Planning a Delegation

Questions to consider

1. What to Delegate

- What sort of things are suitable to delegate?
- What would be unsuitable to delegate?
- What things could I definitely delegate within the next month starting tomorrow?
- What things could I potentially delegate over the coming months?

2. Who to Delegate to (Select something to delegate...)

- How would you decide who to delegate to?
- How will they respond to you delegating this task to them? (Are they willing?)
- Where is the person at in terms of the development continuum for this task? (Are they able?)
- What will you need to consider to help set them up for success?

How may this impact the leadership behaviours you'll need to focus on? (see the *Situational Leadership resource summary* for further ideas related to the person's development level)

3. Communicate expected outcomes clearly

- **Make sure the standards and the outcome are clear. What needs to be done, when should it be finished and to what degree of quality or detail?**
- What do you believe and need to communicate about
 - Context and purpose
 - Outcomes and deliverables
 - Resources and support
 - Guidelines (quality) and constraints
 - Deadlines
 - Checkpoints to review progress
 - Consequences of performance
- How will you ensure there is a mutual understanding of and commitment to these things?
- Who else do you need to inform?
- *Consider the guidelines for communicating your expectations on the next page...*

4. Manage the job

- What leadership behaviours will you need to demonstrate?
- When will be the appropriate checkpoints review progress?

5. Recognise and reward

- What will be an appropriate way to recognise and reward the person for successful completion of this task?

What Holds Us Back from Delegating?



Easier to perform task yourself? (time to set up etc)	Fear of the "no"	Lack of confidence? (in self, in others) Trust?	Fear of being seen as not coping	Thinking you have no one to delegate to
You <i>like</i> doing it	Control? Perfectionism Ultimate Accountability?	Fear of people thinking you are asking them to do your job	Thinking tasks are too complex / tedious to delegate	Fear you'll have to correct the mistakes

"Assigning responsibility to others does not lessen your responsibility - it gives you the capacity to handle greater responsibility."

Delegation – some traps



Thinking people should approach the task as you would. Concentrate on results	Be sure to delegate the authority along with the responsibility <i>Don't make people come back to you for too many minor approvals</i>	Not giving people a chance or providing the right tools, training, expectations <i>Be patient, help set them up for success</i>
The "seagull" effect <i>Let go. Trust people to do well and don't look over their shoulders or check up with them along the way, unless they ask</i>	Punishing mistakes <i>People learn from them; minimise risk by setting up well</i>	Leaving people alone <i>Ensure you have progress checks built in. Help minimise the chances of failure</i>

Plan the delegation

Plan the meeting to discuss the delegation

- What do you want to communicate?
- How may they respond?
- What information may they require?
- What is the performance standard?
- How is the feedback loop going to work?
- What support will they need and how will you give it to them?

Suggested Guidelines

- State your need for help
- Say why you are asking this person
- Ask for specific acceptance
- Describe the task in detail
- State deadlines and quality standards
- Discuss how you'll follow up on progress
- Discuss any training / skill / support requirements

Delegation – Some Tips



Delegate to the right person. <i>Don't always give tasks to the strongest, most experienced or first available person</i>	Spread delegation around and give people new experiences as part of their training	Ask, don't tell <i>Cultivate some independent thinking, responsibility and ownership</i>
When you finish giving instructions, the last thing to ask is, "What else do you need to get started?" They'll tell you	Obtain feedback from employees to ensure they feel they're being treated appropriately. <i>A simple "How's it going with that new project?" might be all that's needed</i>	