

Why

Good delegation saves you time, develops your people, grooms a successor and motivates. Poor delegation causes frustration, demotivates and confuses the delegate and fails to achieve the delegated task or purpose. Without delegation you risk becoming a serious obstacle to company effectiveness and efficiency.

Effective delegation is crucial for management and leadership succession. One of the main tasks of a manager in a growing, thriving organization is ultimately to groom a successor.

What

Delegation is a very helpful aid for succession planning, personal development and encouraging promotion. It's how we grow in a job: delegation enables us to gain the experience we need to take on greater responsibility.

Below you will find a set of simple steps to follow if you want to get delegation right, including different levels of delegation freedom that you can offer to individuals, teams or groups formed especially for individual projects (including "virtual teams").

How

Step 1:

Define the task: confirm in your own mind that it is appropriate to delegate the task. Does it meet the criteria for delegation?

Step 2.

Select the individual or team: chose the right person(s). What are your reasons for delegating this task to this person or team? What are they going to get out of it? What are you going to get out of it?

Step 3.

Assess delegate's ability and training needs: is the delegated person or team capable of doing the task? Do they understand what needs to be done? If not, you can't delegate the task to them or you have to give them the necessary support and/or information.

Step 4.

Explain your reasons: you must explain why the job or responsibility is being delegated and why it is being delegated to that person or those people. What is its importance and relevance? Where does it fit in the overall scheme of things?

Step 5.

State required results: what must be achieved? Clarify understanding by getting feedback from the delegate(s). How will the task be measured? Make sure they know how you intend to determine whether the job is being done successfully.

Step 6.

Consider the resources required: discuss and agree on what is required to get the job done. Consider people, location, premises, equipment, money, materials and other related activities and services.

Step 7.

Agree deadlines: when must the job be finished? Or if it is an on-going duty, when are the review dates? When are the reports due? If the task is complex and consists of several parts or stages, what are the priorities?

At this point you may need to confirm the delegate's understanding of the previous points, getting ideas and interpretations.

As well as you showing that the job can be done, this helps to reinforce commitment.

Methods of checking and controlling must be agreed with the delegate. Failing to agree on this in advance will cause this monitoring to be perceived as interference or an indication of a lack of trust.

Step 8.

Support, coach where needed and communicate. Think about who else needs to know about what's going on and keep them informed. Involve the delegate in this so they can see beyond the issue at hand. Do not leave the delegate to inform your own peers of their new responsibility. Inform your boss if the task is important and sufficiently high profile.

Step 9.

Provide feedback on results: it is essential to let the delegate know how they are doing and whether they have achieved their aims. If they haven't, you must review with them why things did not go according to plan and deal with the problems. You must absorb the consequences of failure and pass on the credit for success.

When

As often as possible!

Delegation is the most important leadership skill when it comes to creating an entrepreneurial and innovative climate in your department and in the company as a whole.

Skills and necessary training

Coaching skills.

Ability to use the management funnel.

Possible workshop exercise

Ask people to work in groups of 3 (one observer, one delegator and one delegate).

Role-play the delegation process and practice the skills required. The observer evaluates the performance of the delegator and delegate (with reference to the steps described above).

Critical success factors

There is a wide range of freedoms that you can confer on a delegate. The more experienced and reliable the delegate is, the more freedom you can give them. However, the more critical the task, the more cautious you need to be about extending the delegate a lot of freedom, especially if your job or reputation depends on obtaining a good result. Take care to choose the most appropriate degree of freedom for each situation. Be creative when choosing levels of delegated responsibility and always check with the delegate that they are comfortable with the level chosen. People are generally capable of doing far more than you might imagine.