

## The Art of Delegation

Learning to delegate is a major challenge and takes some time to master. Suddenly your priority is no longer to complete a task independently, on time, and to a high standard. The emphasis is now to ensure individuals in your team have sufficient capability to do the work. You are a boss.

You are no longer an island and this new role looks suspiciously like being a teacher. Like any change, it will take some time to feel comfortable about passing over something you know you can do in half the time and ten times better, but the key objective is for you to pass it on.

The amount of time and supervision you allocate to this important task of growing your team will directly influence how effective your team becomes and ultimately how you are measured.

The benefit of mastering delegation is to be able to grow and develop your own ability and talent. Delegate effectively and you will have time to do new things that previously you were unable to include in your busy schedule.

*Delegation = Development, not dumping*

For someone learning a new task, it's not unlike completing a jigsaw puzzle. While you, as delegator, may have completed it many times before and are able to do it in a matter of minutes, for someone who has no 'big picture' it can be alarmingly unclear how the pieces fit together or just what the end result may look like.

If you are allocating tasks, don't always give it to the person you know requires the least amount of input to get the job done. If you have the time, or your second-in-charge does, choose someone who will grow and develop from the experience. When not busy, choose level 3 or 4 below.

Choosing how much information to give:

1. An experienced person only needs to know how the task fits into the work plan and when you want it.
2. Someone who is less experienced needs the additional information about the result you expect.
3. An intermediate level person will need to know what you want them to do to get the result.
4. A beginner will need to see each step carried out so they can begin to build some experience of the task and then be able to carry out the steps independently.

Most experience ----- Least experience

1	2	3	4
Context & goal	Context & goal	Context & goal	Talk about the context of the task & goal
	The Result	The Result	Explain the result you expect once the goal has been achieved
		What to do	Go through the steps of what you expect them to do
			Explain exactly how each step is carried out

Time

Delegating successfully starts with making an assessment of the person’s current skills. If they get it wrong, then either they have not understood what you want, or they do not have the right skill base at this point to deliver the right outcome.

Don’t be too quick to blame failure on your subordinate. The most common reasons people fail to deliver the right result is poor selection of a person to carry out the task, and insufficient preparation and communication to enable them to deliver.

Learning takes a lifetime and mistakes are a recognised part of any learning process. Very few people turn up in the morning at work and think to themselves, “Today I want to look like a fool and fail”.

Don’t be surprised when someone needs to be shown things more than two or three times. Everyone learns at a different pace, dependant on their existing knowledge, skills, and natural ability in that area. It doesn’t mean they are stupid, incapable, unwilling or lazy.

Depending on what the task is, people can find it easier to learn it in a specific way. The trick is matching or combining the areas of learning (below) to get the best result for the individual and the way they learn a specific task.

- Visual – being shown or reading.
- Auditory – listening/talking through the details/issues.
- Kinesthetic – learns best by doing it themselves and practice.

A major barrier to learning is fear (fear of failure, or fear from past experiences and mistakes), so the more patient and encouraging you are the more likely you are to have success with your team.

Successful delegation is dependent on:

- Good preparation and your ability to communicate well.
- Regular monitoring and an environment that encourages learning and accepts that mistakes are a given.
- Regular (e.g.: hourly, daily) review of work in progress to check that they get it, build confidence, and report back.
- Formal reviews 6-12 monthly.

Set up a system so your people know that they have to report back to you at regular intervals (daily updates, either in person or by email) or when they get stuck. This prevents the common and frustrating situation where a manager feels they have to chase. It also allows the person to learn how to be accountable.