

Mastering the art of delegation



Delegation can be used either as an excuse for dumping failure on the shoulders of subordinates, or as a dynamic tool for motivating and

training your team to realise their full potential. CHERYL DONNISON examines the do's and don'ts of delegation.

Good managers recognise that there's a limit to both the quantity and quality of work they can do on their own. So delegation for the modern manager becomes not merely an option, it's a necessity. It's a necessity for the sake of one's health.

Delegation should be one of the first tools we turn to. However, it seems that a worryingly high percentage of UK managers simply have not learned this most basic of management techniques. And why not? The reasons are many but if you stop and think for a while, you'll recognise that delegation requires skill, patience, confidence and courage. The more you have of these four workplace virtues, then the more likely you are to delegate to your subordinates

But delegation throws up a series of questions and for those who seek immediate solutions to problems, it poses a real challenge in itself. "If you want something done around here, then do it yourself!" We're all guilty of that

Do's and don'ts of delegating

- Decide what to delegate
- Find the right person to delegate to
- Delegate the entire job to that one individual and give him or her full authority
- Allow the delegated person some space to get on with the job
- Establish deadlines and build in accountability
- Give positive and corrective feedback
- Provide all the necessary resources
- Give full recognition to the person who gets the job done
- Don't hover
- Never ever take credit for yourself



familiar grumble from time to time. But take a look around. Successful managers use delegation for the benefit of themselves, their teams and their organisations.

But to whom should you delegate? What part of your day's workload should you delegate? And what should you retain as your own responsibility? Stretching your team is always healthy, but putting too much pressure on less experienced members of staff can break them too.

Successful delegation occurs when the manager purposefully selects an employee to do a specific task, bearing in mind his or her experience, knowledge, skills and motivation.

The employee should be selected because the manager believes that the team member has (already) – or could demonstrate – the ability to complete the task in hand both effectively and efficiently.

By delegating a task which can stretch an employee, the manager is, in effect,

saying publicly: "I trust you... have a go." This is offering a challenge, modest or not, and will lead to an increase in responsibility for the employee – a prime motivator in the workplace.

Consequently, the employee may feel inspired to complete the task and, at the same time, grow in self-confidence. In this way, delegation is a win-win situation. It offers the subordinate the chance to develop in a tangible, measurable way and gives the manager the opportunity to spend more time on important, perhaps longer-term strategic issues and less on time-consuming, more apparently "urgent" matters at hand.

However, the manager genuinely does need to know when it's best to delegate and how to suggest that delegation is about to occur. To be effective, the process requires planning and patience.

As a small business owner or sole trader, look for tasks that can be done better by someone else. For example, if you are a self-employed consultant, a trained bookkeeper is more likely to do a better job at handling your accounts than you are. And why should you still be handling VAT receipts at 10.30pm at night when relatively inexpensive support can be at hand?

➤ For further information on coaching call Cheryl Donnison at Luminia Professional & Business Coaching on 01943 605597 or visit: www.luminacoaching.co.uk