

The Principles of Effective Delegation

Delegation is one of the most beneficial aspects of any leadership role. Done well, it not only frees up countless hours of time for other activities, it can also ensure that all tasks are given the time and concentrated effort they are due. Further, it is a great way to build on (and build up) the skills of other team members.



However, for all its merits, delegation continues to be something that is not done as well as it could be. Some of the more common problems being a lack of trust in the abilities of others, a fear that delegation leads to a loss of power and an inability to believe that someone else may be able to do the same job as well as (or better than) the person doing the delegation!

Listed below are some of the key elements of delegation, which if understood and followed, can lead to a rewarding experience for all involved.

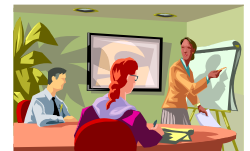
Select the person to whom you will delegate - It is important to have trust and confidence in the abilities of the person you will be delegating to. While there is a danger that perfectionists may never find someone 'suitable', those wishing to delegate effectively will always be on the lookout for people with a whole range of skills to whom they can delegate a variety of tasks

Ensure their commitment - Having found a suitable person to delegate to, it's important to have their support of the idea. Instructing someone to 'do something' is a re-allocation of responsibilities and not delegation. Remember - delegate, don't dump!

Clearly describe the tasks - If you want a job done well, then it is important to clearly outline and share the task at hand with the person to whom you will be delegating. This is best done in writing either as a task description or a work brief. Once communicated it is good to clarify that your instructions have been clearly understood

Gain mutual co-operation and understanding - Inherent in the above, is the need for both the person delegating the task and the person to whom the task is being delegated, to have a mutual understanding about the different responsibilities associated with the delegation of the task.

Build in regular reporting - One good way for the person delegating to stay at 'arms length' is to build a regular reporting mechanism into the delegation of the role. This way, they can be assured that they will be on top of any major mis-communications early enough to intervene if necessary, while at the same time not giving the person undertaking the task the freedom to proceed at their own pace. This can also act as a powerful reinforcer for the person undertaking the task - to know their progress is right on track and appreciated.



No undue interference - It is critical that the delegation takes place in an environment where the person undertaking the task doesn't feel like someone is constantly looking over their shoulder. After all what's the point of delegating if you then spend all your time checking up on the person to whom you delegated?

Accept some tasks won't be done perfectly - Accepting that some delegated tasks might not be done as perfectly as you might do them is one of the more challenging parts of effective delegation - particularly for the perfectionist.

Use mistakes as a development opportunity - Mistakes don't need to be 'bad' - rather they can act as a great learning tool for all involved. Don't let bad experiences put you off delegating the next time.

Reward Success - Acknowledging successful delegation is also critical to the ongoing development of a 'culture of delegation' in any agency.