The Gentle Art of Delegation

**Why delegate anyway?**

* To give yourself more personal time.
* To give yourself the opportunity to do more and therefore to achieve more.
* To be able to grow your business more effectively
* To improve productivity and efficiency – both of yourself and of your key people.
* To allow for the growth and development of your staff.
* To teach your staff to accept more responsibility and become more valuable to you.

Before you delegate – use this test:

The key is to ask “What is the worst that could happen - and can I live with that?”

If you feel that you could live with the worst that could happen – then you delegate.

What is the cost of not delegating?

Compare the cost to you of your time per hour - against the cost per hour of a team member (or outside source). Then decide if the job should be delegated or not.

The Process of Delegation to a staff member:

* + Have a clearly defined set of policies in place that the staff member can refer to for guidance – and be prepared to stand behind the staff member’s decisions based on those policies.
  + Give them the skills and training needed to do the task.
  + Give them the responsibility to take the action required.
  + Give them the authority to be able take the action required.
  + Give them a time frame to complete the task.
  + Give them a clear picture of what outcome you want.
  + Give them feedback so they know if they are producing what you want.

Keeping control – after you have delegated.

There are two different levels of delegation:

Level 1

Team member is asked to look at all the options – make a decision – and report back to you for your final OK - before any action is taken.

Level 2

Team member is asked to do as above, then take the action – and report back the results of the action for review by you.

**Common mistakes in effective delegation:**

* Don’t give enough freedom
* Don’t communicate clearly
* Aren’t open to new ideas

First concentrate on the most important matters yourself. You should be doing activities that only you can do (involve a high level of skill) and ideally, that you enjoy doing. When delegating, set broad controls and allow your people to make mistakes.

**The 6 key steps of delegation**

1. Communicate clearly

Take the time to make your requirements known to your associate. Give a clear picture of the results you expect, the time limits involved, and the authority being transferred to the individual. Also make sure other people in the organization know about the delegation so they can support it.

1. Encourage participation

Employees are least satisfied and least motivated when they can’t inject their own ideas into the project. They need to be able to display their own talents and ingenuity.

1. Examine results not methods

An effective delegator needs to accept differing approaches to achieve results. Since no two people approach a solution in exactly the same way we need to concentrate on whether the desired results are being achieved – not that they are being achieved your way. A poor delegator says - “This is what we want to achieve and this is how we will proceed”. An effective delegator says - “Here is the result we have agreed we want to accomplish – give me your best recommendations as to how we can get those results”.

1. Show trust

Allow them to get the job done without micro managing. Excessive checking will convince the employee that they are not really responsible for the job.

1. Delegate credit only

You cannot delegate blame. Remember that you bear the final responsibility for the sins of your people.

1. Know your people

Both at the time you delegate, and as the task unfolds – you need to know what and how much you can delegate to a person. You should gradually increase it as the results are successfully achieved.

Some don’ts in delegation:

* Don’t let the chain of command get too long. If there are too many levels of responsibility some information will never trickle all the way to the bottom.
* Don’t ask one subordinate to report to two people. It will be impossible for the subordinate to decide whose work comes first.
* Don’t make fuzzy job assignments. Grey areas between positions simply invite overlap, conflict and duplication of effort.
* Don’t be too rigid. Try to maintain flexibility to provide for situations that inevitably crop up and need non-standard solutions.

**Exercise**

Make a list of three things you are doing today that you should be delegating. Identify whom you will delegate to and write down how you will go about doing so. Then delegate it.