

Why Are We Afraid of Delegating and What Can We do About it

People are afraid of delegation. It is epidemic! Ask your colleagues how good they are in delegation and you are bound to hear something similar to these:

- "I am terrible at it"
- "I like to be better"
- "I wish I could do more"
- "I never feel comfortable when I delegate to someone"
- "I don't have anyone to delegate to"
- "They can never do a good job"

If this sounds familiar, then read on as this article explores our fears of delegation and suggests a few simple productivity techniques that can improve your delegation skills.

Your first reaction to the word "delegation" should be extreme positivism. Why? Because delegation is good, not just for you, but also for everyone else. Here are the critical benefits of passing work to others:

- They understand that you recognize their skills and trust them with responsibility for certain tasks
- By delegating a task, you build skills which can then be used when needed later on. Over time, you will end up with resourceful staff who can cover each other over various demanding skills
- You increase efficiency of the organization by allowing those who are better than you at doing the task to take over and get more done
- You help people enjoy their jobs more by challenging them, by motivating them and by increasing their self-actualization. As it is well known, motivated people are far more productive and enthusiastic about their jobs. They also inject enthusiasm into the rest of the team.
- And of course, if you delegate properly you save time and make yourself more productive to attend to other critical tasks

The classic fears of delegation come from misunderstanding the concept of delegation. Delegation is not about getting rid of the task you cannot be bothered to do, or to fill someone's time because you have to keep them busy. Both of these lead to an unmotivated delegatee who would rather dodge the work. Always see delegation as a way to expand roles and getting people involved more in the complexity and challenges of what you work on.

To maximize the effectiveness of your delegation, consider the following:

Decide what to delegate

Identify tasks that you can pass to others by making a list and then choose the most appropriate based on the people around you:

- List tasks that are interesting from other's point of view, but you are happy to pass on rather than that doing them yourself
- List tasks that would help people grow when they carry them out
- List critical tasks that someone other than you should always be able to do, so when you are not present, everything does not come to a halt
- List tasks that would motivate others and make them enthusiastic about work
- List tasks that take your time and you feel others can do it either as fast as you, cheaper than you, in time, even faster than you

Select the right people

Consider the current interests and capabilities of people around you. Familiarize yourself with their aspirations, hobbies, wishes and those aspects of their current work that they enjoy the most. Don't filter out people based on their current experience in the tasks you want to delegate. People learn quickly. Just because they have never done something, doesn't mean that they can never do it in the future.

Iterate over tasks and delegates

Iterate over this list and the list of delegate tasks and update them based on each other. In other words, don't selfishly focus on getting rid of some tasks you cannot be bothered to do. Think of people you want to delegate to and the tasks you want to delegate and iterate several times to refine them.

Package tasks

People would feel much more motivated if they know what these tasks mean and how they fit into everything else. Don't fragment the tasks or simplify them. People learn quickly; respect their intelligence and provide tasks at a level that challenges them. If the task is simple, pass on more responsibility to make it more interesting and satisfying as a role.

Retain ownership, but consider making them accountable

Delegation is not about delegating responsibility. You can make the person accountable to increase the quality of work, but still retain ownership so you don't lose control if that is what you desire. Fear of losing control is what stops most from delegating. You will

not lose control if you explain the boundary of responsibilities and set specific monitor and control guidelines.

Monitor and set targets

A delegatee needs to know how his performance is measured, when and how he needs to complete the task, when he needs to report, where he can get help or more resources from and most important of all, what kind of decisions he can make and what kinds he cannot.

Always consider the following productivity grand rule:

Those who learn the art of delegation and look at it as a way to empower others become far more successful in this art than those who look at delegation selfishly as a way to get rid of something they don't want to do. Centre delegation on others and you will succeed. Centre it on yourself and you are bound to fail sooner or later.