

Delegation

As a leader, it may seem easiest, most effective, and even expected for you to do everything yourself. However, a leader who hopes to be successful must learn early on the importance of delegation (the art of spreading the work around).

Purposes of Delegation:

- Allow more people to be actively involved.
- Distribute the workload.
- Increase the motivation and commitment of the members.
- Develop leadership skills among members.
- Decrease the organization stress level.

Many leaders have difficulty delegating responsibility. They would prefer to do the job themselves to make sure the job is done right. While this method is often more expedient, it can also breed apathy among those group members who are not involved.

Sometimes leaders make the mistake of delegating only the menial work, while keeping the appealing tasks to themselves. This can give members the feeling of being used rather than being important.

When to Delegate:

- When there is a lot of work
- When you feel someone else has a particular ability, skill, expertise, or qualification which would best suit the task
- When someone expresses interest in the task
- When you think a particular person(s) might benefit from the responsibility

What Not to Delegate:

- Things that are usually your specified responsibilities, except in emergencies
- Something you yourself would not be willing to do (the menial work)
- A task to someone who may not possess the capabilities necessary
- An important item, which has already been passed from person to person
- A project so large or difficult that it cannot be completed by the deadline

Methods for Delegating

- Ask for volunteers: explain the task and see who is interested.
- Select people for the task: A request for volunteers is often met with silence. Don't drop an idea when this happens. Often times, a person won't volunteer because he/she lacks either self-confidence or a little initiative. If the leader expresses confidence in the person by indicating that he/she might be good for the task, the person may feel good and take the responsibility.

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- Enlist the support of informal leaders- Sometimes the best way to get the support of "cliques" is to identify their leader, compliment them on a particular skill, and ask them to use that skill to benefit your organization. Not only will they get involved, they will also enlist the support of their "followers."
- Spread the good task around- Make sure that the same people do not always get the same jobs. Allow different people an opportunity to participate and contribute.

Delegating to Develop Future Leaders:

- Match the members' skills and interests to the task assigned.
- Assign smaller, relatively simple tasks at first to develop competence and confidence.
- Carefully and specifically outline all the requirements, expectations, and deadlines for the project.
- Clearly define parameters and resources, including budget, which will be available.
- State amount and frequency of feedback you expect.
- Tell others who is in charge.
- Provide an on-going support.
- Anticipate problems and assist that member in developing a proactive approach.
- Upon completion, publicly recognize the individual for his/her efforts.
- Evaluate the project and offer constructive advice for future endeavors.

Other Considerations When Delegating:

- Coordinate and keep communication open with the various individuals to whom you have delegated responsibilities.
- Set definite expectations and specific deadlines for work performance. Develop a mutually agreed-upon work plan.
- Make necessary resources available to those individuals involved in various tasks.
- Establish a priority system for accomplishing tasks.
- Facilitate the accomplishment of those tasks without taking over.
- Keep in mind the importance of balancing tact and concern. Don't nag.
- If expectations and deadlines are not being met, find out why and help to eliminate those barriers.
- Always remember to recognize individuals for their contributions properly and publicly. Not only will this increase their confidence, it will add to their future motivation and initiative.