Delegating Responsibility

Allocating decision-making authority and/or task responsibility to appropriate others to maximize the organization’s and individual’s effectiveness.

Key Actions

- **Shares appropriate responsibilities**—Allocates decision-making authority and/or task responsibility in appropriate areas to appropriate individuals (considering positive and negative impact, organizational values and structures, and the enhancement of the individual’s knowledge/skills).

- **Defines parameters**—Clearly communicates the parameters of the delegated responsibility, including decision-making authority and any required actions, constraints, or deadlines.

- **Provides support without removing responsibility**—Suggests resources and provides assistance or coaching as needed; expresses confidence in the individual.

- **Stays informed**—Establishes appropriate procedures to keep informed of issues and results in areas of shared responsibility.

Quick Tips

- Outline the purpose, boundaries, significant dates, and importance of the task, responsibility, or project.

- Use electronic calendars or project planning software to set specific dates to complete tasks and responsibilities.

- Periodically follow up with people to whom you delegate and offer help as needed.

- Assign tasks or responsibilities that will provide people with a chance to learn or practice important skills.

- Practice delegating assignments or responsibilities outside the workplace.

- Praise people when they complete delegated tasks or make positive contributions.
Developmental Activities

Self-Directed

- Create an environment that encourages your team members to take on challenging assignments and to take risks. Communicate your confidence that they will meet your expectations.

- Prepare an agenda or tickler file each week, recognizing and identifying appropriate tasks for delegation.

- Maintain a workload-distribution tracking chart to identify staff members who can spend time on the task or project to be delegated.

- Review previous projects to assess where more appropriate delegation might have led to a better outcome.

- Identify an assignment that you are unlikely to complete on your own and share all or a portion of the tasks.

- Identify tasks you are currently performing that, if delegated, could enhance the skills of one or more individuals. Then, after considering the characteristics of the tasks and individuals’ skills, knowledge, experience, and motivation, delegate the right tasks to the right people.

- Choose a task that you would like to delegate. Create a delegation plan before meeting with this person. In your plan include: the importance of the assignment, who should be involved, a clear definition of the output expected, time frame for completion, and support that you will provide.

- Maintain a log of previous delegations to identify those that have been productive and successful.

- Define parameters by establishing several milestone deadlines over the course of a project.

- Hold regular update meetings during the course of a project to review progress on assigned tasks and to ensure that objectives are being met.

Partnerships

- With the help of a manager, analyze an assignment that you delegated. Determine what was effective and what could have been done differently. Request coaching to identify what behaviors you might change and how.

- Meet with the appropriate individuals at the beginning of a project to define objectives and clarify specific roles and responsibilities.

- Involve direct reports and team members in development planning. Explore opportunities to expand their knowledge and skills.
• Request feedback from peers and direct reports regarding the skill and clarity of your
delegation and the effectiveness of your follow-up procedures. Seek input to identify
possible improvements or additions. Make appropriate behavior changes.

• Ask the people working on the project to identify any barriers; then ask their advice as to
how barriers might be eliminated.

• Request status reports that describe progress on the delegated task.

Targeted Assignments
• Volunteer to organize activities for community, charitable, cultural, or political
organizations. Look for activities that encompass numerous tasks and provide delegation
opportunities.

• Seek project assignments that will require you to appropriately delegate a number of
tasks for timely and successful project completion.

Workshops
Look for a workshop that addresses the following:
• Identifying the benefits of delegating.

• Analyzing and evaluating the effectiveness of current delegation methods and follow-up
systems.

• Understanding why managers don’t delegate.

• Analyzing your present workload and identifying tasks you could delegate.

• Recognizing delegation opportunities for employees who are qualified to receive
additional responsibilities.

• Understanding the power of trust in the business community.

• Monitoring performance.
Readings

Books

This book provides exercises, checklists, and practice activities to ensure delegation skill retention. It reinforces the importance of delegation and describes a variety of delegation techniques.


Structured as a fable, this easy-to-read book shows how to empower employees and create energy within an organization. It also details how to encourage creativity and responsibility so that employees feel that they own their jobs.


Learn the principles of empowerment by reading this business fable that teaches lessons about empowerment, continuous improvement, teamwork, and the need for internal and external partnerships.


This colorful, pocket-sized book is a practical, easy-to-read overview on delegation. It covers the process of delegation from determining the tasks to be handed out and choosing a delegate to supporting delegates and rewarding them for success.


This Fifty-Minute Series book leads the reader through the process of delegation, including analyzing skills, selecting the right people, handling delegation problems, and using delegation as a change-management tool.


Key delegation skills are covered in this guide to empowerment. The authors show how empowering managers share responsibility with their employees and provide support by coaching and recognizing employee efforts.


This workshop-in-a-book helps readers assess their current skill levels and build on those skills to increase their own and their team’s productivity.
Articles

This one-page article offers 13 steps for delegating effectively and building skills that provide a cohesive team.


This article offers suggestions on how to delegate responsibilities successfully and emphasizes taking time when making delegation choices. It covers the types of tasks that are suited to delegation and how to choose delegates. The article also stresses communication as an important delegation skill.


Six steps for successful delegation are described in this article, which focuses on laying a foundation with employees that will make them more receptive to the tasks and ensure that they have the skills needed to be successful.


The importance of delegation during difficult economic times is stressed in this article that examines two types of delegation: delegation for results and delegation for employee development. It also examines common reasons for failure to delegate successfully.


A manager’s approach to delegation is seen as a key to success in this article, which examines the underlying assumptions that often derail delegation. The article describes five levels of delegation that relate to delegates’ levels of competence and shows how to lead employees through these levels.


As managers are often judged by the work that their employees do, delegation skills are paramount to success. This article highlights the importance of delegation and the reasons that some managers resist delegating. It also offers suggestions for making delegation easier and more effective.