Empowerment/Delegation

Using appropriate delegation to create a sense of ownership of higher-level organizational issues and encouraging individuals to stretch beyond their current capabilities.

Key Actions

• **Chooses targets**—Gives work to the most appropriate person based on time, skills, experience, position, and growth opportunities.

• **Defines latitude**—Defines latitude of action and boundaries that provides enough autonomy in decision making to encourage ownership of tasks; pushes decision making and autonomy downward through the organization.

• **Promotes accountability**—Delegates; provides encouragement and support to others in accepting responsibility with accountability; promotes risk taking, explores the reasons for mistakes, and learns from them.

• **Provides guidance**—Checks for understanding; provides instruction, resources, and guidance as appropriate to support success without undermining the individual’s full ownership of issues.

• **Follows up**—Builds follow-up and accountability into organizational processes to monitor issues.

Skill Enhancers

• Identify appropriate tasks to delegate; track deadlines and due dates.

• Establish and maintain a process to track how work is distributed to identify staff members who have time for taking on new projects.

• When assigning tasks or projects, use information from past assignments and consider staff members’ skills, knowledge, and experience.

• When empowering people, be sure to suggest appropriate resources.

• Push decision-making downward through the organization. Ensure that decisions are being made at the level of the work, not at a higher level.

• Set a time to discuss a delegation. During the meeting encourage and elicit staff members’ ideas, consolidating the groundwork for the task.

• Outline a project’s purpose, parameters, and importance; include correspondence and assignment due dates.
• For each task or decision, consider relinquishing decision-making authority to a staff member.

• Hold direct reports accountable for delegating appropriately.

• Upon completing a project, schedule follow-up meetings to determine whether quality standards and time commitments were met.

• Review customer survey comments to assess the quality of a delegated task or project.

• Seek out staff members’ opinions on issues, projects, and decisions through memos, meetings, informal and formal talks, etc.

• Hold regular staff meetings and provide opportunities for exchanging information among group members.

• Tell your leader about staff accomplishments at a meeting or in memos.

Developmental Activities

Self-Directed

• Examine past assignments in your area. Note the nature and importance of the assignments, who handled them, and how visible the outcomes were. Examine staff members’ project history and create a staff development needs analysis. Use the analysis to provide staff members with challenging, visible, critical, and skill-enhancing assignments.

• Meet individually with staff members to show them how their responsibilities relate to department/area and organization operations; recognize their contributions.

• Identify tasks that could be entrusted to direct reports and plan the delegation as soon as possible.

• At the outset of a project, meet with everyone involved to define objectives, roles, and responsibilities.

• Establish several interim deadlines over the course of a project to pinpoint when specific tasks must be completed.

• Set regular update meetings during a project to review progress and to ensure that objectives are being met.

• Be available to people working on a project; ask questions and provide guidance as needed. Stay out of the way when not needed to allow individuals to fully “own” the work.

• Check progress by talking informally with people throughout a project to be sure targets are being met (i.e., manage by walking around).
• Request activity status reports describing a project’s progress.

• Schedule meetings to support empowerment opportunities that reinforce organizational goals and philosophies.

• Develop a training/development matrix for your department or area outlining staff training needs. Use corporate programs and challenging assignments to provide staff members with opportunities to meet these needs. Track their progress.

• Develop and implement a cross-training, job-rotation, or intergroup project management program within your department or area. This will give staff members a chance to broaden their skills and explore other department/area opportunities.

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

**Partnerships**

• Schedule staff meetings to discuss how staff contributions support the organization’s goals. Ask for feedback on how well you have provided the resources and support they need to accomplish their objectives.

• Use a process to provide constructive feedback on staff members’ performance.

• Delegate for development purposes, empowering staff to determine what to do and how to do it.

• Put staff members on important committees or work groups that will increase their visibility and networking opportunities. Occasionally, let staff members participate in such activities in your place.

• Give assignments individually to staff members. Discuss the specifics, including needed resources, and reassure them of your support.

• Request feedback from peers and direct reports about the clarity of the delegation and the effectiveness of your follow-up system. Seek ideas for improvements or additions. Make appropriate behavior changes.

• Work with direct reports to identify assignments, particularly those for development, they can delegate to their staffs. Coach direct reports on empowering their staffs to determine how to accomplish delegated tasks.

• Hold direct reports accountable for delegating challenging assignments to their staffs.

**Targeted Assignments**

• Support a project team as a coach; other members will have most of the responsibility for accomplishing the task.

• Take a workshop designed to focus on and build trust, collaboration, empowerment skills, and follow-up and control skills.
Developmental Resources

Workshops
Look for a workshop that addresses the following:

• Motivating employees.

• Understanding the dynamics of power and control in an organization.

• Finding ways to reward accomplishment.

• Developing team attitude and spirit.

• Delegating responsibility (i.e., relinquishing control) with complete confidence and trust.

• Giving visibility to others.

• Building relationships.

• Understanding the power of trust in the business community.

Additional Learning Resources

Books


**Articles**


