



Techniques for Effective Delegation

By Chanon Collins

There is a prevailing thought among contemporary professionals that they are indispensable and that only they can do the work in a satisfactory fashion. There is probably some truth to this current trend, but its practice is slowly destroying executives and causing an enormous amount of lost production time.

Take, for example, the professional who refuses to spend 10 hours training a team member in the process of a particular task. This task normally takes 5 hours for the professional to do, but he or she believes that no one can complete it in an acceptable fashion. So, the 10 hours of training are spent in other areas and the professional continues to spend 5 hours each week on the task. If this professional would have taken 10 hours to train another person for the task, over 250 hours in a year's time would have been freed for this professional to devote to another more important issue. The logic in this scenario is difficult to understand.

Delegating is a difficult task for most, but some have mastered the skill. In order to become effective at delegation, one needs to follow some basic rules. When delegating, remember to identify the desired outcome and offer suggestions on how to complete the task – don't just dump a problem in another's lap because you don't want to do it. You should also be very selective in to whom you delegate tasks. Don't delegate to a person you do not trust to do the job – period.

Once you have delegated an activity, make sure that the person working on the task understands the magnitude of delegation. Some believe that since a senior professional has passed an activity to a junior, that the activity is of no value. This is not the case and all parties involved should understand that the performance and outcome will effect the entire organization.

Just as it is not advisable to toss car keys at a 15 year old and say "Go learn to drive," you would not delegate an enormous task to someone as the first project. Try several small things first so that you can monitor the progress and your associate will become comfortable with the tasks at hand. You are guaranteed a horrific outcome if you assign a task and never monitor your associate. You must develop a reporting system so that little problems are solved before they become unmanageable.

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Examine the task you wish to delegate to see if it can be automated or deleted. The historical foundation of “we have always done this” should not hold weight if the task is not valuable. You should also avoid getting caught up in the moment and delegate tasks that you truly must complete yourself. And if you can’t find anyone to whom you wish to delegate tasks, this is a problem that should be examined.

Above all, remember that the work you are currently completing is perceived to be valuable. Take the time to examine the tasks and associates available and train wisely and delegate at the appropriate times. And it would best to follow Abraham Lincoln’s advice “it [is] best to not swap horses while crossing streams.”

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