Effective Delegation

Introduction

By definition, delegation is the transfer of authority to make decisions and complete specific tasks. Learning how to delegate is one of the most important skills for managers and leaders to possess. Strong delegation techniques can help managers save time, motivate people, and train people, as well as these techniques can enable managers to take on new opportunities. However, the lack of delegation practices often leaves people frustrated, unmotivated, and under-trained, while the manager remains overworked. Delegation is a skill that enables managers to achieve more without burning themselves out.

Delegation is a tool for developing people while also freeing up time for the manager to take on new responsibilities and to develop himself or herself. In corporations, delegation is often the first step toward electing a successor. This technique allows the successor to slowly learn the job and enables the manager to move on to a higher position. In addition, effective delegation is essential to developing high quality leaders. By delegating work, managers are able to coach, train, and develop competent employees, making them more valuable to the organization. All of these reasons emphasize the positive outcomes associated with delegation.

On the other hand, while delegation sounds good in theory, it can also be one of the biggest challenges for any manager, leader, or owner. As the famous saying goes, “if you want it done right, do it yourself.” This is how many people feel. It is often difficult to find the right person to handle the delegated task, coupled with finding the free time to train the person on how to do the job. All of these items are hurdles that each manager must overcome in order to delegate effectively.

In this reading, we will review the main concepts of delegation and the five steps to delegate effectively.

Main Concepts of Delegation

The authority, responsibility, and accountability for the task changes hands when a person delegates a task. Before delegating a task, it is important to understand how delegation affects these three concepts.
• **Authority** – Authority is the power given to a person or group of people to act and make decisions within designated boundaries. When delegating a task, the authority is shared between the manager and the person receiving the delegation.

• **Responsibility** – Responsibility refers to the act of carrying out the task. When delegating a task, the manager and person receiving the delegation share the responsibility of completing the work. The manager has the responsibility of providing instructions on what work needs to be done, while the person receiving the delegation is responsible for figuring out how the task should be completed.

• **Accountability** – Accountability is the act of being liable for a person's actions and decisions. During delegation of a task, the accountability of the task transfers from the manager to the person receiving the delegation and actually completing the work. Any positive or negative consequences associated with their performance are ultimately their responsibility.

*Four Steps to Delegate Effectively*

In order to overcome many of the obstacles associated with delegation, planning is required. Outlined below are four steps to follow when planning to delegate.

• **Step 1 – Select the Right Task**
  The first step is to carefully select which task to delegate. Not every task is an ideal candidate to delegate. Tasks that are redundant and well-defined are good tasks to delegate. Also, tasks that are isolated in function and do not require a great deal of coordination or group interaction might also be good candidates for delegation.

• **Step 2 – Choose the Right Person**
  This step can be one of the hardest steps. It takes time and effort to find a person who possesses all the traits and skills required for the job. The person not only needs to have the right technical skills or expert knowledge, but they also need to be trustworthy and have the time to take on the additional work. In addition, the person needs to have similar values and ethics to the person delegating the task. Finding a person who has all of these capabilities takes time, but being patient and selective on finding the right person can ensure the delegation process goes smoothly.
• **Step 3 – Give Clear Directions**
  Once you find the right person, the next step will be to provide them with directions on how to do the job. The directions should be clear, simple, and well-documented. If the instructions only reside in the manager’s head, then the delegation process can be very time consuming and lengthy. The additional time it takes to provide clear, well laid-out instructions will be worth it in easing the delegation process.

• **Step 4 – Monitor Progress**
  The next step in the delegation planning process is to monitor the progress of the knowledge and skill transfer. Regularly follow-up on how well the person is completing the work. Take time to check over the work and ensure the work is correctly done. Remain available for questions and provide feedback on the progress of the work to guarantee the delegation process is successfully completed.

  Keep in mind, the more success a person has with delegating tasks, the more the person will choose to delegate in the future. In summary, select simple tasks, choose the right person, provide clear directions, and monitor progress to ensure effective delegation.

**Summary:**

• By definition, *delegation* is the transfer of authority to make decisions and complete specific tasks.
• Strong delegation techniques can help managers save time, motivate people, and train people, as well as these techniques can enable managers to take on new opportunities
• Poor delegation practices leave managers overworked and employees frustrated, unmotivated, and under-trained.
• Many hurdles, including finding the right person and having free time to train the person, make delegation one of the most difficult, yet important, management skills.
• The three concepts of delegation are authority, responsibility, and accountability.
- When a task is delegated, authority and responsibility become shared between the manager and person receiving the delegation. Accountability is transferred from the manager to the person receiving the delegation, remaining accountable for their performance.

- To overcome the obstacles associated with delegation, managers should follow four steps when planning to delegate:
  1. Select the right task.
  2. Pick the right person.
  3. Give clear directions.