

Delegating Effectively Nets Powerful ROI  
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November 2010

In most work environments today there is enormous pressure on managers and their teams to maximize talent, skills, and knowledge, and get more done with less. This is a balancing act that has become a business imperative for all managers to delegate effectively at work. Very often people think about delegating as “dumping” on team members. And when that happens the manager has abdicated his/her responsibility-that’s not delegating. Delegating effectively involves planning and allocating work so that the task or responsibility is transferred with direction, support, authority (if applicable), and progress checks. This does require an investment in time upfront, but you will experience a positive return on your investment!

So you want to delegate a task or new responsibility, there are four questions to ask yourself that will help you delegate effectively:

1. Do I keep the task? In other words, do you keep the authority and responsibility for the task? This decision depends on whether or not the task is exclusively within your area of responsibility, whether or not a team member(s) is/are qualified (do they have the skills, knowledge, and experience) whether or not management asked that you specifically complete the task, or whether or not a team member(s) can meet the deadline.
2. Do I have an opportunity to delegate idea generation? In other words, can you assign the responsibility for generating ideas or solutions to a particular problem or situation? What to consider for this decision: you want the benefit of others ideas, expertise, or perspectives; you want to involve the people who will ultimately be affected by the ideas or decisions generated; you are prepared to accept and implement the ideas generated.
3. Do I delegate the task with no or little decision-making? In other words, can you assign the responsibility for completing a well-defined task that involves little or no decision-making authority? This decision involves thinking about whether or not the task or responsibility you are transferring requires decision making authority and defining what that requires.
4. Do I delegate the task with decision-making authority? When making this decision you are leveraging your team’s capabilities. This is an opportunity to empower and engage your team members who are qualified to make decisions relative to the task you want to delegate, or when you want to create a developmental opportunity, and training or coaching can be provided.

So you've decided to delegate the task or responsibility, here are some planning tips that will help you delegate effectively:

- Determine what skills and knowledge are needed, and whether or not you want to create a developmental opportunity
- Identify who might want to develop the needed skills to complete the task and assess the risk and urgency of the task against the developmental opportunity
- Determine how many people are required for the task/responsibility
- Define scope of responsibilities, including the level of authority for decision making and the resources and support you or others will provide
- Assess workload and priorities of who might be interested or who you might consider
- If you are unsure about the level of authority for decision making start with less and add more later
- If you are unsure about the level of support start with more, you can always reduce the level of support as the person/team gain experience and confidence
- Define timeline for completion and progress check points. Consider the following when deciding how often to follow-up on progress: experience, skills, abilities, knowledge, confidence, past performance, individual needs, risks associated with task, and your level of confidence that the task/responsibility will be done right
- Be prepared to discuss measures of success so that people can self monitor progress and you can provide effective feedback

Remember delegating is a balancing act that will pay you a huge return on your investment. In my work with coaching managers to delegate more effectively their return on investment has included: a more motivated work team, people are more proactive with generating ideas, more time to focus on high priority work, peace of mind when out of the office with more confidence that work will be done correctly and better communication with team members.

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