



Practical
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Business Support



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Need More Time? 7 Tips on How to Delegate Effectively

You've made an unusual discovery – there are never enough hours in a day. The flip side, of course, is that your list of important things to do never gets smaller.

As a leader, your jobs include holding the vision; inspiring your staff; fostering key relationships with customers, vendors, the public, etc. How can you free up time to do this? You need to let go of some cherished things like hiring, perhaps day-to-day sales - many things you handled in the past, often out of necessity - and focus on your role as a leader.

How can you do this and not lose control of the business? Here are seven steps to follow in order to delegate effectively:

1. Determine What Should be Delegated

- Think about your highest value contribution to your company. Which of your activities generate the most revenue, profit, etc.? Like most leaders, your greatest leverage is in mobilizing the forces around you - your employees, key customers, prospects and vendors. Everything else becomes secondary in terms of impact.
- To effectively delegate you should always delegate the tasks that you understand best and also like. If you assign tasks you don't like, then you will have lost control. At a minimal, delegate:
 - Matters that keep repeating themselves.
 - Minor decisions most frequently made.
 - Details that take the biggest chunks of time.
- Also, many leaders don't delegate responsibilities they've labeled "critical". They fear the job will not be done right. Or no one else can do it as quickly. Give it up! The growth of your company will be stifled to the extent that you hold on to critical functions. Your company will suffer in the exact areas where you think you are the expert! Staffing? An engineer can't be hired because you haven't signed off and are out of town. Sales? Negotiations on a big deal are held up because you are in Asia meeting a vendor.

2. Determine How Much Authority to Give

At a minimum, you should delegate enough authority:

- To get the work done,
- To allow key employees to take initiative, and
- To keep things going in your absence.

3. Determine Who to Delegate to

- Delegation of responsibility does not mean that you say, "Here, you run the place." A person should possess the three "I's" – Initiative, Interest, and Imagination.

4. Spell out the Delegation

- Competent people want to know what they are being held responsible for. It is also a necessity to eliminate confusion and keep control in ownership's hands. Communicate precise conditions of satisfaction.
- Work out a plan - the plan should include resources, approach or methodology, timeline, measures and milestones. Even simple projects require a plan.

5. Keeping Control

- Set up a structure for accountability. If the project is to take place over the next six weeks, schedule an interim meeting two weeks from now. Or establish a weekly conference call, or an e-mailed status report. Provide some mechanism where you can jointly evaluate progress and make mid-course corrections. This helps keep the project, and the people, on track. Periodic staff meetings are another way to get feedback.

6. Coaching Your Staff

- Delegation does not end with good control. It also involves coaching. You should be certain that you convey your thinking when you coach your staff. Sometimes words can be inconsistent with your thoughts. Ask questions to make sure the listener understands your meanings.
- Listen! Many leaders get so involved in what they are saying or are going to say next, that they do not listen to the other person. In coaching a person so he or she can improve, it is important to tell why you give the instruction. When a person knows the reason, he or she is better able to understand.

7. Get Buy In and Allow People to Work

- You and your company are in trouble if you try to measure your people by whether or not they do a particular task exactly as you would do it. They should be judged by their results - not their methods.

If you skip any of the steps above, you will reduce the likelihood things will turn out the way you want them to. On the other hand, if you rigorously follow the steps, you greatly increase the odds in your favour.

Isn't this more work than doing it yourself? No, it isn't. The time it takes to 1) establish goals, 2) review the plan, and 3) monitor the progress, is not equal to the time it takes to execute. That is how you gain leverage. This is how you multiply your efforts. (Sometimes it does take longer to communicate something than to do it yourself. Delegate it anyway. The next time will be easier.)

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