

DELEGATION

Delegation – giving others the authority to act on your behalf, accompanied with responsibility and accountability for results.

A leader cannot do all of the work for an organization; if one tries, he or she will not be successful at leading. Learning how to delegate responsibility (the art of spreading the work around) is an indispensable skill for a leader of any organization. In turn, effective delegation produces benefits for the organization by:

- Allowing more people to be actively involved
- Distributing the work load more evenly
- Helping an organization or committee run more smoothly and efficiently

Most leaders have some difficulty delegating responsibility. Most often they would prefer to do the task themselves to make sure the “job gets done right.” While this method can be more expedient, it can also breed apathy among non-involved, unmotivated members eventually resulting in the loss of members. Sharing your authority with others can be the greatest single motivator in retaining members and strengthening the organization.

FOUR BASIC DELEGATION STRATEGIES

Telling: The leader designs the job then delegates to a member.

Participating: The leader identifies a job a member might do with another member, then gets a commitment that they will work on it.

Selling: The leader involves members in developing a project and encourages them to volunteer for tasks.

Delegating: The leader gives a member a desired outcome and then leaves them to do it, “pure delegation.”

The strategy a leader uses to delegate a task depends on the stage of readiness of the members. A member who is new to an organization may need the leader to TELL him/her what to do in order to be successful at completing the delegated task. On the other hand, a committee of executive members who have had a lot of experience in the organization may be most successful if the leader uses pure delegation as their strategy.

Getting to know the members of your committee or organization is critical to ensuring that delegation works. Trust and have confidence in your members, learn to be flexible in your style of delegation and adjust the delegation strategy that is best for the individual.

DO DELEGATE

- ❖ When there is a lot of work
- ❖ When you feel someone else has a particular skill or qualification that would suit a task
- ❖ When someone expresses an interest in a task
- ❖ When you think a particular member might benefit from the responsibility (i.e., an emerging leader in your organization)

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DON'T DELEGATE

- ❖ Your own “hot potatoes” (extremely important matter with serious consequences, emergencies, matter of exception to a policy, etc.)
- ❖ Things that are usually your specified responsibility
- ❖ Things you would not be willing to do
- ❖ A task to a member who may not possess the skills necessary to do the task successfully

DECIDE IF THE TASK NEEDS TO BE DELEGATED

Do you want to give it away? Do you enjoy it or feel it is so important that true delegation will not take place? Be true to yourself and delegate those tasks which ought to be handed over.

CHOOSE THE RIGHT PERSON FOR THE JOB

Try to give members tasks that they can do best or are interested in. (If members are truly not interested in working on a task, they might not do a good job.) Sometimes members who have the abilities and could do the job extremely well, may feel insecure about their abilities. Communicate to the members your trust regarding their skills. Their motivation will be much higher when they know that they are trusted by their leader.

DEFINE THE JOB AND SET MUTUAL EXPECTATIONS

Give detailed explanations for what the job involves and include all key points. Try to focus on the results rather than the method for accomplishing them. Also, work with your members to set mutual expectations for the final job performance. Members are usually more likely to back a decision if they were involved in the decision making process and understand how the decision was reached.

SET A DEADLINE FOR THE JOB

A member will usually feel more responsible for a task when he/she is held accountable. If no deadline is set it is much easier for them to lose motivation and procrastinate. Work with your members to set a REASONABLE deadline for completion. (Remember to make the deadline reasonable so members are not being pushed too hard.)

DETERMINE METHODS FOR FOLLOW-UP

Work with your members to set a time for conscious review of performance. This could be a meeting to check progress or a phone call to check to see if they have any questions. The method for follow-up should be mutually determined at the start, so your members will know you are not trying to hover over their shoulders. Rather, you are trying to learn how work is progressing. Criteria for evaluation at this point should also be predetermined so the leader will not be overly critical of the work that has been achieved so far. It is also important to let your members know that the lines of communication are open, and if they need clarification of the task or have questions, they should ask.



DELEGATION

TRAIN YOUR MEMBERS

It's important to make sure that members know how to do the task they've been delegated. Be willing to take the extra time to train your members if they need it. Initially, training someone to do your work may take more time than doing it yourself. But in the long run, training others will improve your efficiency and give them a chance to hone their skills.

DELEGATE AUTHORITY

This ties in with setting time for follow-up. As a leader you need to allow your members the responsibility to make day-to-day decisions. Sometimes members' decisions might not be exactly the same as you would have made. That's okay. Everyone needs the opportunity to try to give them the freedom to work without you looking over their shoulders.

EVALUATE THE PERFORMANCE

After the task has been completed, evaluate the task based on the expectations and criteria set when the task was delegated. If certain aspects were left out when setting the initial job definition, the member should not be criticized for leaving them out of the final performance. Work with the member to determine how you and they feel the performance turned out (what went well and what didn't), and also how the performance can be improved.

ACKNOWLEDGE ACHIEVEMENT AND GIVE RECOGNITION

Almost nothing is worse than pouring oneself into a task, having it turn out perfectly, and then being ignored by the person who delegated it. Give recognition and praise for the work your members have done. By giving recognition and letting members know you appreciate their work, members will feel a further sense of pride in their work and may be more willing to help out in the future.



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