

Supervisor's Network **NYU**

Volume 7, Issue 1 November/December 2005

NYU Human Resources

Delegating Successfully. Understand how empowering employees to perform delegated jobs can free you to manage more effectively. **Defining delegation:** Delegation involves your entrusting another person with a task for which he or she remains ultimately responsible. Delegation can range from a major assignment, such as the leadership of a team developing a new process, to other tasks in the everyday life of an organization, such as planning a meeting.

EXPLORING THE FUNDAMENTALS

The basic issues involved in delegation are autonomy and control.

- > How much authority is the employee able to exercise without referring back to you?
- > How far should you exercise direct influence over the employee's work?
- > When you choose an employee, you are assessing whether a person is fully capable of performing the task with available resources.
- > Having appointed someone, you must ensure that he or she is allowed sufficient autonomy to undertake the task in his or her own way, subject to an initial briefing and regular reports on progress.

RECOGNIZING AND DEALING WITH BARRIERS

You may find delegation difficult. The impulse to do tasks yourself and being too busy are a few of the barriers to effective delegation.

Doing It Yourself

As a supervisor, you may be more efficient at many tasks than your staff. But if you attempt to do everything because you are quicker, surer, and more proficient, you may find yourself overburdened. With delegation, you'll free your time for your priorities and help your staff become more proficient in a wider range of skills.

Being Too Busy

An overloaded or poorly managed schedule can create a vicious circle when it comes to delegation. You do not delegate enough because you lack the time to explain or monitor the tasks that should be delegated; therefore, you are always busy *doing* the tasks that should have been delegated. Just as you schedule time for a meeting, try to designate a weekly time on your calendar for delegating to break the I'm-too-busy-to-delegate pattern.

THE SUPERVISOR'S ROLE

Growing staff capabilities is **your primary job as a supervisor**. It is how you strengthen your department and the organization as a whole.

BUILDING A RELATIONSHIP

Frankness, openness, and respectfulness are essential to successful delegation.

Communicating Well

Sharing knowledge, communicating regularly, and, of course, telling the truth all help build trust and foster positive feelings among your staff. Express your ideas clearly and develop your listening skills. Communicating openly will build the foundation for delegating.

Respecting Opinions

Treat everyone with the same respect that you expect yourself, because your staff are allies in the job of management. When you delegate, you show respect by entrusting part of your work to others because you believe in their capability and their suitability. To build mutual respect, ask your employees for their opinions on how the work should be done, and show you are listening to their suggestions.

UNDERSTANDING ACCOUNTABILITY AND MAKING EXPECTATIONS CLEAR

Accountability is at the heart of delegation, so before you select employees for a task, consider whom you are going to make responsible for each deliverable. Make your expectations clear: accountability must be strictly defined so that there is no doubt over where it lies and what it covers. To instill responsibility with your employee, define the task in detail and ask the employee to confirm that he or she fully understands what the task involves. **FOR EXAMPLE:**

Unclear

"I need you to finish this spreadsheet for me, ASAP."

Clear

"I just e-mailed you a spreadsheet that I'd like you to complete. Last year's costs still need to be filled in, and all the totals should be checked against the budget report. Is this something you can do by noon tomorrow?"

The words "finish" and "ASAP" are both open to interpretation, making the first request unclear. Including specifics about what needs to be done and providing a deadline will help the employee understand the task assigned. Ending with a question elicits agreement—and following up with a "thank you" is always appreciated.

EVALUATING AND DEVELOPING STAFF

Choosing the right person for a task requires careful assessment of experience and specific abilities. Consider the skills needed for the task and identify an employee with those attributes. The ideal person may not exist; however, delegation can be used to train and develop a valued employee's range and depth of skills. The more skills each employee has, the greater your choice of potential delegates. Training also has beneficial effects on motivation, since people can feel more valued when you invest in their futures.

Ask Yourself:

- > Is there anybody who could, and should, be doing more important work?
- > Do my employees each have at least one task that will develop and improve their skills?
- > Are all my employees multiskilled, and, if not, what am I doing to make them so?
- > Am I doing anything just because nobody else can?

Delegation is more than getting tasks completed efficiently. The **process of delegation provides an ideal opportunity to raise skill levels** in employees. Think beyond their current job function and use delegation as a way to develop employees for future growth.

MONITORING PROGRESS

The level of experience of your employee will help you decide whether to adopt a hands-on or hands-off approach when controlling a delegated assignment. Remember that the learning process needs to begin somewhere, and good leadership can overcome inexperience.

The monitoring process provides an opportunity for you to assess and extend any employee's abilities and to supply specific skill training. Consider your employee and the scope of the delegated task, then choose one or a combination of several of the following monitoring systems:

Involvement in All Correspondence — You retain the greatest share of authority by receiving copies of all communications related to the task. This method

- > keeps you fully informed of developments and allows you to anticipate and avoid any errors in judgment
- > could indicate that there is a lack of trust toward the employee.

Written Reports — The employee supplies a written commentary regarding actions and results, which are regularly updated. This method

- > encourages employees to organize their thoughts
- > can prove to be too remote and can be used to mask problems.

Personal Report — You arrange for the employee to meet with you to discuss the assignment at regular intervals. This method

- > provides an opportunity for regular, informal updates and early airings of any potentially problematic situations
- > may encourage you to become overly involved in making decisions and taking action.

Open-Door Policy — You encourage the employee to bring you his or her day-to-day problems at any time for help or clarification. This method

- > enables you to give support and show encouragement and stresses the collaborative aspect of delegation
- > may cause employees to rely too heavily on your input, rather than use their own initiative.

Meetings — You discuss the delegated task in a meeting that includes you, the employee, and other people involved in the assignment. This method

- > allows issues to be debated in a wider forum and emphasizes that delegation also involves coherent teamwork
- > can lessen the employee's perception of personal responsibility for the task.

ASSESSING YOUR ABILITY

Evaluate the effectiveness of your delegation skills by responding to the following statements and marking the options closest to your experience. Add your scores together and refer to the analysis at the end to interpret your score. Use your answers to identify areas that most need improvement.

- I give my staff full and frank information wherever possible.
- I monitor the progress of my employees but without constant intervention.
- I try to do only the work that must be done by me and delegate the rest.
- I treat my subordinates as equals when establishing the best course of action.
- I make my expectations clear with each task I delegate.
- I ensure that employees understand the extent of their accountability.
- I give the benefit of the doubt, but act quickly if problems arise.
- I trust people to work effectively without my assistance.
- I make sure there is adequate backup available for employees when needed.
- I encourage employees to use their initiative when confronted with problems.
- I ensure that I provide positive feedback to employees whenever warranted.
- I keep an up-to-date log of which tasks I have delegated and to whom.
- I consider all possible alternatives before reclaiming a delegated task.
- I make opportunities to thank employees for all tasks successfully completed.
- If I make a mistake, I accept responsibility without making excuses.
- I analyze actions to find and teach the lessons of success and failure.

OPTIONS				ANALYSIS
NEVER	OCCASIONALLY	FREQUENTLY	ALWAYS	
1	2	3	4	<p>Add up your total score and check your level of skill by reading the corresponding evaluation.</p> <p>16-31: You are neither delegating effectively nor enough. Learn to prioritize appropriate tasks and to select the most suitable employees.</p> <p>32-47: Some of your delegation works well, but there are gaps. Identify and improve your weakest areas.</p> <p>48-64: You delegate very well. Do not become complacent—continue to use your skills to achieve success.</p>
1	2	3	4	
1	2	3	4	
1	2	3	4	
1	2	3	4	
1	2	3	4	
1	2	3	4	
1	2	3	4	
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1	2	3	4	

Supervisor's Network is published by the Office of Employee Relations, Division of Human Resources.

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THE SUPERVISOR'S BOOKSHELF

Consult these relevant books for more information on delegating.

If You Want It Done Right, You Don't Have to Do It Yourself!: The Power of Effective Delegation

by *Donna M. Genett*

In fewer than 100 pages, Genett's book explains her six-step approach to effective delegation through an easy-to-read allegory. With a special focus on using delegation for stress reduction and optimal performance, this book teaches simple, important steps for more effective time, work, and life management.

QUILL DRIVER BOOKS, 2003

Empowerment Takes More Than a Minute

by *Kenneth H. Blanchard, John P. Carlos, and W. Alan Randolph*

The author of *The One-Minute Manager* switches gears and tells you not to manage your employees minute by minute. Instead, Ken Blanchard, along with John Carlos and Alan Randolph, advocates and explains the notion of empowerment—giving your employees the information and authority to act and make decisions on their own, within a structured set of organizational goals and values.

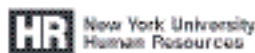
BERRETT-KOEHLER PUBLISHERS, SECOND EDITION, 2001

Delegating for Results (Crisp Fifty-Minute Series)

by *Robert B. Maddux*

This revised bestseller offers exercises and worksheets to help you evaluate your current skills, easily identify the problems, and quickly find solutions. Maddux suggests ways to prepare employees for delegation as well as identifying and avoiding potential delegating pitfalls.

CRISP PUBLICATIONS, 1998



Supervisor's Network NYU

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Produced by Advertising and Publications, New York University.