

Delegating 101

Why Delegate?

Contrary to popular belief, being a leader does not mean you must do every task to ensure it is done properly. Being a leader includes empowering others to improve the overall organization, as well as providing the necessary tools to optimize the performance of the group. Empowering typically comes through delegating responsibilities to fellow club members. As more members get involved (and take ownership of projects) the more effective your organization will become.

Phases of Delegation

Phase I (Preparation) – Establishing the goals of the delegation, specifying the tasks that need to be accomplished, and who should accomplish them

- ✓ Specify the job to be delegated. Things to know:
 - Results expected
 - Materials, resources, and information needed
 - Relevant policies and procedures to be considered
 - Time frame for the project
 - Others involved in the project (suppliers, other members, advisors, administrators, etc)
- ✓ Decide to whom the task will be delegated. Things to consider:
 - The member's abilities, knowledge, interest, experience, attitudes, confidence, and goals
 - The member's current workload
 - The types of tasks or projects the member is currently working on

Phase II (Planning) – Meeting with the chosen member to describe the task and to ask the member to come up with a plan of action

- ✓ Explain the reasons for delegating to this person
- ✓ Describe the project clearly (results expected and so forth), including how the project fits into the “big picture”
- ✓ Ask the member to prepare a plan of how the job could be accomplished, and to specify what obstacles he or she anticipates
- ✓ Establish a meeting time to discuss the member's ideas and determine how long the meeting will last

Phase III (Discussion) – Reviewing the objectives of the task as well as the member's plan of action, any potential obstacles, and ways to avoid or deal with these obstacles

- ✓ Discuss the member's plan of action and ways of overcoming potential obstacles
- ✓ Specify the resources that will be made available and make any necessary introductions to others who will be involved in the project
- ✓ Tell the member how much authority you will confer
- ✓ Discuss how much follow-up to expect, establish checkpoints
- ✓ Emphasize the member's responsibility for the outcomes
- ✓ Remind the member that you are available for questions and support

Phase IV (Audit) – Monitoring the process of the delegation and making adjustments in response to unforeseen problems

- ✓ Make sure that needed materials, resources, and so forth are available to the member
- ✓ Discuss problems and progress at designated times/as needed
- ✓ Offer encouragement; don't take over tasks yourself

Phase V (Appreciation) – Accepting the completed task and acknowledging the member's efforts

- ✓ Do not accept unfinished, inaccurate, unprofessional, or off-target work

- ✓ Show an interest in the results. Reward the member for achievements
- ✓ Be accountable when less-than-desirable results are your responsibility (didn't follow up, provide correct info, etc)

Things to keep in mind...

- Unless the project manager can visualize and articulate what he or she wants, the process will fail.
- The project manager must stretch the capabilities of his or her committee; repeatedly assigning the same jobs to the same people because they do them well does not help people develop.
- The project manager must let the chosen member know how the assigned task fits into the organization's or event's objective, and to what extent the member is empowered to act on behalf of the organization. Without this permission, it is difficult for the member to make independent decisions.
- The delegation should never be revoked. Doing so undermines what a project manager wishes to establish – initiative.
- The project manager should never accept unfinished or unsatisfactory work. By doing so, you send the message that you are content with mediocre work.
- Completed work should be evaluated according to the results that the project manager wanted to achieve, not the way the he or she would have achieved them.
- A satisfactory outcome should be recognized. Many delegations fail because hard work goes unappreciated and forgotten. At the least, the appreciation of a successfully completed task should be rewarded with the change to be given another challenging task at another date.

Common reasons for not delegating

- Insufficient time
- The perception that the job is too important to take risks
- One's belief that he or she can do the best work alone
- Lack of confidence in other members
- Desire to maintain control
- Fear that another member may do the job better than the initial person
- Not enough assistance from others

*Adapted from Delegation: Using Time and Resources Effectively (Pfeiffer Annual by University Associates)
Via Center for Leadership and Community Engagement, University of Arkansas*