



## The Six Steps to Delegation

By implementing the six steps to delegation, a manager creates a work environment that is more productive, fosters creativity and opportunity, and focuses on the importance of communication.

There are six steps to successfully delegating tasks. Most managers and leaders only do one of these steps, while some conduct two of them but aren't completed to the manager's satisfaction, all too often the manager comes to his coach or boss complaining that his employees just do what they want. Employees who are good enough to "get the job done."

Delegating for outstanding results is a formula. The good news is that it's rarely the employees at the heart of the issue. Good news becomes bad news for a manager to learn an improved approach than to be replacing staff!

Delegating is usually approached as a transaction, which it isn't. "I tell an employee to do a task. The employee does the task. I reward the employee." At its core, delegation is an act of trust. When successful, the relationship between leader and employee is strengthened. When it fails, either the leader or both are fired.

The obvious reason successful delegation is critical is the capacity to get more done in less time. The second reason is that it frees you up to focus on the highest and best level. Skills developed by delegating: planning, communication, self-management, and transfer of technical skills. These are the skills of a delegator and delegate!

### Popular Myths about Delegating

**Myth: It's just faster to do a task myself.**

Truth: This is short term thinking. Saying this myth to yourself for any longer than two weeks turns an emergency situation into the status quo and limits growth. (To be clear, I'm not talking about two weeks as a time. I'm talking two weeks period).

**Myth: My employees understand what I want without me really having to tell them.**

Truth: Even a team of unusually gifted psychics wouldn't get things right 100% of the time. In a situation like this, the leader usually isn't involved in the outcome from the beginning. This is setting the team up for failure and can lead to high employee turnover rates.

**Myth: My way of doing things is the most productive / best method.**

Truth: All employees bring their unique abilities and approach to process that creates the result they're tasked with. Good managerial coaching is as long as the process belongs to the person tasked with creating the outcome. Successful delegation is about results – "what" instead of "how" to make it happen.

### The Six Steps to Delegation

Walking through this process becomes faster and more fluid the more you implement it. When you have mastered this process, it will be : DNA; you'll flow through it easily and reap consistently outstanding results.

### 1. Prepare

Employees can't deliver results successfully if the task delegated to them isn't fully thought out or results are a moving target. Take the time and discipline to know what you're asking for since an ounce of prevention is worth the pound of cure repairing a situation where delegating failed.

### 2. Assign

- Hand over the deliverable with timing, budget and context to enhance understanding.
- Provide tips and coaching while making it clear to the employee that she owns the process.
- Set expectations for communication and updates: frequency, content, in person or via email, etc.
- Have an open door policy for the employee to ask questions.

### 3. Confirm Understanding

One of the most critical areas where delegating tends to fall apart is when an assumption is made that the other person understands what is being delegated. Understanding is a process that takes about 60 seconds and can determine the success or failure of delegation more than any other step.

- Have the employee paraphrase the deliverable you've assigned in his own words.
- Be up front about the process of delegating. This is simply a step that helps you both be certain there is clear understanding.
- Be creative about how you elicit the paraphrasing from your employee. Replace the phrase, "Now what did I just tell you?" with "How would you explain this task to a fellow employee?"
- Ask employees if they feel they have the tools and resources to be successful.
- Ask questions to make sure employees understand what the task will require.

### 4. Commitment

This is another area that most managers tend to skip in the delegation process. Managers assume an employee's acceptance of the task and the critical stage is handing the baton to the next runner. A huge amount of training is invested in learning the handoff. It's no different in organizations; making sure you've successfully handed over the baton.

### 5. Avoiding "Delegating Back"

Many of the managers who begin working with me are extremely overworked, and one of the first determinations is that their employees are more overworked than the manager. We know this because delegated tasks return to the manager's workload. I call this "delegating back." There are very few times when a manager taking back a delegated task is necessary. When an employee reaches an impasse, managers need to coach them through it, not take the job back. Don't take tasks back.

### 6. Accountability

Communication in delegation is key. Finding out that a deliverable wasn't completed or wasn't done satisfactorily after the completion date of delegating. Accountability is actually the act of giving a report on progress.

It can be difficult to overcome the myths of delegating and getting into the process of conducting all six steps when delegating tasks. By implementing these steps, a manager creates a work environment that is more productive, fosters creativity and opportunities for growth and focuses on the important tasks.