

# Relieve Pressure on Your Time - Delegate

Leanna Cruz  
Editorial Director

Your role as a manager is multifaceted, with attention to each aspect essential for your professional success, the success of your team, and your team's successful contribution to the business. At the top of the list of responsibilities are leadership, development of direct reports, execution of strategic initiatives, leading and managing change, your own professional development, and a daily "to do" list, each requiring considerable time on your schedule. Clearly, there are position-imposed time pressures which you are required to handle, but frequently, there are self-imposed pressures on your time that, once delegated, will relieve stress, prevent your job from overwhelming you, and improve your effectiveness and the likelihood of your success. Delegate these, and gain time.

Many managers find it difficult to delegate. They have determined that delegating means giving up the identity they have worked for years to develop, the very skills that got them recognized as outstanding individual performers. Yet if you continue to try to do it all – the work that got you your promotion and your new responsibilities – at some point, you will be unable to manage the work load, both physically and mentally, causing other problems, including a stalled career or failure.

## **Primary Inhibitors**

Learning to delegate is the most challenging skill that managers face, yet it is the most fundamental. Frequently, managers believe that they are delegating, yet if you consult their direct reports, they tell a different story.

Here are four of the most common roadblocks:

1. Mistaking the role of manager as manager of tasks

Rather than looking at your role as the manager of the work, recognize that the role of a manager is to get the work done by influencing others. Though you are responsible for the work, you must depend on your direct reports to use their skills to get the work done. Managers must work through others.

Learning how to be a manager of people rather than a manager of tasks is crucial to your success. This will require that you develop both your ability to establish and maintain relationships and your communication skills.

## 2. Holding on to past roles

The abilities and skills you have developed over years and years, the skills that got you noticed, are hard to give up. You are good at these things; they come naturally, and doing them is stimulating and comfortable. But your success in your role as manager depends on how long it takes you to realize you must turn the day-to-day tasks over to someone else.

Don't make the mistake of wearing yourself out trying to remain the technical expert, relying upon what you know and preferring to remain comfortable and confident. Get uncomfortable and choose the path of professional growth.

## 3. Personal insecurity

Some managers are reluctant to delegate because they do not want to reduce or share their power. Giving away their work, what they are good at, what got them noticed and highly regarded as a valuable resource is a threat to their identity and self-esteem.

## 4. Trust

Delegating means putting your success in someone else's hands. You must rely on someone else to get the work done. In the past you have been the one in control, the one making sure the work got done and that the work was of high quality. Delegating means that you must depend on others to achieve the numbers, get a good performance rating, and get a bonus. You have less direct control.

Some managers believe that their judgment is better than others', so it is more comfortable to make the decision and tell others what to do rather than delegate decision-making authority to other people.

If you are not delegating, you are creating additional work for yourself, and eventually, your job will become too big to handle alone. You'll never have enough time. And if you are telling your boss you don't have enough time, you may also be communicating that you are unable to manage your responsibilities and are not ready to be promoted to the next leadership position.

### **REASONS WHY MANAGERS DON'T DELEGATE**

"My staff are not experienced enough."

"By the time I have to explain what I want, the process and resources, I might as well have done it myself."

"They won't care enough to do it properly."

"I don't have the time to train them."

## **Match the Task with the Competency of the Individual**

Direct reports will vary in skills, strengths and motivation. Your role is to know what to delegate, to whom, and when to follow up.

### Select the Right Person for the Assignment

It is crucial that you give the right individual the right job, that you put the right individual in the right position. Successful delegation will require that you develop the people-management skills needed to ensure that you understand each individual on your team and that will enable you to delegate with confidence. You will need to be able to assess competence, personal integrity, and motivation. You need to know who you can count on and rely on your own judgment about who to trust to get the requested work done. This requires that you know your reports' strengths and how much direction they need to ensure that they have sufficient instruction and information to move forward and meet your expectations.

You will discover that individuals on your team will fit at least the follow competencies. Those who:

- wait until told what to do
- do what is required but refer problems or unexpected issues to you for a decision
- refer problems and unexpected issues, but with suggested solutions
- take action on problems and unexpected issues and reports to you the action taken

Many managers prefer to have all problems and unexpected issues referred to them, but doing so does not encourage professional development in your direct reports, and it adds more things to your already full schedule. Successful managers support the development of their direct reports to a level at which the direct reports take responsibility for tasks and apprise their managers of problems and unusual issues along with a report of successful action taken. Not all direct reports will rise to that level.

Regardless of their level of competency, set everyone up for success. Direct and help to develop the skills of those who need support, and delegate with little interference to those who are more experienced and can handle working independently.

Reaching the goals you want to reach will depend on the ability of your direct reports to increase the knowledge and skills they already have and to develop new competencies. As a manager, your job is to provide new challenges and opportunities followed by honest feedback, coaching, and an opportunity to continue to develop. Most of us like to get better and to be moderately pushed beyond our ability. These people will become your allies in success.

Developing people is also a way to engage them. If you don't delegate, you minimize the effectiveness of each individual of your team.

### Which Tasks to Delegate

- Repetitive decisions
- Tasks in which you are very competent but that others should learn
- Tasks at which you are less competent but that you do not necessarily need to be expert in and that someone else can learn, has interest in, or already has competence
- Tasks that add variety and interest to someone else's role

### Assign and Follow-up

- Hand-off the work completely, trusting that the individual will get it done on time
- Provide clear direction
- Clarify the constraints within which the person must operate
- Agree about what constitutes success
- Support your delegate with information about resources he or she can use
- Allow the delegate to own the problems that come with the task
- Ensure that your delegate knows that the responsibility is still on him or her
- Coach when necessary
- Commit to direct your delegate regarding skill development
- Observe who is willing to grow and change, who can work completely independently
- Rather than orders and criticism, influence through support , development and encouragement to keep your direct reports engaged and motivated
- Know how to find the balance between delegation and managerial control
- Avoid having your employees feel over-controlled or neglected and unsupported

Initially, this process may occur through trial and error, but the more you delegate, observe and develop your team, the better your judgment will be about matching the work with the right individual, delegating the appropriate amount of responsibility, and providing follow-up followed by appropriate feedback.

### **Feedback and Performance Reviews**

After follow up, immediate feedback ensures that goals will be met and that everyone is heading in the right direction. Make it a discussion. Soon you will find that you will have to do less follow-up, freeing up even more time for you to perform your responsibilities.

Rather than wait for an annual review, consider providing more frequent reviews. Quarterly review is adequate, and after a significant assignment, review is appropriate. After each performance review, your direct reports should emerge more able, more confident, and more willing to take on another

challenge. Establish reviews as future-focused, and present them as an opportunity to learn and improve. This process is consistent with how we learn: try, evaluate, learn, and try again.

Of course there will be occasions when follow-up will identify a problem and expose the fact that the individual to whom you have delegated an assignment may not be the right person for the job. Managers have the dual responsibility to both support the development of their direct reports and to determine whether these individuals must be removed from their responsibilities because they cannot do the work. You may invest time and knowledge in developing an individual only to have to abandon him or her once you determine that he or she is not a good fit for the responsibility.

### **Accelerate Your Career Advancement - Delegate**

Delegating will require that you make judgments about each individual's current skills levels, whom to trust, and the level and kind of involvement you must maintain. Delegating is essential to get the best from your direct reports and to leverage yourself as an upwardly mobile manager. You cannot succeed in your current position, develop experience and skills for the next position, or manage your time without delegating. If you can't do everything for which you are responsible and that you are trying to do, it is time to delegate. You will stall your career if you are not able to delegate effectively and develop and manage people's performance.

Delegating allows you to focus on your strategic and administrative responsibility and your professional development.