

Top Tips

Delegation

What is delegation?

Delegating tasks to the appropriate people is an essential management skill. However, many managers believe that they are delegating when they are in reality merely 'allocating' activities. Delegation is about giving a member of your team the authority and responsibility to carry out a task or achieve an objective for which you are accountable. It is therefore about giving people additional responsibilities, not just handing out extra work.

Many managers, particularly newly appointed ones, find it hard to break the habit of doing task themselves, and are reluctant to delegate. Some of the more common reasons for this and ways to overcome them are:

What stops me delegating?

'It's quicker to do it myself'

This time, maybe. What about next time, and the next, and the next?

'I'm the best / the only one who can do it'

How will you be able to take holiday or get promoted?

'It's risky - something might go wrong'

If you plan carefully and do it right it will only be a calculated risk

'I enjoy doing that task'

You will make time to do other things you'll enjoy

'People will see me and think I'm lazy'

The time you spend thinking could create ideas that save or make money

'I like to keep my finger on the pulse'

You still will when you follow up and review completion of the task

'I don't want my team pushing for my job'

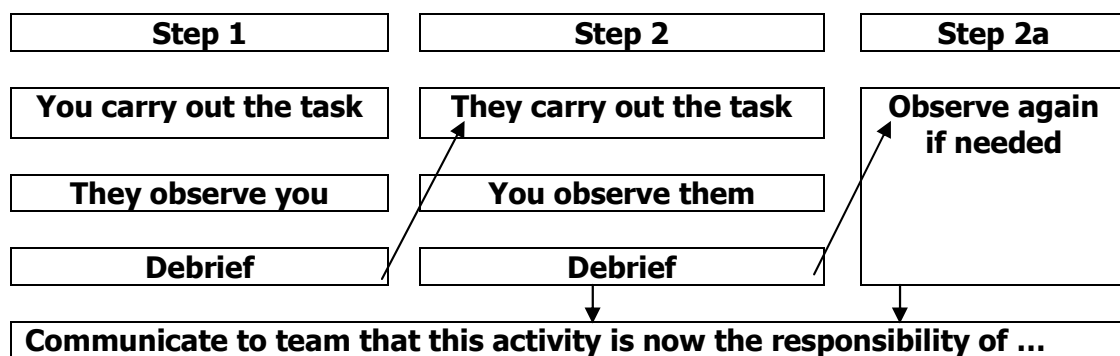
If they're that good they'll get on anyway, so use their skills to help you

Why should I delegate – what’s in it for me?

- To reduce your workload and be effective, not efficient
- To give you more time to do the things you should be doing
- To develop the skills of the individuals in your team
- To motivate your team by giving more interest and involvement
- To encourage trust both ways between you and your team

A delegation process

If the person you are delegating to has not done the job before, you may need to provide some training or a demonstration of the task. Bear in mind that you will show the person your way, and they may get an equal or better result doing it their way, where the exact method is not important, and the result is what counts.



Tips for delegating

- Use the checklist (see later) to ensure you cover all the points you need to

The person

- Select the right person – for experience? For development?
- Consider also whether you can delegate sideways or upwards
- Remember that your priority is not necessarily the same as theirs

The task

- Use tasks as a coaching opportunity to develop your team
- Classify your tasks:
 - Should be done by me
 - Could be done by my team / someone else
 - Should be done by my team / someone else
- Give the right task at the right level to the right person
- Don't just delegate the things you don't like
- Delegate the whole job, not just parts.

The explanation

- Set a SMART results objective for the task
- Explain the big picture; the reasons and context
- Explain why you've chosen them for the task
- Give guidance – facts, different approaches, budget if any
- Agree follow-up & review intervals

The involvement

- Check for understanding and gain their input
- Involve the person – ask 'What do you think you should do?'
- Get your team to bring you solutions, not problems
- Encourage ownership by letting them set their own deadlines
- Give responsibility and where necessary authority;

During the task

- Communicate to the team where responsibility now lies
- Once you've delegated a task, let them get on with it - don't interfere
- Remain available in case they ask for help, guidance, or clarification

Afterwards

- Review & evaluate afterwards - identify learning and how to use it
- When you review:
 - If the person has done well, recognise this and give praise
 - If they have struggled, provide training/coaching as needed

And finally

- Make sure your team do what you **expect**, not what you **inspect**
- Remember - you are still responsible, so delegate, don't abdicate!

For related topics see Top Tips:

- **Coaching**
- **Empowerment**
- **Objectives - Writing**

Delegation checklist

A thought bubble with a main large cloud and three smaller circles leading to it from the bottom right. The text inside the main cloud reads: "I can copy this page and use it next time I delegate a job to someone!"

I can copy this page
and use it next time I
delegate a job to
someone!

- What exactly is the task?
- How much detailed instruction do you need to give?
- What are the results or standards required?
- By when do you need it done?
- Who will you delegate to?
- Who can make the time need to do the task?
- Who would do it best?
- Who would get the most development benefit from doing it?
- What information, resources, or authority will he / she need?
- What training / coaching will he / she need?
- When will I review progress?
- What other points will I need to consider?