

# DELEGATING WITH COMFORT

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Do you find yourself working later and later every day while the rest of your family and friends find time to do some of the things they would like to do? Are your days so filled with everyday tasks that you never have time to get to that exciting new project you'd like to try?

If you answered yes to either of the above questions, you may be in a rut. The failure to delegate is one of the most common pitfalls. We often find 80 percent of the work being done by 20 percent of the people. Wouldn't it be nice if the tasks were evened out a bit?

Why don't you delegate more? You probably think you can do the job faster, and better, yourself. Or you may be thinking that it would take more time to explain the job to someone else than to do it. Or, you may believe no one will help you. Or, you hate to ask for help. Or, are you the person who waits too long to ask someone else, and then you hate to "dump" a project on someone. (No one likes to be "dumped" on!) Be honest with yourself and try to understand why you do not delegate more.

Delegation, at its simplest level, is getting things done through other people. Once you understand why you don't delegate, you may be willing to work on changing your behavior to the point where delegating becomes easier.

## A Delegation Attitude

Developing effective delegation skills requires some new thinking--seeing others as capable, building new competencies in others, providing a supportive environment, becoming a better communicator, allowing others responsibility and

authority, maintaining control through checkpoints, and evaluating the product and process.

To be an effective delegator you must have confidence in yourself and others. Your communication skills should be honed so that you can clearly state your expectations and outline the task to be done. And, you need the ability to gain satisfaction from seeing others do a good job and grow.

Delegation is hard work. In fact, delegation does not eliminate work; it changes it. Thinking through a delegation process helps assure a solid foundation for a successful result.

1. Define responsibilities clearly. What do you want done? Describe freedoms and limitations. This allows for consistency.
2. When delegating, delegate complete segments rather than bits and pieces.
3. Maximize strengths of individuals by choosing the right people for the appropriate tasks.
4. Provide adequate feedback. Be honest and accurate in assessing how they are doing. Emphasize **what** went wrong, not **who** did it.
5. Set goals and performance standards together. Then, everyone will have a similar understanding.

6. Provide support by sharing your knowledge, information, and ideas with them.
7. Give those with responsibility a voice in the decision making. Let them make some of the decisions that affect the task outcome.
8. Commend and encourage. Reward accomplishments.
9. Let go! Fully delegate and allow for personal success or failure. Remember, delegation involves the transfer of authority.
10. Make sure you provide adequate thank-yous after the task is completed. You need to acknowledge the contribution and the individual.

Marlene Wilson, a consultant on volunteerism, gives the following tips for effective delegation:

Only delegate tasks that ...

- \* are important,
- \* you are willing to let go of, and
- \* you are willing to maintain accountability for.

When you delegate, be sure to ...

- \* delegate results, not just activities;
- \* make needed results, deadlines, and timelines clear;
- \* be clear about the level of authority and control you are delegating; and
- \* express confidence in person's ability to do the job.

To get the most out of your "delegates," try to ...

- \* give people tasks that "stretch" them,
- \* help set priorities, and
- \* be available to help with problems.

As you begin your delegating experience, you might want to rate your delegation skills, using the following scale. You may also want to ask the delegatee to rate you.

Did you:	<b>Your score</b>		
	Great	OK	Need to improve
Define responsibilities clearly			
Delegate complete segment			
Choose appropriate person for task			
Provide feedback			
Set goals and standards together			
Provide support			
Give chance for decision making			
Commend and encourage			
Let go of authority			
Remember to say "thank-you"			

References

**The Art of Delegating.** FCL 201. Corvallis, OR: Family Community Leadership. 1985.

Wilson, Marlene. **How to Delegate to Today's Volunteers.** Boulder, CO: Volunteer Management Associates. 1991.

1993: 6M