

## DELEGATION

By Will Phillips

### INTRODUCTION

Delegation can be defined as the process of assigning various responsibilities to other people in an organization. The most effective form of delegation includes the assigning of sufficient authority to complete the tasks whenever possible.

When a manager fails to delegate sufficiently, the organization under the manager fails to grow and develop satisfactorily. This failure occurs for several reasons:

1. The organization can never grow bigger than the number of decisions the manager can handle in a day.
2. The individuals reporting to the manager will not grow and develop in their responsibility and skills. De-motivation is the eventual result.

### BENEFITS

The benefits of successful delegation are increased productivity, growth and cost savings for the organization, and increased motivation and training for the individuals involved.

### LEVERAGE

The benefits which accrue from delegation all stem from the concept of management leverage. There are at least four levels of management leverage:

1. Employees work at the lowest level of leverage.
2. Supervisors work at a somewhat higher leverage level because of their ability to supervise people to get things done.
3. Managers work at a significantly higher point of leverage because of their ability to get things done through others, without directly supervising them.
4. Leaders work at the highest point of leverage, since they have delegated the majority of their operational responsibilities to managers. Leaders then become free to focus on the more creative and forward thinking activities which will help the organization move successfully into the future. Some typical high leverage leadership decisions would involve such things as choosing new markets to move into, committing to develop new products or services, etc.

Managerial leverage has several paradoxical qualities that often cause people to shy away from delegation. These paradoxes can be best illustrated by using a large lever to move a rock.

1. To use a lever you must move farther away from what you are trying to move. Many supervisors and manager are only comfortable when they are very close to the problem and trying to move it directly. They call this 'being on top of the situation'. Managing from a distance creates some anxiety at first.
2. Your effort will not be proportional to the result it causes, depending upon where the fulcrum is located. For example, designing and instilling a strong customer service orientation in an organization can be a very high leverage activity. An employee may impact customer service in a face-to-face transaction with a customer. A organization president, on the other hand, will have an impact through a chain of managers, supervisors and employees. He or she cannot do it by regular, direct interaction with a customer.
3. When using a physical lever you must push in the opposite direction than you wish the levered object to move. This is also true with managerial leverage. A direct frontal attack does not work. For instance, to get an organization under control, the CEO may have to delegate more and thus relinquish control!

In all cases where you are exploring a new level of delegation, you will be faced with these paradoxical issues and will face the decision of returning to direct hands-on work or moving to a higher leverage route through delegation.

## **THE GOAL**

If your approach is to say "I don't have anyone to delegate to - they are too busy or unable," then you will never free up more of your time.

Another approach is to begin with the assumption that you will free up 10% of your time. For a forty hour work week this would be 4 hours. To start this in action, select an hour each week when you will think. In other words, time when you are NOT to be interrupted; time when you are NOT to work; time to think! This time must be scheduled and focused.

Write your "Thinking Schedule" here: \_\_\_\_\_

## **WHAT WILL I DO WITH ALL MY FREE TIME?**

Once you begin the process of successful delegation, you should find more time available. The primary thing for you to do with this time if you are to move from a management to a leadership level is to begin thinking and dreaming of a future of your department or organization.

One organization president I know sets aside every Wednesday morning to go into work late. Each Wednesday he has a specific area that he spends time thinking about. He also keeps a record of his ideas and thoughts.

## UNCOVERING DELEGATION OPPORTUNITIES

Is there enough delegation in our organization? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Is there enough delegation in my  
area? \_\_\_\_\_

Each of the following statements is related to how an organization delegates.  
Rate each statement from 0 to 10.

**10** = This occurs frequently in our organization.

**0** = This occurs infrequently in our organization.

### AT THE MANAGEMENT LEVEL

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Projects started but not completed.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. More work being handled by management than by subordinates.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Planning and scheduling are low priority tasks.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Crisis problems out-number opportunities.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Inability of subordinates to list their top three work goals.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Lots of orders and assignments being issued frequently by manager(s).
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Difficulty in accepting ideas of others.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Workload prevents taking vacations.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Frequently working overtime or weekends.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Managers not working at their highest and best levels.

### AT THE SUBORDINATE LEVEL

- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. Refusing to make decisions without consulting a manager.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. Acting according to the letter rather than the spirit of an assignment.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. Skill level of individuals unchanged during the past year.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. No one to replace managers during an absence.

\_\_\_\_\_ 15. Lack of challenge for subordinates.

**AT THE DEPARTMENTAL LEVEL**

\_\_\_\_\_ 16. All decisions come from the top.

\_\_\_\_\_ 17. Employees do not know the work priorities.

\_\_\_\_\_ 18. Methods are emphasized over results.

\_\_\_\_\_ 19. Status is based on position and not on performance.

\_\_\_\_\_ 20. Workaholics are favored for promotion.

\_\_\_\_\_ **TOTAL SCORE:**

**SCORE EVALUATION**

- Excellent Delegation = 0 - 30
- Good Delegation = 31 - 60
- Fair Delegation = 61 - 90
- Poor Delegation = 91 - 180

Now review each item above and rate the benefit to you and the organization of changing it. 10 = High Benefit and 0 = No Benefit.

You may now wish to select some areas to delegate based on the above diagnosis. If so, list them on page 8. If not, read on for more help.

**IDENTIFYING TASKS TO DELEGATE**

1. List all the tasks you are responsible for:

<u>TASKS</u>	<u>RATING</u>
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____



## GUIDELINES FOR DELEGATING

1. The normal sequence of the tasks that an individual can delegate are:
  - First, delegate the doing.
  - Second, delegate the systems for controlling the doing.
  - Third, delegate the design of systems, solutions.
  - Fourth, delegate the integration of the various creative and operational activities in the organization.
2. When delegating tasks, be sure you are not just dumping the undesirable tasks onto subordinates. One way to check this is to ask them. Successful delegation from a subordinate's point of view means that they perceive new challenges that enable them to learn to perform at higher levels. Avoid last minute delegation that is forced because you've run out of time.
3. Delegation works best when natural task boundaries are delegated. Delegating only a piece of a task prevents a person from taking full responsibility for the results that it is designed to produce.
4. In order for delegates to perform at their highest level, they must understand a number of things about your organization. These form the context in which the particular delegation is performed. The major organization wide knowledge that must be understood includes:
  - Organizational direction and purpose.
  - Organizational philosophy and culture.
  - Organizational policy and procedures.
  - Organizational standards.

For instance, if you delegate the task "you are now in charge of handling all telephone requests," and it is crystal clear that "customer service" is an important and valued part of the organization's philosophy, then the telephone task will be influenced and guided by "Customer Service."

5. Be sure to delegate to all subordinates, not just a few.
6. If you find that no one individual is able, in your estimate, to successfully handle a particular delegated task, you might consider assigning the task to a team.
7. Whenever you delegate, be clear what type of output you expect. Some possibilities are:
  - Carry this task to completion and implementation.
  - Make recommendations back to me before starting any implementation.
  - Let's do some analysis and research and give me your input, not your ideas.

8. In many cases, you can assign well-defined projects to an individual as a way of experimenting with his or her ability and willingness to successfully handle increased responsibility and authority. In delegating, be sure to empower responsibility. You can do this by: Specifying results, standards and deadlines.
  9. Delegate authority that is commensurate with the task. This means the right to decide or spend money without checking for approval.
  10. Negotiate the delegation instead of assigning it. This builds more commitment, responsibility and clarity.
  11. In the beginning write down the delegation, including:
    - The task, deadlines, standards, resources required and who it has been delegated to.
    - The desired outcome or results.
    - Any agreed upon milestones.
- Be sure to identify any training and/or support the delegate believes he or she needs in order to carry out the task.
12. Use the above outline to inform all people who may be involved or affected by the specifics of the delegation in order to help establish the authority and responsibility of the delegate.
  13. Remember, to keep all your questions, suggestions and requests for interim reports to a minimum. If the delegation is to be successful, you must reduce the amount of control which you have had in the past over the task. This is essential in order to build the delegates sense of autonomy and confidence. You must prepare yourself to accept mistakes. Without mistakes, there rarely is any significant learning. If you want a mistake-free process, then the process of delegation will be extraordinarily limited. If you insist on speed and perfection you will not get delegation and leverage.
  14. When successful completion of delegated tasks occurs, be sure to recognize and acknowledge the individual's performance.
  15. It is possible that as you delegate, you will overload your subordinates. It is now time for them to delegate so that the delegation process cascades down. It is also possible you will save them time by giving them authority to match their responsibilities. This means they can act without taking time to check with you first.
  16. You may feel that there is no slack to delegate because those below you are already overloaded. This is just the time to push on the delegation. There are several ways to find relief:
    - Your subordinates must delegate.
    - Hire better subordinates.
    - Train subordinates.

- Better focus everyone's objectives and eliminate some tasks.

**TASKS I WANT TO DELEGATE:**

**1. Task:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Delegated to: \_\_\_\_\_ When will I delegate this? \_\_\_\_\_

Describe Any Ability Issues? \_\_\_\_\_

Solution? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Describe Any Willingness Issues?: \_\_\_\_\_

Solution? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**2. Task:** \_\_\_\_\_

Delegated to: \_\_\_\_\_ When will I delegate this? \_\_\_\_\_

Describe Any Ability Issues? \_\_\_\_\_

Solution? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Describe Any Willingness Issues?: \_\_\_\_\_

Solution? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**3. Task:** \_\_\_\_\_

Delegated to: \_\_\_\_\_ When will I delegate this? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Describe Any Ability Issues? \_\_\_\_\_

Solution? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Describe Any Willingness Issues?: \_\_\_\_\_

Solution? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**4. Task:** \_\_\_\_\_

Delegated to: \_\_\_\_\_ When will I delegate this? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Describe Any Ability Issues? \_\_\_\_\_

Solution? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Describe Any Willingness Issues?: \_\_\_\_\_

Solution? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**RELUCTANCE**

There are many reasons to be reluctant about delegating. A number of these are listed below. Please identify the ones which you are most concerned about by rating how much of a barrier each of the items below is for you: 10 = High and 0 = Absent.

1. Staff is not ready. They are unable and/or unwilling to do the tasks. \_\_\_\_\_
2. These tasks are too important to be delegated. \_\_\_\_\_
3. I'm faster and better than anyone else. \_\_\_\_\_

4. Someone else might be faster and better than me! \_\_\_\_\_
  5. The comfort of familiar work. It is pleasurable and gives me a sense of confidence, and giving it up brings a sense of loss. \_\_\_\_\_
  6. It's very risky to delegate: They could fail, or I could fail. \_\_\_\_\_
  7. Delegation always involves giving up a certain degree of control and power. This is one of the qualities which many managers or supervisors most enjoy. To now give it up is one of the clearest expressions of the paradox of delegation. \_\_\_\_\_
  8. Moving from a specialist to a generalist. As you begin to delegate and to move up the managerial leverage ladder you'll become more of a generalist. Witness the doctor who manages a hospital, the engineer who manages the manufacturing plant and the lawyer who is the managing partner of his law firm. It is very difficult to give up all of your allegiances and enjoyments of your specialist skills and knowledge. \_\_\_\_\_
- TOTAL:** \_\_\_\_\_

One way to check the accuracy of your above ratings is to ask those to whom you wish to delegate to also rate you on each of the above items.

Once you have identified the most prominent areas of reluctance to delegate, it is time for you to build an action plan on how to overcome these barriers. It is even possible to enlist the support of the delegate in helping you overcome these. Another resource is for you to seek help from your boss or peer group.



MY BARRIERS

MY PLAN

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**OVERCOMING BARRIERS**

What strategies could you use to overcome the stronger barriers you identified above?

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