The Art of Delegation

Delegation is an integral part of management. People often find it difficult to do at first as they feel uneasy and believe that others will not do the work as well as themselves. But holding too much to yourself leads to frustration for staff and stress for the manager with no time. This will ultimately affect performance.

A worker is valued on the quality of work but a manager is judged on the quality of the team’s performance. The manager who doesn’t delegate doesn’t learn to acquire new skills. Delegation itself is a process that can be learned.

**Some Barriers to Delegation**

The concern that you are indispensable (often brought about by a fear of the up and coming)

Everything is seen as a crisis and requires the service of the manager

I’m experienced and good at it so I’ll do it! I can do it faster and better

I am not in control if I’m not making the decisions

My staff may make mistakes and like me to take responsibility anyway

**5 Steps to Effective Delegation**

1. IDENTIFY ALL TASKS through job descriptions or task outline plans. Agree standards of performance and establish timetables. Never delegate a task of which you are not clear.
2. DELEGATE EACH TASK APPROPRIATELY – never ask anyone to do anything that you would not do yourself BUT never do anything yourself if you can get someone else to do it. Match tasks to skills, experience and personality. Determine if any training or help is required.
3. EXPLAIN EACH ASSIGNMENT – define limits, resources, budgets and feedback frequency. There are degrees of delegation and responsibility. There is a wide spectrum from ‘check with me’ to ‘don’t trouble me with this’.
4. DEVELOP A PLAN FOR EACH ASSIGNMENT. Define the amount of authority being delegated and remember to tell others who is in charge
5. REVIEW PROGRESS REGULARLY.

SOME TOP TIPS

Any time you perform a task someone else could do you keep yourself from a task only you can do.

You can’t lead if you are involved in every day-to-day decision.

Give staff the confidence by working with them providing them with background information and offering praise for good decisions.

**The Advantages of Delegation**

* More work gets done and deadlines can be more easily met
* Provides more time for the manager to concentrate on important tasks
* Makes managers more accessible for consultation improving communications
* Improves the strength and effectiveness of the workforce
* Enables people to develop aptitudes and abilities
* Encourages greater participation and commitment
* Is a means of training and testing a person’s suitability for promotion
* A means of measuring performance
* Enhances recognition and employee satisfaction

**Deciding what to delegate**

Check your job description and highlight tasks that are:

Clerical or administrative

Routine

Planning of regular events

Tasks taking a deal of time but giving little result

Low priority

Already showing your expert status

Revealing your lack of qualification

Ones you dislike

Now underline jobs that involve:

The initiation of change

Advising on crucial issues

Allocating resources

Negotiating in critical situations

Representing the school

Leading through appointment, motivating, encouraging or creating the ethos

Involve liaison outside school

Processing information from documents, phone calls, formal/informal meetings

Passing on information from the above activities

Analysing information as a guide to future action

The highlighted activities can easily be delegated but the underlined may require careful thought before deciding on delegation. If in doubt retain these core areas.

Clearly some of these more important activities can provide opportunity for real professional development and challenge.

**Deciding who to whom a task should be delegated**

A colleague who is becoming stale in present post or needs the stimulus of a new challenge.

A person who is looking for professional development opportunities.

A person with an unfairly light workload to others of similar status.

Someone needing training to secure greater responsibility

A person with an interest in the area or activity.

**The Three A’s**

*Areas of responsibility must be clearly defined*

The purpose of the task

Financial constraints – clear budget and resources

Key results by which success can be judged

*Authority given to carry out the job*

Given room to move and not have to follow precise instructions to the letter

Given power to control the activities of others (making sure others know)

Given the right to take decisions without referral back but able to seek guidance

*Accountability with absolute certainty*

Set up an agreed period for the delegated job and for review times

Freedom to give feedback on progress as needed (not surprise checks which are resented)

Expectation that some mistakes will be made

Agreement on performance criteria

**Trouble shooting**

If a teacher is unhappy feeling talked into acceptance of responsibility – withdraw the task

If the teacher lacks confidence - check the task was made clear

If the teacher is unwilling to accept situations involving conflict – observe them and try mock training exercises and if unsuccessful – remove the task

If the teacher over reacts to given responsibility upsetting colleagues – remedy as above

*Stephen Covey suggests that effective delegation takes emotional courage as we allow others to make mistakes on our time, money and good name. It takes the courage of patience, self-control and faith in the potential of others and respect for individual differences. It is a two way process with responsibility both given and received – a win – win activity*