

Delegation

Delegating is entrusting and giving authority to someone else to undertake a piece of work on your behalf. The work still forms part of your own job function and you are still accountable for the end results. You might, for example, ask a team member to take responsibility for leading a team project.

When you delegate work to another staff member, you are still accountable for it, and therefore need to ensure that you provide an appropriate level of direction and support. For an experienced staff member, this may just mean agreeing the objectives, what will be achieved and then being available to answer questions as they arise. The objectives are likely to include outputs (what will be done) and outcomes (results or difference that will be made). For a staff member who is unfamiliar with the work, you may need to provide a higher level of direction, by identifying specific tasks to be completed and providing guidance and/or training on how to complete them.

Whichever is appropriate, make sure that you communicate clearly with the staff member as to how much authority they have to make decisions, and when they need to check back with you. The delegated task should provide a learning opportunity for the team member, so whilst appropriate supervision is necessary, don't try to micro-manage.

In contrast, **allocation** of work refers to the distribution of tasks for which individual team members are themselves responsible as part of their job description.

Benefits of Delegation

- Increases motivation by making people feel valued and worthy of higher level work
- Offers staff the opportunity to address more complex problems
- Helps staff to develop their skills, creativity and to use their initiative
- Gives staff a flavour of what is required at the next level of management in the leadership path
- Gives you time to do the tasks that only you can do
- Allows you to have a worry-free break

When NOT to delegate

Occasions when delegation is unlikely to be appropriate include:

People Management Resources were developed by Rhian Cadvan-Jones, Maggie Piazza, Alain Rias and Geneviève Degeye, drawing from the quoted authors' work

- confidential issues, e.g. health or stress related
- financial aspects which only you are allowed to sign for
- problems involving a staff member's performance or conduct
- a problem with a patient or colleague that involves the staff member

A 5-Step Model of Delegation

Step 1 *Match the task to the person*

This has two elements:

1. Select the task carefully

Make a list of jobs which you might delegate. Suitable topics might be a job which takes up a lot of your time, has a lower level of responsibility and would be a good development opportunity for a team member. For example, you might delegate leading on a needs analysis for a new activity, or managing implementation of a new protocol for the whole department.

2. Select personnel carefully

Consider who would be suitable. Is there a staff member who has lighter workload? Is there an individual who needs a special challenge? Will the person you select take on the task with enthusiasm? Would they like extra responsibilities? Could they do the task after training? You could use the attached planning pro-forma.

Step 2 *Briefing*

How to hand over the task:

- meet in a quiet space
- allocate sufficient time to explain the task
- explain the reasons you have chosen to delegate to that individual and any relevant background information
- explain clearly the results you expect
- agree the level of autonomy - to what extent can the staff member make decisions or do things differently?
- explain what resources are available
- set a clear timescale
- reassure that you are providing ongoing support

Step 3 *Securing agreement*

Ensure that the team member is happy to take on the delegated task, and don't just accept agreement on face value. Notice the body language and tone of voice. Ask for feedback to check understanding and provide opportunities to ask questions. Consider too how other team members might react. Ensure you are fair in the way you offer opportunities, as you may risk appearing to have favourites. Not everyone in the team will be ready to take on a delegated task, so it is important to offer everybody appropriate learning and development opportunities.

Step 4 ***Follow up***

Communicate promptly with other people so that they know about the newly assigned responsibility.

Keep an eye on progress without stifling creativity. Ensure that your level of monitoring is appropriate to the task and the individual and that you make yourself available if the team member gets stuck. Allow the person to take risks and make mistakes; that is how many people learn. Check progress regularly and give encouragement, praise and support.

Step 5 ***Monitor outcomes, review & praise***

Review the team member's performance with them. Allow them to self-assess - how well did they think they got on? To what extent did they achieve the planned outputs and outcomes? What did they learn? What could they do differently next time? Give them some feedback and praise for their achievements.

You might also want to monitor the outcomes of the delegation by consulting other staff. You might want feedback in relation to the planned outcomes, as well as any unintended benefits or difficulties.

Why people don't delegate

People choose not to delegate for many reasons, even when they know it makes sense.

What about you?

Which excuses do you most often use for avoiding delegation, when you know it is right?

Take a few minutes to close your eyes, think back over the last week, or the last few weeks. Remember those times you wanted to avoid delegation. Maybe you did delegate, or perhaps you didn't. That doesn't matter. Each time, think back to before you made the decision. Hear again your inner voice. What did it say? What excuses can you hear? Write them down.

Typical Excuses

How many did you get? Do you often use the same one, or do you have a few to choose from? Here are ten common ones. Make a note of which ones you have used, or that people around you use.

"I'd be better off doing it myself"

"I don't want to overload my colleagues"

"I don't want to lose control"

"I don't have the time to delegate"

"I'll only end up doing it all again myself"

"I don't know how to delegate"

"If only I had someone I could delegate to"

"I want to stay indispensable"

"I know exactly how I want it done"

"If I ask him/her to do it, he/she will be nagging me every five minutes"

"I could do it faster"

"I don't want to correct it afterwards"

"I don't dare to ask"