



Why is it important?

Delegation can be one of the riskiest things we do at work as it means relinquishing control and placing your trust in another individual to carry out one of your tasks. Their performance is then seen as a reflection of your own. As a manager you must take responsibility for the outcome. It is little wonder that many of us shy away from it.

But risky as it is, delegation is vital to succeeding as a manager. Unless you learn to delegate effectively, you will struggle to achieve a good work-life balance and deliver results. It may also demotivate and even alienate your team members, who feel you have no confidence in them, and it can inhibit their development.

Delegation is not a shirker's charter; it is a vital business skill which gives rise to a belief of empowerment. Your career progression is also likely to hinge on you being able to free up time to concentrate on high-priority issues.

Where do I start?

- **Fix on the task!**

The more prepared you can be when it comes to delegation, the better for both parties. Delegating tasks under pressure will almost certainly fail. Fix on the task you intend to do, delegate and define it clearly. Don't have a predetermined view as to how the individual should carry out the task – they must be able to use their own initiative and apply their own methods. The project might not get done exactly as you would have done it (it could even be better!) but if the result is the same, or better, it's okay. It is important to challenge your team and make them feel valued.

- **Identify the person!**

Next, identify who will complete the job, a favourable outcome will depend on how well you know your team including their strengths and weaknesses. Ensure the team member is at the right level for the task and has the necessary abilities to do it. Refrain from using the same person for every task, as this will do nothing for the confidence for the rest of the team (and could make the regular person feel overloaded).

- **Explain the task!**

Ask the potential team member if they are happy to take on the task, and then work through it with them. Provide a brief with clearly defined outcomes. Make sure they have all the resources and tools to complete the job and set a timeframe. Check they know what is expected of them, as well as their level of authority and responsibility. It is a good idea to ask them to explain back to you their understanding of the task and expected outcome along with timelines to confirm they have interpreted the brief properly.

- **Monitoring progress**

Schedule a follow up meeting at an appropriate interval for an update. Give the individual space to tell you how things are going, rather than bombarding them with questions. If you are concerned that the project is falling behind schedule or not going to plan, find out why, and help them. If they are struggling, you may have to consider taking the task back from them (called reverse delegation) or providing them with additional support. But this should only be considered in extreme circumstances as it will seriously dent their self-esteem and deprive them of an opportunity to grow professionally.

- **Feedback and Review**

It is crucial to follow up adequately once the task has been completed. Tell your team member how they did and what, if anything, could be improved. Give full credit for their accomplishments, and be aware of your own behaviour too, and whether you could do anything differently to be more effective the next time you delegate.

If you only do 5 things:

1. Clearly define the task you are going to delegate.
2. Allow the team member to use their initiative and own methods.
3. Determine where your and their responsibilities begin and end.
4. Keep a watchful eye on their progress.
5. Give full credit for their success.