

## Seven keys to better delegation

As a manager you instinctively know that delegating to others is a critically important part of your job. You know that delegating saves you time, often gets the job done well and faster and usually cheaper, and helps your delegates learn new skills and improves their confidence. So, why aren't you delegating more and better?

### Some background

Surveys show that half of all organisations are concerned about delegation by their people, but only a quarter provide any training or guidance. *"Your most important task as a leader is to teach people how to think and ask the right questions so that the world doesn't go to hell if you take a day off"*, says Professor Jeffrey Pfeffer of the Stanford Graduate School of Business. Consultant Carol Walker believes most people think they are too busy to delegate and that it's more efficient for them to just do it themselves. Both Pfeffer and Walker agree it's time to drop the excuses. Here's how.

### Seven keys to better delegation

**1. An early warning sign** is when you keep on working longer and longer hours and feel indispensable, while your staff keep regular hours. When a staff member says 'I am happy to help you with this', it's probably an indication that you're handing out tasks, not handing over responsibility.



**2. Understand why you're not delegating.** Are you a perfectionist who believes only you are capable of the standard you expect? Are you afraid that your delegation will detract from your own importance or standing in your boss' eyes? Accepting you can't – and shouldn't try to – do everything is a crucial first step to improve delegation.

**3. Track yourself.** Once you accept what's blocking you, you need to behave differently. And to know whether you are succeeding, you need to track what and how you are changing. The simplest way of doing this is to keep a daily diary or learning journal and make notes on how you spend your time. Within weeks you'll see the pattern – and know whether you are on track or not.

**4. Hire the right people** because you can't delegate to people who don't have the necessary knowledge, skills and attitude. Ask yourself, do I have anyone on my team to whom I cannot delegate something that sucks my time?

**5. Make delegation part of what you already do.** Delegation is not something extra that you have to do. You should integrate delegation into the development plans of your staff; they need to be as fully on-board as you are.

**6. Ask for feedback that you can't ignore.** Give your direct reports permission to give your feedback and call you out when you hug work they know you should delegate. Invite them to step up and take projects away from you.

**7. Let go like you mean it.** This means getting out of the way. Not looking over their shoulders. Allowing them to make mistakes. Micro-managing is the antithesis of delegating.

### Acknowledgement

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