

# 7 tips to developing delegation skills

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As a business owner who manages and leads people who work for you, your ability to get things done is dependent on others carrying out certain elements of the work on your behalf. You cannot possibly do everything yourself. If you try and do it all yourself, you will become unnecessarily overburdened. Your performance and health will deteriorate, you will fail to develop your employees adequately, and in time, your entire business will suffer. The ability to delegate is arguably one of the most distinguishing features between good and bad managers, and knowing how to delegate is a crucial management and leadership skill. Here are some thoughts as to how you can develop the skill of delegation.



Image: Supplied

## 1. From your prioritised jobs, select one to delegate

In order to qualify for delegation, a task should have some of the following characteristics:

- It is not strictly related to your key role
- It is more routine than strategic
- It is taking up too much of your time
- It is appropriate and challenging enough for another team member to take on
- It is better undertaken by someone with more appropriate skill or know-how than yours

Remember that the purpose of delegating is not to dodge work or to offload tedious or difficult tasks on others. However, you shouldn't only retain tasks that you personally enjoy.

## 2. Clearly define the task for yourself before delegating

In your own mind, clarify the task you wish to delegate. Think it through thoroughly and clearly so that you can communicate it with as much clarity as possible to the person who will be performing the task. You need to be able to provide details of:

- The expected results or product

- Depending on the skill and experience of the person you are delegating to, explain how the task might be approached
- Sub-tasks within the overall task
- The limits of authority
- The applicable timelines
- How you will know the task is done
- What resources will be required
- What training, if any, might be required

### **3. Select the right person to delegate to**

As a good manager, you should be aware of the strengths and limitations of your team members and delegate accordingly. Ideally, the person you choose to delegate to should have the ability, knowledge, skills, enthusiasm, talent and time needed to take on and successfully complete the task. Unfortunately, such qualities are not always found in one person. Here are some questions worth considering as you choose the right person for the job at hand:

- Who has the necessary skills?
- Who would be most challenged?
- Who would learn the most? Who would benefit the least?
- Does the task require previous experience? Will training be required? If so, who will provide this?
- What particular personal qualities are needed? Who on your team has these?
- Who would enjoy a job like this? What other workloads does that person have?
- Is more than one person required? If so, who can work together successfully?

### **4. Delegate appropriate authority**

Whenever you give someone a job, make sure you tell them how much authority you are handing over. Here is an example: “Look into the problem, suggest three solutions and I will choose the best.” Or, “Look into the problem, tell me how you plan to solve it and continue to do so unless I tell you otherwise.” Or, “Look into the problem, solve it and tell me when you have completed it.” Set parameters and establish controls to ensure this authority and the accompanying power are appropriately used.

### **5. Keep lines of communication open**

There is a fine line between delegation and abdication. Be warned! When you delegate, you do not abdicate responsibility. You must maintain some level of oversight on the project. At the very least, agree to your delegate informing you when things are not going according to plan. Be available, but avoid constantly looking over the delegate’s shoulder during the execution of the task. Avoid being meddlesome. Let the delegate make the first contact when necessary.

### **6. Reward performance**

Appreciate and acknowledge a job well done by recognising good work, both privately and publicly. Sincere recognition will increase your own effectiveness in working with others and in the art of delegation.

### **7. Delegate as part of the big picture**

Review the project on its completion to ensure your delegate has also gained and grown from the task. View and include delegation as part of the planned growth of your team. Through effective delegation, your team members will grow in confidence and both they, and your business, will benefit in the long run. Always employ delegation as part of your business's 'big picture' both in terms of staff development and business growth.

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