



The Blake Group

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Delegating is Not Dumping.

You can develop your direct reports through “developmental delegating” and summer is a good time to do it.

Delegation is a much talked about topic these days. There are many articles on why to delegate, how to delegate, when to delegate, and the advantages and disadvantages of delegation. Most managers are being encouraged to delegate more because of increasing and competing demands on their time and energy.

Delegation has also been found to be a critical factor in employee involvement, employee development, and job satisfaction

Developmental Delegating is Not Dumping.

Whatever level or position you are in delegating is the same thing. You are saying, "This is something I can't do. I'm asking you to do it for me. I trust that you have the necessary skills and competencies. If I know of any special way to do the work, I will tell you. If not, do it your own way. If you need any help, I'm here. I need it by no later than... (Or) When do you think you can get it done?"

Developmental delegating is a way of teaching new skills. This requires finding a balance between too much direction and not enough. If your instructions are too explicit, you're not training the person. If they are not thorough enough, you may not get the results you want. Delegate gradually until the person feels competent and comfortable with a new task. Be sure to let the other person know that you expect questions and that he or she should not be afraid to come to you for help. If someone makes a mistake, stay cool. Don't grab the work back and do it yourself.

Make sure people understand your priorities. Don't assume that someone will intuitively know where to begin. Many people start by doing the easiest tasks first, which may not be the best way to approach a particular project. Does the job you are delegating need to be done as fast as possible? If so, you don't want someone to put more work into it than it deserves. On the other hand, are you looking for thoroughness or the highest quality of work? If that's the case, be realistic about deadlines.

Effective Developmental Delegation

Your effectiveness and success as a managers hinges on your ability develop people. Your capability in delegating responsibility and authority is part of developing direct reports. Both you and the person delegated to hold accountability for results. Do you know how to effectively delegate for development? Think about these seven statements:

1. The best way to expand your personal authority is to delegate as much responsibility as you can. Hoarding authority serves to diminish your own status and importance.
2. Delegation of responsibility does not mean abdication of responsibility on your part. As the head of your work group, you are ultimately responsible for every job performed in your section.

3. Prior to delegating, pave the way with the training and guidance required to equip the employee with the skill and understanding he or she needs to do a good job.
4. Take into consideration that some risk is inherent when responsibility is delegated, and that some degree of error and misjudgment is usually inevitable.
5. Avoid confusion and conflict by making sure the employee receives instructions from you only.
6. Make it a point to back up your people when their authority is questioned.
7. After delegating, give your people a fair chance to prove their ability without interference or intrusiveness.

If you take time to consider these seven statements and reflect on your delegation style, it will help you evaluate your effectiveness.

Five Steps to Effective Developmental Delegation

The following five tips will enable you to delegate effectively:

1. Proper delegation is actually a wheel with spokes; be committed to the full delegation process. Think of it as the compass. Each part of the compass interacts with others with you at the center.
 - a. The top of compass (North) is linked to the rest of the compass. North represents you planning and determining what you will delegate. It is like getting your bearings.
 - b. The compass circles around to the left and touches the East point. This represents the task coming from you to the other person(s).
 - c. The third point is due South. This represents you following up on the status of what you delegated.
 - d. The other side of the compass (West) represents you following up to get a report from the people you delegated to.
 - e. Finally, the compass returns to you (North), this completes the loop and returns to its point of origin. This represents you forwarding the report, decision or findings to the source that originally gave you the task.
 - f. Be sure to complete all four points of interaction with every assignment. If you neglect any of these points, the link is broken, and the chain loses its strength. That's when the delegation process fails.
2. Delegate in writing. Often the delegation process breaks down because the person being delegated to is unclear on the details of the assignment. They might not ask you for clarification (to avoid appearing incompetent) and they might sit on the assignment hoping you'll give some additional clues about what you really want. That's why you need to put every delegated task in writing.
 - a. The purpose of writing the task out is that it causes you to slow down enough and include all the details someone needs to complete the task successfully.
 - b. Yes, written delegation takes more time than verbal delegation. However, for every minute you spend writing out the details, you save one hour in execution.
3. Train your team members to report back on time. In your written instructions, be sure to tell people when you want them to report back to you - with progress updates and the final product. Be specific. Tell them, "Please provide me a status update every Friday at 2 p.m. for the next two months, or until the project is completed."
 - a. Be clear about deadlines, "Please complete this task by noon on Wednesday."
 - b. When team members report back on time, make a big deal about it. Equally, when they fail to report back on time, make an even bigger deal about it. Even if they completed the task but didn't report back to you with the final product, help them realize that reporting back is every bit as important as getting the task done.

4. Use a reminder system. Never delegate an assignment and completely leave it up to the other person to make sure it gets done. Just as the person you delegate to needs to be accountable for reporting in, you need to be accountable for following up.
 - a. Important: Only follow up when the person misses a requested update or deadline. You don't want to train people that you will be following up with them on a regular basis, as that leaves the task's responsibility with you. Rather, you want to train them that they are expected to report back to you, making them responsible for the delegated item.
5. Report back to the person you received the assignment from. Just because you receive the delegated task back completed (and to your satisfaction) doesn't mean you're finished. Always remember to complete the cycle by reporting back to the person who gave you the finished project. Keep the communication loop intact so others learn that they can trust you as well.

The Delegation Dilemma

If giving managerial responsibility and authority makes you uneasy, here are some suggestions on how to make delegating less stressful:

1. Keep the communication channels open. Encourage employees to ask questions and offer opinions. Listen carefully to what they say.
2. Recognize possible barriers to good relations with people. Try to understand their viewpoints and to agree on common objectives.
3. Provide all pertinent information at one session. Most employees prefer to have you delegate in this manner.
4. Be careful to not omit some vital information - the omission may set up the employee for failure.
5. Be specific and precise so that employees will know exactly what you mean.
6. Differentiate between fact and inference. While facts are truth and evidence, inferences are born from deductive reasoning.

Don't fall prey to the Delegation Dilemma. The total number of hours that you need to boost your delegation skills is relatively small. Take the time to be an effective manager through effective delegation. Your success depends on it.

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