



Delegating

Most of people do not like delegating. It often means:

- loss of personal control;
- time 'waster' explaining, coaching and correcting;
- unexpected outcomes, and dilution of personal standards:
- stress from loss of control.

Effective delegation frees your time to focus on where you add most value and helps develop the skills of your team. Failure to delegate traps you into doing low-level jobs.

Read the case below and discuss it in small groups: *have you already met people like Jim? Share the bad experiences that you had.*

The case of Jim

Let's look at an example, the case of Jim.

Jim would only delegate three sorts of activities:

- **Routine rubbish.** Delegating the administrivia freed him to do the important things, like working out how to get promoted.
- **Hospital passes.** Whenever he had a project going horribly wrong, he would delegate it to a subordinate as a 'development opportunity'. When the project duly collapsed, he would walk away and leave the subordinate crushed under the collapse.
- **Last-minute panics.** Fridays were good days to avoid Jim. He would be thinking of the weekend and of all the work he had not done: time to delegate it all, especially if the deadline was Monday morning. Goodbye weekend, hello office

Jim also had a unique style of delegation. He seemed to have three main principles:

- **Be vague about the objectives**, and then change his mind several times in the course of the project, This would double the effort and halve the morale of the team.
- **Be vague about the deadlines**, but bring them forward by several days at the last moment just to keep everyone on their toes.
- **Be vague about the process** in terms of how to do it, the support available, the critical path and the check points. This gave him carte blanche to interfere at will with sudden and extreme demands at any point in the process.

On no account would he ever discuss any of this with the team. he saw himself as a strong manager, which meant that he preferred to issue commands, preferably with elaborate detail around what the consequences of failure would look like.

Principles of delegation

- Ensure clarity over the task and the eventual success criteria. Make the team summarize back to you what they think the task and the outcomes are meant to be. Do not assume they have understood anything until they say it back to you.
- Ensure people have enough skills and resources to complete the job; do not delegate too much too soon.
- Be clear about how you want to work together (progress reports). Discuss concerns before you start.
- Be available to help, but do not interfere all the time. When they ask for help, require that they suggest solutions so that they always learn.
- Delegate meaningful projects, not just administrivia. Stretch people and they will rise for the challenge. Giving away mundane jobs only demotivate people.
- Show faith and trust in the team; praise success, and do not undermine them.
- Remember, you may have delegate authority, but you cannot delegate away responsibility. You are still accountable for the outcomes.

Effective delegation

Review the tasks you undertake and allocate each one to one of the four sections of the delegation chart in the table below. Then act on the outcomes.

Delegation Chart		
	<i>Others Could Do This</i>	<i>Only I Can Do This</i>
Very Important	Delegate - supervise en support closely	Take the lead - involve others so they can learn and develop
Less Important	Delegate - make sure you are delegating more than just the rubbish	Are you sure? - could be a development opportunity for someone

As you fill the chart, do not ask 'Are they capable of doing it today?' but ask 'Could they do it with enough help, support and supervision?' Your goal is not just to do the job, but also to stretch and develop your staff. You will be surprised by how much your team can achieve with the right support. People tend to rise or fall to the level of expectations set for them. So set high expectations and have the courage to delegate extensively. This has the added advantages of making your life easier and making you more popular with your team: they will see that you are trusting them and developing them.