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Healthy Teams Collection

Delegating for Efficiency

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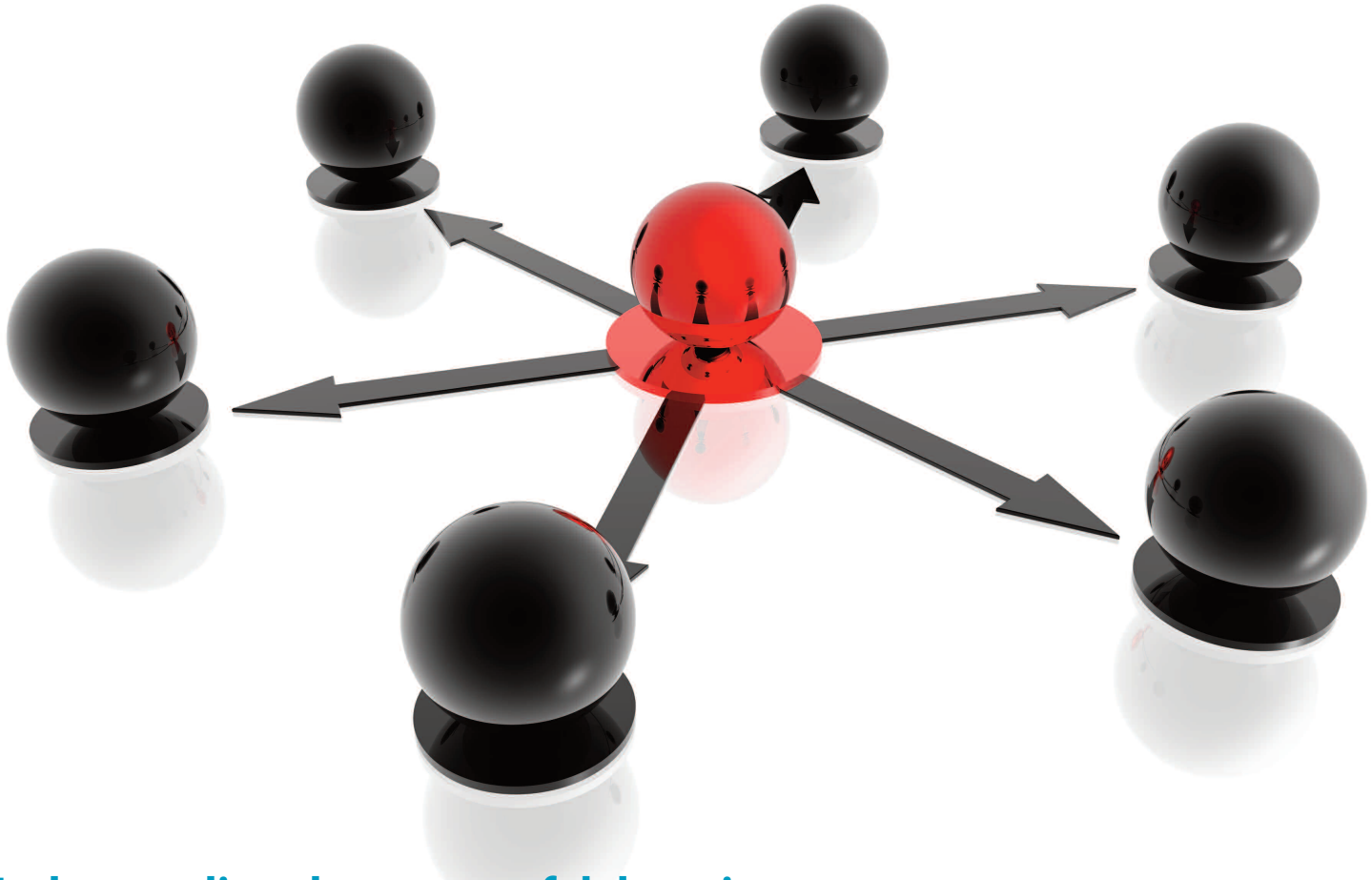
In today's work environment, delegation is an essential skill for managing more effectively. Learning how to delegate requires a lot of patience and energy, but the short-term payoff makes it all worthwhile! You need to make time if you want to save time. Managers who delegate wisely instead of doing the work themselves, gain the ability to plan, organize and control the work done by their team.

With effective delegation, managers can have the work done by someone else rather than doing it themselves so they can focus more on managing. Delegation helps to improve the manager's overall efficiency while creating development opportunities for the team. It's an ideal way to divide up the work equally, improve individual performance, promote cooperation, and cultivate a feeling of confidence and team spirit. When used effectively, delegation is a win-win solution.



Understanding the nature of delegation

▶ The need to delegate

As a manager, your role is to plan, organize and validate the work. Delegating certain tasks enables you not only to carry out your supervisory role more effectively, but also to achieve your objectives more easily, thanks to better time management. **Delegation is essential because it releases you from your production tasks so you can focus more on your management tasks**. Strangely enough, even though a lot of managers are overworked, few of them recognize the need to delegate. Many feel that they're personally responsible for doing the work… not to mention the only ones who can do the job right!

Not only does delegation make managers more productive, it also helps build a motivated team that's proud of its achievements. **By delegating certain tasks, you're recognizing each person's talents and skills**. This demonstrates your confidence in the team and helps create a sense of accomplishment. Fear of delegating very often stems from a misunderstanding of leadership. A leader can be compared to a cork floating on the water; the more the water level rises, the more the cork rises too. Similarly, the more effective and independent the team, the more competent its leader is perceived to be.

Delegation styles

There's no "right" or "wrong" delegation style. **Effective delegation means choosing the style that's best suited to the task at hand and the person to whom you're delegating the task**. For example, if most of the people on your team are inexperienced, you will probably tend to supervise their work more closely. On the other hand, if your team is made up of more experienced people, you will more likely adopt the role of "advisor". The important thing is to choose a style that's appropriate for the situation, the task and the person or group of people to whom you're delegating the task.

You should also know that regardless of the style you choose, delegation can be as frustrating as it is gratifying. Managers who are just learning the delegation process are often disappointed with the results. If this is the case for you, remind yourself that these disappointments are normal but they'll go away as you begin to realize that what really matters is the results, not the process.

What really matters is the results

CONTROLLER

The controller gives precise, detailed instructions. This person supervises everything very closely and indicates what needs to be done in minute detail, leaving virtually no freedom as to how to proceed.

ADVISOR

The advisor offers greater freedom than the inspector, providing more general instruction and inviting the person to share their own ideas. They decide on the approach together, but the greatest contribution is made by the employee. The advisor is available for consultation, but only gets involved when asked.

INSPECTOR

The inspector supervises the delegated task but is less instructional than the controller, offering explanations and advice when the person needs it. The inspector allows more leeway than the controller, but intervenes whenever they feel it's necessary.

ADMINISTRATOR

The administrator describes the task to be carried out in general terms. After agreeing on how much freedom the employee has in carrying out the task, the administrator feels that their help is no longer required. The administrator has complete confidence in the employee, and is concerned only with the results.

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Don't always delegate the most interesting tasks to the same person

Understanding the principles of delegation

Choosing the tasks

First you need to determine which tasks you can delegate. The activities you perform that are not directly related to your objectives and responsibilities, should be eliminated. For example, if people come to you for certain tasks that you're good at but that have nothing to do with your responsibilities, these are the things you need to delegate. **On the other hand, what you need to keep are the management activities that can't be delegated to anyone else.** This includes planning the work, managing the budget, coordinating activities, and motivating and training your team. In short, the production tasks that can be done by someone else are the ones that should be delegated.

Choosing the right people

Delegating means making an employee responsible for a task. In order for the delegation to be effective, the task must be given to the person most qualified to do it. The table below will help you determine which members of your team are the best candidates for delegation. Keep in mind however, that all of your employees should be involved in the process sooner or later in order to promote the development of every team member.

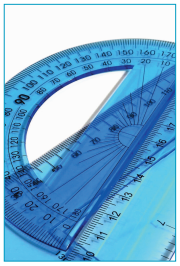
The other key principle is obtaining the commitment of the selected individual. **Delegating a task to someone against their will leads to anxiety, stress, low morale, dissatisfaction and poor results.** A person may have the necessary skills and availability, but have no interest in the task. In cases like this, the delegation is destined for failure. On the other hand, a person might really want to be given a certain task, but not have the skills or time to do it. In short, make sure the employee you choose, has the ability and the desire to perform the task successfully.

Individual's ability to perform a delegated task

Based on your employees' usual behaviour, complete the following exercise for each member of your team. If most of your answers for a given employee are in the column on the left, avoid delegating tasks to this person unless you're very familiar with delegation techniques. If most of your answers are in the column on the right, you've found a good candidate.

- ❏ Does their work without asking questions.
- ❏ Needs constant supervision.
- ❏ Relies on rules and procedures even when it's not appropriate.
- ❏ Avoids discussion and confrontation at all costs.
- ❏ Has unconditional respect for the hierarchy.
- ❏ Often demonstrates resistance to change.

- ❏ Plays an active role in the decision-making process.
- ❏ Often questions procedures.
- ❏ Is creative and good at formulating solutions.
- ❏ Tries to promote their opinion within the team.
- ❏ Handles and resolves problems effectively.
- ❏ Seeks out varied tasks, enjoys a challenge.



Choosing the right style based on the type of employee

Once you've chosen which tasks to delegate and the employees to whom you want to delegate them, you'll need to adapt your management style to the type of employee in question. For example, you can't use the same style with a junior employee as you would with a more experienced one. The table below will help you make the right choice.

Type of Employee	Knowledge	Needs	Appropriate Style		Management Style
Junior	Below average	Technical support, encouragement and control	Controller		• Be instructional • Define very specific criteria • Get involved in each step
Intermediate	Average	Technical support, encouragement and supervision	Inspector		• Work with the employee • Give your opinion when necessary • Get involved when necessary
Experienced	Above average	Support and stimulation	Advisor		• Explain the expected results • Let the person decide on the approach • Get involved when asked
Expert	In-depth	Freedom	Administrator		• Focus on results • Rarely get involved before the deadline • Assess the results

The difference between assigning and delegating

Often when managers delegate a task, their first reflex is to propose their own way of doing it. However, the employee also has their own way of doing things. This difference in approach is very often a source of conflict and the reason behind an unsuccessful delegation.

When you delegate a task, your primary concern shouldn't be how it's done. Delegating doesn't just mean assigning a job to someone. It also means giving them the latitude they need to do it. **When it comes to delegation, the focus should be on the results**; how they're achieved is up to the employee. Otherwise it's a matter of assignment, not delegation.

Also, resist the temptation to help do the job. If your involvement has a direct impact on how the job is done, the delegated task invariably becomes an assigned task. In addition, your actions could be interpreted as a lack of confidence and undermine the employee's motivation.

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Delegation meeting

Once you've done your planning based on the key principles (see opposite), you need to meet with the person or persons involved. **This meeting can be informal, but should always be well structured** (see meeting guidelines below). A group meeting is recommended if the delegation impacts the work of more than one person. When delegating more complex tasks, or when the delegation involves input from employees on another team, have a meeting with everyone concerned to discuss the details. It's also a good idea to put any decisions made at the meeting in writing so they can be referred to later on.

Meeting Guidelines

- √ **Define the objective of the mandate, the details of the task and the expected results.**
- √ **Verify the person's or persons' understanding of, and interest in, the mandate.**
- √ **Establish the degree of authority granted to do the job.**
- √ **Determine the resources and training required.**
- √ **Respond to any questions, suggestions and comments.**
- √ **Establish the performance criteria that will be used to evaluate the results.**
- √ **Determine the follow-up steps and checkpoints.**

Using a delegation process

Seven keys to successful delegation

The following seven principles are key to the delegation process and should be taken into account in your planning.

1. Determine the objective

First of all, the person to whom you delegate a task, needs to understand the rationale behind the task. The achievement of results is often dependent on a good understanding of the objective.

2. Define the task

When you delegate, your goal is to carry out a project by relying on the efforts of another person. As a result, you need to know what you want to achieve, and communicate it. The more complex the task, the clearer the explanation should be.

3. Grant the necessary authority

Determine precisely how much authority you will delegate to the person. Make sure the boundaries regarding the person's freedom are understood, and notify any other people involved of your decisions.

4. Provide the necessary resources

Take into account the employee's concerns and ensure that they have the necessary skills to carry out the project. Determine the assistance, resources and training required, to achieve the expected results.

5. Establish performance criteria

Establish performance criteria based on the specific, measurable results you want to achieve (e.g. desired quality, budget, deadline, etc.). Follow-up is very difficult without performance criteria.

6. Perform regular follow-ups

Since achieving the results is what really matters, you need to put milestones in place in order to monitor the progress. This will enable you to see how the project is progressing and provide appropriate feedback.

7. Evaluate the results

It's important to meet with the person or persons involved once the task has been completed to compare the performance criteria with the actual results. You should also discuss the positive aspects of the exercise, as well as any problems that arose. This meeting will allow you to voice your opinion, determine any corrective measures needed in the future and, if necessary, improve your delegation method.

Delegation doesn't release you from your management responsibilities

Pitfalls to avoid

When asked, employees say their two main reservations about delegation are that they often feel too closely monitored, or that they feel abandoned. Once the task has been delegated, your role is to oversee its progress. However, you don't want to be seen as intrusive by scrutinizing the progress too closely. Remember that how the work is done is up to the employee. However, that doesn't mean you should neglect your supervisory role.

And what if the project seems to be getting off track? It will probably be difficult for you to resist the urge to take over the job. First, you need to make sure there's a real problem, then define how big a problem it is and determine what needs to be done, like adjusting the steps and time frames, or adding resources.

You obviously need to take action when difficulties arise, but resist the temptation to "rescue" the project yourself. **If you take over a project you had previously delegated, you'll make your team feel that, regardless of their commitment, you're the only one you trust to do it right**. Delegation involves endorsing the work of someone in whom you have confidence. Conversely, lack of confidence creates insecurity. The results achieved will therefore be a reflection of the confidence demonstrated.

Creating an atmosphere conducive to delegation requires a change of perspective. When you transfer some of your responsibilities to your team, you need to have confidence in them and accept any mistakes that might be made. This requires courage on your part to take on the risks involved in delegation.

This process is effective when you accept the fact that you can't do everything yourself, and that you have to use the talents at your disposal to achieve the desired results. And at the end of the process, you'll be the first to benefit from the positive results.

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Post-traumatic counselling

- Round-the-clock service for serious incidents

1.800.668.0193

For more details about the program
www.posactionplus.com

Posaction® Plus
Your management assistance program

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Round-the-clock confidential service

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