

ProSeminar Top Tips Series

Structured Delegation

Taking a structured, or at least systematic approach, to delegation is essential if responsibilities and tasks are to be carried out successfully. This doesn't mean to say that delegation will always be carried out in the same way – much will depend, for instance, on the complexity of the task and the experience of the person being asked to handle it. However the approach does need to be comprehensive which means to say it needs to cover a number of steps all of which the delegator should try to cover in some form or other.

And there's also a responsibility here for anyone receiving delegation – they've also got to ensure that all the elements are covered and need to be proactive in asking the right questions or making the necessary requests to make sure that they are.

Here's useful frame work

1. Decide what to delegate and to whom

Deciding what to delegate involves examining the barriers which may rightly or wrongly restrict delegation. Deciding to whom we should delegate involves not only thinking about people's abilities, but also about their workloads and the way the delegated task fits with their job profile. Jobs may not necessarily be delegated to the person who can do the best

Delegation

'Getting other people to do parts of a job/task/project for which you are responsible and using their time, talent and specialism accordingly'.

'Delegation is the effective use of a shared pool of time and talent –it can go beyond allocating tasks and responsibilities to direct reports and include briefing and commissioning specialists in other departments and even outside the organisation.'

job. You may give it to someone else for whom it provides an opportunity for stretching or development.

2. Explain what needs to be done and why

Explaining what needs to be done and why helps people see the relevance and importance of what they're doing, and gives them a sense of involvement. People will be happy to do even the tedious jobs if they can see they're important. Sharing the objective – explaining the 'why' – also means that the person being briefed can usefully challenge the 'what'. *'If that's what you want to achieve you don't need to that, you only need to do this ...'*

3. Discuss how to do it

Discussing how the job should be done is a two-way affair. Often managers see delegation as a matter of telling a staff member to do something. In practice, managers are often delegating to people with a technical specialism greater than their own. The manager needs to draw on this specialist experience and learn from it so as to be able to ask the right questions and manage the specialist accordingly. Unfortunately, many managers think they ought to be able to do everything their staff can and feel threatened if they can't. The good manager respects the specialism of his/her staff and tries to learn from it.

4. Explore the resources and skills needed

Exploring the resources and skills needed follows on from discussing how the job should be done. *'If that's the way to do the job, what will you need to do it?'* Remember one of the most important resources available to the person you are asking to do the job is their own time. How much time will be needed? What are the implications of taking on this task for their workloads and other priorities?

5. Establish decision-making scope

Establishing the individual's decision-making scope and authority helps them make their own decisions without having constantly to interrupt you and gives them a greater sense of ownership and responsibility.

6. Agree schedules and monitoring methods

Some managers prefer to operate a system of 'management by exception' expecting staff to report only if they encounter problems. With experienced personnel this can be a valid approach. However, there is always the danger that some individuals will not recognise, or

admit to having, a problem until it's too late. 'Management by exception' can be 'hangman management', with people given just enough rope to hang themselves!

7. Check understanding

Checking understanding is an important part of any briefing process. Checking should not be done by asking: 'Got that?' or even: 'Any questions?' It's quite likely that the person involved may think they have understood even if they haven't. The best approach is to ask them to summarise the main points. Differences of understanding and any inadequacies of the brief will then soon emerge.

8. Stick to agreed monitoring methods

Sticking to agreed monitoring methods is common sense. On the one hand it helps to avoid 'the interferer' syndrome. On the other, it ensures that the delegatee feels the job is taken seriously and that it still merits the boss's interest.

9. Help by being available

Being available and giving encouragement reflects the fact that delegation is an on-going process and not a matter of 'buck-passing'. It is important to be accessible to deal with unforeseen problems which may lie beyond the decision-making scope you've agreed with the person doing the task.

10. Check the completed task

Just because you've delegated a task, doesn't mean that you're not responsible for the quality of job. Even good people make mistakes, particularly in a task which requires attention to detail, and it's always useful for someone else to check it over.

11. 'Provide feedback'

Providing feedback completes the circle. People can only perform if they know how well they've done. Praise and constructive criticism are part of the process of motivating and developing people. Feedback also covers letting people know the outcome of the task they've worked on. If, for instance, you've asked someone to work on putting together some figures

Related Courses

- [Managing People & Performance](#)
- [Time Management & Personal Effectiveness](#)
- [Introduction to Management Workshop](#)

All courses are run regularly at our London training venue and are also available on an in-house basis.

as a basis for senior management to make a decision, let them know what senior management decided as a result.

Improving the quality of delegation we receive

If the points above provide a useful guide on how to delegate, they also provide guidance on how to improve the delegation we receive. Fill in the gaps.

- If the delegating manager doesn't explain the why, ask *'what's the ultimate objective here?'*
- Ask for time to think about a task before agreeing how it's going to be done – *'Can I think about this and then come back so that we can discuss the best way to do it.'*
- Check on resources – particularly the time to be used and the priority of the task. *'How long do you want me to spend on this?'* *Do you want me to give this priority over . . .'* *'Is it okay for me to ask . . . for his help on this and can you let him know accordingly?'*
- Check on deadlines and monitoring schedules. *'We haven't discussed monitoring – when do you want a meeting to discuss progress?'*
- Check on decision-making scope. *'If this comes up, are you happy for me to make the decision or is that something I should refer back to you?'*
- Don't rely on the delegating manager to ask you to summarise. Try: *'Let me check my understanding. Can I just summarise and you can tell me if I've missed anything.'*

Helping staff improve the quality of delegation they receive

The framework can also be used to help our staff improve the quality of delegation they receive from us. This is not just a matter of us delegating better but of them helping us to do so by taking on some of the responsibility themselves. They need to be encouraged to fill in any gaps that we might leave in the delegation briefing and ask us the appropriate questions.

Share this model with the whole team and work together to improve delegation.