

By Jeff “Chief” Urbaniak
COLUMNIST (www.AdviceChief.com)

If you are in charge of a team or group of people with an array of resources assigned, you will need to delegate quite often in order to perform effectively. But delegation can be a tricky thing. Inexperienced or ineffective leaders either don't delegate much at all, or they delegate too much to people who are not experienced enough or ready to handle the delegation.

It is important to ease people in when delegating tasks to them. You simply can't dump a bunch of tasks on someone if you want them to succeed. Here's a good sequential process to use when beginning to delegate tasks to an individual:

1) *Ask them to be fact finders only.* This gives them a chance to get their feet wet, become knowledgeable, and to become acquainted with the issues and objectives.

2) *Ask them to make suggestions.* This gets them thinking, and it gives you a chance to understand their thought processes.

3) *Ask them to implement one of their recommendations, but only after you give your approval.* This is an important time for them. When doing this, set them up for success, not failure. And be sure to give lots of encouragement along the way.

4) *Ask them to take action on their own, but to report the results immediately.* This will give them confidence, and you will still be in a position to perform damage control if necessary.

5) *Give complete authority.* This is the final step--what you've been working toward to evolve someone into an effective leader.

Here's an excellent survey to take to determine how effectively you delegate. It was created by leadership expert John Maxwell. Go through and answer accordingly then tabulate your results in accordance with the “Scoring” paragraph at the end of the column.

Delegation Survey:

Questions:

Determine if each of the following statements is True (T) or False (F).

1. Always delegate to the subordinate who has experience with similar tasks. T or F.

2. The person you delegate to should have as much information about the task as possible. T or F.

3. Controls should be built into a delegated task from the beginning. T or F.

4. In delegated tasks, monitoring the method is as important as getting the desired results. T or F.

5. The crucial decisions involved in a delegated task are still considered the territory of the delegator. T or F.

6. Always make the delegated task seem like a challenge even if it's drudgery. T or F.

7. Delegating means assigning work. T or F.

8. Don't offer advice when delegating. T or F.

9. Use the same procedures and systems of accountability with every subordinate when delegating to avoid favoritism. T or F.

10. If a subordinate fails in a delegated task, do not delegate to him or her again. T or F.

Answers:

1. F. If you repeatedly delegate similar tasks to the same people, they won't get additional opportunities to grow. It also shortchanges less experienced subordinates who need a chance to develop.

2. T. The more background information you give the person who is about to do the task, the faster and easier the delegating process works. For more experienced subordinates, you may be able to provide some information and then give them ideas on how to obtain additional information on their own.

3. T. Controls not only help prevent disaster, they also give you the confidence to delegate.

4. F. This is one of the most common pitfalls of an inexperienced delegator.

Results are everything. Demanding that other people use your method can stifle initiative and creativity needed for successful delegation.

5. F. This is another common mistake poor delegators make. With true delegation comes the right and responsibility to make decisions.

6. F. Deceptive characterization of delegated tasks insults subordinates. And it erodes trust.

7. F. True delegation includes handing over the rights and responsibilities to determine what work must be done, how it will be approached, and who will do it.

8. F. Let people handle tasks their own way, but give them as much advice (and vision) as you think they need before they get started. Make yourself available to answer questions, but don't constantly peer over their shoulders or solve their problems for them. Learning to solve problems is part of the development process.

9. F. Tasks are different, and so are people. The difficulty of the task as well as the experience and skill of the person must always be taken into account. When you delegate, tailor the system of accountability to fit the delegatee.

10. F. Don't give up on a subordinate because of a single failure. It might be due to circumstances beyond the person's control. The failure could even be a result of your method of delegation. Examine what went wrong and why.

Scoring:

Give yourself one point for each correct selection you made.

9-10: You're a top-notch delegator.

6-8: You know the fundamentals, but keep learning.

5 or less: You've uncovered a serious weakness in your leadership skills, but don't bask for too long in this. Apply what you've learned in this column over the next year, then come back and take this survey again. I'll bet your score improves!

The more effective you delegate, the more effective you lead.

~ The End ~