

7 Top Tips For Effective Delegation: Skills Towards Work-Life Balance

By Lyndsay Swinton

No matter where or who you are, there is a time and place for effective delegation. Whether it's getting the kids to clean the yard or your accounts manager preparing the annual budget, good delegation skills are essential if you want to achieve a work-life balance. The art of delegation, or doing more by doing less, can be mastered if you heed these 7 quick but reliable tips.

1. No Manager Is An Island.

Even though others may have a different approach or standards, you're setting yourself up to fail if you think you have to do EVERYTHING yourself. Accept that in today's interdependent world, there is a shared responsibility for getting things done. It's not all down to you!

2. Delegate, Don't Abdicate.

Remember if things go wrong, it's ultimately your fault! Assess the risk of failure BEFORE you decide to delegate a task, and manage any risk appropriately. The only person you can blame is you, for not effectively delegating the task at the beginning. And you never know, they might even do it better than you!

3. Crystal Clear Tasks

If you can't define the task to be delegated, it isn't ready for delegation. Good tasks to delegate are; Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timebound.... or in other words "SMART". Fuzzy, vague tasks are impossible to complete or result in such a mess you've squandered more time than you could potentially have saved. Part of the art of effective delegation is creating SMART tasks from fuzzy ones and communicating them clearly.

4. Tools To Do The Job.

It's universally agreed that sledgehammers are way over the top for cracking nuts, and in effective delegation, it's as important you select the right person to do the task. Some people could do the task standing on their head, others may need a bit of direction and coaching. As you decide who should undertake the task, make an assessment of their skill and will and change your approach accordingly.

5. I Say "Tomayto", You Say "Tomaato"

You know what you want to delegate, and to whom, now it's time to communicate what needs to be done. You're both be looking at the task labeled "Tomato" but there's no guarantee you're interpretation is the same. Even if you agree on the pronunciation, a tiny cherry tomato and a large beef tomato are strangely different fruit. Take some time to check understanding of the delegated task, including details such as how to get from A to B, resources required, checkpoints and deadlines.

6. Give Them Enough Rope

There is a spectrum of freedom in decision-making and action taking that you need to consider before, and during, the delegation process. This can vary from "give me the information and I'll decide" through to "you decide and do it, no need to check back with me". Again your approach depends on the risk of failure, your trust in the person and their ability to do the task.

7. How Was It For You?

Effective delegation is about sharing workload, with the added bonus of developing skills and responsibility in others. Maximise the learning experience by taking time for shared reflection of the task once it's completed – what worked, what didn't work and what would you do differently next time? Often the learning is two-way, with you gaining insight into your delegation skills.

These 7 tips for effective delegation will help you achieve a work-life balance, and become more productive by doing less.

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