

Delegating means trusting someone else in your team with work and responsibilities. Why is it so important, and how can we do it better?

Before reading

Do the preparation task first. Then read the article and do the exercises.

Preparation task

Match the definitions (a–h) with the vocabulary (1–8).

Vocabulary

1. leadership
2. burnout
3. overworked
4. to arise
5. to hand over
6. to oversee
7. to discourage
8. innovation

Definition

- a. made to work too hard
- b. the development and use of new ideas and methods
- c. the set of characteristics that make a good leader
- d. to begin to happen or be noticed
- e. extreme physical and emotional tiredness because of working too much or in continuing conditions of stress
- f. to give something to someone else
- g. to watch or organise an activity to make sure it is being done correctly
- h. to make someone feel less confident, enthusiastic or willing to try something

Delegating

It might be tempting to think you can do everything faster and better than your team members. It might be hard to hand over tasks you enjoy doing. But attempting to do everything all by yourself shows poor leadership and can end in personal burnout. You end up overworked, stressed and unable to be the leader your team needs.

Leading a team brings new responsibilities and challenges, and managers need to learn to delegate as much as possible. That means sharing or transferring some of your responsibilities, and trusting other people to do some of the work that you normally do. Effective delegation gives you the time and space to offer the support needed, deal with the problems that arise and keep an eye on the bigger picture – things that a leader should be doing.

As you consider what tasks to delegate, here are five tips on how you can delegate effectively.

1. Start with smaller tasks

If you're worried about handing over large projects, start by delegating the smaller tasks that don't require much overseeing. This will also give your team members time to get used to their new responsibilities.

2. Delegate tasks that will develop your team members

Delegation shouldn't just be about reducing your workload. It should also be about developing your team and giving them learning opportunities. Choose tasks that help their professional development, and allow them time to get better at doing them. By passing on work you are good at doing yourself and training your team members to do it, you're helping them grow professionally.

3. Delegate tasks to people who might like them

A good team leader knows their team well and knows which tasks would suit which person best. Don't just delegate tasks you don't like doing. When people are doing tasks they enjoy, they're more motivated to do the best job they can do.

4. Trust your team

After handing over a task, some managers regularly look over their staff's shoulders and correct every action they see. This is called micromanagement – a style of management where a manager watches and controls what their team is doing too closely. Micromanaging takes almost as much time as doing the task yourself. It's also demotivating for your team, and discourages creativity and innovation. When we delegate, we need to be able to trust that things will get done, just not in the exact way we would do them.

5. Offer support

As a team leader, you need to set clear goals and expectations, communicate timelines and offer guidance where needed. Don't expect your team members to read your mind and understand your expectations when you haven't given them the necessary information. Check in regularly to make sure everything is on track.

It is not easy to delegate, and it takes practice to do it effectively. But it is by sharing responsibilities that we can become a valuable team player and a true leader.

References

<https://www.inc.com/harvey-mackay/6-keys-effective-delegation.html>

https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newLDR_98.htm

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/dailymuse/2011/12/23/6-tips-for-delegating-success/>

Tasks

Task 1

Choose the five tips included in the article.

- _____ Delegate smaller tasks first.
- _____ Delegate only when you feel you have too much to do.
- _____ Get organised and set up a system for sharing out tasks.
- _____ Explain the importance of a task and how it fits into the bigger picture.
- _____ Delegate tasks that can help team members grow.
- _____ Delegate tasks that might motivate individual team members.
- _____ Avoid criticising ways of doing the tasks that might be different from yours.
- _____ Make sure team members know what you want them to do.

Task 2

Read these sentences and circle the correct word.

1. If someone feels extremely tired and overworked, they may be suffering from _____.
a. burnout b. micromanagement c. delegation
2. Being able to delegate shows good _____.
a. domination b. leadership c. micromanagement
3. Delegating tasks gives leaders more time to deal with problems that _____.
a. arise b. happen c. spring
4. When we delegate, we earn the time and space to take on the role of a team _____.
a. player b. expert c. leader
5. It's important to see delegation as an opportunity for professional _____.
a. development b. leadership c. responsibility

6. While leaders shouldn't micromanage, they still need to _____ the tasks and ensure that goals are met.
- a. correct b. set c. oversee

Discussion

What kinds of tasks do you think you should or shouldn't delegate?

Answers

Preparation task

1. c
2. e
3. a
4. d
5. f
6. g
7. h
8. b

Task 1

- Delegate smaller tasks first.
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- Get organised and set up a system for sharing out tasks.
- Explain the importance of a task and how it fits into the bigger picture.
- Delegate tasks that can help team members grow.
- Delegate tasks that might motivate individual team members.
- Avoid criticising ways of doing the tasks that might be different from yours.
- Make sure team members know what you want them to do.

Task 2

1. a
2. b
3. a
4. c
5. a
6. c