# 5 Steps to Effective Delegation

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Anyone who has ever managed people or projects understands the importance of good delegation skills. Effective delegation is built off strategy and forethought. Leaders who delegate effectively understand the importance of knowing the people they work with.

In other words, it is important for leaders to be able to reasonably predict how another person will perform the same task as they would.

## Why Is Delegation Important?

Organizations use delegation as one of many tools intended to develop employees. Employee development comes by increasing job responsibilities and instilling accountability for those duties. Effective delegation helps to identify what others can do – if given the chance.

For instance, let's assume you are considering promoting an employee to a supervisor role. An effective test for that promotion would be to delegate responsibilities that the employee may have when promoted.

Test the employee and if they manage the new responsibilities well, test them with more.

## Reasons Managers Don't Delegate

Managers are not always comfortable delegating high-level tasks to subordinates. There are lots of reasons managers don't delegate:

- The manager is concerned that the employee doesn't have the time or ability to take on additional responsibilities.
- Manager fears that delegation will mean a loss of control.
- The manager feels like they are the only one who knows how to do tasks the right way and doesn't trust that anyone can do it as well as them.
- The manager has the perception that delegating tasks takes away from their authority.

## 5 Steps to Effective Delegation

### 1. Know Your Employees

It is important to pay attention to the skillset and how well employees perform.
Every manager should demonstrate certain competency skills. Pay attention to things like verbal and written communication skills, problem-solving skills, social skills, organizational skills, and negotiating skills.

These are just some examples of competencies employees should develop.

Being able to recognize an employee's strengths can help a manager make the right choice for delegating tasks.

## 2. Explain the Task

Don't assume the employee will automatically know how to do a new task. When delegating a task, especially the first few times, help the employee think through the necessary steps to accomplish the assignment.

Guide them through the process and then let them go. For instance, if you are delegating supervisory responsibility to an employee, have coaching sessions with the employee and talk them through the important steps of managing employees.

## 3. Monitor the Tasks

When you first delegate tasks to others it is important to monitor how the employee is performing the task so that you can make needed changes or adjustments. For instance, if you are delegating the task of running a staff meeting, take the time to observe how the employee manages the meeting and hold employees to things like meeting ground rules.

After you observe, have a feedback session with the employee and praise them for what went well, and coach them on ways to do a better job next time. Monitoring also helps identify any issues that may arise. Such as the need for additional resources, task capability, etc.

## 4. Coach the Employee

Give the employee feedback as they perform the task and take the opportunity to teach or enlighten the employee as needed. This coaching opportunity can help develop other leadership competencies.

For instance, let's say you delegated the responsibility of planning the annual staff picnic. The employee planned the picnic but went over the budget. This is a great time to teach them the discipline of budgeting limited resources.

## 5. Develop the Employee

As the employee demonstrates the ability to perform delegated tasks, increase their responsibility. Keep in mind that not all employees will have the ability to take on more responsibility.

Some employees have a limit as to how much they can handle without it affecting their stress level. That is OK. Target those employees who have the capacity, willingness, and interest in growing and help them increase responsibility. This offers them new and interesting responsibilities and allows them to focus on higher-level tasks.

## Examples of tasks that can be delegated:

- *Anything that is time-consuming and not in your skill set._*
  For example, creating an excel spreadsheet or PowerPoint presentation.

- *Decisions are made on a regular basis.*
  For example, what time to hold the weekly staff meeting.
- *Tasks that are time-consuming and don't require a high level of skill.*
- *Creative tasks that can be used to develop creativity in others*.
  For example, coming up with the theme for the staff picnic.
- *Anything that will provide a learning experience for another person*.
  For example, asking someone to facilitate a meeting so you can work on other projects.
- *Research is a great task to delegate.*
  For example, ask the employee to research catering vendors for the upcoming employee picnic.
- Any task that should be learned by many people.
  For example, teaching everyone how to program the switchboard so anyone can do it when needed.

## 5 Things that Should NEVER be Delegated

### 1. Disciplining Employees

If an employee reports to you, you are the only person who should discipline them. This is not a task to be delegated.

### 2. Vision Casting

Vision casting is something that needs to come from the top of the organization and cannot be delegated.

### 3. Writing Departmental Goals

While employees can and should have input into writing department goals, the responsibility for making sure goals are written should not be delegated.

### 4. Performance Appraisals

Writing and delivering performance appraisals to employees who report to you should never be delegated. As a manager, you are the best person to give feedback and assess employee performance.

### 5. Confidential Tasks

There are some tasks that are too sensitive or confidential to delegate. A manager needs to use wisdom in determining which tasks are ok to pass on and which they should do themselves.

Delegation is a necessary leadership competency.
If done effectively, it can allow employees the opportunity to develop and take on additional responsibilities.
But more importantly, it allows a manager to delegate jobs and gives them the necessary time to perform higher-level tasks.