

How Delegating Can Help You Live a Better Life

You may have gone into business because you like being in control of everything. You're probably doing things you know you do well yourself, and you get a strong sense of satisfaction from that.

But, if you want to keep your sanity in a growing business and live a better life then it's vital to learn how to delegate to your employees.

Why is it so difficult to delegate?

There are many reasons. Perhaps:

- It seems quicker to do a task yourself than explain it to someone else and then have to spend time correcting the inevitable mistakes.
- You worry that your employee will completely mess up the job causing you a big problem to sort out.
- You feel threatened that your employee might do it better than you do.
- Your employee might find something wrong with the way you do it.
- You doubt your ability to confront your employee if a problem develops.
- You don't want to give tedious tasks to your employees.

These barriers are common and understandable, but you can overcome them. Here are 10 important principles to keep in mind.

1. Focus on the benefits

Delegating gives you more time and space to be able to do what you do best. It will help you to keep the 'big picture' mentality you need to oversee the business. Something that becomes very difficult when you're bogged down in minor details.

Your employees benefit too. Because they provide new challenges, delegated tasks are often more motivating than you realise. You'll be helping your staff to develop and increase the contribution they are making to your business. Who knows you may even uncover hidden talents.

You won't necessarily make things easier straight away, but you will quickly see your business become more efficient and effective. The results you get will be well worth the effort.

2. Delegate at the right time

To put it simply, any time is the right time.

If you have too much to do and not enough time to deal with an important issue, then delegate.

When you take on a new employee with a certain skill, or you see that an existing one has potential, then don't hesitate to delegate appropriate tasks to them.

3. Delegate the right tasks

As a start, concentrate on smaller, routine jobs. These are usually easier to explain and pass over to someone else.

Write down a list of all the small jobs you do during the day. Consider which ones aren't really good uses of your time and delegate them.

Make sure that you're delegating a task that someone can be successful at. Few things are worse than delegating an impossible task. It won't help you and it'll be a negative experience for the person you delegate to.

4. Delegate to the right person

Check that the person you are delegating to has the skills and ability to be able to carry out the task. And check that they have the availability themselves to be able to do the task.

The tendency can be to always delegate to your most capable employees, but you could end up putting too much pressure on them. So spread the tasks you're delegating among several employees.

5. Adopt a positive approach

You will get what you expect. When you expect that delegating will result in failure it usually does.

On the other hand if you can be positive about it, you will give your employees confidence. They want to know that you believe in them. Once they sense that they'll become much more likely to succeed.

6. Discuss the task thoroughly

If someone leaves you unsure how to start the task then you haven't delegated effectively.

Make sure that you allow time for an in-depth discussion about the task. Explain clearly what you're expecting and any targets and deadlines.

Before the person you delegate to starts the task, ask yourself these questions:

- Do they understand what the task is?
- Do they know when it needs to be done by?
- Do they understand why it needs to be done?
- Do they know how to start the task?
- Do they have a plan?
- Do they know what support is available to them?

7. Give the tools and authority

Delegating tasks without giving your employees the tools and authority to carry out the task is unfair.

Provide the tools or make sure that your employee knows where they are. Sometimes small, but crucial details are missed. For example, web-based tasks usually require knowledge of usernames and passwords. Leaving an employee to work things out for themselves is a recipe for frustration and incomplete tasks.

And if you're delegating responsibilities, make sure everyone involved knows you've done this.

8. Support and review

It's often a good idea to check in from time to time to see how the task is going. This will prevent someone from straying too far from the task set. At the same time be careful not to be seen to be micro-managing the task or that you're expecting work to be done ahead of the schedule you previously agreed.

Once the task is done, review it and give feedback. Make a special point of finding specific aspects where you can praise your employee. If there are some aspects that need to be improved find out what went wrong and why.

Also be conscious of making sure that you provide fair rewards where you've increased someone's responsibilities. Saying nothing and hoping it won't be noticed is unwise.

9. Manage your expectations

The common tendency is to think that my way of doing things is the only way. This can be a problem when you delegate and the other person approaches the task in a different way to you. Recognise that people work in different ways. You need to concentrate on the results, not on the methods.

Also, be patient. When you give someone something new they won't be able to do it as quickly as you straightaway. They'll need time and perhaps more time than you think. But if you are patient the results will pay.

10. Have faith

Don't be put off by what in the end are minor errors. Concentrate on correcting any mistakes that you make yourself in the delegating process, but avoid dwelling on your employee's mistakes. Focus instead on their good qualities and attributes. Let them use these to help you take your business and life forward.

In short, have faith in your employees and over the long run you will be rewarded.