

Quick Guide: Successful Delegation

We all like to feel in control of our responsibilities. Sometimes we continue to perform certain tasks because we feel we should, or because we like the task. But if doing the task is holding you back, you need to delegate it. Consider which of these four main reasons makes you reluctant to delegate: accuracy, fear, preference and speed, and use the **top ten tips** below to help you delegate successfully:

1. **Define the task** and confirm in your own mind that the task is suitable to be delegated. There are only three kinds of task which cannot be delegated: 1) disciplining; 2) those requiring a specific authority level or qualification; 3) those involving confidentiality. Everything else can be delegated!
2. **Write down the reasons for delegating** to a particular person or team. What are they going to get out of it? What are you going to get out of it? Beware of delegating just because the task is boring!
3. **Assess ability and training needs (accuracy)**. Is the other person or team capable of doing the task? Do they understand what needs to be done? Could they become 'qualified'? If not, provide training and guidance.
4. **Explain the reasons (fear)** why the task or responsibility is being delegated. And why to that person or team? What is its importance and relevance? Where does it fit in the overall scheme of things?
5. **State the required results (preference)**. How must the task be done? How will it be measured? Make sure they know how you will decide that the job is being done successfully.
6. **Agree deadlines (speed)**. When must the job be finished? When are the review dates? If the task is complex and has parts or stages, what are the priorities?
7. **Confirm understanding** of the task and agree how you will check all is OK. If you don't confirm this in advance, it will seem like interference or lack of trust when you do.
8. **Support and communicate**. Who else needs to know what is going on? For example, your peers, their co-workers, your manager?
9. **Feedback on results regularly**. Let them know how they are doing and whether they have achieved their aims. Don't forget to praise them for what they have done well and transfer any new responsibilities to their job description.
10. **The hard part**. The mark of a successful delegator is the ability to absorb the consequences if all has not gone to plan, but pass on the credit for success.

Compiled by Des Whitehorn