

DELEGATION

Competency Development Guide

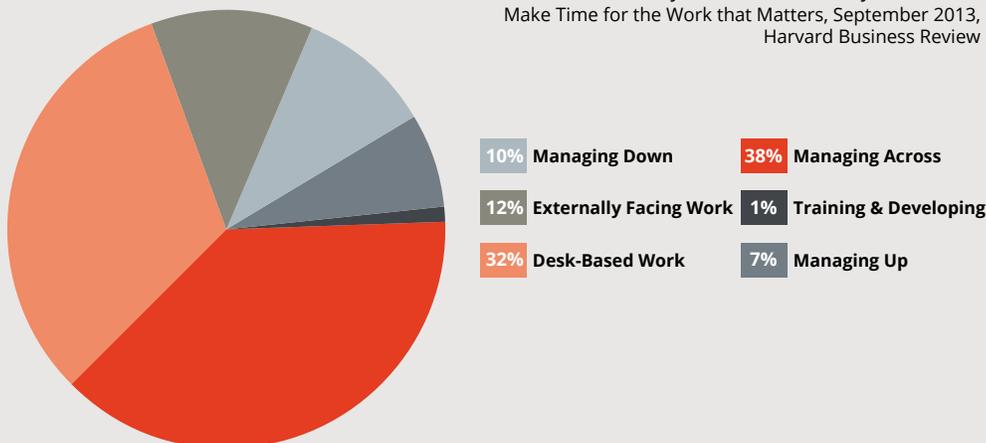
Delegation Defined:

Empowering another person to make decisions, perform tasks or take responsibility for completing projects or job roles.

Is delegation important? Yes. It's an important managerial skill. But the value of delegation goes much further than simply forming one aspect of foundational management and supervisory skills. Learning to delegate improves productivity and makes managers and supervisors significantly more productive.

“ More hours in the day. It's one thing everyone wants, and yet it's impossible to attain. But what if you could free up significant time—maybe as much as 20% of your workday—to focus on the responsibilities that really matter? ”

Julian Birkinshaw and Jordan Cohen
Make Time for the Work that Matters, September 2013,
Harvard Business Review



Delegating tasks can be a complex competency for managers to master. In fact, it's a competency most managers struggle with at many points in their careers. Once things are delegated, the manager loses control and for many people that is an uncomfortable feeling. But in the end, delegating to team members works to make the manager more productive, and it gives members of the team opportunities to grow professionally and apply skills to new and challenging tasks.

The transformation from individual contributor to manager is one of the most difficult people make during the course of the professional career. Additionally, the performance of our managers ends up being a major factor in a wide range of vitally important areas that all impact our bottom line. Our managers' performance influences employee retention, productivity, engagement, quality and a host of other important business outcomes. Helping our managers become more productive and effective should be a priority for every employee development program, and delegation should be a competency that is at the foundation of every manager's success.

THE TRANSLATION

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The transition from individual contributor to manager represents a profound psychological adjustment - A TRANSFORMATION - as managers contend with their new responsibilities

New managers must learn how to lead others, to win trust and respect, to motivate, and to strike the right balance between delegation and control. It is a transition many new managers fail to make.

SOURCE: Linda Hill
Associate Professor
Harvard Business School

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Supporting Behaviors

Identify the specific tasks or parts of tasks to delegate. While this may seem painfully obvious, it's actually not always an easy first step. While not every task will easily fall into one of these three "buckets", this is a great place to start.

Stop – things you can stop doing with little to no negative effect. Are there tasks that take up time that can really just end? Examples might be cross functional meetings that serve no purpose or for which the purpose no longer makes sense, or time consuming tasks that don't facilitate the achievement of any meaningful goals for you or your team.

Off-load – these are tasks that can be delegated with a minimum of effort and disruption. Examples might be handing off responsibility for a team project to trusted members of an existing team, or tasks that other team members understand and already perform at a high level of mastery. Ask yourself: "Are there PARTS of broader tasks or projects that other team members can perform?"

Long-term redesign – This is work that needs to be restructured based upon changed conditions or new information, and may not YET be ready to delegate.

Selects the appropriate person or team.

Finding the right things to delegate only gets the manager halfway there. The manager must select the right person for the job. This means the managers must demonstrate a clear understanding of the skills and capabilities of his team in order to effectively match the delegated tasks to the abilities of the person to which the task is delegated.

Allowing the person/team to whom the task has been delegated the freedom to actually perform.

In other words – get out of the way! Managers who delegate and then "hover" to "keep an eye on things" end up communicating – inadvertently – a lack of trust in the person they've asked to do something. Team members must have the space and room to perform.

Clear communications about the scope of the delegation.

This is a crucial behavior to the success of any effort to delegate tasks, roles or responsibilities. For instance, it's exasperating to delegate a major project BUT not delegate the authority to make the important decisions to get the project completed. Make sure the scope of the delegation matches the scope of the expected outcomes.

SUPPORTING BEHAVIOR STATEMENTS

To identify competency skill gaps consider outlining key supporting behaviors that are important in your organization. You can assign a basic Likert scale to each behavior statement (examples outlined below) and have the employee and the employee's manager rate proficiency.

DEVELOPING OTHERS:

Looks for and creates situations that foster others' development. Assists others in acquiring the skills needed for their job.

BUILDING TEAMWORK:

Assists the group in effectively using individuals' talents and contributions. Removes barriers and identifies resources to assist the team.

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Development Activities and Suggestions

Delegation is often promoted as something that benefits us as individuals - it helps us be more productive and effective. However, there are additional benefits that are just as, if not more, important. First, delegating demonstrates you trust and value your team's skills and capabilities. Second, delegation provides the opportunity to strengthen existing skills or build new ones. Consider these additional benefits when working on development activities.

Basic questions to develop delegation skills:

- What can't you do?
- What shouldn't you do?
- Who else should do it?
- What do they need to get it done?
- How do you make sure it gets done right?

Delegation Process:

- What tasks?
- What measures? What does success look like and how do you know?
- What are your targets?
- Establish timelines
- Are you delegating to an individual or a team?
- What training, resources and support are needed?
- Monitor and evaluate

Recommended Resources from The BizLibrary Collection

Becoming a Great Leader: Empowering Followers

LEAD NOW: Delegating

Leadership: Delegating Authority

Q&A: Delegating and Empowering

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SUPPORTING BEHAVIOR STATEMENTS

CARING ABOUT DIRECT REPORTS:

Monitors workloads and shows appreciation for extra effort.
Treats direct reports equitably.

EMPOWERING OTHERS:

Allows others to make mistakes and take risks to learn and grow.
Gives others the freedom to have control of their tasks and duties.
Provides guidance and support for others as they take on new challenges.

MANAGING PERFORMANCE:

Adjusts work activity and desired outcomes based on changes in business strategy.
Establishes means of measuring performance and objectives.