CHAPTER 1

THE ROLE OF DELEGATION
IN MANAGEMENT

By the end of this chapter, the student will be able to:

1. Define the practice of delegation.
2. Differentiate delegation decisions from other routine supervisory activities.
3. List five basic misunderstandings about delegation and management.
4. Describe the relationship between delegation practices and staff member motivation.
5. Explain the impact of delegation on organizational structure and management "span of control."

INTRODUCTION

We are living in interesting times. The changes we have witnessed in the past 25 years have profoundly altered the way we live, eat, dress, communicate, process information, purchase goods and services, and handle financial transactions, to name only a few obvious examples. Furthermore, specialists who study macrolevel trends in our society suggest that we are in for more of the same for the foreseeable future. Considering a few of the more evident trends provides a useful frame of reference for those who are in management today and will be coping with the impact of these trends tomorrow. Since this is a course on delegation, and not a treatise on social evolution or public policy, we will limit our discussion to a brief summary of the trends that seem to have the most important implications for our subject.

COMPETITIVENESS
AND PRODUCTIVITY

The United States participates in what is increasingly a global economy. We no longer dominate the world economy as we did during the years following World War II, through the decades of the 1950s, 1960s, and even
early 1970s. The OPEC oil shocks of the 1970s attracted the attention of governmental policymakers, economists, and business executives alike, as perhaps nothing short of another world war could have. Given the relatively plentiful oil/energy supplies of more recent years, we tend to forget the trauma of that experience and the havoc wrought in our economic system, even though in some ways we are still living with the aftershocks. The dramatic loss of market share that American firms have experienced at the hands of foreign competitors has had an indelible impact on our views of quality, productivity, cost-effectiveness, staffing patterns, and management practices throughout every corner of American enterprise.

At major companies such as General Motors, Ford, Chrysler, General Electric, Mobil, and literally thousands of others, major operating units have been merged, reorganized, and/or otherwise shrunk in size to become more competitive. Entire layers of management—in some cases several layers—have been eliminated in many of these firms, while business has remained stable or, in some cases, grown dramatically. Since these companies have eliminated thousands of "management positions," it should be obvious that those remaining have been and will continue to be profoundly influenced by the changes. In simple terms, there is, without a doubt, more work per manager for those remaining.

**ECONOMIC SHIFTS**

During the early to mid-1900s our country evolved from an agrarian society to an industrial society and a primarily manufacturing-driven economy. Manufacturing's share of the gross national product (GNP) peaked in the mid-1950s and has been declining since. Concurrently, the service components of the economy continue to grow and by the year 2000 are projected to account for close to 80 percent of GNP. This accelerating shift has dramatic implications for management. The difference stems from the fact that manufacturing, or production of "goods," lends itself easily to centralization of operations to achieve economies of scale, efficient use of capital and new technologies, and so on.

Many service jobs, on the other hand, tend to be located where and when the customer wants them. Among the implications of this trend are fewer people in the average work unit, but at the same time perhaps even less direct contact between managers and their staff people. More varied and flexible schedules and more part-time staff almost guarantee less direct contact between supervisors and staff in such positions. Contrary to popular belief, the education levels and technical sophistication required in a high percentage of these new service jobs will create new challenges as well. "Between now and the year 2000, for the first time in history a majority of new jobs will require a postsecondary education." Literally, it will be impossible to manage staff in organizations of the future in the same way as has been common practice in the past.

**DEMOGRAPHIC SHIFTS**

The population is undergoing a number of significant changes that will affect organizations and their management in many ways. In terms of work force

---

composition, if homogeneity was the watchword of the past, "diversity" will unquestionably be the more accurate descriptor in the future. Among the projected changes in the labor pool are a continued increase in the participation of women, an increasing mix of races and foreign nationals, and an overall composition that has a larger proportion of middle-aged and older workers. The skills, values, expectations, and priorities of such a work force will undoubtedly influence their behavior as employees and, in turn, the ways in which their efforts can be successfully managed.

**RAPIDITY OF CHANGE**

Finally, underlying these other very significant changes that are apparently inevitable is an ever-accelerating rate at which change is occurring. Rapid and far-reaching technological innovation is leaving little unchanged in its wake. This demands more highly educated and skilled workers, more training, and more frequent retraining. It also suggests the importance of newer approaches to old problems. More cross-training, more job-sharing, and more team-oriented approaches to work are among the new strategies that will play an increasingly important role in tomorrow's organizations. Managers obviously must deal with these monumental upheavals in the traditional environments with which most are familiar and comfortable.

The future is not without its challenges for those who choose the profession of management. How does it all fit? What impact will these trends have on the management process in the future? And specifically, since this is a course on delegation, what role will delegation play in helping managers cope with the demands they will face in the future?

**WHAT DELEGATION IS**

Perhaps nothing is more basic to the work managers do than the process of delegation. Indeed, if one can embrace a common definition of management as being "the accomplishment of work through others," it is delegation that primarily differentiates managers from those who are not considered managers.

As common as the term might seem, not everyone defines delegation in the same way. For the purposes of this course delegation will be defined in the following way: Delegation is the assignment of one or more meaningful tasks or responsibilities, either operational or managerial in nature, to a subordinate or subordinates.

Throughout the balance of this course we will examine the key dimensions and behaviors considered to be important elements in effective delegation. At the same time we will consider the impact of recent history on the management process and the inevitable implications for the delegation process, now and in the foreseeable future.

**WHAT DELEGATION IS NOT**

Some writers define delegation broadly to include any and all instances where managers assign or entrust a task or responsibility to subordinates.
In this course we are going to draw a clear distinction between the trivial and the meaningful assignment of work. We will distinguish between permanent and temporary delegation of responsibilities. Our focus will be on the delegation process as it relates to the assignment of a meaningful part of operations or management to one or more subordinates.

In the following chapters our discussion of delegation will not, on the whole, refer to simple tasks that may be assigned at the whim of a manager. In keeping with our definition of delegation, asking, telling, or requiring a subordinate to bring a manager a cup of coffee is not delegation; it is an errand. Furthermore, assigning the responsibility of having a steaming hot cup of coffee on the desk awaiting a manager's arrival each morning at eight is not delegation as we will define it. Neither is the assignment of such chores as calling a cab, making dinner reservations, selecting a birthday gift for the manager's spouse, getting the company car serviced, or calling a client to say that the manager will be late for an appointment. These are all tasks that managers may, at one time or another, ask subordinates to perform. However, these tasks more closely resemble personal valet services than the delegation of work-related tasks. Regrettably, managers must cast this very broad set of tasks aside despite the fact that they may considerably simplify their lives while also satisfying one characteristic of effective delegation—that is, freeing the manager's time for tasks that are likely to make a broader contribution to the organization’s success.

Finally, delegation—as we will define it—is not the assignment of totally programmed tasks where all responsibilities are predetermined. To assign an employee to an operator's job on a turret lathe is not delegation. To place an employee in a supervisory position is not delegation. To promote a supervisor to a department head's position is not delegation. Even though these decisions indicate that certain responsibilities have been "delegated," these are job design and staffing decisions, which are uniquely different from delegation.

How Is DELEGATION DIFFERENT?

What, then, is unique about delegation? How does it differ from the other management actions or functions described above? Traditionally, management scholars have preached the five functions of management: planning, organizing, coordinating, directing, and controlling. Where does delegation fit into this scheme? Delegation may be a part of any of these functions. On the other hand, any of these functions, or parts of any of the five, may be delegated.

There are other processes that are a pervasive part of the management scheme. Two of these key processes are communicating and decision making. Communication is the conduit through which all management action flows. There could be no planning, organizing, coordinating, directing, controlling, or delegating without communicating.

All of these managerial functions at some stage also require decision making. Managers make thousands of decisions. Some are simple, some complex. Some are novel and some routine. Some are significant. Some are so trivial as to go almost unnoticed. The decision-making process is the
essence of management. However, no manager in an organization of any size can possibly make all the necessary decisions.

Consider the growth of a business from a one-person enterprise to a business that employs one, five, ten, and eventually dozens of people. As the only worker in a one-person shop, the owner must make all the decisions. With one subordinate, this is no longer a necessity, yet the owner is still able to make all the decisions if he or she chooses. This still may be true with five employees, ten, or more. The manager (or, in this case, the owner) is still able to pull all the strings—to make all management decisions, to personally handle all critical management functions. However, at some point this ceases to be true. Size and complexity combine to make it more and more difficult for the manager to be in all the places he or she needs to be at once. This same analogy holds true in a larger business where a department or other organizational subunit grows in importance, size, and staff.

Effective decision making is the essence of successful management. Decisions of whether or not to delegate, when to delegate, what to delegate, and to whom to delegate are among the most critical decisions managers make. If delegation decisions are not effective, management cannot be effective. This relationship is straightforward. Once an organization reaches a certain size, an effective manager must be an effective delegator.

MISUNDERSTANDINGS ABOUT DELEGATION AND MANAGEMENT

In addition to certain questions about definition, there are other misconceptions and misunderstandings about delegation.

Misunderstanding One: Good Delegators Are Good Managers. The first misunderstanding that should be clarified is that good delegators are by definition good managers. We said previously that an effective manager must be an effective delegator. The converse is not necessarily true. Being a good delegator might be a prerequisite; but, by itself, it does not guarantee that a person will be a good manager.

Many other characteristics are required of good managers. They must be good planners, organizers, communicators, and coordinators. They must have well-developed interpersonal skills. They must know the organization as a whole and be aware of the relationships and the interdependencies between organizational units and subunits. They must possess a logical mind, an awareness of problems, and an ability to perceive reasonable solutions. They must monitor progress, provide feedback, take corrective action when necessary, control costs, control quality, and fulfill many other obligations.

In addition, good managers must possess a reasonable level of technical understanding of the area for which they are responsible. The degree of technical sophistication required to be successful depends on the organization; the nature of the work; and the relative knowledge, skill, and experience possessed by those to whom responsibilities might be delegated.

Finally, good managers must be aware of the decisions and management functions that may be appropriately delegated.
Misunderstanding Two: Managers Should Delegate Whenever Possible. The key word in this phrase is "possible." As long as a manager has at least one available subordinate, delegation is possible. There are many times, however, when delegation is possible but not really practical. For example, a particular task or responsibility might need to be done only rarely. In such cases, the time that it might take to explain the task to a subordinate or to train a subordinate to do something a manager is already capable of doing may be a greater burden to the manager than the manager simply doing the job him- or herself. Also, the critical nature of a particular responsibility might require such a detailed and careful review of someone else's work that it would be better if the manager did it. In other cases, delegation might create a situation where a subordinate is so overwhelmed that he or she cannot reasonably be expected to complete the task or responsibility in a timely and effective manner.

Many other examples could be given. The point to remember, and one that will be repeated throughout this course, is that practicality should be the guiding principle. A manager should delegate when such action makes a practical contribution to the organization, creates some real benefit for the organization, and does not create disadvantages that exceed the benefits.

There are tasks or responsibilities that are prime candidates for delegation. In such situations, delegation is both possible and appropriate. There are other situations in which delegation would be possible but, for one reason or another, is not viewed as appropriate. There is a third class of situations where it might be appropriate and even desirable to delegate responsibilities, but for any of a variety of reasons it may not be possible or practical to do so. Finally, there is a set of managerial responsibilities that are both impossible and inappropriate to delegate.

In Chapter 5 we will take an in-depth look at what tasks and responsibilities should be delegated; to whom they should and should not be delegated; when certain responsibilities are best delegated and under what conditions; and, finally, the responsibilities that should be delegated to others.

Misunderstanding Three: The Higher the Decision Maker, the Better the Decision. Another commonly held belief is that the higher the level of the decision maker, the better the quality of the decision. Whether this is true or not depends entirely on the nature of the decision and the qualifications of the decision maker. This view, however, prevailed throughout most of the twentieth century and, indeed, is still prevalent in some organizations today. It is this view that led to vastly bloated bureaucratic structures in many business and government organizations alike.

While it is true that some decisions and managerial functions should be handled at the higher levels of management, the importance of the managerial level in making effective decisions should not be oversold. Furthermore, even if the higher-level manager could make better decisions consistently, he or she soon would be overwhelmed with the sheer volume of work.

From studies of the group decision-making process, researchers have long known that a group can frequently produce higher-quality decisions than an individual. This is partly due to the interchange of ideas and the thought processes this interchange generates. Another reason for the higher quality of group decisions is the direct knowledge or information that certain members of the group contribute, knowledge that may not have been commonly known to others within the group. This same observation can be made regarding the decision-making ability of managers at different levels in
MISUNDERSTANDINGS ABOUT DELEGATION AND MANAGEMENT

the organization. The knowledge or information necessary to make effective
decisions may or may not be directly available at any given management
level. In such cases, it may be necessary to pass information from level to
level prior to decisions being made or actions taken. This results in ineffi-
ciency at the best, and perhaps ineffectiveness as well. Delegation of the
decision-making responsibility might be a better strategy.

One of the corporate trends mentioned earlier in this chapter was the
reorganization of our major enterprises and the concurrent shrinkage of
whole layers of management. This has been accomplished by increasing use
of technology to effect necessary management controls. Even more critical,
though, has been the reallocation of responsibilities and the tendency to
push decision making downward in the organizational hierarchy.

This downward shift in responsibility and accountability moves
decision making closer to the organization-customer interface. Not
only does it achieve greater cost-effectiveness, which is so important
in an increasingly competitive environment, but it allows organizations
to be more sensitive and responsive to customer needs and to
to changes in the competitive arena. This is an important element in
what we might describe as customer-driven organizational design and
a key part of any customer-driven management strategy. Whether an
organization is a provider of goods or services, such a customer orien-
tation has become increasingly important. Further, it is accepted
among management scholars that it is an absolute essential for success
in a global economy.

Misunderstanding Four: Delegation Implies Diminished Control. Earlier we indi-
cated that monitoring activities and maintaining control are part of effec-
tive management. Control is indeed an important (most would say criti-
cal) management function. One of the reasons why managers are reluctant,
or refuse, to delegate is that they fear losing control. To many managers,
the word delegation seems to imply diminished control.

If managers were to consider the problem objectively, they would have to
admit that doing the task themselves probably provides the maximum level
of control-at least for that particular task or responsibility. However, this is
a very narrow view of control. How many other tasks and responsibilities are
not as closely monitored when managers are doing one specific task? Is con-
trol over other areas increased or diminished? Has the refusal to delegate
contributed to a greater ability to control or to a lesser one?

From our discussion, it is obvious that the relationship between
delegation and control is not a simple one. Failure to delegate might
lead to a weakened ability to control tasks that are of greater impor-
tance than those a manager is reluctant to delegate for fear of "losing
control." (Such trade-offs will be considered in greater detail in
Chapter 6.) In any case, to conclude that delegation necessarily
diminishes control is clearly an oversimplification and in many cases
clearly wrong.

Delegating effectively implies that all tasks and responsibilities will
be completed in as satisfactory a manner as they would have been
completed had they not been delegated. This implication will be
essential to our definition of effective delegation-that the results
obtained are at least as good or better than they would have been had
the responsibilities not been delegated.
CHAPTER I  THE ROLE OF DELEGATION IN MANAGEMENT

Misunderstanding Five: Delegation Is Abdication.  Some managers seem to have the impression that they are responsible for personally accomplishing all tasks and responsibilities for which they are accountable. Furthermore, they feel that delegating critical functions and tasks is, in effect, abdicating their management responsibilities. This, of course, is a naive view, but one that is occasionally reinforced by criticism from superiors and by other challenges to delegation attempts made by managers.

There is a story of a young executive who was transferred to a new location as general plant superintendent in a major manufacturing facility. On the staff at this facility was a young man whose title was assistant plant superintendent. Before long, the new superintendent was delegating to the assistant such tasks as ordering supplies, and planning and scheduling maintenance. It soon became apparent that the assistant resented some of these tasks. Some time passed before the cause of this resentment and resistance was understood. The assistant felt that the delegated functions were the rightful responsibilities of the superintendent. He also felt that the delegation of such functions was a shirking of responsibilities by the superintendent. The assistant's feelings were the result of the distinctly different styles of the new superintendent, who was a delegator both by nature and design, and the former superintendent, who believed in doing it all himself. Under the previous superintendent the assistant had been little more than an errand boy, despite his title as assistant superintendent. He was now being asked to manage.

An interesting sidelight to this story is that the newly appointed superintendent had been forewarned of the potential for resentment and resistance on the part of his assistant. He was told that the primary reason this employee had been passed over for the promotion was the fact that he had been entrusted with little real responsibility by his previous superior. The new superintendent had specific instructions to demand more of the assistant for reasons of personal development so as to allow management to better evaluate his potential. The superintendent had not shared these instructions with his new assistant.

The assistant resisted his new responsibilities because he didn't understand the reason behind them; the superintendent didn't understand this resistance because he wasn't aware of how his assistant felt. Also contributing to the problem was the former superintendent's basic ignorance of management principles—he did not understand that good managers accomplish more through others than they could ever accomplish themselves. The former superintendent (a nondelegator) had been the primary role model for the young assistant. The assistant also did not understand, as many do not, that delegation is not an abdication of responsibilities. It is not what is popularly identified as "passing the buck." It is not a shirking of management responsibilities. When a manager delegates, the final accountability for successful completion of the task remains with the delegator. A manager is merely enlisting the help of a subordinate in fulfilling a responsibility or task. In the end, the manager will be held accountable.

What finally happened between the new superintendent and the assistant? Once the basic communication gap relating to expectations and motives was bridged, the assistant was much happier with his new and
DELEGATION AND MOTIVATIONAL THEORY

Some years ago Abraham Maslow offered a theory of human motivation. The hub of his theory was that people are motivated to satisfy a variety of different needs and that these needs tend to form a hierarchy in terms of importance. That is, he felt that certain needs, called lower-order needs, dominate others until they are satisfied, and then other needs, called higher-order needs, become significant (see Exhibit 1-1).

It is important to note that lower-order needs are not less important than higher-order needs. Lower-order needs are more or less important at

Exhibit 1-1. Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs

expanded responsibilities. The superintendent eventually assumed the general manager’s position at the plant, and the assistant was promoted to the plant superintendent’s position (a position for which he previously had been overlooked). The manner in which the assistant handled his expanded responsibilities played a significant role in the decision to promote him to plant superintendent.

DELEGATION AND MOTIVATIONAL THEORY

This course is not a course in theory. However, some theoretical concepts and ideas can help us better understand the real significance of delegation in the management process. Such a discussion can shed some light on the impact delegation may have on employee satisfaction and motivation.

a given point in time. Lower-order needs must be satisfied before higher-order needs exercise any significant influence.

PHYSIOLOGICAL NEEDS
Physiological needs are at the base of the needs hierarchy. Maslow saw these as the most basic and, therefore, the most dominant of all needs. These needs include such things as hunger, thirst, the body's need for oxygen, and the sex drive. It is obvious that even among these basic needs there is an order of importance. Clearly, you can survive much longer without food than without water. Similarly, you can survive much longer without water than without oxygen.

SAFETY AND SECURITY NEEDS
Safety and security needs refer primarily to freedom from bodily threat, but they might also relate to warmth, comfort, financial security, and some ability to control your destiny. Emotional security may be likened to physical security in interpreting human behavior. People have a need to be able to predict—reduce the amount of uncertainty in their lives.

SOCIAL NEEDS
Social needs fall in the middle of the hierarchy. These needs include the need to belong and the need for love, affection, group affiliation, and friendship. The need to be liked and accepted by others is a powerful one. Few people enjoy being outcasts, and most will go to great lengths to avoid it. This is the genesis of what we know as peer pressure, a significant social influence in our society that shapes behaviors in most environments.

ESTEEM NEEDS
Esteem needs include not only the esteem of others, but self-esteem as well. Most people want to be recognized and respected for their accomplishments. They value the respect of family, friends, and work associates. But for many people this is not enough. They seek a feeling of self-worth, of importance, of pride in their achievements. The concept of self-esteem is not simple. Many factors can be viewed as contributors. Independence, the amount of control one has over one's job, relative levels of skill or knowledge, years of experience, the respect one is accorded by others, and the responsibilities with which one is vested represent only a few of the potential influences on our self-esteem.

SELF-ACTUALIZATION NEEDS
The need for self-actualization is at the top of the ladder. It is a rather vague concept that has been defined as becoming all that you are capable of and desire to become. The need for self-actualization is difficult to define and impossible to measure. It might best be thought of as a maximization of all other human needs and desires. Or it might suggest that there really is no ceiling on human motivation.

Maslow did not intend his theory to be taken as a road map to human behavior—it is useful only as a general set of rules for understanding
human behavior. For example, it is not necessarily true that, for every indi-
vidual, social needs are more fundamental than esteem or ego needs.
Maslow believed simply that this order holds true for most people.

Other theories of motivation relate directly and easily to Maslow's theory.
Douglas McGregor's well-known Theory X and Theory Y assumption is
one example. McGregor's Theory X summarizes what he identifies as the
traditional authoritarian approach to management. This approach holds
that the average human being has a natural dislike of work and will avoid
it whenever possible. According to Theory X, people must be bribed,
directed, threatened, coerced, and otherwise controlled to assure their con-
tribution to organizational objectives. Theory X further holds that people
have little ambition or initiative, prefer close direction to self-direction,
and, above all, want security.

Theory Y, which McGregor, writing in 1960, identified as the emerging
view of human behavior, is a much broader and also more flattering view
of human nature. Theory Y assumes that people are motivated not only by
physiological needs and the desire for safety and security, but also by the
need for achievement, recognition, enjoyment of work, a sense of contribu-
tion, the stimulation of new challenges, and many other factors.

Relating Theory X and Theory Y to Maslow's hierarchy, one can see
that Theory X assumes people are motivated primarily by lower-order
needs, while Theory Y recognizes the importance of higher-order needs as
well. In the experience of this writer, Theory Y appears to be a more real-
istic portrayal of human nature.

The third motivational theory is Frederick Herzberg's two-factor theory of
motivation. Herzberg identifies hygiene factors, which include things such as pay,
fringe benefits, working conditions, supervisor-subordinate relationships,
and similar factors. According to Herzberg, hygiene factors lead to
employee satisfaction or dissatisfaction, but not necessarily motivation to
perform at superior levels. Herzberg identifies motivators as involvement in
challenging tasks, utilization of your abilities, new opportunities to learn
and grow, and other similar job features. Herzberg's hygiene factors relate
directly to the satisfaction of lower-order needs (physiological, security,
and affiliative needs). The motivators tend to satisfy the higher-order needs
(the need for control, achievement, autonomy, recognition, and personal
growth).

Exhibit 1-2 provides a graphic comparison of the theories of
Maslow, Herzberg, and McGregor. The theories are complementary.
Each provides useful insight into human behavior. None of the three
provides easy answers to the question of how to motivate individuals
in specific circumstances.

---

4 F. Herzberg, B. Mausner, and B. Syndeman, The Motivation to Work, 2d ed. (New York: John Wiley and
Sons, 1959).
The theories of Maslow, Herzberg, and McGregor are not magic—that is, they are not infallible—but they are reasonable ways of thinking about and better understanding human behavior and motivation. If you accept these views (and there is significant research evidence suggesting their validity), then the implications for delegation are real. Delegating additional responsibilities to subordinates can enrich their jobs in many ways. Being selected for greater responsibilities can be ego-gratifying. The opportunities for achievement, recognition, and self-satisfaction are increased. Broader responsibilities frequently provide greater challenges, a chance for employees to use more of their abilities, and an opportunity for them to learn and grow professionally. All of these relate directly to the satisfaction of higher-order needs in employees, and it is the pursuit and satisfaction of these needs that are the strong motivators for many individuals.
A fundamental principle of management holds that responsibilities should be pushed downward to the lowest practical level. By "lowest practical level" we mean the lowest level at which employees are capable of satisfactorily fulfilling their responsibilities. To the extent that this is done, work tends to be accomplished more efficiently. Eliminating multiple steps in the communication and decision-making chain and minimizing the length of time that subordinates are often required to wait for decisions or authorization will increase efficiency.

Managers who spend a significant portion of their time on responsibilities that could be satisfactorily fulfilled by subordinates have relatively less time to spend on work that they must do as managers. The logical outcome of this practice throughout an organization is that more managers will be required to perform the necessary management functions. But if work is delegated whenever it is practical, fewer managers will be necessary. The logical extension as organizations grow larger is that fewer managers will be required to manage other managers. The result is fewer levels of management and a flatter organizational structure. This difference is demonstrated graphically in Exhibit 1-3.

The reason for the structural differences in Exhibit 1-3 rests in the managers' span of control—that is, the number of subordinates a manager can effectively supervise. A manager who chooses to delegate little, and who therefore must spend a high percentage of time actually doing non-management work, has relatively less time to interact with subordinates. The time available to interact with subordinates is a critical limiting
factor on the number of employees a manager can effectively supervise: It limits the manager's theoretical maximum span of control. To the extent that delegation increases the time managers have to supervise and interact with subordinates, the maximum span of control should increase (all other things held constant).

In Exhibit 1-3 the span of control in the example of optimal delegation is five employees, while the span of control in the example of suboptimal delegation is three employees. It also can be seen that the optimal delegation example is capable of accommodating a total of twenty-five employees, while the suboptimal example can accommodate no more than thirteen. In order to accommodate additional employees, an additional level of management would need to be added to the figure representing suboptimal delegation.

These examples are no less true for being simplistic. Indeed in larger, more complex organizations the problems generated by suboptimal delegation are often magnified dramatically. The result is duplicated efforts, lack of responsiveness, bureaucratic red tape, inefficiency, and significantly greater frustration and dissatisfaction of employees.

Of course delegation is not the only influence on a manager's span of control. The nature of the task, physical proximity, existing levels of knowledge and experience, special training requirements, and many other factors may also influence it. However, these issues aside, it is obvious that the fewer things a manager must "do," the more time he or she will have to supervise others and pursue other critical management responsibilities. Delegation is essential in maximizing effective span of control and minimizing the number of managers required to run organizations.

It becomes obvious from this discussion how important delegation practices are in achieving success in a competitive environment. The administrative cost structure of organizations is frequently the difference between profit and loss, ability to retain and/or gain market share—indeed, to survive and prosper.

This has become ever more apparent in the organizational restructuring wave of the 1980s. Not only must we be concerned with technological innovation, with redesign of organizational structures, and with reallocation of responsibilities at operational levels; we must be concerned with the use managers make of all the resources made available to them. It is through effective delegation that managers use their staff resources to best advantage.

DELEGATION AND ORGANIZATIONAL RENEWAL

The long-term success of an organization depends on its capacity to develop managers capable of accepting increasingly broader roles and responsibilities. The continual process of development is a primary ingredient in organizational health. The constant flow of management talent is a source of both continuity and organizational renewal. With new managers come new approaches, new ideas, creative potential, and the change that is so necessary to survive in an ever-changing environment.
Delegation of additional responsibilities, of decision-making power, and of control over critical management functions builds both competence and confidence in middle- and upper-level managers. Insufficient delegation stifles creativity, initiative, and professional development. Failure to delegate can, and frequently does, cause high-potential employees to seek other positions where their talents are better used. In the long run this loss of high-potential employees is a cost no organization-and no manager-can afford.

THE PRACTICAL SIGNIFICANCE
OF DELEGATION

Developing and retaining good managers are critical issues in most organizations. Effective delegation is not a synonym for management development, but it is one very important ingredient in the development process.

Developing management talent and using management resources to best advantage is central to delegation. Like money, there never seems to be enough qualified managers. Delegation uses scarce management resources to best advantage. Effective delegators can extend their personal influence and the benefits of their expertise far beyond that of ineffective delegators.

Responsiveness is another important issue. Delegating responsibilities to the lowest practical level allows organizations to respond more quickly and effectively to a myriad of situations. Responding to a lower bid by a competitor, handling a complaint from an important customer, and taking an opportunity to save money on materials that are ordered by 5:00 P.M. today are all examples where quick response is necessary and good delegation can be effective. There are simply too many situations when seeking the approval of higher levels of management is inconvenient, impractical, or impossible within the time constraints managers face.

The effectiveness of the decisions that are reached and the actions that are taken is a practical issue as well. Frequently, subordinates may have a better understanding of the situation or be in a better position to make a decision. To the extent that this is true, effective delegation will result in more effective decisions.

Delegation legitimatizes lower-level managers, not only in the way they view themselves, but in the way they are viewed by subordinates. Little respect is accorded to those who are managers in title only. If these managers lack the authority to make decisions and do not have the support of their superiors, their ability to manage and control subordinates is significantly diminished. Delegation increases the confidence, as well as the competence, of lower-level managers.

Finally, delegation is an inescapable fact of organizational life. Responsibilities are often so numerous and demanding that failure to delegate would guarantee failure on the job. In such cases, delegation is essential.

An anonymous author has captured many of the frustrations inherent in the delegation process in the following humorous portrayal of the functions of an executive.

As nearly everyone knows, an executive has practically nothing to do except to:
- Decide what is to be done.
- Tell somebody to do it.
- Listen to reasons why it should not be done, why it should be done by someone else, or why it should be done in a different way.
- Follow up to see if the thing has been done.
- Discover it has not been done.
- Inquire why it has not been done.
- Listen to excuses from the person who should have done it.
- Follow up again to see if the thing has been done, only to discover it has been done incorrectly.
- Point out how it should have been done.
- Conclude that as long as it has been done it might as well be left where it is.
- Wonder if it is time to get rid of a person who cannot do the thing right.
- Reflect that the person probably has a large family, and certainly any successor would be just as bad and may be worse.
- Consider how much simpler and better the thing would have been done if one had done it oneself in the first place.
- Reflect sadly that one could have done it right in twenty minutes, and now one had to spend two days to find out why it has taken three weeks for somebody else to do it wrong.

The goal of this course is to remove frustration and uncertainty from the delegation process. In the chapters that follow, the delegation process will be discussed in detail. The differences between effective and ineffective delegators will be identified. The primary reasons that managers fail to delegate will be considered, along with means of overcoming some of the obstacles to delegation. Organizational, managerial, and interpersonal issues will be explored, for effective delegation involves an understanding of all these dimensions. Understanding and embracing the ideas presented in this course will prepare you to become a more effective delegator and, therefore, a more successful manager.
1. Delegation is the assignment of critical managerial functions and responsibilities to a subordinate.
   ( ) True
   ( ) False
2. Good delegators are always effective managers.
   ( ) True
   ( ) False
3. Which of the following characteristics is/are required in good managers?
   (a) Planning ability
   (b) Organizational ability
   (c) Communication skills
   (d) Delegation skills
   (e) All of the above
4. Which of the following statements is true of delegation?
   (a) Managers should delegate whenever possible.
   (b) Higher-level managerial decisions are always better decisions than lower-level managerial decisions.
   (c) When managers delegate, their ability to control is reduced.
   (d) Managers should delegate whenever practical.
5. When managers delegate managerial tasks they abdicate their responsibilities as managers.
   ( ) True
   ( ) False
6. Which of the theoretical views listed below lend(s) support to the motivational value of delegation to subordinates?
   (a) Maslow's hierarchy of needs
   (b) Herzberg's hygiene and motivation factors
   (c) McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y
   (d) All of the above

7. Which of the following needs are most accurately classified as higher-order needs?
   (a) Hunger and thirst
   (b) Safety and security
   (c) Status, recognition, and self-esteem

8. McGregor's Theory Y suggests that people have a natural dislike for work and will avoid it whenever possible.
   ( ) True
   ( ) False

9. Delegation may significantly influence employee satisfaction.
   ( ) True
   ( ) False

10. Optimal delegation tends to ________________ the number of levels of management within an organization.
    (a) increase
    (b) decrease
    (c) have little effect on

11. Span of control refers to how long a manager can keep an employee working on a particular job.
    ( ) True
    ( ) False

12. Delegating effectively tends to ________________ a manager's potential span of control.
    (a) increase
    (b) decrease
    (c) have little effect on

13. Which of the following statements about delegation is/are true?
    (a) Delegation helps develop managers.
    (b) Delegation can make life easier for managers.
    (c) Delegation is unimportant in small organizations.
    (d) Failure to delegate may lead talented employees to leave the organization.
    (e) a, b, and d.