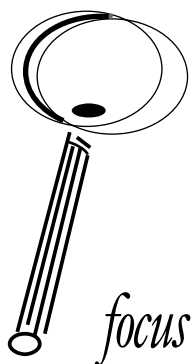


# 1

## Delegating—More Important Than Ever



### Learning Objectives

When you complete this chapter, you should be able to:

- Explain why delegating is important in today's business environment.
- State the key differences between assigning tasks and delegating jobs.
- List the key benefits of delegating to individuals and organizations.
- State several common reasons why people hesitate to delegate.
- Assess your ability to delegate.

Today's highly competitive, fast-paced business environment presents a vast array of new challenges. Companies need to accomplish more with fewer resources. Employees must work more productively and take on an increasing number of responsibilities. At the same time, the importance of an organization's ability to attract and retain good employees has led to an increased understanding of the need to empower people and provide them with opportunities to grow and develop. These days, more than ever, a highly competent work force helps determine how well a company can survive and prosper.

The ability to delegate is crucial for a company to accomplish its goals. Delegating allows managers to help staff members develop their full potential. It helps people feel more involved in the organization's success. It allows teams, departments, and co-workers to work together more efficiently. It lets everyone in the organization make the best use of limited time. It extends the company's resources by expanding the number of people who are capable of doing a particular job, and it helps reduce the stress that results when people feel overwhelmed.

Good delegating skills give managers an advantage in the workplace. After all, one of a manager's key responsibilities is to manage the work of others. And

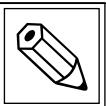
the usefulness of the skills that delegating requires, such as the ability to break down tasks into logical processes and to communicate clearly, extends well beyond the manager–employee relationship. In fact, learning to delegate successfully will improve your performance in a wide range of situations throughout your career.

In this course, you will find detailed information and practical techniques you can use immediately to improve your ability to delegate. In this chapter, you'll begin by examining what delegating is, and what it is not; the common types of delegating relationships; the benefits of delegating to individuals and their organizations; and typical reasons that people hesitate to delegate. You'll also learn how to assess how well you currently delegate.

The course includes case studies that help you think about delegating; questions that encourage you to draw on your own experience to identify what works and what doesn't; and practice exercises that help you learn. By the time you have completed the course, you will have developed your own delegating plan and used it to delegate some of your work. Along the way, you will learn the key skills needed for successful delegating: how to set goals, prioritize, plan, communicate clearly, provide feedback, and reward good performance. As an added benefit, you will find that the value of mastering those skills extends far beyond delegating: They are essential for successfully carrying out nearly all your job-related activities.

## WHAT *IS* DELEGATING?

Many people assume that they understand what delegating is, yet they might be hard-pressed to come up with a workable definition. Try it yourself by completing Exercise 1–1.



### **Exercise 1–1**

#### **Which Situation Describes Delegating?**

Read the situations below and analyze the differences between them. Which situation describes delegating? Why?

Situation A: Lydia supervises a team of customer service representatives. On Tuesday mornings, she meets with the team to hand out the week's assignments, which she rotates so that everyone has a chance to do every job during the course of a month or so. This week, she makes the following assignments: Marcy—handle the telephone calls that come in to the customer service desk. Parker—respond to e-mail from customers. Sonia—use the team's checklist to review completed transactions and identify any further action that might be needed.

Situation B: Alex is responsible for writing a quarterly newsletter for customers. But this quarter, his job has expanded to include managing the company's Web site. Pressed for time, Alex decides to ask his assistant, Benedetta, to take over the newsletter. Using previous issues, Alex explains

**Exercise 1–1 continues on next page.**

**Exercise 1–1** continued from previous page.

what the finished product should look like, the kinds of articles it should include, when it needs to be ready for distribution, and so on. He and Benedetta agree that she will do the research and interviews, write the articles, and do the preliminary layout. Alex will remain available as she works to answer questions and edit the final drafts. Before Benedetta begins work, she will attend a workshop on newsletter design and production.

Which situation describes delegating? \_\_\_\_ Situation A \_\_\_\_ Situation B

Why? \_\_\_\_\_

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You probably recognized that Situation B describes delegating. In situation A, Lydia is simply assigning tasks. While her team members might have some latitude in how they do the tasks, they are basically following established procedures to do routine jobs. The team members have only limited responsibility and no real authority. Although they might derive satisfaction from doing a good job, the assignments offer no opportunity for them to grow and develop.

In Situation B, however, Alex is sharing the responsibility for writing the newsletter with Benedetta. After making his expectations clear and providing the resources she needs, he will step back and let her do the work on her own. By delegating this project to Benedetta, Alex is not only giving himself more time for higher-priority projects, he is offering her an opportunity to develop new skills. Giving her both the responsibility and the authority to do the job is likely to increase her job satisfaction and make her more valuable to the company.

As distinguished from making an assignment, which generally involves telling someone what to do and how to do it, delegation involves giving people both responsibility and authority for achieving a certain outcome and then trusting them to find the best way to achieve it.

Exhibit 1–1 shows the key differences between assigning work and delegating.

**Who Delegates to Whom?**

You might think of delegating as something that only managers and supervisors do. Of course, managers and supervisors must often delegate work to their subordinates. But delegating takes place in other situations as well. Team leaders delegate to team members, and team members delegate work to one another. Co-workers delegate to peers who have the time, interest, and expertise for certain projects. Leaders of volunteer groups delegate projects to group members. Sometimes, in fact, subordinates delegate work upward, to their managers.

A delegating relationship exists whenever one person hands over a project, or part of a project, to another, giving or sharing with that person the

**E****xhibit 1–1****Key Differences Between Assigning Work and Delegating**

<b>Assigning</b>	<b>Delegating</b>
Requires following established procedures to do routine tasks	Given the necessary resources, requires taking on a whole job or a significant portion of a project
Offers little latitude in how to do the work	Enables person doing the work to decide how to achieve the objectives
Assumes the person assigning the work is primarily responsible for the outcome	Assumes that the person doing the work and the person delegating the work will share responsibility for the outcome
Offers people little real authority	Gives people the authority they need to do the job
Offers few development opportunities	Offers significant opportunity to develop new skills

responsibility and authority for achieving the objectives. In most of this course, we will focus on the most common relationship, that between leaders and their subordinates. In Chapter 6, *Delegating in Other Situations*, you will examine some concerns and strategies when delegating in other situations, and when you yourself are the one being delegated to.

**WHY DELEGATE?**

Delegating successfully is not easy. It takes time and attention to get the results you want. So why should you bother?

**Think About It**

Think about a job that you delegated to someone else. What benefits did delegating offer you, your team members, subordinates and co-workers, and your organization?

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Here are some of the benefits you might have come up with:

- Gives you more time and energy for high-priority work and for the work that only you can do
- Reduces the stress that comes from being overwhelmed with too much work to do in the time you have available
- Improves morale and increases job satisfaction by providing opportunities for others to learn, develop, and grow
- Gives others a sense of shared responsibility for and a stronger commitment to the organization's success
- Helps the organization retain good employees and expand their competencies
- Develops a pool of competent people with a wide range of skills and experience
- By encouraging others to make decisions and come up with solutions to problems, can result in more creative, innovative ways of doing things
- Improves communication and increases productivity
- Makes it easier for you to advance in the organization because others will be able to step in and do your job
- Gives you a competitive advantage in the workplace by helping you improve a wide range of essential skills

## WHY HESITATE TO DELEGATE?

Looking at the list of benefits from delegating, it's surprising that people hesitate to delegate even when they feel overwhelmed by their work. Yet they do. Here's an example.

Marcello, the leader of a technical documentation team, is supposed to have lunch with Francine to discuss plans for the company picnic, which they have both volunteered to coordinate. But after a meeting with his manager, Marcello stops by Francine's office to cancel. "Can't spare the time," he says.

"This is the third time you've cancelled," Francine says with a frown. "What's going on?"

"Too much on my plate," Marcello replies. "And my boss just asked me to update some documentation by the end of next week."

"You know, you don't have to do everything yourself," Francine suggests. "Isn't there someone on your team who can handle the update? Or take on some of your other work?"

Marcello shrugs. "I don't have time to show them what to do. Anyway, my boss asked me to do it. And the last time I handed off something like this I just had to do it over."

Marcello came up with three reasons for not delegating either the new project or his current work, even though it's clear that he doesn't have enough time. If Francine pressed him, he would probably be able to come up with several more objections. It's likely that he is so unsure of himself when delegating that it feels easier to keep too much work on his plate than to risk handing it off to someone else.



## Think About It

Do you hesitate to delegate? Think of a time when you had too much work, yet found reasons not to delegate some of it to others. What were those reasons?

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The reasons you had for not delegating are probably among the common reasons shown below and summarized in Exhibit 1–2:

- *“It takes too much time to delegate.”* It’s true that delegating successfully takes some time. You need to plan and prepare. You need to talk with the other person to ensure he or she understands the results you need. You might need to provide some training and coaching. You need to monitor the work. But the time you invest in preparing, explaining, training, and monitoring is usually less than the time you will spend doing the work yourself. Even if delegating takes the same amount of time as doing it yourself—and it rarely will—you and the other person still get the long-term benefits. For example, once a member of Marcello’s team has experience doing documentation updates, Marcello can delegate future updates more easily.
- *“I should do it myself.”* Marcello might feel that because his boss gave him the documentation update to do, she expected him to do it himself. In reality, what his boss wants is that the job be completed on time and up to standard. Unless she made it clear that she wanted him to do it himself, he can make better use of his time by delegating the job to a member of his team.
- *“I can do it better and faster.”* It might be true that Marcello could do a better job, and that he could do it more quickly. But that doesn’t justify his spending his valuable time on something that a team member could, and should, learn to do.
- *“If it’s not done right, I’ll just have to do it over.”* Of course, it’s important that the job be done right: The result must meet the goals. Marcello has already had a bad experience, which makes him reluctant to risk having to redo a delegated job. What he probably doesn’t realize is that there are specific steps he can follow to reduce or eliminate that risk. He simply has to learn and apply those steps.
- *“I’d rather do it myself.”* Marcello might want to do the documentation update because it’s the type of work he enjoys and knows he does well. But

**E****Exhibit 1–2****Objections to Delegating**

Objection	Response
It takes too much time.	The time invested in planning, preparing, explaining, training, coaching, and monitoring delegated work is less than you'd spend doing it yourself, and it results in long-term benefits.
I should do it myself.	You can usually make better use of your time by delegating.
I can do it better and faster.	With experience, other people can learn to do it as well and quickly as you can, freeing you for higher-priority work.
If it's not done right, I'll just have to do it over.	There are steps you can follow to reduce or minimize the risks.
I'd rather do it myself.	You need to let go of certain work you enjoy to concentrate on things only you can do.
If I let someone else do it, I'll lose control.	Giving people authority to do a job and make certain decisions is not abdicating; you still share responsibility for accomplishing the work.
I don't have anyone to delegate to.	A primary reason for delegating is to help others learn new skills.
Everyone is already too busy.	Delegating is not dumping; it's providing opportunities, as long you can give the other person enough time to do the work.
If people learn my job, I'll be out of work.	Leaders who can successfully get work done through others and expand others' competencies are more valuable to the organization.

as team leader, he needs to let go of certain types of projects so that he can concentrate on things that only he can do.

- *“If I let someone else do it, I’ll lose control.”* What is Marcello afraid that he will no longer control—the documentation update? A measure of authority? Delegating does mean giving up some control, and it does mean giving a certain amount of authority to others. Marcello will give his team member authority to do the job in his or her own way and make decisions associated

with the work. But that's not the same as abdicating. He and his team member will share the responsibility for achieving the desired results.

- *"I don't have anyone to delegate to."* Delegating requires trust and confidence. It's important to identify the right person to whom to delegate a specific job. Marcello might think that he can only delegate to someone who has experience doing documentation updates. But it's not essential that the person already know how to do the job. What is important is that you feel confident that he or she is willing and is capable of learning. After all, a primary reason for delegating is to help people develop new skills.
- *"Everyone is already too busy."* It's possible that Marcello is afraid that his team members will think that asking them to do documentation updates is giving them extra work. But delegating is not dumping. Delegating is providing people with opportunities. Perhaps some of the team members' work can be delegated to someone else, delayed, or not done at all. It is important to make sure that people have enough time to take on a delegated job. But be careful not to assume that people are simply too busy and will resent a delegated job as "extra" work.
- *"If people learn my job, I'll be out of work."* Marcello, like many leaders, might feel that if others learn to do his job he will be less valuable to the organization. In fact, leaders who can successfully get work done through others and expand others' competencies are more, not less, valuable.



## Exercise 1–2

### How Well Do You Delegate?

In this chapter, you've considered some of the issues related to delegating. Before moving on to Chapter 2, How to Delegate to Get Results, examine your own ability to delegate by answering the following questions.

1. Do you often work longer hours than others in your organization who do the kind of work you do?  Yes  No
2. Do you often spend time on routine work that others could do or learn to do?  Yes  No
3. Are you very concerned with doing jobs perfectly?  Yes  No
4. Do you often feel overwhelmed by the amount of work you have to do?  Yes  No
5. Are there certain parts of your job that you continue doing because you enjoy them, not because you have to do them yourself?  Yes  No
6. When you do delegate work to others, are you often disappointed with the results?  Yes  No

**Exercise 1–2 continues on next page.**



**Exercise 1–2** continued from previous page.

7. Do you find it difficult to identify people who are competent enough to take on important jobs?  Yes  No
8. Do your subordinates or team members often come to you for help answering questions or solving problems that they should be able to handle themselves?  Yes  No
9. Are your subordinates or team members unwilling to make decisions without checking with you first?  Yes  No
10. Have you noticed that your subordinates or team members are dissatisfied with their jobs?  Yes  No
11. Do you think that it is important for you to control the way things are done?  Yes  No
12. Would you describe the morale among your subordinates or team members as generally low?  Yes  No
13. Do you often do things yourself because it seems as if it would take too long to explain them to other people?  Yes  No
14. Does it make you uncomfortable to give up your authority, including the power to make decisions, to others?  Yes  No
15. Are you reluctant to take a vacation or go on a business trip because you're afraid that things will not get done while you're away?  Yes  No

More than three or four “Yes” answers indicate that learning to delegate will be helpful to you. If you answered “No” to most of the questions, you might already be delegating well; if so, use the information in this course to brush up on your delegation skills.



Delegating is more important than ever in today's lean, fast-paced, competitive business environment. Delegating helps organizations compete by attracting and retaining a highly competent, productive workforce. It benefits individuals by helping them make the best use of their time and providing opportunities to learn and grow. Still, people have a variety of objections to delegating, including concerns about time, responsibility, quality, loss of control, lack of resources, and uncertainty about the outcome. These issues are addressed by the information, strategies, and techniques in this course.



## Review Questions

1. Delegating is more important than ever because: 1. (a)
  - (a) companies need to do more with fewer resources.
  - (b) managers who don't delegate are seldom promoted.
  - (c) most companies are phasing out managerial employees.
  - (d) some people don't have enough work to do.
  
2. One reason to delegate is that: 2. (b)
  - (a) it shows subordinates who's in charge.
  - (b) it provides people with the opportunity to develop new skills.
  - (c) it is a way to show your manager that you have too much work to do.
  - (d) it is a way to hand off work you don't like to do.
  
3. Which statement best illustrates delegating a job? 3. (c)
  - (a) Assigning someone to answer the telephone while the receptionist is at lunch
  - (b) Asking your assistant to summarize the key points from several proposals
  - (c) Handing over the responsibility for coordinating ongoing communications between departments to a member of your staff
  - (d) Giving the task of gathering comments on the draft of the annual report to a team member
  
4. Which is a valid reason not to delegate? 4. (c)
  - (a) I should do it myself.
  - (b) I'll lose control.
  - (c) It's a job that I must do myself.
  - (d) It takes too much time.

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5. Which is a question to ask when assessing your ability to delegate? 5. (b)
- (a) How long does it take you to do things?
  - (b) Are you very concerned with doing jobs perfectly?
  - (c) Would you know how to use the extra time if you knew how to delegate?
  - (d) Are you afraid that delegating too much work would threaten your job?

