



Many managers cite 'time' as a major barrier in their work. Beating the clock is impossible, there are only 24 hours each day, but changing our use of those hours is possible. Working extended hours is only ever a short-term solution if we are to stay fresh and avoid burnout, lead a healthy team culture, get an exact picture of the resource required in any area and therefore its true profitability.

As a leader, recognising where we add most value is critical. Yet the other tasks and items on our worry list don't go away, so how do they get taken care of? Once you identify tasks that should be on your 'To Don't' list, the first job is to decide whether that task needs doing at all. Will it benefit the business or are we holding on to processes or approaches because 'we've always done it that way'? Assuming action is still required, effective delegation becomes our best friend.



## EFFECTIVE DELEGATION

Delegation is a fundamental skill for leaders. Yet it's not as easy as it sounds! Managers regularly express their frustration and disappointment, having delegated tasks and received late or sub-standard work. Subsequently, they often take the work back and correct or complete it themselves, deciding not to trust that person again. They sometimes fall into the trap of repeatedly choosing 'favourites' as their trusted helpers, meaning some of the team feel over-burdened and others never develop to the standard required.

## HOW TO DELEGATE EFFECTIVELY

### Think ahead

Spot upcoming opportunities to get others involved early, remembering that you may be able to delegate part of a project if the whole feels too risky. Managers regularly report that it was 'too late' to brief the person fully, so it was easier to do it themselves. To gain back time over the longer term this cycle must be broken.

### Who to delegate to - make a considered choice

You may well have some instant 'go to' names in mind when you decide to delegate due to either their high Skill or Will. If others are lacking Skill, consider how to cross train, so that more people become capable of taking on that task. Could you delegate it to the less skilled person but appoint a buddy to work alongside them, whilst they do it for the first time? If Will is absent, why? Perhaps there is a lack of confidence, or perhaps they are only ever given mundane tasks to do, and you need to commit to sharing these on a rota.

### Describe what good looks like and why

The goal needs to be clearly described, so the person taking on the task understands the end product you expect upon completion. Setting the context is also integral to delegating well. People need to understand the purpose and importance of what they are doing, how it fits with the bigger picture and the positive impact of successful delivery.

### Check understanding

Getting someone to describe what they think it is they are being asked to achieve is essential, to avoid disappointment on both sides. Managers often worry that this will sound patronising, but you can ask in a collaborative way. You might say: "there's so much going on at the moment, let's just check we're both on the same page - what is it you think you are going away to do?"

### Agree checkpoints, deadlines and ownership

Managers often give fake deadlines because they are worried that the quality of the work will need correcting. Be honest about the deadlines and be sure to explain the standard of work required by the time it arrives with you (e.g., proof checked by themselves, so it's ready to go to the client). Ask them to suggest when their first progress update to you should be; to agree a feasible date, they must really think about how they are going to get started and how long it will take to have something useful to report.

### Recognise and reward successful completion

Take the time to give specific, positive behavioural feedback. This helps people replicate great behaviour and to understand how they made a difference.