

The Back Office - Top Ten Tips for Successful Delegation

by Barbara Patrick at The Back Office, Reading, Berkshire – June 2010
<http://TheBackOffice.co.uk>

How often do you say, *"It's quicker to do it myself"*?

But don't imagine for one minute that Richard Branson got where he is today by doing it all himself! The most successful managers delegate.

It can be very difficult to delegate initially – it takes time to explain what needs to be done and then to supervise the initial process – hence it can indeed be quicker to do it yourself!

However, this view is very short-sighted.

If you take the time to delegate and to explain what needs doing, and then a little more time to supervise initially, you will almost certainly reap the rewards.

- a) Because it will give you more time for other tasks, and
- b) Because it will enrich the job of the employee, giving them increased job satisfaction and self-esteem.

Here are my Top 10 Tips on Successful Delegation

- 1) Start off by delegating the simple, routine tasks, then progress to more skilled assignments.
- 2) Ascertain that the employee to whom you are delegating has the ability to do the task, even though they might not yet have the experience.
- 3) Give specific guidelines on what the task entails. Be very specific. If you don't take the time to specify exactly what is expected, then you shouldn't be surprised at the results!
- 4) Explain why the task needs to be done, what final outcomes are expected, what the deadlines and milestones are, and what the consequences will be if the outcomes are not achieved.
- 5) Accept that the job might not be done in the same way that you would do it. The important thing is that it's done and it has an acceptable outcome - possibly not perfect, but acceptable.
- 6) Make yourself available to answer any questions at the outset and throughout the period of the task. Give regular feedback/reviews but if you need to criticise, do it in a constructive way, so as not to undermine or demoralise the person who is undertaking the task.
- 7) If the task is not done entirely to your satisfaction the first time round, don't give up. Praise the employee for their efforts, offer more training and/or assistance, and assure them that you believe they will do better next time. Assure them that this is going to assist the Company significantly in the future.
- 8) Ask for feedback from the employee. What did they enjoy about the assignment? What did they find difficult? What problems did they encounter? How you could help them to perform better in future?
- 9) If you feel they could take on this duty in future, add it to their job description, and include it during staff appraisals.
- 10) Reward if appropriate.

WARNING:

Be very careful that you don't set a precedent regarding rewards.

If you reward on one job, the employee may expect you to reward on all future jobs - and this could leave them feeling aggrieved if you don't continue to reward each and every time.

Also, other employees may expect similar rewards. Verbal appreciation and acknowledgement of their achievement is usually sufficient and can go a long way in terms of employee self-esteem.

Be very careful not to promote an employee on the basis of a good one-off performance. I'll write about promotion another time, as it's a subject in itself.

IN SUMMARY:

Delegation is an art. Yes, it requires a little investment in terms of time and patience, but the benefits will produce a very quick return on your investment and you will free up your own time to complete other tasks.

For up-to-date support and advice on Human Resources issues, contact **The Back Office**:

We specialise in HR Support and Advice for Small Businesses.

Start delegating today, and reap the rewards.

Good luck!

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