

Delegation

Practice Guide



Delegating is an important skill to learn if you want to build your business, lower your stress, and manage or engage your team. Delegation is a sign of good leadership, as delegating tasks to employees allows them to become more skilled, confident and productive.

The results for managers that delegate effectively include better time management and higher team morale, trust and productivity, along with increased staff retention, cooperation, loyalty and accountability. As these benefits can have profoundly positive effects on employees and your organisation, delegation is a very important management skill that's worth improving.

If you think delegating is telling, ordering or dumping work on someone, you are very mistaken! Poor delegation means people will feel confused, undervalued or bullied. However, if you take some important steps and give people meaningful and challenging tasks, you will see individuals thrive and want more responsibility, not less.

Creating a positive culture

If you want employees to accept responsibility for work delegated to them, you need first to ensure that you have a good relationship with them. Building a culture that emphasises good communication, respect and accountability will allow individuals to understand that being delegated a task is important to the team and their personal growth.

Creating a positive culture also means you should begin instilling confidence in employees so they don't feel they have to come to you about every little problem or decision. You need your team to feel okay about problem solving and using their initiative.

Preparing to delegate

Avoid only ever delegating menial or difficult jobs as this can cause frustration and cynicism very quickly. Delegate tasks that you know are meaningful and are suitable jobs to be delegated.

Think carefully about which person you are delegating a task to and how it will affect team relationships. Before delegating consider whether a person needs any extra resources, training or time to complete the task. A person who has been prepared for the role, and shown your support practically and emotionally, will more readily accept their responsibility.

The art of delegating

Firstly, clearly describe to your employee the task and what you want them to achieve. Communicate the scope, timeframes, reporting requirements and the process for ongoing communication and support. Discuss risks and any fears your employee might have. Ideally document your expectations and agreements in a brief or email so you can refer to it later if required. Let your employee ask questions and make sure that they understand the importance of the task and how their role fits into the overall project or organisation.

Secondly, gain commitment from your employee orally or in writing. Let them know how you'll know whether they did a good job. If you are being fair and reasonable, and have communicated your expectations well, then you can trust them to do the job assigned to them.

Monitor and evaluate

Once you have delegated the task to an employee, don't micromanage them! Let the person get on with the job, but report to you as agreed. Be supportive without being intrusive or undermining.

Monitoring in a supportive way will make the person feel they can talk to you if they feel they are having problems, or need advice. Monitoring will also alert you to problems early on so you can address concerns before becoming frustrated or stressed.

When the task is completed, evaluate the process and outcome with the employee. Discuss:

- 1 Was the objective achieved, and are you both happy with the outcome?
- 2 Did it help the employee learn new skills or gain confidence?
- 3 What would you both do differently next time?

Always congratulate the person on their achievements, however small. Avoid criticism and blame if things don't work out as planned, but just agree on how things will be different in the future.



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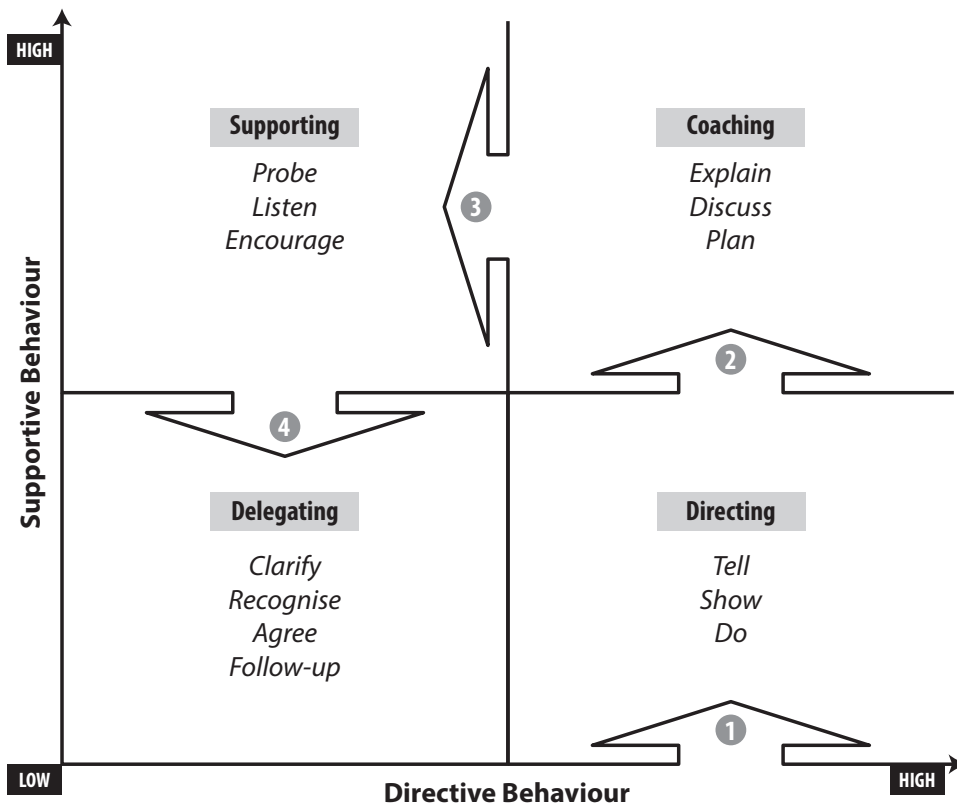
Checklist

- 1 The right task has been given to the right person.
- 2 Scope, objectives and expectations have been communicated well and been made explicit.
- 3 Enough time has been given to the employee to complete the task.
- 4 The person has been given the right training or resources to complete the task.
- 5 Reporting, monitoring and evaluation processes have been agreed upon.
- 6 The employee has expressed commitment to the task.

Keep looking for opportunities to delegate. Not only will you empower and engage your employees, but you'll enhance your own leadership skills as you become a more confident delegator. Using effective skills and processes to delegate means you are being an excellent role model and passing on your delegating skills to your team and future managers.

No person will make a great business who wants to do it all himself or get all the credit.

Andrew Carnegie



The Situational Leadership Model

(Hersey and Blanchard, 2007), suggests that delegating is a leadership style that can be used with individuals who are willing and able to take on responsibility, make decisions and follow through on tasks.

The model encourages leaders to consider the skills, confidence and support needs of employees before they delegate.

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