



Unit 1

An Introduction to Delegation

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit the learner will be able to:

- ✓ Clearly identify how delegation fits into your job and how it can make you more successful
- ✓ Identify different ways of delegating tasks
- ✓ Use an eight-step process for effective delegation

Unit 1

An introduction to Delegation

Why Delegate?

Advantages and Disadvantages
Use the chart below to record the advantages of delegating and the disadvantages (or reasons why managers don't delegate).

Benefits/Advantages	Disadvantages/Why you don't delegate

Debrief

Have you ever looked at the final product of a task you had assigned somebody else and realized you didn't get what you wanted, and you would have to redo it yourself? Initially it may seem like the person who was assigned the task has failed, but that's not really the case. As you learn more about delegation, you may begin to realize it was you as the delegator who failed.

As a supervisor or manager, you will likely always have responsibility for more things than you can handle by yourself. You cannot adequately plan and perform every task. If you feel your employees aren't ready to take on tasks by themselves and you never delegate, they never will be ready.

Added to this mix, we have the dilemma of the new supervisor who isn't confident and sure of their role, and the traditional manager who thinks there is only one right way of doing anything.

Delegation Do's and Don'ts

Things To Do

- Specify the results expected
- Explain why you are delegating
- Give the necessary authority to carry out the tasks
- Let others know of the delegation
- Have confidence in employees

Things Not To Do

- Delegate just trivial tasks
- Expect others to do the job as well as you can. They need to learn
- Delegate haphazardly
- Be an autocratic delegate
- Check constantly to see how things are going (micromanaging)
- Take credit for results achieved by staff

- Overload employees

Self-Assessment

We can see there are some pretty good reasons for improving our delegation ability. How do you know whether you need help or not? Consider your own role as a manager over the last three months and answer the questions below.

	Never	Sometimes	Often	Always
I find myself working longer hours than those who report to me.				
I take work home or come in on weekends or days off.				
I have difficulty keeping up with the paperwork associated with my job.				
I end up doing tasks for others that they should do themselves.				
I find myself rushing to meet deadlines.				
I find myself doing a lot of routine or technical tasks.				
I feel as though I'm always under a lot of pressure and stress.				
I find myself making the decisions affecting my work group.				
I don't spend enough time on managerial functions, such as planning work or interacting with people.				

	Never	Sometimes	Often	Always
Those who report to me have to seek my approval before they can take an action.				

On a scale of 1-10 (where 1 is poor and 10 is excellent), how would you rate your ability to delegate?

What is Delegation?

Delegation Definitions

Defining Delegation

What do you think that delegation means? Is it delegation to assign somebody the work that you don't want to do? Is it delegation to assign work to somebody when you are busy and then to reclaim it again when you have more time?

A common definition of delegation is entrusting power and authority to a person acting as your representative. While that may seem a little abstract, it really captures the meaning well. Another way to define delegation is getting your work done through other people.

It's more than simply assigning work. Delegation also involves making an investment in a person for the future and helping them to increase their own skills.

In the broadest sense, delegation involves five things:

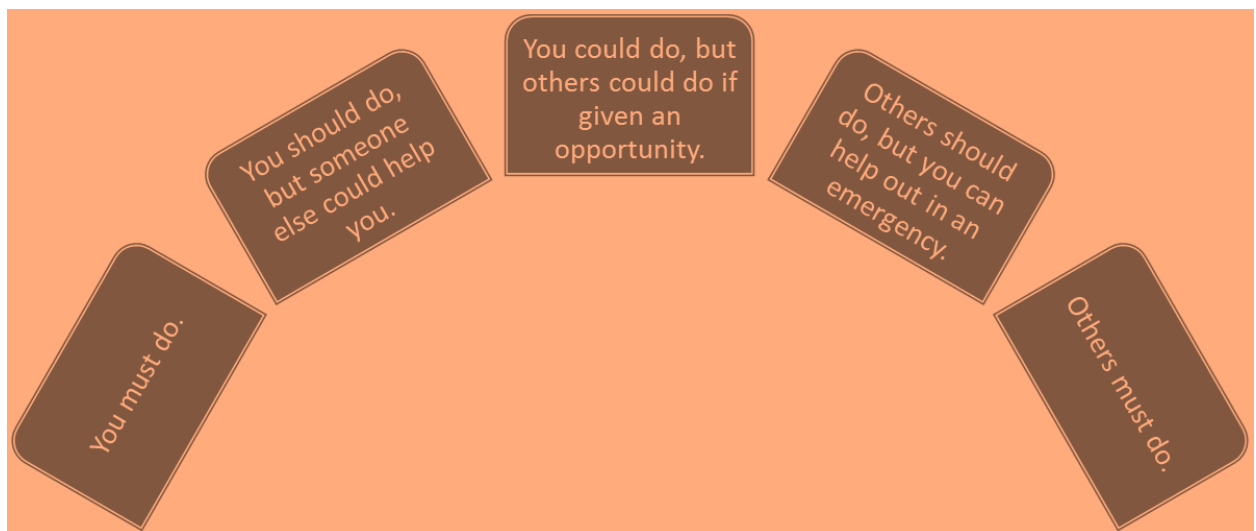
- The training and development of your staff
- The direction and follow-up of assignments
- The analysis of performance problems
- Coaching to overcome problems
- Periodic formal evaluations of performance

Four Basic Steps to Delegation



Deciding What to Delegate

Part of preparing to delegate is deciding what tasks you can and cannot delegate. Tasks can generally be placed in one of five categories:

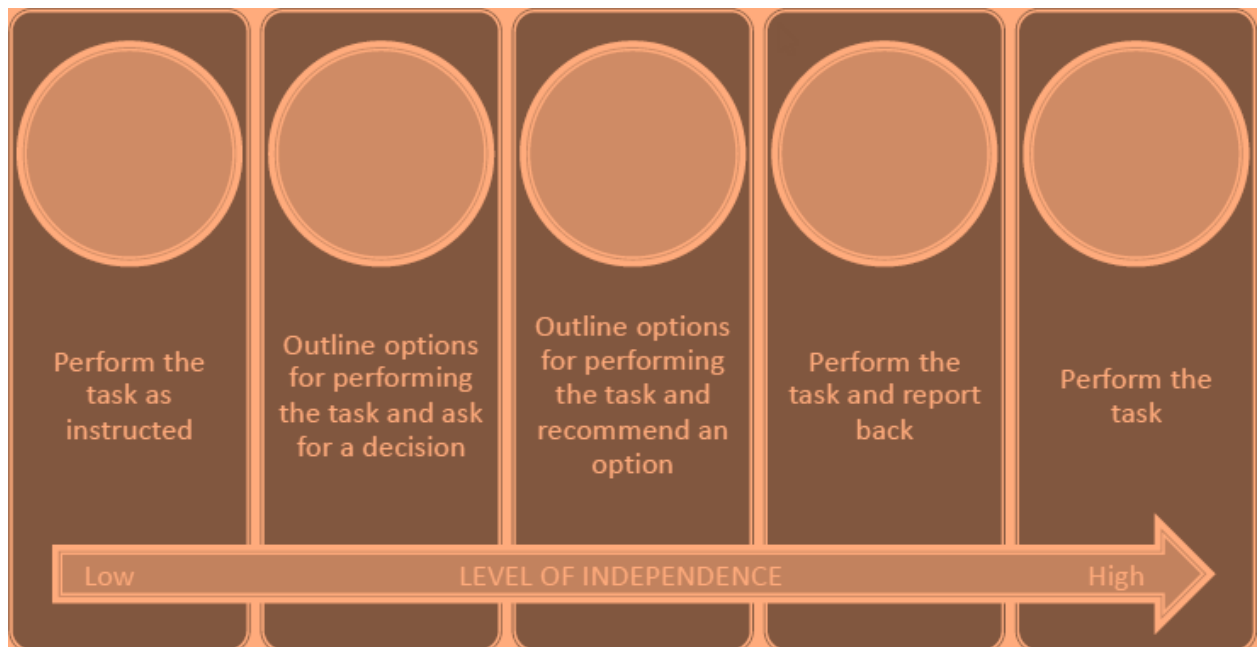


Levels of Delegation

The Five Levels

Delegation doesn't have to be all or nothing. In fact, you should consider what level of delegation is appropriate for the task, the employee, and the situation.

Here is an overview of the five levels of delegation:



Breaking Down the Model

Let's say that we want an employee to prepare a summary report of their work over the past year that will be submitted to the executive team. How will each level of delegation look?

The **first level of delegation** is to have the employee perform the task exactly as instructed with no independence. In our example, we might give the employee a report template, the data, and similar reports. Then, we'll ask them to complete the report and submit it by a certain date.

The **second level of delegation** is to allow the employee to do some research (if necessary) and then give you options for the task. You make the decision and the employee completes the task according to your instructions. In our example, the employee might research different formats and give you some different options. They may also draft a list of items that they want to include in the report. Then, you will outline the format and contents for them. They will complete the report and submit it by a certain date.

The **third level of delegation** is similar to the second, except that an employee makes a recommendation. Continuing with our report example, the employee would recommend a format and possibly prepare an outline. You would approve it and ask the employee to complete and submit the report.

The **fourth level of delegation** is where independence really comes into play. This is the level that you will use most often once team members get up to speed. With our report example, you would simply ask the employee to complete the report and submit it by a certain date. (They may use existing procedures

or templates, but the bulk of the decisions are up to them.) You would then review the report, approve it, and send it to the executive team.

The **fifth level of delegation** gives the employee complete freedom. With our report example, you would ask the employee to complete the report and submit it directly to the executive team. You may ask the employee to send you a copy of the report, but you would not have any active role in it.

Guidelines for Success

When should you delegate some of your work?

- After you have been in the job long enough to understand what it entails.
- When you have completed a skills, abilities, and interests inventory of your team members (formally or informally).
- When you understand the value of delegating.

What are some ways to prepare for delegating?

- Draw up a list of the current job responsibilities that you would leave behind if you were to suddenly leave your job.
- List the team members qualified to take over each of these responsibilities. If there is no one to take over a responsibility, leave a blank space.
- When the list is complete, add up the blank spaces to see what kind of department you would leave if you were suddenly out of the picture.
- Are you satisfied with the results?

What tasks should you delegate?

- Tasks that can be handled adequately by team members.
- Tasks for which team members have all the information for decision-making.
- Tasks that don't require skills unique to you or your position.
- Tasks for which an individual other than you can have direct control over the task.
- Tasks and/or projects that will contribute to growth and development of the individual who will carry out the assignment.

What tasks should you not delegate?

- The delegation process itself: Any work to be delegated should be delegated and explained by you.
- Performance evaluations and disciplinary actions: These are a managerial responsibility.
- Coaching, counseling and morale problems.
- Planning and forecasting: Some of the detail work can be done by others, such as calculations and research. However, you alone are in a position to decide how departmental goals fit in with the overall organization's goals.
- Confidential tasks and tasks that have been specifically assigned to you by your manager.
- Complex situations: Don't ask someone else to handle what you don't understand yourself.

How do you know whether you are delegating well or not?

If you are delegating well.

- You are satisfied with the way staff members complete work assignments.
- Team members feel committed and involved and morale is high.

If you are not delegating well, you may see these symptoms:

- You are too busy with work and under constant pressure.
- You are spending too much time on organizational details.
- Team members leave because they don't feel challenged or that they are learning, or they feel that you are difficult to work for.
- You have been bypassed for a promotion because you have difficulty handling your current responsibilities.

Note: If you feel you aren't delegating well, confirm or put your suspicions to rest by seeking feedback from your team. If your suspicions are confirmed, formulate a plan to improve.

Lateral Delegation

In flatter organizations without multiple management and reporting layers, teams can be largely self-directed, but there is still room for delegation to take place. This is particularly useful when you are involved in (or even leading) project teams made up of people at the same levels within the organization. When you delegate to your colleagues (not your subordinates), we call this **lateral delegation**.

Like regular delegation, lateral delegation allows you to have other people work to their strengths. It also allows you to help others develop skills and expertise, and frees up your time for your own development.

The same guidelines discussed previously apply to lateral delegation. You must not delegate things that are specifically yours to do and you must not give away work that you simply do not like to do. Lateral delegation is about asking a team member to take on the assignment and ensuring that they are both ready and able to accept the work.

Pre-Assignment Review

Here are the answers for the case study assigned before the workshop.

1	Assign sections of the departmental plan to individual travel agents.
5	Gather data on political stability, military, and police activity.
1	Assess whether reports are of acceptable detail and quality.
2	Determine what objectives will be included in the departmental plan.
1	Schedule the number of analyst hours to be allocated to each project.
4	Meet with local officials to get their input on feasibility of tourism in new areas.
3	Write training and development plans for staff.
4	Visit interplanetary locations to determine their suitability as holiday and business destinations.
2	Present information about upcoming travel packages to the marketing department for them to design marketing materials.
1	Keep track of departmental budget.

Legend:

1. She must do it.
2. She should do it, but someone else could help her.
3. She could do it, but others could do it if given the opportunity.
4. Others should do it, but she can help out in an emergency.
5. Others must do it.

Picking the Right Person

So far, we have looked at the definition of delegation and deciding what to delegate. The next step is deciding who to delegate to. How do you pick the right person for the job? Here are some things to consider.

Demonstrated Skill

Who is capable of completing the assignment? What is their record on similar assignments? If you have new employees, you should have a sense of their skills. You may even have completed a formal inventory.

Ask yourself:

- How will this person fit in with other that they must work closely with?
- In which situations does this person operate best?
- Are the employee's skills appropriate for the task? (Giving someone a task that they are overqualified for can make the task boring. Likewise, if the employee is underqualified they may find the task frustrating.)
- If you have nobody readily capable, can somebody be trained to do the task? Who could be trained? How long would it take?

Employee Motivation

This is as important as ability. Does the employee want to do the task? Can you help motivate them? Remember, this is a good opportunity to involve team members and give them a chance to try something different.

Employee Workload

Decide if the team member has the time available. How much are they currently doing? How well are they handling the workload they have? How does their workload compare with others in the department? Their level of interest in accepting more tasks is often a good barometer of their level of ambition. Be wary, however, of deciding that a person's workload is too heavy or that the person would not be interested. First, talk with the person and gauge their interest.

Matching Skills and People

Even if you have knowledge about the person's skills, their workload, and their potential for success, delegating can still be tricky. If given the chance, people may do very well at activities they never previously attempted. The person with enough time is not necessarily the right choice either, as the busiest person is often best at working efficiently.

Given these variables, consider what the best means of achieving the overall goals of the department is. Are team members encouraged to take individual initiative and accept greater responsibility? Are those seeking greater responsibilities being rewarded and recognized?

You can also base delegation on the employee's desire to grow. Once they have had a chance to interact with employees, new supervisors can begin devising plans to train and develop their employees. A key aspect of this is finding tasks you can delegate and match them to the workers with the readiness to successfully complete the tasks and benefit from the assignments.

One way to do this is to:

- Inventory the skills and interests of your employees.
- Rank employees according to their readiness to learn and grow, keeping an open mind about who belongs in each category.
- Work on upgrading low performers, developing the high performers, and preparing average workers to maximize their strengths.

The Delegation Meeting

The delegation meeting has eight specific steps to it. We recommend that you review these steps before your meeting so that nothing is left out. This will also help you provide a thorough orientation to what is being delegated.

Step One

Clearly communicate to team members what they are being asked to do. This should include the following information:

- What specifically needs to be done?
- When should the task be completed?
- What are the consequences of the task not being completed on time for the organization and the employee?
- What level of accuracy is needed?
- How does the task fit into the overall scheme?
- How many parts are there to the entire project?
- Who is working on other parts of the task?

Step Two

Provide context and relevance to the assignment.

- Why is the task being done?

- Why is it important to have it completed?
- Explain relative importance of the task.
- Explain potential complications.
- Focus on the results to be achieved, not the process or method for achieving them.

Step Three

Confirm understanding. Instead of simply asking, “Do you understand?” ask them what they understand about the assignment and what questions they have.

Step Four

Clearly communicate the performance standards by which the team member will be evaluated. This ensures that the team member knows what good performance is.

There are three generic levels of performance standards:

- **Outstanding:** Completes assignments early and at a level that exceeds expectations
- **Acceptable:** Completes assignments on time and at a level that meets expectations
- **Minimal:** Completes assignments but they may be late or below expectations

Here are some guidelines for setting performance standards:

- What quality is required?
- What resources will they have? (Time, money, etc.)
- What specific results do you expect to see?

You need to decide ahead of time how you will measure performance and share that with the employee. Will you use observations? Survey? Interviews? Reports? Presentations? These measures should be simple, reliable, unbiased, organized, and directly related to the work being measured.

Step Five

Make sure the employee has enough authority to complete the task. Assigning a task without giving the employee the appropriate level of authority to do it to the level that you desire makes it unlikely that the task can be accomplished. Delegated authority lets the team member spend money, direct or seek assistance, or represent the department.

Common mistakes related to authority include:

- Not giving enough authority
- After the fact approval
- Accountability but not authority

Step Six

Communicate the level of support for the delegated task.

- What resources are available and who can help them with the task? Who can provide indirect help by suggesting other resources?
- What assistance can you provide? When will you be available to help? Be sure the employee knows what role you will be taking in this delegation and what they should come to you about.
- Give notice to others to inform them of the team member's role. This establishes credibility and gives everyone involved a clear understanding of their respective roles.

Step Seven

Obtain obligation and commitment from the employee for the delegated task. Don't leave an assignment with an employee unless you get a commitment for completion of the task by an agreed-upon date. Make clear the assignment belongs to the employee, and that he or she must resolve any problems that arise, or at the very least bring options for a solution when he or she comes to you with the problem.

Step Eight

Establish rewards and recognition. Be sure to notice the employee's performance. If recognition is never forthcoming, they will decide that good performance doesn't make any difference, and others will not be motivated to accept delegation either.

There are four types of consequences you can use:

- Praise
- Redirection
- Re-negotiation of goals/standards
- Reprimand

Putting it into Practice

Case Study

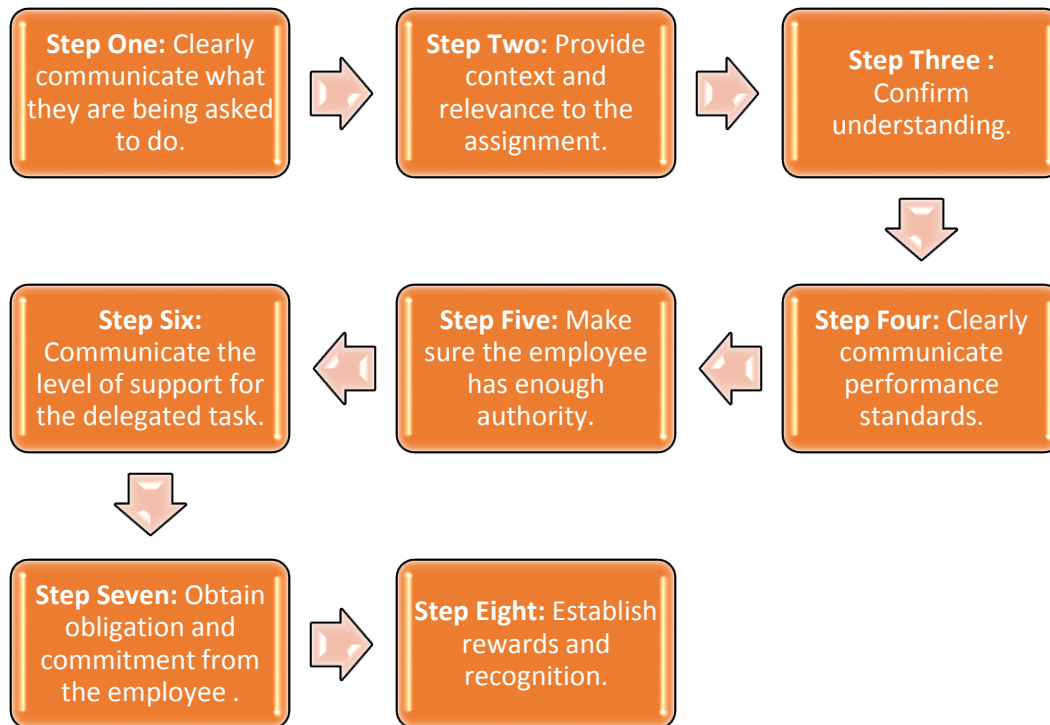
You are going on a one-month cruise. You have been planning this trip for a long time and now it is time to delegate some of your workload to one of your staff members. Think about whom in your department is most capable of stepping in to fill your shoes for a month.

Activity

Use the space below to outline your script. The steps for a delegation meeting are included on the following page.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Steps for a Delegation Meeting



Giving Instructions

Three Types of Instructions

There are three basic types of instructions.

Orders

Orders are autocratic, and used for things which need to be completed immediately. **Some examples of orders:**

- "Stop that immediately."
- "Get me the Murphy file."
- "Ready, aim, fire!"

When should they be used?

- Where a quick response is desired or where there is no opportunity for prolonged discussion.
- When the person receiving the order knows exactly what has to be done, as there is no opportunity for clarification.

Other points about orders:

- Have an immediate effect
- Are followed exactly but almost never exceeded
- Require prior knowledge (I have to know where the Murphy file is, for example)
- Go unquestioned
- Are assumed to be right
- Allow no feedback
- Allow no initiative

Requests

Requests are used in general operation and on an everyday basis. Team development is encouraged through the opportunity to use initiative and express views and opinions. Requests are open to further suggestions even though the manager remains in control.

Some examples:

- “Would you pass the files, please?”
- “Can you complete this report by 5 p.m.?”
- “Would you make sure you are in your office and ready to start work by 8 a.m. every day?”

Other points about requests:

- Can take longer to be implemented
- Allow for feedback
- Allow initiative
- Promote individual development
- Can be exceeded
- Can attract criticism
- Can expose weaknesses

Suggestions

Suggestions are used where the team is allowed to develop on their own, with guidance from their manager. Suggestions aren't recommended for newly appointed or inexperienced supervisors, but they are useful to develop a self-motivated team and to assess individual potential.

An **example** of a suggestion: “We need to reorganize the filing cabinet so the files are compatible with the filing system on the computer.”

Other points about suggestions:

- Produce a slow response
- Risk no response at all
- Cannot be specific
- Promote self-motivation
- Inspire initiative

Preparing Instructions

Use the space below to outline your instructions.

[illegible]

Further Reading:

- ✓ *Bellman, Geoffrey. Getting Things Done When You Are Not in Charge. Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2001.*
- ✓ *Finch, Lloyd, and Robert Maddux. Delegation Skills for Leaders, Third Edition. Axzo Press, 2005.*
- ✓ *Gennett, Donna M. If You Want It Done Right, You Don't Have to Do It Yourself! Quill Driver Books, 2003.*