

“Dare to be....an effective delegator”

Common Human Barriers to Effective Delegation

As an executive business coach working with a wide variety of organisations and their owners/directors/managers, it has become increasingly evident that many people struggle to delegate effectively and that this failing is a major barrier to improved performance.

Effective delegation is a critical skill that if not properly embraced can severely limit the growth of entrepreneurial businesses and can certainly make or break a manager's career.

There is a limit to what any one of us can do and both management and leadership involve working with and through others to achieve desired outcomes.

For most of us, at the beginning of our careers or during the start up phase of a business, 90% of job performance is a direct result of our own efforts. However, as we advance, or grow the business, it is likely that 90% of results will probably come from what they are able to get done through others. Early technical skills or job knowledge does not equal manager/people skills ability. It is a distinctly different skill set and needs to be acquired. (for more on this read Marshall Goldsmith's book, *What Got You Here Won't Get You There*.)

There are many symptoms of ineffective managerial delegation including micromanaging, the constantly changing project outcome, lack of communication, etc.

The root cause of why a manager does not delegate effectively may come from one or more five common human barriers to effective delegation – see below.

Getting over these human barriers starts with recognition and requires some emotional intelligence and personal development support - the use of a business coach (like me) can be most useful in addressing any shortcomings as meetings are conducted in a confidential environment where there is no finger pointing and performance improvement can be worked on with a critical friend and trusted advisor.

These five common barriers are as follows:

1. Fear of Failure

What if they fail? The reality is that everyone makes mistakes in the workplace and if managed appropriately mistakes can be excellent learning opportunities to both improve performance and improve operations. To delegate effectively, managers must recognise their own fears and allow some room for their team to make mistakes. With adequate development and trust, team members will more often meet the challenge than fail.

2. Envy of Your Staff Member's Ability

So, you're a little bit *green with envy* at that talented staff member of yours whose ability in a certain area outshines your own. In your private thoughts, you know you are reluctant to delegate to them because they are so good at what they do. So what should you do?

Talk to yourself and get over it! Even laugh at your envy if you must! Once you have intelligently dealt with your own negative emotions, let your talented staff member do what they do best. Give them full credit as appropriate. The truth is

they make you look good! Let them excel and you'll be known as a manager and leader who can utilise the talents of your staff effectively.

3. I Can Do it Better Myself!

This is probably true! After all, your technical ability is part of the reason for your success in your organisation. The correct question to ask yourself, however, is: *Should I be doing the work myself or is it better for me to delegate this work to someone else?*

As a manager, your role is one of process to achieve organisational outcomes through organising, controlling, planning, communicating, etc. You can fulfill this role better when you are not bogged down with work that others should be doing. Invest the time in developing your people to perform these tasks. Lower your standard to an acceptable level of performance. They do not need to complete the task exactly like you do it to meet organisational goals. After all, there are many methods for accomplishing most tasks.

4. I Like To Do This Myself!

Understood! There are some aspects of any job that are more enjoyable than others. The question here is the same as in item #3, however: *Should you be doing the work yourself or should you delegate it to someone else?*

There is a principle of delegation that says managers should delegate tasks that can be done by others. Some managers take this advice too far and delegate everything to their staff members. This is not what is meant. Delegated tasks should be appropriate to the responsibilities and organisational level of the team member. Further, there are some managerial tasks that are inappropriate for a manager to delegate to others to perform. This human barrier to delegation addresses those tasks we like to do but really should not do because they could be done by others. Let someone else enjoy this part of your job!

5. I Better Not Give Him Too Much Authority For This Task Or I Will Lose Control

Part of delegating effectively is picking the right person for the task. This requires assessing both their willingness and capacity to perform the task. Assuming they have the right attitude and skill level to perform the task, give them the authority they need to complete the task for you. As appropriate, establish check-in points so you can monitor their progress. Don't over-monitor them however (particularly your superstars) or you will frustrate them. You have invested in their development and created a positive work environment for them to do their best—now you just need to trust them to give you the desired results.

Delegation is a critical skill that takes some time to develop. It requires emotional intelligence because it impacts some of our human emotions. The better we become at recognising these emotions and managing them appropriately, the more effective we will be as a delegator. With practice, self-awareness, and the ability to “give ourselves a talking to” when needed, we can overcome the five common human barriers to effective delegation.

If you'd like help in improving your delegation skills or would like to discover how we empower individuals to achieve their goals, be more effective, be more efficient and be even more successful – **“to be the best that they can be!”** - Please contact me for a free 'no-strings' Business Coaching taster session on 07768 290694