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## **Building Chief Executive Skills; the Art of Effective Delegation**

Article by Andy Low

Delegation is not only a powerful leadership & coaching tool, it is also a way to increase productivity and profit, improve morale and keep hold of your staff. This will allow you to enjoy professional success and have a life.

As a CEO, you should be delegating around 90-95% of what crosses your desk and focus your day on leading the business and the strategic issues facing the company. The approach below will give you the confidence to delegate, grow your employees and achieve the results you want.

Move yourself from day to day management to effective leadership.

However, delegation has to be 'effective' and here are several ways to get there:

### **Preparation**

Take time to think through the task you are delegating and identify a goal or purpose and outcome for the delegation. For example a goal to use delegation as a coaching exercise with one of your reports is different to just getting work off your desk. This will require a different approach.

### **Dialogue**

The employee needs to engage in a discussion and agree with you about the task and be clear about the task and the desired and specific outcomes. Have them tell you in their own words what they have to do and by when.

Be specific about things that have to be done in certain way and be clear where the employee has some discretion and freedom to act.

You also need to be aware of how well the employee is likely to perform and be prepared to step in if needed.

### **Timelines**

It must be clear to both of you when the deadline is due and what is required by then. The deadline must be realistic and achievable and take account of the skills of the employee.

Allow additional time if you feel that it might be needed for coaching or some other support. The deadline must also be realistic with regard to current workload and priorities (ensure that the priority of the new task is agreed in relation to other tasks on the employee's slate for the day or week). This is particularly important if the task crosses functional/department boundaries in the company. All managers must be aligned with these priorities.

### **Define authority levels**

Be clear as to where this authority level is and then let them get on with it. Some examples of authority levels, which can be used to define levels at various project stages or throughout the life of the project.:-

**Approval/Recommend- The employee must present a recommendation for you to approve and agree final action:**

High project risk

Employee not skilled in this area- needs a learning experience.

Need to choose from a slate of options

You need buy in

**Inform and act- Employee will inform you and then take action**

Moderate project risk allows some flexibility but you are not able to give full action authority.

Employee skilled and experience enough but this is a coaching exercise

Employee has done well before and should be given a little more freedom to act

**Action- Employee has full authority to act**

Low project risk

Employee very experienced or skilled in this area

Employee has done well in previous levels and can be given full flexibility to act

**How are we doing?**

These are just the necessary checks on the way to project completion. Close together at first, these can become less frequent as the project progresses.

The following should be covered at each meeting:

- Review progress and give feedback as to how it meeting key goals

- Review what needs to be done differently and set it up in the system for checking next time

- Find out any barriers to project success that might be there and agree strategies and actions to overcome them. Any issues with authority levels? Is the project on track?

- Encourage and coach as needed

- Agree next meeting

**Debrief the results**

This is a 2-way discussion about how the project went and what can be learnt for next time. You can review how the employee benefited from the project, set up additional areas for them to get involved and document any issues or problems. You can celebrate success and take the opportunity for additional coaching.

In a 2-way conversation, ask the employee how it went, how they think they did and also to comment on your performance as the delegating manager. Discuss any major differences here. Agree any improvements on both sides