

Delegating Without Abdicating

"To lead the people, walk behind them."

Lao-Tzu

A primary responsibility of leadership is to develop people so that the organization grows, thrives and ultimately excels. The 'best managers' are those who enable the 'best employees'. A starting point for this is understanding what skills your employees need to be effective in your organization and successful within your company's culture. Hiring correctly is a given, aligning people and their skills with the right job duties essential, yet it is delegating to develop your team and therefore your organization that is mission critical to achieve the goals you set and the results you want.

Experienced executives know that not only can't they do 'everything' but more to the point they should not even attempt to 'do it all by themselves.' Business is a group activity and a team sport. When every member of the team is in the right position, when every individual is enabled and empowered with a sense of 'can do ownership' then the organization is aligned and optimized for superior results.

Recall your Executive Reflection and Journaling questions – "How am I spending my time? How should I be spending my time? How do I want to be spending my time?" To get to more of the 'What should you be doing' within your organization you will need to ask – or rather enable – others to do more of what they actually can and want to do more of independently. Human nature seeks accomplishment, achievement and success. Long gone are the arcane management philosophies that dictated only the boss knew what was best. Our current world-view informs us that expertise is shared and when we build competency within our team we encourage retention and enrich the entire organization.

The key to building that 'can do' team is knowing how to delegate without abdicating. Transferring responsibility for key tasks involves educating, listening, sharing, learning, setting goals, assessing progress, and developing the individual as well as the job. Think about the tasks on your daily 'to do' list in light of your Executive Reflection and Journaling questions. What can and should be shouldered by someone else in your organization, getting the job done and freeing your time to be spent on activities with greater potential impact and influence? This is the starting point for delegation.

Talk with your team and find out their thoughts on what they do, and how they can best contribute to the growth of the business. You will be pleasantly surprised to find out how invested they already are in their work and how strong their appetite is for greater impact. Employees more often leave jobs due to dissatisfaction and stifled responsibilities rather than simply for more money, title or a change of scenery. Empowered delegation is a strong motivator and a component of employee development and retention.

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Often executives will shrink from delegation because they believe others cannot do the given task as well as or with the same results as they can themselves. While this may seem true at first, the real questions to ask are 'By doing this myself, what am I not doing that I should be doing (that the organization needs me to do?' and 'How good is good enough?' When we step away from the self-imposed limits set by our own ego we embark on the path of true executive leadership and team development. We grow, our people grow and ultimately our business grows.

Here are some simple steps to get you started on the path of empowered delegation

- *Identify: With one employee find one key activity that you will transfer to them in such a way that they will feel a sense of ownership in the operations of your business.*
- *Document: What steps will you and this employee need to take to document this activity so that it becomes part of your operations and processes manual and your company's 'run book' so that others can be trained for this activity?*
- *Empower: What will your employee need to complete the activity successfully?*
- *Measure: How will you maintain quality control and simultaneously empower your employee to innovate and continuously improve this one key activity?*
- *Inform: What information will your employee need from you and what will you need from them so that everyone is comfortable with the execution and outcome?*

Delegate – Without Abdicating – and Achieve More through Enabling Others