

DSC SPEED READS
MANAGEMENT

Delegation

Brian Rothwell

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DIRECTORY OF SOCIAL CHANGE

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Introduction

Who will this book help?

Delegation is not easy. Nearly everyone is in favour of it as an abstract concept, rather like the majority of the population would agree with other abstract concepts such as justice and freedom. However, delegation in real life requires effort and perseverance in the face of discouragement and disappointment. It doesn't work all of the time.

This practical guide will help all managers who are responsible for the performance of others. In particular it will aid individuals who are new to management and develop the skills of managers who are unused to delegating and those who recognise that they have a problem with the concept.

What will it give you?

This book provides guidance on how to make sure that delegation works well and, as a result, should help you enjoy greater managerial satisfaction. Sticking to these guidelines will allow you to get a job done more efficiently, your time will be freed up to focus on the more important aspects of your job and it will enable you to develop members of staff.

The manager who fails to delegate is not a real manager. The manager who delegates has made a start on the road to becoming exceptional at their chosen job.

Chapter 1

What is delegation?

This chapter looks at what delegation is and is not, and the risks and benefits involved in delegating.

Delegation is one of the most important aspects of any manager's job. It is an area where managers frequently have great freedom of choice because what they choose to delegate, to whom and when, is almost entirely at their own discretion.

All members of staff have their own duties. They have their own jobs to do – and so do managers. Delegation is not about allocating the work that naturally falls into the duties of staff members. Managers may have to decide who handles which piece of work, and that may depend on the balance of individual workloads within a department. However, this is not delegation.

Delegation is when a manager deliberately chooses to give a reporting staff member the authority to undertake a piece of work that is normally handled at managerial level. It requires a modicum of courage, a degree of patience and no small amount of judgement.

Top tip



Be a
gardener at work.
Grow people.

Julia Cleverdon,
CEO, Business in the
Community

Three important distinctions

In defining delegation, it is important to make three distinctions. First, 'responsibility' in this context means the work that is to be delegated – the project, task, job or duty. Second, 'authority' means the power or the right to make decisions and take action to enable a responsibility to be handed over. Traffic wardens have the responsibility to prevent vehicles from obstructing other road users. They need the authority to issue parking tickets. Without this authority their job cannot be done. Delegation always involves matching the responsibility with the appropriate authority.

Third, is the distinction of what *cannot* be delegated. This is the manager's accountability for the totality of what goes on in the department or team. You can delegate a responsibility by ensuring that you give the member of staff the right level of authority to carry it out. But accountability for the performance of the task delegated remains with you, as the manager making the decision to delegate.

You can have a one-to-one conversation with a member of staff about a delegated responsibility that has been handled badly, but in front of anyone else – whether they are from inside or outside the organisation – you cannot shirk your accountability for the performance of the delegated task. It is the manager who must face the wrath of annoyed clients or irate members of staff from other departments. And this is logical because it was the manager who made the decision to delegate the job concerned.

It is this third aspect of delegation that involves you taking the calculated risk that a member of staff will do the delegated job as well as needs to be done to satisfy the rest of the internal organisation or the external client.

Top tip



Being publicly accountable for the work that you delegate can be a scary thought. But don't let it put you off! The benefits of delegating far outweigh any problems you may encounter.

DSC Speed Reads

Aimed at people who are short on time and need to absorb information quickly, these indispensable guides are:

- **Accessible** – practical guidance on a wide range of subjects
- **Condensed** – distilling experience and expertise in just 32 pages
- **Clearly signposted** – Top Tips, Case Studies and Where Next ideas

Covering a wide range of topics and building into an invaluable library, Speed Reads are an essential addition to any bookshelf.

Delegation

This practical guide will help all managers who are responsible for the performance of others. It will help individuals who are new to management, and help improve the skills of managers who are unused to delegating or who find the process challenging.

Brian Rothwell is a graduate of the London School of Economics and Political Science and has worked for over 25 years in business. He is now a freelance coach, lecturer and writer. He is co-author of *Leadership 101*, also published by DSC.



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