

How to Delegate

As we all know, too much work leads to “burnout”. Effective delegation helps accomplish our goals by distributing the work. At different times, you may be delegating work or being delegated to. Here are some guidelines for doing it well.

Delegation involves clear, up-front mutual understanding and commitment regarding expectations in 5 areas:

Desired Results. Create a clear, mutual understanding of what needs to be accomplished, focusing on *what*, not *how*; **results**, not *methods*.

Spend time. Be patient. Visualize the desired result. Have the person see it, describe it, made out a quality statement of what the results will look like, and by when they will be accomplished.

Guidelines. Identify the parameters within which the individual should operate.

These should be as few as possible to avoid methods delegation, but should include any formidable restrictions. You wouldn’t want a person to think he had considerable latitude as long as he accomplished the objectives, only to violate some long-standing traditional practice or value. That kills initiative and sends people back to the gofer’s creed: “Just tell me what you want me to do, and I’ll do it.”

If you know the failure path of the job, identify them. Be honest and open – tell a person where the quicksand is and where the wild animals are. You don’t want to have to reinvent the wheel every day. Let people learn from your mistakes or the mistakes of others. Point out the potential failure paths, what not to do, but don’t tell them what to do. Keep the responsibility for results with them – to do whatever is necessary within the guidelines.

Resources. Identify the human, financial, technical, or organizational resources the person can draw upon to accomplish the desired results.

Accountability. Set up the standards of performance that will be used in evaluating the results and the specific reporting times when evaluation will take place.

Consequences. Specify what will happen, both good and bad, as a result of the evaluation. This could include such things as financial rewards, psychic rewards, different job assignments, and natural consequences tied into the overall mission of an organization.