The Fail-Safe Way to Delegate

By Marcia Zidle on July 9, 2013

“I know I should delegate but: “I can do it faster…He won’t be able to get it done on time…she’s bound to make some mistakes.”

These are things I’ve been hearing frequently from overworked, stressed out managers. I jokingly mentioned, in a recent presentation, if there was something in the air that’s causing this outbreak of “I must do it myself if it’s going to get done right.”

Leaders, who are reluctant to delegate, can usually come up with what they consider logical explanations for their stand. But these explanations are based on fears of letting go and of losing control. What they don’t realize is that while they’re busy “doing it all themselves”, they are falling further behind.

Of course there are times when we and we alone “own” the project or task. But how often is that the case? The real problem with delegation I have found lies not with the person being delegated to but rather with the one who needs to delegate.

The Fail-Safe Way To Delegate
Delegation, if done right, is a both a time management and leadership development tool. Here are 7 tips to delegate effectively. It will make you a better time manager and a better leader as well.

1. Delegate early.
Make an effort to delegate the task early to avoid unnecessary pressure. This allows the person to better plan the task.

2. Select the right person.
Ensure that the person has the time to take on the responsibility. Assess the skills and capabilities of your staff and assign the task to the most appropriate person. Make sure the person has the training and resources to succeed.

3. Communicate the rationale.
Identify the reason for the task and how it will contribute to the goals of the company or department or team. Also, point out how the delegated task could benefit the person. Remember a routine task to you may be a new challenging task to your subordinate.

4. Set clear goals and expectations.
Be clear and specific on the parameters – the what, why, when, who and where- and the amount of authority – what she can decide and what you must decide, etc. You might leave the “how” to them if they are experienced. Or ask how they might go about handling the task so you can identify any missteps right from the start. so you can . Confirm and verify task goals and expectations.
5. Delegate the entire task.
This gives the person the responsibility, increases their motivation and avoids ambiguity in accountability. Otherwise, different people will have different ideas about who does what when.

6. Don’t just drop it.
Request regular updates or progress reports especially if it’s a large or new assignment. That way you can catch problems or mistakes early and provide assistance when necessary. This will also give you a comfort level that things are going as planned.

7. Evaluate results.
Did the person meet the set expectations? Did the task get done accurately, on time, on budget? If so, recognize the person’s performance. This will reinforce both yours and the person’s confidence in their abilities. If it didn’t, then analyze the cause of insufficient performance and coach on how to improve. But don’t throw in the towel. Remember, most of us learn more from our mistakes than successes.

Management Success Tip:
Delegation is about more than just taking work from you and giving it to someone else. It’s about getting work down in the most efficient manner using the resources you have available. Yes, sometimes a staff person can actually get better results than you. In addition, delegation is about valuing people and allowing other to develop by giving them increased responsibility and authority. That’s what makes an effective leader.

- See more at: http://managementhelp.org/blogs/supervision/2013/07/09/the-fail-safe-way-to-delegate/#sthash.5uulorYi.dpuf
Successful Delegation
Using the Power of Other People's Help

Even "Super You" needs help and support. There is no shame in asking for assistance. Push aside the pride and show respect for the talent others can bring to the table.

And, remember that there is no such thing as a single-handed success: when you include and acknowledge all those in your corner, you propel yourself, your teammates and your supporters to greater heights.

– Author Unknown

Do you feel stressed and overloaded? Or that your career seems stalled? If so, then you may need to brush up your delegation skills!

If you work on your own, there's only a limited amount that you can do, however hard you work. You can only work so many hours in a day. There are only so many tasks you can complete in these hours. There are only so many people you can help by doing these tasks. And, because the number of people you can help is limited, your success is limited.

However, if you're good at your job, people will want much more than this from you. This can lead to a real sense of pressure and work overload: you can't do everything that everyone wants, and this can leave you stressed, unhappy, and feeling that you're letting people down.

On the positive side, however, you're being given a tremendous opportunity if you can find a way around this limitation. If you can realize this opportunity, you can be genuinely successful!

One of the most common ways of overcoming this limitation is to learn how to delegate your work to other people. If you do this well, you can quickly build a strong and successful team of people, well able to meet the demands that others place. This is why delegation is such an important skill, and is one that you absolutely have to learn!

Why People Don't Delegate

To figure out how to delegate properly, it's important to understand why people avoid it. Quite simply, people don't delegate because it takes a lot of up-front effort.

After all, which is easier: designing and writing content for a brochure that promotes a new service you helped spearhead, or having other members of your team do it? You know the content inside and out. You can spew benefit statements in your sleep. It would be relatively straightforward for you to sit down and write it. It would even be fun! The question is, "Would it be a good use of your time?"

While on the surface it's easier to do it yourself than explain the strategy behind the brochure to someone else, there are two key reasons that mean that it's probably better to delegate the task to someone else:

- First, if you have the ability to spearhead a new campaign, the chances are that your skills are better used further developing the strategy, and perhaps coming up with other new ideas. By doing the work yourself, you're failing to make best use of your time.
- Second, by meaningfully involving other people in the project, you develop those people's skills and abilities. This means that next time a similar project comes along, you can delegate the task with a high degree of confidence that it will be done well, with much less involvement from you.

Delegation allows you to make the best use of your time and skills, and it helps other people in the team grow and develop to reach their full potential in the organization.
When to Delegate

Delegation is a win-win when done appropriately, however, that does not mean that you can delegate just anything. To determine when delegation is most appropriate there are five key questions you need to ask yourself:

- Is there someone else who has (or can be given) the necessary information or expertise to complete the task? Essentially is this a task that someone else can do, or is it critical that you do it yourself?
- Does the task provide an opportunity to grow and develop another person's skills?
- Is this a task that will recur, in a similar form, in the future?
- Do you have enough time to delegate the job effectively? Time must be available for adequate training, for questions and answers, for opportunities to check progress, and for rework if that is necessary.
- Is this a task that I should delegate? Tasks critical for long-term success (for example, recruiting the right people for your team) genuinely do need your attention.

If you can answer "yes" to at least some of the above questions, then it could well be worth delegating this job.

Tip:

Other factors that contribute to the delegability of a task include:

1. The project's timelines/deadlines.
   - How much time is there available to do the job?
   - Is there time to redo the job if it's not done properly the first time?
   - What are the consequences of not completing the job on time?
2. Your expectations or goals for the project or task(s), including:
   - How important is it that the results are of the highest possible quality?
   - Is an "adequate" result good enough?
   - Would a failure be crucial?
   - How much would failure impact other things?

That being said, having all these conditions present is no guarantee that the delegated task will be completed successfully either. You also need to consider to whom you will delegate the task and how you will do it.

The Who and How of Delegating

Having decided to delegate a task there are some other factors to consider as well. As you think these through you can use our free Delegation Worksheet to keep record of the tasks you choose to delegate and who you want to delegate them to.

To Whom Should You Delegate?

The factors to consider here include:

1. The experience, knowledge and skills of the individual as they apply to the delegated task.
   - What knowledge, skills and attitude does the person already have?
   - Do you have time and resources to provide any training needed?
2. The individual's preferred work style.
   - How independent is the person?
   - What does he or she want from his or her job?
   - What are his or her long-term goals and interest, and how do these align with the work proposed?
3. The current workload of this person.
   - Does the person have time to take on more work?
   - Will you delegating this task require reshuffling of other responsibilities and workloads?
Tip:
When you first start to delegate to someone, you may notice that he or she takes longer than you do to complete tasks. This is because you are an expert in the field and the person you have delegated to is still learning. Be patient: if you have chosen the right person to delegate to, and you are delegating correctly, you will find that he or she quickly becomes competent and reliable.

How Should You Delegate?

Use the following principles to delegate successfully:

1. Clearly articulate the desired outcome. Begin with the end in mind and specify the desired results.

2. Clearly identify constraints and boundaries. Where are the lines of authority, responsibility and accountability?
   - Should the person:
     - Wait to be told what to do?
     - Ask what to do?
     - Recommend what should be done, and then act?
     - Act, and then report results immediately?
     - Initiate action, and then report periodically?

3. Where possible, include people in the delegation process. Empower them to decide what tasks are to be delegated to them and when.

4. Match the amount of responsibility with the amount of authority. Understand that you can delegate some responsibility, however you can't delegate away ultimate accountability. The buck stops with you!

5. Delegate to the lowest possible organizational level. The people who are closest to the work are best suited for the task, because they have the most intimate knowledge of the detail of everyday work. This also increases workplace efficiency, and helps to develop people.

6. Provide adequate support, and be available to answer questions. Ensure the project's success through ongoing communication and monitoring as well as provision of resources and credit.

7. Focus on results. Concern yourself with what is accomplished, rather than detailing how the work should be done: Your way is not necessarily the only or even the best way! Allow the person to control his or her own methods and processes. This facilitates success and trust.

8. Avoid "upward delegation." If there is a problem, don't allow the person to shift responsibility for the task back to you: ask for recommended solutions; and don't simply provide an answer.


10. Establish and maintain control.
    - Discuss timelines and deadlines.
    - Agree on a schedule of checkpoints at which you'll review project progress.
    - Make adjustments as necessary.
    - Take time to review all submitted work.

In thoroughly considering these key points prior to and during the delegation process you will find that you delegate more successfully.

Keeping Control

Now, once you have worked through the above steps, make sure you brief your team member appropriately. Take time to explain why they were chosen for the job, what's expected from them during the project, the goals you have for the project, all timelines and deadlines and the resources on which they can draw. And agree a schedule for checking-in with progress updates.

Lastly, make sure that the team member knows that you want to know if any problems occur, and that you are available for any questions or guidance needed as the work progresses.
We all know that as managers, we shouldn't micromanage. However, this doesn't mean we must abdicate control altogether: In delegating effectively, we have to find the sometimes-difficult balance between giving enough space for people to use their abilities to best effect, while still monitoring and supporting closely enough to ensure that the job is done correctly and effectively.

The Importance of Full Acceptance

When delegated work is delivered back to you, set aside enough time to review it thoroughly. If possible, only accept good quality, fully-complete work. If you accept work you are not satisfied with, your team member does not learn to do the job properly. Worse than this, you accept a whole new tranche of work that you will probably need to complete yourself. Not only does this overload you, it means that you don't have the time to do your own job properly.

Of course, when good work is returned to you, make sure to both recognize and reward the effort. As a leader, you should get in the practice of complimenting members of your team every time you are impressed by what they have done. This effort on your part will go a long way toward building team member's self-confidence and efficiency, both of which will be improved on the next delegated task; hence, you both win.

Key Points

At first sight, delegation can feel like more hassle than it's worth, however by delegating effectively, you can hugely expand the amount of work that you can deliver.

When you arrange the workload so that you are working on the tasks that have the highest priority for you, and other people are working on meaningful and challenging assignments, you have a recipe for success.

To delegate effectively, choose the right tasks to delegate, identify the right people to delegate to, and delegate in the right way. There's a lot to this, but you'll achieve so much more once you're delegating effectively!

Check how effectively you're delegating now with our "How Well Do You Delegate?" quiz.

This site teaches you the skills you need for a happy and successful career; and this is just one of many tools and resources that you'll find here at Mind Tools. Click here for more, subscribe to our free newsletter, or become a member for just $1.
The Single Best Time Management Tip Ever

By Dave Logan MONEYWATCH April 26, 2011, 9:42 AM

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I spent most of my life at war with time--and time usually won. I'd read every book and taken every course along the way, and with a few exceptions (like David Allen's excellent Getting Things Done), most of it seemed to rehash common sense. The feeling of being overwhelmed and underproductive was relentless.

The big breakthrough came when I was first teaching at USC and a student with severe dyslexia asked for help. Not knowing what to do, I turned to an expert on learning disorders. She advised that I let the student take the exam in my office, giving him short breaks every 20 minutes. The student did very well, surprising us both, and I was intrigued. After years of working with 20-minute segments, the Multiple Put Down technique was born. I've used it to write four books, a dissertation and thousands of speeches.

Here it is: work on a task in 20-minute increments, with absolute focus, and then put it down, over and over, until you're done. In this case, the gold is in the details, so please follow them exactly:

1. Alert your brain that a task is coming that will require its recall, creativity, and brilliance (yes, your brain is brilliant--thank your parents). Then let some time pass--a day, perhaps.
2. When you’re ready to start, set a timer for 20 minutes, such as the stopwatch feature on an iPhone. Set your cell phone to airplane mode, turn off your email, and silence all other distractions. Then hit start on the timer.
3. During the 20 minutes, you must focus on that task without interruption. And unless the building burns down, do nothing but work on that task until the timer goes off. You may hit the wall, but keep going. The vast majority of people find they can work on that task "in the zone" until the timer goes off.
4. After 20 minutes, you have a choice: keep working or take a break. If you keep working, reset the timer to 20 minutes and go through the process again, without interruption until the next 20 minutes are up. If you decide to take a break, it can be short (such as refilling your coffee cup), medium (returning a phone call) or long (going into a meeting, or working out).

That's it. You pick it up and put down over and over, hence the name "Multiple Put Down." Some data, my own experience, and reports from the thousands of people who have learned the technique is that you are much more efficient--often finishing a task in

The Single Best Time Management Tip Ever

30-50% of the time it would take if you worked on it in one sitting. Even better, the quality of the work is far superior than if you followed your mother’s advice of "start early and just get it done." There are other benefits, too: less stress, reduced frustration, and a general feeling of being brilliant. Multiple Put Down will save you hours and it can be even more powerful when combined with a Life Repair Day.

There are several advantages to the Multiple Put Down technique. The first is that your brain is brilliant at running processes in the background, but is awful at multitasking. While you’re driving to work, in the shower or answering email, your brain will be working in the background on the task, so that when you’re ready, it'll drain through your fingers, into your computer or notepad, for about 20 minutes. The break allows your brain to restock the supply of brilliance. Each time you go through the process is a "productivity unit."

Here are some tasks that are perfectly suited for Multiple Put Down: writing a report, preparing a pitch for a client or boss, figuring out how to solve a tough problem. Fans of Tribal Leadership might be interested to know that the book was written in 1106 productivity units.

Here’s my challenge to you: right now, take a task that’s nagging at you and use Multiple Put Down on it. I hope you’ll share how it goes by posting a comment below.
Managing Email Effectively

Strategies for Taming Your Inbox

It's Monday morning. As Linda sits down at her desk she experiences that familiar sinking sensation in her stomach... She's not dreading the day ahead of her – she's dreading her email inbox!

Linda's in charge of a large team, and she receives at least 50 emails every day. Reading and responding to all of this mail takes a long time, and most of her work takes back seat to this daily chore. As a result, she's notoriously behind on projects, and she's started staying late, just to catch up.

When we use it appropriately, email is an incredibly useful communication tool. But, like Linda, many of us feel overwhelmed by the amount of mail that we receive and need to respond to.

However, there are ways to manage your email so that you're more productive. In this article, we'll explore strategies for doing this, so that you can get on with the real work at hand.

Note:
Keep in mind that these strategies may not work for everyone. So use your own best judgment when you think about how to manage your email.

Checking Email

Checking your email regularly during the day can be an effective way to keep your inbox at manageable levels.

However, the constant interruption and distraction that comes from multitasking in this way can dramatically lower your productivity, and disrupt your ability to enter a state of flow when working on high value projects.

One strategy you can use is to check email only at set points during the day. For instance, you may decide that you'll only check your email first thing in the morning, before lunch, and at the end of the day.

Here, it helps to set your email software to "receive" messages only at certain times, so that you're not distracted by incoming messages. If you can't do this, at least make sure that you turn off audible and visual alerts.

You can also reserve time to read and respond to email after a long period of focused work, or at the time of day when your energy and creativity are at their lowest (this means that you can do higher value work at other times). Our article, Is This a Morning Task? will help you identify when you're feeling least energetic, so that you can schedule time appropriately.

If you're concerned that your colleagues, boss, or clients will be annoyed or confused that you're not responding to their email quickly, explain that you only check email at certain times, and that they can call you or use instant messaging if the matter is really urgent.

Note:
Clearly, in some roles, you will have to check email on a regular basis, especially if your business uses email as its main communication tool. As with all of these strategies, use your judgment, based on your circumstances.

Reading Email

When you read email, you can waste hours if you don't use this time intelligently.

First, try using the "Two-Minute Rule" (a concept from David Allen, the author of Getting Things Done) when you read your mail – if the email will take less than two minutes to read and reply to, then take care of it right now, even if it's not a high priority. The idea behind this is that if it takes less than two minutes to action, it takes longer to read and then store the task away "to do later" than it would to just take care of the task now.
10 Time Management Tips That Work

The answer is simple. Everything you ever learned about managing time is a complete waste of time because it doesn't work.

Before you can even begin to manage time, you must learn what time is. A dictionary defines time as "the point or period at which things occur." Put simply, time is when stuff happens.

There are two types of time: clock time and real time. In clock time, there are 60 seconds in a minute, 60 minutes in an hour, 24 hours in a day and 365 days in a year. All time passes equally. When someone turns 50, they are exactly 50 years old, no more or no less.

In real time, all time is relative. Time flies or drags depending on what you're doing. Two hours at the department of motor vehicles can feel like 12 years. And yet our 12-year-old children seem to have grown up in only two hours.

Which time describes the world in which you really live, real time or clock time?

The reason time management gadgets and systems don't work is that these systems are designed to manage clock time. Clock time is irrelevant. You don't live in or even have access to clock time. You live in real time, a world in which all time flies when you are having fun or drags when you are doing your taxes.

The good news is that real time is mental. It exists between your ears. You create it. Anything you create, you can manage. It's time to remove any self-sabotage or self-limitation you have around "not having enough time," or today not being "the right time" to start a business or manage your current business properly.

There are only three ways to spend time: thoughts, conversations and actions. Regardless of the type of business you own, your work will be composed of those three items.

As an entrepreneur, you may be frequently interrupted or pulled in different directions. While you cannot eliminate interruptions, you do get a say on how much time you will spend on them and how much time you will spend on the thoughts, conversations and actions that will lead you to success.

10 techniques to become the master of your own time

1. Carry a schedule and record all your thoughts, conversations and activities for a week. This will help you understand how much you can get done during the course of a day and where your precious moments are going. You'll see how much time is actually spent producing results and how much time is wasted on unproductive thoughts, conversations and actions.

2. Any activity or conversation that's important to your success should have a time assigned to it. To-do lists get longer and longer to the point where they're unworkable. Appointment books work. Schedule appointments with yourself and create time blocks for high-priority thoughts, conversations, and actions. Schedule when they will begin and end. Have the discipline to keep these appointments.

http://www.entrepreneur.com/article/219553
3. Plan to spend at least 50 percent of your time engaged in the thoughts, activities and conversations that produce most of your results.

4. **Schedule time for interruptions.** Plan time to be pulled away from what you’re doing. Take, for instance, the concept of having "office hours." Isn't "office hours" another way of saying "planned interruptions?"

5. **Take the first 30 minutes of every day to plan your day.** Don't start your day until you complete your time plan. The most important time of your day is the time you schedule to schedule time.

6. **Take five minutes before every call and task to decide what result you want to attain.** This will help you know what success looks like before you start. And it will also slow time down. Take five minutes after each call and activity to determine whether your desired result was achieved. If not, what was missing? How do you put what's missing in your next call or activity?

7. **Put up a "Do not disturb" sign when you absolutely have to get work done.**

8. **Practice not answering the phone just because it's ringing and e-mails just because they show up.** Disconnect instant messaging. Don't instantly give people your attention unless it's absolutely crucial in your business to offer an immediate human response. Instead, schedule a time to answer email and return phone calls.

9. **Block out other distractions like Facebook and other forms of social media unless you use these tools to generate business.**

10. **Remember that it's impossible to get everything done.** Also remember that odds are good that 20 percent of your thoughts, conversations and activities produce 80 percent of your results.
For emails that will take longer than two minutes to read or respond to, schedule time on your calendar, or add this as an action on your **To-Do List**, to do later. Most email programs allow you to highlight, flag, or star messages that need a response, so utilize this handy feature whenever you can.

**Tip:**
Many of us also get lots of internal notifications. These are those "FYI" emails from the corporate office or from team members who want to keep us "in the loop." If you see your name in the "cc" field instead of the "To" field, chances are it's an FYI email. Consider filing it in a "To Read" folder, and tackle it when you have time.

### Organizing Email

Can you imagine having an inbox with nothing in it? It almost sounds too good to be true!

Although a completely empty inbox (also called "inbox zero") might be unrealistic for many of us, keeping our main inbox cleared can make us more organized, and help eliminate stress.

First, set up a simple filing system to help manage your mail.

You could use broad categories titled "Action Items," "Waiting," "Reference," and "Archives." If you're able to stay on top of your folders – particularly "Action" and "Waiting" folders – you could use them as an informal To-Do List for the day.

If four categories sounds too simplistic for your needs, you can set up a more detailed system. For instance, you could create a folder for every project that you're working on, or have a set folder for each of your clients or sales reps.

The advantage when you create specific folders for processing email is that it makes it easier to search for past mail: instead of scouring your entire email system, you can simply search in that particular folder.

### Using Rules

Most email programs, such as Outlook and Gmail, allow you to establish "Rules" that sort email into a particular folder as soon as it comes in.

For instance, you might get several emails per day that notify you of sales that your company has made. You want to receive these, because you want to see what's happening, but you don't want them to clutter your inbox.

This is where you could set up a rule in your email program that moves emails with, say, "Sale Notification:" in the subject line straight to the "Sales Made" folder as soon as they come in. This means that you don't need to manually file these emails, and allows you to keep all of the sales emails in one folder.

### Non-Essential Email

If you regularly receive email such as newsletters, blogs and article feeds, you could re-route these to another email address, or use rules, so that they're instantly delivered to a particular folder.

This will help keep your primary inbox clear, and they'll be in one place, ready to read at a convenient time.

**Tip:**
You can make a world of difference for your colleagues, boss, and clients when you **write effective emails**. This will not only save them stress and frustration, but succinct, relevant emails can also save an enormous amount of time – yours and theirs.

### Good Team Habits

One of the best things that you can do, to limit the amount of email you need to process, is encourage people to send you less.

For instance, if certain team members regularly send you long, drawn-out emails, let them know. Tell them gently but firmly that because of the demand on your time, you'd appreciate emails no longer than a paragraph or two. Anything longer than that should warrant a phone call. Alternatively, they could drop by your office for a discussion.

Also, promote good email and communication strategies in your organization – encourage people to use the strategies highlighted in this article and in our [Writing Effective Email](http://www.mindtools.com) and [Using Instant Messaging](http://www.mindtools.com) articles.

### Key Points

Most of us feel overwhelmed by email. Although it's a great communication tool, people often overuse it. When you manage it effectively, you can significantly boost your productivity.

To gain control of your inbox, start by checking and processing email only at certain times during the day. If you're concerned about the delayed response, let people know that you don't check your email constantly.
Also, try to keep your inbox as clear as possible. Organize mail using folders like "Action," "Waiting," and "Archives."
And when you do check mail, use the two minute rule – immediately handle any email that you can read and responded to in two minutes or less.
You can also reduce your incoming mail by asking people to send you less, and by advocating effective email and communication strategies in your organization.

This site teaches you the skills you need for a happy and successful career; and this is just one of many tools and resources that you'll find here at Mind Tools. Subscribe to our free newsletter, or join the Mind Tools Club and really supercharge your career!