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## Got Growth?

# Delegation can spark growth and staff development

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This is the first in a series, which will run about once a month, on overcoming obstacles to achieve business growth.

Most people understand the basic idea of delegation. Arranging work to be completed by someone else for which you are ultimately responsible is an art. Often missed is the strategic value of delegation, and the importance of establishing a simple process that can be repeated and taught. This ultimately creates growth.

Delegation is, above all, an opportunity to transfer knowledge, skill and responsibility, developing your staff. It is also a wonderful opportunity to find new ways to accomplish your objectives by having others look at them from different viewpoints.

Hesitation? Feeling the tasks won't or can't be done properly if not handled personally? One, no one person can do everything, and two, it's selfish. Delegation is essential for staff development.

At the other end of the spectrum, don't fall into the trap of viewing delegation as a means to off-load work that is undesirable or unimportant. To the delegate, it feels like humiliating busywork. Typical results include poor performance, low morale, and unnecessary turnover. Effective delegation skills create value through others resulting in positive impact on the entire organization.

Here's a six-step process:

- Have a clear objective. Get crystal clear on what you want to achieve. You can't expect someone else to achieve your tasks by reading your mind. Be honest with yourself with how much you care about the method by which it gets done versus the result of

the task getting done.

- Picking the delegate. Select the person you believe best suited to taking the task on now and for the foreseeable future. He or she must have the desire to do it and understand the value. Train him or her on equipment or software to ensure success and understanding.
- Guidance. Think about the process you would go through to achieve the task and what you know from experience that a delegate may not yet be aware of. Set a deadline, provide critical information and clearly state the desired results you are looking for with specifics.
- Delegation contract. Define the level of involvement and control you want over the delegate. There are four basic contract levels:

Relaxed. Take action with no need to report back until finished.

Concern. Take action and stay in touch on a schedule.

Fear. Get approval before each identified step.

Paranoia. Do only what I tell you, no more, no less.

- Controls. Describe the exact feedback you want and when you want it. Be prepared to meet with your delegate and provide bi-directional feedback to monitor progress. Don't fall into the trap of taking the task back. If unexpected difficulties or problems arise, additional training, or perhaps an adjustment of the delegation contract is needed.
- Evaluation. Everyone wants to do a good job and be praised for it, not criticized. When the task is complete, get closure by discussing the delegate's performance and lessons learned by both of you. Delegating to this person is an opportunity to further develop a valuable member of your staff.

Larry Mandelberg is founder and managing principal of Beyond Point B, which provides executive coaching, business analysis and training services to help businesses be more successful.