

Why delegation is not performed often management essay



Introduction

Delegating is like a magic wand in the hands of smart managers. Delegating is highly effective when used properly but it is a complex one to practice.

Whatever be the leadership mode, Delegating is an undisputed leadership style. (Babou 2008)

“ Effective delegation takes emotional courage as we allow, to one degree or another, others to make mistakes on our time, money and good name. Effective delegation must be two-way: responsibility given, responsibility received.”

Stephen Covey in First things First

Delegating tasks, work, responsibilities and authority are commonly required in today's world. For example when a professor asks his teaching assistants to invigilate a pop quiz for the students of his class, he is putting them responsible for ensuring a smooth and fair testing conditions for all the students. He is also giving them the authority to penalize the erring students looking for unfair means to write the quiz. After the quiz is over he may ask the teaching assistants to evaluate the answer scripts of the students, hence ensuring that he has transferred his tasks and work to his assistants, mean while he creates time for himself to prepare for the next session of class.

Conceptual Framework

The first rule of management is delegation. Don't try and do everything yourself because you can't.

Anthea Turner

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Delegating is assigning a task that you currently have in your activity list, for which you are ultimately responsible, and assigning it to other person with confidence that he will complete with minimal or no involvement from you. (Babou 2008)

In fact, those who accept Peter Drucker's classic definition of management as "accomplishing tasks through others" insist that effective training managers must first be skillful delegators. (Younger 1997)

Delegation is the process of relinquishing decisions and tasks to others. (Michael E. Ward 1999)

The Five Rights of Delegation

The Five Rights of Delegation were identified in Delegation: Concepts and Decision-making Process (National Council, 1995) for Nursing Service Administrators (NSA) and staff nurses (Hansten 1992). We can extrapolate these to a level of generality for the delegation process and identify these as the broad components of delegating.

Right Task

It is important to identify an appropriate set of activities and goals in accordance with the organizational policies, procedures and standards. These activities must be within the competencies of the delegatee. Usually tasks, responsibilities and work which are time consuming for a person, which could be performed equally well by someone else resulting in the same output can be transferred. While the time saved by the delegator can be put into use into other more productive and creative work.

Right Circumstances

The delegator needs to ensure that the resources available are sufficient for the delegatee to perform the activities transferred to him, failing which the results may not be satisfactory. Identifying the opportune moment to groom a person for career succession by delegating him tasks of the next level is important.

The following could be circumstances which can demand delegation.

1. When somebody else has more skills than you in a particular area.
2. When an individual has approached you with willingness to help out on a specific project.
3. When someone can develop themselves by taking on a challenging task.
4. When you don't have the time to handle your other responsibilities effectively.
5. When planning takes more time than implementing.

Right Person

Managers may look to assign new and untested employees tasks for which results are predictable and the potential risk is minimum. But once a trust relationship has been established between the delegator and the delegatee, mostly in the cases of more experienced and skilled employees, more complex and risky work can be delegated.

In Organizations it is important that the right person is delegating the right task to the right person to be performed on the right person or situation. For example the company's board has decided to lay off some employees to reduce cost. Then the CEO may ask his divisional head to carry out the process in the division, the divisional head will ask the lower rung managers to inform the decision of the company to the employee.

Right Direction/Communication

Clear, concise description of the task, including its objective, limits and expectations must be communicated while delegating a task.

Communicating the expected results, potential complications and the time lines for completing the activities ensures effective delegation of the task.

Right Supervision

Appropriate monitoring, evaluation, intervention, as needed, and feedback to be given to the delegatee by the delegator ensure that the things move on track.

As far as managers are concerned, Delegating allows them to make the best use of their time and skills, and it helps team member's growth and develops to reach their full potential in the organization. Delegation, however, is not simply assigning work that falls within the scope of employees' job descriptions. Effective delegation involves giving employees the responsibility and authority to do something that is normally part of the job of a manager.

“ But because our organization has grown so much and in so many different ways, the delegation process places responsibility and authority on the shoulders of people you can watch grow and watch the way they treat others.”

Vince McMahon

Participative (democratic): Managers delegate authority to their staff, giving them responsibility to complete the task given to them in their own way so long as the task is completed; staff are fully involved in decision making thus developing a sense of belonging in the organization. (Zamaros 2008)

Participative delegation can be perceived by the employees as the level to which the organization or their immediate superiors show confidence in them and trust their abilities. Thus for an individual it can be a powerful means of empowering the employees. As a result the employee engagement and organizational commitment show an appreciable increase.

Decentralization: The extent to which power and authority are delegated to lower levels (Zamaros 2008). Delegation helps an organization to grow unhindered. As the organization becomes larger and larger it becomes increasingly difficult for the management to do everything that they were used to do.

Organizations reduce layers of management and delegate more responsibilities to its employees (McShane 2007). Failure of managers to delegate can result in stunting the growth of an organization.

Decentralization is a direct result of delegation giving powers to the lower

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run employees. The psychological empowerment of the employees tends to increase significantly, while freeing the managers from the mundane and routine tasks allowing them to focus on new initiatives.

A particular assignment can be delegated to an individual or a group of individuals. One difference between individual and group delegation is that individual behavior is typically easier to control and monitor. One alternative to delegating the assignment and giving entirely to a subordinate is for a manager to participate in the process as a group member. The downside of this approach is that it may send the group an unintended message of a lack of trust. Employees may feel that the manager is not there to contribute, but to check on the quality of their work. (Camp 2005)

Review of Literature

Delegation is the process through which the manager assigns tasks and goals to subordinates and vests in them formal authority to make job related decisions, take appropriate action for performing their tasks, initiate action on others and utilize the resources of the enterprise. Delegation thus enables a manager to assign a part of his work his subordinates and transfer them corresponding authority to perform tasks and discharge their responsibilities. (Agarwal 2007)

The process of delegation involves determining the results expected from a position, assigning tasks to the position, delegating authority for accomplishing these tasks, and holding the person in that position responsible for the accomplishment of the tasks. (Harold Koontz 2007)

Why Delegation is not performed often?

According to (Harold Koontz 2007), the failure in effective delegation occurs not because managers do not understand the nature and principles of delegation but because they are unable or unwilling to apply them. Many of the reasons for managerial failure lie in the attitude towards delegation. The attitudes which can affect delegation are receptiveness, willingness to let go, willingness to let others make mistakes, willingness to trust subordinates and, willingness to establish and use broad controls.

Receptiveness

An underlying attribute of managers who will delegate authority is a willingness to give other people's ideas a chance. Decision making always involves some discretion, and a subordinate's decision is not likely to be exactly the one a superior would have made. The manager who knows how to delegate must have a minimum of the "NIH (not invented here) factor" and must not only be able to welcome the ideas of others but also to help others and to compliment them on their ingenuity.

Willingness to let go

A manager who will effectively delegate authority must be willing to release the right to make decisions to subordinates. A major fault of some managers who move up the executive ladder - or the pioneer who has built a large business from a small beginning of, say, a garage machine shop - is that they want to continue to make decisions for the positions that they have left.

Managers will enhance their contributions to the firm if they concentrate on tasks that contribute most to the firm's objectives and assign subordinates other tasks, even though they could accomplish them better themselves.

Willingness to let others make mistakes

Although no manager would sit idle and let his subordinate make a mistake that might endanger the company or the subordinate's position in the company, continual checking on the subordinate to ensure that no mistakes are made will make true delegation impossible.

Willingness to trust subordinates

Superiors have no alternative to trusting their subordinates, for delegation implies a trustful attitude between them. This trust is hard to come by. Too often, bosses distrust their subordinates because they do not wish to let go, are threatened by subordinates' successes, do not delegate wisely, or do not know how to set up controls to ensure proper use of authority.

Willingness to establish and use broad controls

Since superiors cannot delegate responsibility for performance, they should not delegate authority unless they are willing to find means of getting feedback, that is, of assuring themselves that the authority is being used to support enterprise or department goals and plans. More often than not, reluctance to delegate and to trust subordinates comes from the superior's inadequate planning and understandable fear of loss of control.

Delegating Authority or Overcoming Weak Delegation (SP Robbins 2009),

(Harold Koontz 2007)

Clarify the Assignment

Define assignments and grant sufficient authority in the light of the results expected. Provision for clear information on what is being delegated, the results expected, and the timelines or performance expectations need to be set straight.

Specify the delegatee's range of discretion

Select the most capable and motivated person in the light of the job to be done. Specify the parameters of constraints so that the person knows, in no uncertain terms, the range of his discretion.

Allow the delegatee to participate

Allowing the employees to participate in determining what is delegated, how much authority is needed to get the job done, and the standards by which they will be judged, increases employee's motivation, satisfaction, and accountability for performance. Also decentralization should not lead to insulation and a free flow of information between superior and subordinate, furnishing the subordinate with the information needed to make the decisions and to interpret properly the authority delegated.

Inform others that delegation has occurred

Delegation should not take place in vacuum. Not only do you and the delegate need to know specifically what has been delegated and how much authority has been granted, but anyone else who may be affected by the delegation act also needs to be informed.

Establish feedback controls

Controls must be relatively broad and be designed to show deviations from plans, rather than interfering with routine actions of subordinates. The establishment of controls to monitor the delegatee and the employees reporting to this person's progress increase the likelihood that inefficiencies will be identified early and the task will be completed on time and to the desired specifications.

Reward effective delegation and successful assumption of authority

Managers should be ever-watchful for the means of rewarding both effective delegation and successful assumption of authority. Although many of these rewards will be monetary, the granting of greater discretion and prestige—both in a given position and by promotion to a higher position—is often even more of an incentive.

Empirical Study and Generalization

“No person will make a great business who wants to do it all himself or get all the credit.”

Andrew Carnegie

Mr. X is an LIC Agent in Jamshedpur; he also does a lot of work as a financial consultant and tax planner. Proprietor of X Advertising Agency, Mr. X does advertising work for all the local newspapers and some billboard advertising as well. He works all days in the week but takes an off in the second half of Sunday, unless something very urgent turns up or a new business

opportunity knocks on the door. A normal week for Mr. X means around seventy hours of work.

Mr. X had a very tough start to life as he lost his father at a very young age, and graduated as a bachelor in science. Mr. X had to face all the struggles himself without any help of any kind; but he takes pride in being called a self made man.

With his resilience and hard work he got himself a job of stores officer. He was very dedicated and scrupulous at his job and demanded perfection. As a low rung employee he was an asset to the company. He lost his first job when he discovered an error done by his immediate supervisor and brought it to the foreground; the supervisor did not take the criticism very kindly and prepared the grounds for his exit.

Not to be kept down, he found other avenues of earning his bread and butter. He started as a small time representative of Uditvani, a local Hindi newspaper, in the advertising sales team. His individual brilliance and extravert nature started to get him business. He also saw an opportunity in selling insurance policies as an LIC Agent. It did not take him much time to settle down in his new role and he started to do well. In fact his performance was so good that he broke all kind of sales records at the Jamshedpur branch of LIC. People were astounded by the turnaround in the fortunes of this young man, from being unemployed to becoming the agent of the year in LIC, from living in a rented house to his own house, from driving a scooter to owning a Maruti 800 car; the changes were just unbelievable. People tried to

do the jobs that he was doing to emulate his success, but somehow could not reach the peaks scaled by Mr. X.

But over the years Mr. X's sales have flattened, refusing to grow. Mr. X still prefers to work alone. He does not feel bogged down even by performing some of the menial tasks that could be done by employed staff. He wants to do everything by himself, and takes pride in the fact that his work is perfect and he guarantees customer satisfaction. Also he is not sure if the staff would be as adept as him, it also bothers him that if his clientele is revealed his business is at risk.

Meanwhile a new breed of LIC Agents and advertising agencies, have started to gain ground. They have multiple offices with scores of full time dedicated staff working for them. Today Mr. X is no longer the topmost agent in LIC but an average performer for them.

Findings of the study and Generalization

“ The best executive is the one who has sense enough to pick good men to do what he wants done, and self-restraint enough to keep from meddling with them while they do it.”

Theodore Roosevelt

One thing that clearly stands out is that as business grows it becomes impossible for one person to handle all the responsibilities and carry out the regular work. LIC Agents who were ready to hand out responsibilities by engaging staff were able to expand and grow at a very quick pace, where as Mr. X was reluctant to delegate. As a result Mr. X's business stopped growing

after reaching a certain level. This implies that a risk taking ability is needed for a manager to be able to delegate work effectively and efficiently.

The huge amount of time spent at work by Mr. X could have easily been cut down by employing people to do mundane tasks such as data entry, filing paper work, depositing premiums for the client's policies etc. Mr. X could have used the saved time to handle new clients, get more business, increase his networking and look for means of improving customer satisfaction.

Delegating work saves time for a manager which he can invest in more creative and innovative work to look out at opportunities for expanding the firm's business. Also with the changing face of technology Mr. X is finding it hard to keep up with the pace of the changes in the processes of accomplishing his task. A lot of designing for advertisements is now done on new sophisticated software, CRM databases are used to store client information, and use of emails and online payments of premiums are made. Mr. X could really do well with the help of experts in these areas, and focus on his core competencies.

Mr. X is a perfectionist and hence wants certain jobs to be handled in a certain way only. It is true that if he delegates his work then there is a potential for the quality of the work to go down, as the new staff will not be as experienced and skilled as him. But over a period of time the level of work done by his subordinates will improve. Looking at the larger picture than at details is more important for a manager to achieve the goals of the organization.

In any setting which requires team work the results can be obtained effectively and efficiently by the process of delegation. A phenomenon like this would require a certain level of trust among the team members.

Delegation does not come naturally to a person and depends on the personality, cultural setting, environment and the upbringing of the individual. It is a skill that needs to be developed over a period of time as and when the situation permits. People need to be receptive to the change in the world around them, for being able to effectively delegate their responsibilities.

Implication of Group work

It is not necessary that an individual or an entity responsible for an activity that applies to his or its role would be an expert for performing that task. It is then desired that the task be delegated to an expert who could perform it more efficiently and produce effective results. In the globalized world we see this phenomenon more often than not. Companies look to outsource incidental work to their core areas of business, letting them concentrate on their core areas of strength. It also develops a work life balance where the time saved could be used for private use (like more time with family, time to pursue one's hobbies) thus invigorating the employees for the tasks ahead.

Delegation may be hampered in organizations where transferring of responsibilities and risk taking are not encouraged. This attitude may make the organizations less cost effective and prone to traditional methods of working which may no longer be applicable in the rapidly changing world. An

organization needs to assimilate the change in its day to day working methodology to survive and beat the competition.

Team building can be achieved by delegation as it gives the employees a sense of belonging to the organization and they perceive that the organization trusts their abilities. Hence the employees feel empowered when autonomy is given in the delegation process. A positive atmosphere and identification with the work is developed when challenging and complex tasks are given to the employees relative to their roles. Also the member of the group gets a sense of accomplishment and an opportunity to grow and receive recognition. Intuitively we can say that this would lead to a greater job satisfaction and thus increase in work productivity. For the organization delegation can be a very positive outcome as it can prepare a group of individuals by enhancing their skills and competencies to meet the challenging demands that the organization may face in the future. It also builds leaders for the future by delegation of decision making, participative management strengthening the overall leadership qualities of the organization.

Contribution to OB

The personality and nature of an individual are the moderating variables to the degree or the level of delegation that individual is ready to make. An individual with more risk taking ability is more likely to succeed at delegating work. An element of trust and confidence needs to be shown in the delegatee for delegation to occur. People willing to reduce the level of expectation in relation with the competencies of their subordinates are more likely to have the intent of delegation.

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Individuals who are afraid to let go of power and position of authority will find it more difficult to assign tasks. They may feel threatened by the fact that the delegate may outperform them or steal their thunder.

Managers should be able to assess the complexity of the task at hand, identify the resources capable of executing that task, and have a clear plan to have check points with effective feedback process. Hence we see that there is a cognitive dimension to delegation, prior thinking and planning are needed before delegation.

While it is good that the plan has been formulated and the task has been delegated, success of the task depends on how much motivated the employees are? A part of the responsibility of motivating the employees falls onto the manager. He must have the where withal to encourage and inspire team members, ability to let go of power and control, have effective communication channels and sense of team building. These are the emotional aspects that are important in achieving true delegation.

From a group perspective it is generally desired that the tasks are delegated to prepare the work force for career succession, instilling a sense of empowerment in the employees, team building, leadership building, preparing the employees to meet future challenging and complex problems, reduce decentralization i. e. too much dependence on one or a group of individuals, become more productive,

Some questions which will follow regarding delegation are:

Is delegation always beneficial? We have seen from the literature review and the case study that delegation is a desired behaviour, but is this always the case? Are there any negatives for delegation in specific settings or the way in which tasks are assigned?

What kind of work should be delegated? The general idea that has been generated through this report is that more routine tasks should be delegated. While these tasks may be mundane for the manager, they may be challenging for the subordinates. Should managers delegate only routine tasks or give creative and challenging assignments to their subordinates?

When should delegation occur i. e. under what circumstances or situations it is desirable or undesirable to delegate? We should try to identify the situational factors for the same.

Does delegation of work actually increase the competencies of the subordinates and prepare them for a career succession?

What impact does culture, personality and upbringing have on delegation? Is delegation as an art a natural gift or is it a skill that can be developed over a period of time?

Mostly in the report we have seen and discussed top-down delegation but can bottom-up delegation occur? Can the subordinates delegate certain aspects of their jobs to their superiors in particular situations?

Conclusion

Having done an in depth investigation of delegation as a behaviour we can define delegation as given below.

Delegating is the process of transferring a task from the set of activities, responsibilities and, authority applicable to your role, in a particular setting, to an individual or a group of individuals, identified by you as competent enough to carry out that task, in a situation when you need help with that task and would like to concentrate your energies on some other work; with the assumption that the task will be completed by that person successfully up to your expectations and in the process give him or them the autonomy to choose the way he or they would like to perform the task.

We have seen the positive impact that delegation can have on the structure of the organization, and the mindset of the individual. Productivity and efficiency see a rise in organizations resorting to delegation, however expertise and knowledge of the delegatee are important, a lack of which should restrict and limit the level of delegation.