

When should a leader allow subordinates to participate in decision making? assign...



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It is a common practice in the US for managers to allow subordinates to participate in decision making in order to prepare subordinates for future challenges and tasks. This approach can improve the quality of decisions, free up the manager's time, and improve the manager/subordinate relationship. There are several factors and constraints for effective decision delegation. Some of the critical factors mentioned in the Martin Gannon book are the urgency of the decision or time factor, the capability of the subordinate or knowledge advantage, and whether this participation will help with the acceptance of the leader's program.

The other factors are the importance and complexity of the decision, the size and structure of the organization, and also the type of the organizational culture. In Geert Hofstede's investigations of national culture, he introduced the power distance as one of the five dimensions. The power distance is the extent to which people accept social hierarchies or unequal distributions between individuals.

High-power distance countries tend to have tall hierarchies in the corporate structure, with large differences in the status and salaries. There are big inequalities in these organizations. In the countries with low-distance power, equality is desired. US have lower power distance than China. The low power distance culture is more favorable for authority delegation. With a high power distance culture there is a fear that the manager can lose control or that the subordinates may actually do better job than manager.

Two levels of participation are usually considered: the leader gets suggestions from subordinates and makes decision alone or the decision is

made by a group consensus. This is also affected by the power distance in the culture. In order to make the decision delegation successful the leader should clarify the assignment for the subordinate and specify the range of discretion, establish the level of freedom for the decision maker, and create information support and effective feedback control.