

## DELEGATION

“To be good is noble, but to teach others how to be good is nobler – and much less trouble.” –  
Mark Twain

Imagine an organization in which each member had an equal amount of responsibility – whether the president, treasurer or member who just joined two months ago. Sound like a dream?

Delegation can make such dreams come true. When delegation is used effectively, you can see drastic changes within your group: higher retention rates, better quality events and more free time for yourself. How does one go about utilizing the magic of delegation? Contrary to popular belief, you do not need to have a magic wand (or an iron hand) to be a successful delegator. You just need to remember a few tips and practice, practice, practice.

- Trust. If you feel that in order for something to be done right it must be done by you, you are not placing much trust in your group members. You need to believe in them and their abilities to successfully complete tasks. Remember, if they are motivated enough to volunteer time for your organization, chances are they are able and willing to take on some responsibility.
- Teach. Delegation permits others to learn and grow within your organization. By allowing them to hold responsibility and complete tasks, you are teaching your members skills in motivation, responsibility and time management – skills that will help them the rest of their lives.
- Leave them alone. Once you have delegated a task, do not look over their shoulders to make sure it is getting done. Instead, set up a system from the start to determine how progress will be measured. For example, have them report their progress in each weekly meeting. Or set up a special meeting at regular intervals with the committee chairperson to discuss progress.
- Be supportive. To make delegation work, do not assign tasks with a “fend for yourself” attitude. Provide resources and be available to answer questions when they need you. Think of what you would need had the task been assigned to you and try to have those materials or information available.
- Flattery will get you everywhere. Compliment your “taskmasters” whenever you can. Encourage them and let them know they are doing a good job.
- Include everyone. If you are the president, do not delegate tasks just to your vice president. Involve all members of your group, even those lowest on the totem pole. Not only will this serve to increase their involvement, it may improve their self-esteem as well.
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Don't delegate everything. Do not delegate jobs you would not be willing to do yourself. Also, if you feel a job is far too important to delegate to someone else, take a moment to consider the worst that could happen. If the worst is truly detrimental (i.e. could cause the fall of the group), you may choose not to delegate the project at all.

- Talk. Discuss time involvement, project type and other aspects of the task you are delegating with your members (or specifically with the one to whom you plan to delegate). If he does not have the time to do a good job or does not believe in the project, consider finding someone else for the job.
- Give the gift of time. With a bit of extra time, you have some room to handle any unexpected problems. Whenever possible, avoid giving already collapsing problems to your members. Deadlines are good, but usually serve a better function if they allow a bit of workable time.

You may find some people who are overly cautious when delegated a task. They may appear at all times asking every question imaginable. If this happens, tell the member that the next time she has a question for you, she should bring with it three possible answers rated in order by preference. She will probably generate the correct answer by herself, which will increase her self-confidence and free up some of your time as well.

To make the delegation process as successful as possible, it helps a great deal to develop similar philosophies, goals and values among your group members. This will help build trust in your members and allow you to delegate with confidence.

### **References:**

- Alexander, R. (1992). *Common-Sense Time Management*. NY: AMACOM.  
Wilson, S.B. (1994). *Goal Setting*. NY: AMACOM.

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