



ECSU Student Center and Student Activities Office *Co-curricular education for student organizational leadership*

← THE ART OF DELEGATING →

A leader cannot do everything for an organization; if you try, you will not be successful at leading. Learning how to delegate responsibility (spreading the work around) is an indispensable skill for a leader of any organization. In turn, effective delegation produces benefits for the organization. Effective delegation:

- ◆ allows more people to be actively involved,
- ◆ distributes the work load,
- ◆ motivates members by giving them value and importance,
- ◆ allows members the opportunity to learn, and
- ◆ helps an organization or committee run more efficiently.

Delegation (del-i-'ga `shen): giving others the authority to act in your behalf, accompany it with responsibility and accountability for results

-Gardner & Dae's

Many leaders have difficulty delegating responsibility. Most often they would prefer to do the task themselves to make sure the job gets done right. While this method can be more expedient, it can also breed apathy among un-involved, unmotivated members and eventually results in the loss of members. Sharing your authority with others can be the greatest single motivator in retaining members and strengthening the organization.

METHODS FOR DELEGATION

There are four basic methods for delegating. They are as follows:

- ◆ Ask for volunteers. Interest and belief in something is one of the greatest motivators for success.
- ◆ Suggest someone you feel would be good for the task. Silence in response to a request for volunteers does not necessarily mean lack of interest. Often a person won't volunteer because he/she lacks self confidence.
- ◆ Assign the task to someone. The person can always decline.
- ◆ Spread the good tasks around. Good jobs give people status and value. Make sure the same people don't always get the good tasks.

The strategy a leader uses to delegate a task depends on the stage of readiness of the members. A member who is new to an organization may need you to tell him/her what to do in order to be successful at completing the delegated task. On the other hand, a committee of executive members who have had a lot of experience in the organization may be most successful if you use pure delegation as your strategy.

Getting to know the members of your organization is critical. You can learn the skill but then you must practice it. Trust, and have confidence in your members. Learn to be flexible in your style of delegation and use the delegation strategy that is best for the individual.

DO DELEGATE

It's a good idea to delegate when:

- ◆ there is a lot of work.
- ◆ the work is repetitive or involves details that take up large chunks of time.
- ◆ you feel someone else has a particular skill or qualification which would suit a task.



- ◆ someone expresses an interest in a task.
- ◆ you think a particular member might benefit from the responsibility (i.e., an emerging leader of your organization).
- ◆ a program or activity is large scale.

DON'T DELEGATE

Times when you should not delegate include:

- ◆ situations where you have to address someone's behavior.
- ◆ a decision that involves someone else's morale.
- ◆ the "hot potato" (extremely important matters with serious consequences, emergencies, matters of exception to a policy).
- ◆ things that are usually your specified responsibilities.
- ◆ things you wouldn't be willing to do.
- ◆ a task to a member who may not possess the skill necessary to do it successfully.

GUIDELINES FOR EFFECTIVE DELEGATION

Place your members carefully. Consider their time, interests, and capabilities. Specific responsibilities to be delegated to a particular person must be appropriate for the growth or development needs of that person at that time.

- ◆ Explain why the person was selected for this task.
- ◆ Delegate segments that make sense; not bits and pieces of a task. Explain the big picture (how their task fits into the project, etc.).
- ◆ Discuss the task at hand. Discuss ideas; mutually set possible goals and objectives. Whenever possible, give those who will be responsible for carrying out a program a voice in the decision-making. Do not lower standards. Do not insult your people.
- ◆ Define clearly the responsibilities being delegated to each person. Explain what is expected of the person and the bounds of their authority. Be sure agreement is reached where the person can function freely.
- ◆ Give accurate and honest feedback. People want to know how they're doing and they deserve to know. This is both an opportunity for giving satisfaction and encouraging growth. Allow for risk taking and mistakes.
- ◆ Support your officers and chairpersons by sharing information, knowledge, and plans with them. It is incredible how many errors are made simply because of lack of information. Share their failures as well as their successes.
- ◆ Really delegate. Most responsible people do not appreciate someone looking over their shoulder, kibitzing, or taking back parts of their assignment before they have a chance to do it. As the leader, it's hard for you to let go; but sink or swim, let them do the job! Delegating does not eliminate work, it simply changes it. As you delegate appropriately, a multiplier effect occurs: the time spent doing a job can be spent enabling several people to do numerous jobs.
- ◆ Stress the importance of evaluation. You must not overlook the need to evaluate and measure the extent to which your actions conformed to your plans, if the plans went well, or if the original plans were appropriate and worthwhile.

Your members are your greatest resource! Let them be involved!

REFERENCE

Adapted from: St. Norbert College, Department of Leadership, Service & Involvement

*Additional resource handouts are available as well as consultation services.
For more information, contact the Student Activities Office in the Student Center at 465-4450.*