

The Art of Delegation

Are you running your business or is your business running you?

Talk to SME owners/managers about this and you soon discover that what most of them are doing is... just about everything! Many who started their business based on their own specialist knowledge or skill and a desire to be their own boss ultimately become frustrated and tired as they extend themselves across two jobs – practicing their trade and managing their business.

Ask why the 'hired help' isn't doing the work that the owner wants to drop and you are likely to receive answers like these:

- I'm too busy to find the time to train someone else
- I don't have the time to explain to anyone how to do it properly
- I'm the only person who can do it right the first time

And sometimes there might be an unvoiced, but still important reason:

- If I delegate responsibility, I'll lose control over what goes on

Someone else CAN do it!

Delegation really is the only solution. What is needed is a plan for making it happen effectively. That may mean, short term, finding the time or engaging an advisor to assist you in developing a solid plan for training people and developing reporting mechanisms. Keep the bigger picture in mind – cost is relative. For example, if you manufacture and install pool fencing, are the installation jobs interfering with time that could be more profitably spent developing new designs or marketing? Or would you just like to be spending more time with your family? If your answer is 'yes,' then the cost of delegating is a worthwhile investment for you to make.

Planning to delegate

Planning to delegate should be a structured process – that's why professional assistance can sometimes be a great help in making the process go as quickly and smoothly as possible. It will involve proceeding through the following steps:

- Clearly and logically identify the goal of the project; specify exactly which tasks or part thereof you want the person to be able to relieve you of
- Develop a documented description of the process to act as the teaching guide and reference manual to help with the training so the trainee does not have to continually interrupt you for answers to 'frequently asked question' type issues
- Develop guides as to how long a process should take so you can measure output
- Develop an ongoing reporting mechanism of the key performance indicators of the task so you can keep overall control such as timesheets or wastage reports or even periodic personal inspection of the work
- Provide feedback! Give credit where it is due and offer constructive suggestions to help the trainee through the learning curve

Telling someone to take over and walking away from the job yourself isn't delegating. And the results aren't likely to be pretty. Use a structured process and remember that



success will depend to a large degree on how you conduct the actual training. Your approach should involve frequent feedback to the trainee. You'll be surprised at how many of your employees can step up to the mark under the right conditions.

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