# The Art of Delegation

Delegation is about sharing tasks, responsibilities, or even authority with another person or group to carry out specific activities. It is a fundamental aspect of management and leadership, allowing individuals to distribute workload, empower team members, and focus on higher-level tasks. Delegation involves assigning tasks and providing the necessary resources, support, and guidance to ensure successful completion.
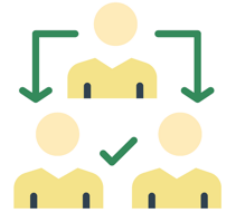
Effective delegation involves clear communication of expectations, providing necessary resources and support, setting realistic deadlines, and maintaining accountability. It also requires trust in the abilities of team members and a willingness to let go of control to some extent.

Overall, mastering the art of delegation is essential for leaders to leverage the strengths of their team members, foster collaboration, and achieve organisational goals effectively.

Benefits of delegation:

- **Development of Team Members**: Delegation provides opportunities for skill development and learning among team members. Assigning tasks that match their abilities and challenge them fosters growth and professional development. Creating a Delegation Matrix (see below) can assist greatly in monitoring skills gaps and ensuring training is put in place before it is urgently required.

- **Empowerment and Engagement**: Delegating responsibilities empowers team members by giving them ownership and the experience of responsibility for their work. This can increase their engagement, motivation, and commitment to achieving team goals.

- **Efficiency and Productivity**: Delegating tasks to individuals with the appropriate skills and expertise can streamline workflow and accelerate task completion, improving productivity and efficiency within the team or organisation. In high-performing teams (HPTs), delegation often happens between colleagues as they work so well in a highly collaborative style.

- **Promotion of Collaboration**: Delegating tasks often requires collaboration and communication among team members. This promotes teamwork and cohesion, leading to better problem-solving and decision-making outcomes. The sense of gratitude and sharing of praise is also a motivator as people come to know their colleagues so well and rely on them for support.

- **Employee Engagement/Retention**: Involving team members in decision-making and task execution through delegation can increase engagement and motivation. If colleagues feel overloaded and believe that another colleague in their team is not being given or doing their fair share, it could create an accidental saboteur or, worse yet, the hard-working team member leaves.

- **Strategic Priorities**: Delegating routine or lower-priority tasks allows leaders to concentrate on strategic initiatives and high-impact activities that contribute to the organisation's long-term success.

- **Time Management**: Delegating tasks frees up time for managers and leaders to focus on strategic initiatives, problem-solving, and decision-making. Colleagues within HPTs find that the balance of work is always fair as they collectively work together to achieve the team's tasks and goals.

- **Reduce Stress Overload**: Effective and efficient delegation reduces the stress that leaders and managers often experience due to poor delegation. Stress is the largest cause of sick leave in the UK. At the time of writing, the NHS said, "Common causes of stress at work include a lack of control of our workload".

- **Work/Life Balance**: Stress often greatly impacts domestic/family/social relationships, so we must work collaboratively to reduce the impact on our personal lives. If we find this negative impact, we must ask ourselves, "What is the cost for my inability to address my workload?" "Am I actively working to delegate more?" "Am I ensuring that people within our team are being trained to take on tasks I could delegate if they had the skills?" (Is it me causing myself all this stress)?

- **Building Trust and Confidence**: Delegating tasks demonstrates trust in the abilities of team members, which can strengthen relationships and morale within the team. It also boosts the confidence of individuals as they take on new challenges and responsibilities.

- **Reduction of Bottlenecks**: Without delegation, tasks may pile up on a person's desk, causing workflow bottlenecks and delaying decision-making. Delegating distributes the workload more evenly, preventing such bottlenecks.

- **Succession Planning**: Delegating tasks allows leaders to identify and groom potential successors by providing opportunities to develop the skills and experience needed for higher-level roles.

- **Blocking Progression Planning**: If we do not get delegation right and end up overwhelmed, overloaded and stressed, team members will see this and possibly think, "I don't want promotion if that's what it's like"! So don't accidentally put colleagues off promotion.

- **Mental Health**: The best way to ensure the mental health of you and your team is to work with them closely, know them **really** well (EI), foster psychological safety for all and ensure a cohesive 365° approach to good mental health across all teams as well.

Delegation Health Check.

The delegation process involves several key steps to ensure that tasks are assigned effectively and that team members are equipped to carry them out successfully to bring about the required outcome on or before the required date.

- **Task Identification**: The first step in delegation is identifying tasks that can be delegated. These tasks should be suitable for delegation, meaning they are appropriate in terms of complexity, importance, and the skills of the team members.

- **Selection of the Right Person**: Once tasks are identified, the next step is to select the most suitable person or team to delegate them to. Consider the individual's skills, knowledge, experience, workload, and availability.

- **Clarity of Expectations**: Communicate the objectives, expectations, and desired outcomes of the delegated task to the individual or team. Ensure that they understand the scope of the task, any deadlines or milestones, and the level of authority they must have to make decisions.

- **Provide Resources and Support**: Equip the delegated individual or team with the necessary resources, tools, information, and support needed to complete the task successfully. This may include access to training, guidance from subject matter experts, and possibly budgetary or other resources.

- **Establish Checkpoints and Milestones**: Define checkpoints and milestones to monitor progress and ensure the delegated task stays on track. This allows for course corrections if needed and provides an opportunity to provide feedback and support along the way.

- **Maintain Communication**: Keep lines of communication open throughout the delegation process. Encourage the delegated individual or team to ask questions, seek clarification, and provide updates on their progress. Regular check-ins can help address any issues or concerns that arise.

- **Monitor Progress**: Monitor the progress of the delegated task to ensure that it is being completed according to the established timeline and quality standards. Provide support and guidance as needed and intervene if any obstacles or delays need to be addressed.

- **Feedback and Recognition**: Provide feedback on the performance of the delegated individual or team once the task is completed. Acknowledge their efforts and contributions and provide constructive feedback to help them improve in the future. Recognition of a job well done can boost morale and motivation.

- **Evaluate and Learn**: After completing the delegated task, take time to evaluate the process and outcomes. Identify any lessons learned or areas for improvement in the delegation process and apply these insights to future delegation.

By following these steps, managers and leaders can effectively delegate tasks, empower their team members, and achieve better organisational results.

How to delegate

Use our Moccasin Approach thinking on this first...

If you were being delegated to, how would you want it done? How would you want to feel after it was delegated to you? What would you hope to gain from that delegation?

We must do our best to inspire and motivate the person or people to whom we delegate the task(s).

It may go something like this:

- **Tell** – the person/people you are delegating to "Why" you are delegating to them.

- **Sell** – the task(s) to them and motivate them to want to complete the task well.

- **Consult** (if time and resources permit) – as more heads are better than one, especially if you are not a subject matter expert (SME).

- **Advise** – offer ideas or your way of doing it (unless you want them to have a go) and offer resources you may have or can authorise.

- **Sense check** – Once they have the final plan, check it for any issues or assistance you can offer.

- **Agree** – on the final approach and empower thinking.

- **Review** – the results before they are required and post-delivery.

If the purpose of delegating the task(s) is for them to be able to complete them on their own in the future, then ensure you give them all the support possible or even team them up with someone experienced so they can learn and develop.

Preparing people for delegation

To help those we delegate to understand the benefits of delegation, we must help them understand how workloads can create stress for managers and leaders, and part of the preparation to become a great manager is to learn how to manage workloads efficiently, effectively, and fairly.
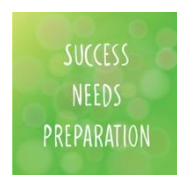
Remember that we should all try to create high-performing teams; delegation is a big part of such teams.

- reduce the impact on our personal lives ("At what cost"?)

- understand how they must become trusted to progress

- build their self-confidence and team resilience

- experience being our stand-in (illness, leave, attending meetings with you, or representing you at them)

- experience and learn what a High-Performing Team is like

- ensure their next move upwards is not "extra stress"!

- be confident in their ability to manage time and work

- enjoy the praise and recognition that come with achieving delegated tasks

Delegation Matrix: (Helping the team and Training/HR)

A delegation matrix enables team leaders and managers to identify all the tasks required by the whole team (their own as well) and to identify any single points of failure, which are risks that need to be addressed, and ideally have sufficient people skilled and practised in those tasks to ensure the smooth management of all tasks within the team.

A suggested approach could include:

- Identifying all the tasks that should be delegated and the skills required.

- Who is best placed to cover each task (and ideally a reserve).

- Opportunities for reserves to learn.

- Any listed tasks that cannot be covered due to lack of ability, expertise, qualification, or certification should be flagged with leaders for action and planning (Training/HR).

- Plan on how to get all uncovered tasks covered.

- Possible cooperation between teams to cover gaps.

- Regular update scheduling (in calendars).

- "Wave planning" for busy periods (if appropriate).

An example **could** look like this:

	Task	Task	Task	Task	Task	Task
Name	1	1	1	1	1	3
Name	2	1	2	1	2	3
Name	2	1	1	1	2	2
Name	1	2	3	2	1	3
Name	3	2	3	2	3	3
1 - Ready		2 – Not yet ready		3 – Skill gap		

Although all names and tasks are listed, you may not need every team member to be skilled in all tasks, so there may be blanks.

Poor delegation

Poor delegation can have several negative and far-reaching consequences for managers, their teams, and other teams, leading to misunderstandings, delays, and undesirable outcomes. Managers and leaders must delegate appropriately by considering factors such as the capabilities and workload of team members, the complexity of tasks, and the level of supervision required. Delegation is an art that must be practised.

A lack of or poor delegation can lead to:

- **Micromanagement**: When delegation is poor, managers may fail to give sufficient autonomy to their team members. Instead, they may excessively monitor and control the tasks assigned, leading to micromanagement. This stifles creativity, demotivates employees, and undermines trust within the team.

- **Overwhelmed Managers**: Poor delegation often results in managers becoming overwhelmed with tasks that could have been effectively delegated. This can lead to stress, burnout, reduced productivity for the manager, and potentially causing delays in critical decision-making and strategic planning.

- **Underutilised Talent**: Failing to delegate effectively means that the skills and abilities of team members are not fully utilised. This leads to missed opportunities for growth and development and decreased job satisfaction among employees who feel undervalued and underutilised.

- **Missed Deadlines and Poor-Quality Work**: Poor delegation can result in rushed or incomplete tasks due to a lack of clear instructions, resources, or support. This can lead to missed deadlines, errors, and subpar outcomes, ultimately damaging the reputation of the team or organisation.

- **Lack of Accountability**: When tasks are not delegated with defined responsibilities and expectations, it can lead to confusion about who is accountable for the outcomes. This lack of accountability can result in finger-pointing, blame-shifting, and a culture of mistrust within the team.

- **Limited Skill Development**: Team members miss opportunities to develop new skills and experiences without effective delegation. This can hinder their professional growth and limit their potential for organisational advancement.

- **Decreased Morale and Engagement**: Poor delegation can lead to frustration, disengagement, and low morale among team members who feel unsupported or undervalued. This can result in increased turnover rates and difficulties in retaining top talent.

Poor delegation can significantly negatively impact organisational performance, employee morale, and the working environment. Managers and leaders must recognise the importance of effective delegation and invest time and effort in developing this skill to avoid these pitfalls. For some, it means letting go of that need for control. Yes, you may be quicker doing it yourself rather than training someone to do it for you, but the **time and effort spent doing that now will save you 100 times more time, stress, and effort later**. Think long-term!

"Delegation may pass on responsibility, but the accountability will always remain with YOU. So train those you delegate to well. Delegation is a skill; like any skill, it needs practice."