

When so many organizations are having to do more with less, it is no wonder that employees react with trepidation when their managers talk about delegation. It is tough for employees to get excited about taking on new tasks when they are already working as hard as they can. And it's doubly difficult when these new tasks are added and no old ones are ever taken away.

In the face of such resistance, managers often stop delegating. However, they need to realize that delegation itself is not the problem. Done properly, it can be not only an ideal tool for training employees, but also the key to making room in a manager's overloaded schedule.



NOTE!
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It is important to understand what delegation is and what it isn't. It is not simple task assignment, or dumping or getting rid of unpopular tasks. Rather, delegation is taking a task from a manager's job description and teaching it to an employee. Managers would choose delegation as an option when they need more time for other work, when they want to develop an employee's potential, or when tasks need to be restructured to accommodate a new project.

So why do managers remain ambivalent about delegation in spite of the obvious advantages? One reason is poor planning. Too often, managers get so swamped with tasks and projects that they wait until the last minute to acknowledge that they need help to meet deadlines. With thinly veiled calm, they approach a subordinate and dump a nearly impossible task on his or her desk. Since they are overloaded and haven't time to explain the job, they leave

it with a pile of hastily scrawled notes and hope for the best. No wonder they leave employees running scared.

Another reason for the ambivalence is ego involvement. Sometimes the climb up the organizational ladder has been such hard work that a manager has a tough time letting go of tasks that seem too important for a subordinate to handle. The manager's sense of value comes from having certain responsibilities they want to believe can't be dealt with by anyone else. These managers don't realize that if their department can't run without them, they are not doing their job.

Another reason is fear of mistakes. There is a significant amount of risk any time people are left on their own to learn something new. The major fear for managers is that the employee will really botch the job and that they'll be left to clean up the mess or, worse still, provide explanations or make apologies.

It can be a real leap of faith to trust an employee to do the job as well as you can.

Finally, there is fear of intruding. This is particularly prevalent in organizations that have been significantly affected by downsizing. When employees are struggling just to keep up with their current workload, the last thing managers want to do is add more pressure. Instead, they suffer in silence, wanting to give more responsibility but fearing to ask the necessary questions about how a task might fit into a subordinate's schedule.

Although the obstacles to delegating effectively can seem insurmountable, learning to be an expert at it is really a matter of observing a few simple rules.

Take your time. Delegate only when you have time to teach and the employee has time to learn. Allocate time in your schedule to have a sit-down, face-to-face meeting with the subordinate to whom you are

delegating. Give clear and accurate instructions, and allow time for their questions, comments and concerns. Time invested at the early stages will pay off in the long run by reducing misunderstood directions.

Delegate in bite-size pieces. Do not try to overload the employee with information during the first session. As a general rule, delegate the job 20% at a time. When the employee can perform 80% of the task unsupervised, it's time to delegate the whole job and let it go.

Watch your language. Try to avoid phrases like "Could you do me a favour" or "I really hate to ask but" This is called personalizing and apologizing, and it tends to backfire by giving the employee the impression that this is above and beyond the call of duty. Make sure you tell the employee what you are delegating, when it needs to be done, and how you want it completed, and why you chose him or her.

Add on a task only when you can subtract one too. It's not fair to keep piling work on to your star employees and expect them to be enthusiastic about it. During your initial meeting with employees when delegating, estimate the amount of time the new task will add to their workweek and let them pass an equally weighted task on to someone else. This will allow them to make room for the new job, and it will give another employee an opportunity to learn something new. If you work in a very small office, you might trade tasks with subordinates to give them a chance to take on a new responsibility. They will have time to learn and you will have a chance to get acquainted with other office operations again.

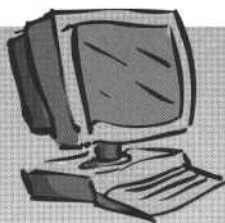
Be available. It is rarely advisable to stand over employees' shoulders while they are working, but it is absolutely appropriate to be accessible when they have

questions. Even better, encourage them to come to you for direction frequently. You obviously don't want them to wait for your approval to make every move, but frequent check-ins will make both of you much more comfortable in the long run.

Delegate recurring tasks. Employees are much more likely to improve their performance if they have several opportunities to do the same job. When a one-time-only task is delegated, what is learned will be easily forgotten. What gets repeated gets remembered, so choose things that the employee will be responsible for daily, weekly or monthly.

It's not always easy to keep people learning and growing in organizations today. With some planning and attention to detail, though, delegation can be a management skill that helps employees to develop and gets the job done too. ♦

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Surfing for Turf on the Internet

"www.uoguelph.ca/GTI"

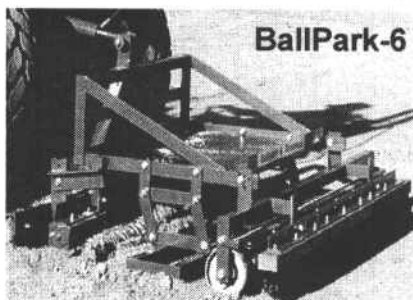
Are you looking for employment in turf management? Do you have a position that needs to be filled? The web site of the Guelph Turfgrass Institute hosts a *Turf Job Mart* for *Turf Jobs Available* and *Turf Jobs Wanted*. Postings are entered on a do-it-yourself basis. Once posted, all contact must be direct so be sure to give enough contact information.

Other Bulletin Boards at this location include *Turf Announcements*, *Turf Business/Education Forum*, *Turf Buy or Sell* and *Turf Events*. From the home page, choose *Interact* and then *Turf Managers' Bulletin Boards*.

"www.pestfacts.org"

This site was developed by RISE (Responsible Industry for a Sound Environment). It is a great source of information to support the responsible use of pesticides. The site hosts a pest of the month and has news stories such as how pesticides are needed to control cockroaches, fire ants, poison ivy, etc. around school yards. In the *Pest Identification* section, you can get information on both common weeds and insects including geographic location of the pest, description and picture, life cycle, prevention and control.

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