

DELEGATION: opportunity for growth

When managers and employees cooperate in the process, delegating authority and responsibility lets the team bring about the best results.

by GREG PETRY



Petry: with two-way communication, all aspects of the assignment will be covered.

Good managers know they can't "do it all" on their own. If you, as an athletic field manager, have the attitude that your way is the only way, and no one else can handle anything but you, you'll not only have a tough time reaching your goals, you'll also drive yourself crazy.

You're right if you feel that you need to delegate authority and responsibility.

Authority is the power to make decisions and take action. Responsibility is the condition of being accountable for those decisions and actions. One is incomplete without the other.

Build a team

The best game plan will result in a busted play if you don't have the right players "running the pattern." A manager must invest the time, effort and resources needed to form a winning team.

Develop and implement programs to train people in all aspects of their job. Initially, training should concentrate on the basic skills needed for the position, gradually increasing the difficulty level with time. Ideally, orientation and training in such

areas as personal relations, safety, communication and specific job-related tasks should be undertaken. Training should continue throughout the course of employment to advance the employee's knowledge and skills.

Investment brokers claim past performance is not an indication of future performance.

Some people learn from their mistakes and don't make the same ones again, and look for excuses to justify poor performance. They limit the scope of their job-related tasks and consequently become less valuable to the organization.

Managers need to monitor and evaluate employee performance, noting who is developing the skills and expertise to accept more responsibility.

Employees are obligated to learn and develop the skills they need to do their jobs effectively. The employee has to accept both the authority and the responsibility delegated to them.

Managers are certainly obligated to insist that an assignment is handled properly, but they must also focus on the final product, not how it is accomplished, provided the workers follow safe, standard guidelines of execution.

The manager's way is not the only way—or even necessarily the best way—to complete a project. Individuals have different ideas and working styles, each with its own strengths and weaknesses. Once you delegate a task, get out of the way and let the employee do the job.

Employees need to be empowered to complete their assignments. They should feel that their supervisor believes they are competent to handle the assignment and view it as an opportunity to shine and accomplish something positive.

Define the assignment

The manager and the employee share responsibility for a clear, precise definition of the assignment.

Managers have to communicate the "big picture," and employees must ask questions when something isn't clear to them.

Complex projects should be covered in writing,

Delegation details

- ▶ make periodic on-site visits
- ▶ complex projects well-planned out, in writing
- ▶ delegating is not "dumping"
- ▶ use peoples' ideas and strengths
- ▶ monitor employee performance
- ▶ take note of 'promotable' people
- ▶ look for opportunity, don't point fingers

with relevant plans and diagrams. Simpler projects can be explained verbally. Whichever format is used to relay the information, both parties must ensure that their expectations are the same, and are based on facts, not assumptions.

No dumping allowed!

Delegating involves a degree of "letting go" of the project, but don't think of it as "dumping." The team concept prevails after the assignment is given.

Managers and employees should work through the chain of command whenever possible, but people should feel free to go to others for information, to directly contact another individual to correct a mistake in process or to keep one from occurring. The appropriate people should be informed of this action as soon as possible.

Complex projects must be well-planned and analyzed prior to kick-off.

Managers are responsible for tracking the progress of the assignment at key intervals, including periodic on-site visits.

Employees in charge of a project should notify supervisors of unusual circumstances or unplanned delays.

Neither party should be afraid to make adjustments along the way to increase efficiency or improve the outcome.

Talk it out

Evaluation sessions are a time to talk about what's right and wrong, not a time for pointing fingers or casting blame. These sessions provide oppor-



PHOTO COURTESY RUPPERT LANDSCAPE CO.

Managers must communicate the overall scope of the project and specific details, including their expectations for the quality of the finished product.

Site visits good for morale

Greg Petry believes in the on-site visit as a way to take note of how well a project is going, and to trouble shoot any potential problems.

"When I'm going to work, or on my way to lunch or during a weekend, I'll drive by on a random basis, just to see what's happening," says Petry. "When I spot something that looks really good, I'll let the people know the project turned out well, or the maintenance was really well done. The site visit is a way to check out the good and the bad."

Petry also believes in talking to crews on the job, not just driving by and waving hello.

"I'll visit a project and talk with the people out there. When you visit on an informal basis, you just kind of pick up on how the work flow is going," says Petry.

"You can also pick up on their mood, and any tensions or problems that need to be resolved."

tunities to express concerns, assess progress and brainstorm possibilities.

Let everyone express their ideas, and back them up with well-thought-out facts and figures, in an attempt to reach consensus. After the pros and cons of all options have been weighed and decisions reached on how best to move forward, those decisions must be accepted and respected by everyone.

Some circumstances are beyond the control of either party, such as unfavorable weather conditions, the business failure of a key supplier, or drastic cuts in personnel or budgets.

Everyone in the organization must work together in developing a plan to overcome those kind of glitches. Look for opportunities, not obstacles, to reach the goal.

In some instances, internal adjustments in overall scope and quality can be made with minimal effect on the public perception of the total projects. In other cases, resources must be channeled to the most important and highly visible segments of a project to satisfy immediate needs, with other project segments temporarily cut back or put on hold until later.

Once the situation has been analyzed and the decisions made, everyone must accept and respect those decisions. □

Greg Petry is executive director of the Waukegan, Ill. Park District, and immediate past president of the Sports Turf Managers Association.