

DELEGATION

When I work with teams and managers I often observe problems in delegation causing conflict, frustration and inefficiency.

Here are some tips for delegating well (based on research by Vroom et al¹)

1. Does the person you are delegating to have the necessary skills, information and resources (including time!)?
2. Consider the longer term impact – it is often easier to delegate the same task over and over to the same team member but this can cause significant problems. Individual team member's tend to become more and more specialised which both creates vulnerability if that individual is unavailable and can lead to boredom and de-motivation if people don't feel they are being sufficiently challenged.
3. Have you got the time to explain the task properly – so the staff member knows exactly what outcome is required and the constraints they are working under?
4. How important is it that they take ownership of the task? If commitment is important, then maximise their sense of autonomy e.g. by delegating decision making, ensuring that it is clear that the outcome they achieve will clearly reflect on them personally and working with them to see how the outcome is aligned with their personal goals and values.
5. Prior to delegating ensure that you and the people you delegate to have a shared sense of direction and values – so they can make decisions consistent with this bigger picture.
6. Make sure you both have clarity about when you will review progress and what you both expect the staff member to have achieved by then.
7. Make sure they know what level of autonomy they have for this task – can they just run with it and report back to you when it is finished? Do you need regular progress reports? Do you want to be involved in key decisions?
8. If you are delegating to a group rather than an individual have agreements been developed to ensure effective communication and conflict resolution between group members?

These tips are also useful if you are being delegated to – I recommend you manage upwards to ensure you have the best chance of success.

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Rachel Collis is available for workshops, keynote speeches, team facilitation and individual coaching

1. Vroom and Jago quoted in Carlopio, James; Andrewartha, Graham & Armstrong, Humphrey (2005) Developing Management Skills Pearson Prentice Hall