



How to Delegate Effectively: 9 Tips for Managers

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Delegation is a vital management skill. But for some, it's the hardest to put into practice.

There are several reasons why managers may shy away from delegating work. They might:

- Think it would take longer to explain the task than actually completing it themselves
- Want to feel indispensable to their team by being the keeper of specific knowledge
- Enjoy completing certain projects so prefer not to reassign them
- Feel guilty about adding more work onto another employee's to-do list
- Lack confidence or trust in who they need to transfer the project to
- Believe that they're the only ones who can do the job right

Whatever the reason, it's important to continue honing the skill, as refusing to delegate can have negative consequences. Not only will you overload your schedule and prioritize the wrong tasks, but your employees will miss out on valuable learning and growth opportunities.

What Is Delegation and Why Is It Important?

Delegation refers to the transfer of responsibility for specific tasks from one person to another.

From a management perspective, delegation occurs when a manager assigns specific tasks to their employees. By delegating those tasks to team members, managers free up time to focus on higher-value activities while also keeping employees engaged with greater autonomy.

According to [a Gallup study](#), CEOs who excel in delegating generate 33 percent higher revenue. These executives know they can't accomplish everything alone and position their team to tackle tasks they're confident they'll achieve—in turn empowering employees, boosting morale, and increasing productivity. In the process, CEOs free up their time to focus on activities that will yield the highest returns and grow the company.

Here are nine ways you can start delegating more effectively to cultivate high-performing teams.



9 Delegation Tips for Managers

1. Know What to Delegate

Not every task can be delegated. For example, performance reviews or any personnel matters should be handled by you. After all, hiring the right talent and knowing each employee's strengths and weaknesses will ultimately make you better at assigning deliverables and transferring responsibility to the appropriate team members.

Several other day-to-day activities don't require your oversight, though. Is there a task you regularly tackle despite knowing your co-worker is better equipped to complete it? Would assigning the project to other employees help bolster their careers? If there's someone who could do the work better, or you think this could be a teachable moment, delegate. It will show you trust and value your team, while also giving you time to focus on more strategic projects.

2. Play to Your Employees' Strengths and Goals

Every employee should have goals they're working toward, and within those goals are opportunities to delegate. For example, maybe you have a direct report who wants to gain management experience. Is there an intern they could start supervising, or a well-defined project they can own the execution of? The type of work you delegate could factor into their professional development plan.

For other tasks, there's likely someone on your team with the specific skill set needed to achieve the desired result. Leverage that and play to your employees' strengths. When someone has a higher chance of excelling, they're more motivated and engaged, which then benefits the entire business.

3. Define the Desired Outcome

Simply dumping work onto someone else's plate isn't delegating. The projects you hand off should come with proper context and a clear tie into the organization's goals.

"You've got to have real clarity of objective," says Harvard Business School Professor Kevin Sharer in the [online Management Essentials course](#). That includes having alignment on "what does good look like" and by what timeline, and "the technique of measuring accomplishment."

Before anyone starts working on a project, they should know what they need to complete and by when, including the metrics you'll use to measure the success of their work.

4. Provide the Right Resources and Level of Authority

If the person you're delegating work to needs specific training, resources, or authority to complete the assigned project, it's your role as a manager to provide all three. Setting someone up for an impossible task will frustrate both sides; your colleague won't be able to achieve the desired outcome, and then you'll likely need to put that work back on your to-do list.

This is also where you need to fight the urge to micromanage. Telling your co-worker, step-by-step, how you would accomplish the task and then controlling each part of the process won't enable them to learn or gain new skills. Focus instead on what the desired end goal is, why the task is important, and help address any gaps between the outcome and their current skill set.

5. Establish a Clear Communication Channel

While you want to avoid micromanaging, you do want to establish a communication channel so that the person you're delegating to feels comfortable asking questions and providing progress updates.

"You've got to have some way to communicate so that the person you delegated to can come back to you and report," says Sharer in the [Management Essentials course](#).

"You've got to have some way along the way to see how things are going. It isn't fire and forget. That is, 'I just give you the task and I don't worry about it anymore. We've got to have some way to monitor the progress along the way without me getting in your way.'"

Setting up regular check-ins and providing feedback throughout the project can help with this.

6. Allow for Failure

This step is particularly important for the perfectionists who avoid delegating because they think their way is the only way to get the work done. You need to allow for failure—not because your employees might fail, but because it will enable experimentation and empower the people you're assigning tasks to, to take a new approach.

If you're open to new ideas and approaches to the work, you'll have an easier time delegating when able.

7. Be Patient

As a manager, you likely have more years of experience in your field. Because of this, a task you can complete in 30 minutes might take an employee a full hour the first time they complete it.

You might be tempted to refrain from delegating certain tasks knowing that you can get them done faster, but be patient with your employees. Think back to the first time you completed a specific task early on in your career. You probably weren't as efficient as you are now; your time management skills have improved.

As you continue to delegate and your employees become more familiar with the tasks that need to be completed, you'll notice that the work will get done faster over time.

8. Deliver (and Ask For) Feedback

In addition to monitoring progress, you should also deliver feedback to your employees after the tasks you've delegated are complete.

If a task wasn't completed as assigned, don't be afraid to offer constructive criticism. Your employees can take this feedback and make changes the next time a similar task is assigned. On the other hand, remember to provide positive feedback and show your appreciation when a task was done well.

To ensure you're delegating effectively, you'll also want to ask your team for any feedback that they can give you. Ask your employees if you provided clear instructions and determine if there's anything you can do to better delegate in the future.

9. Give Credit Where It's Due

After you've delegated tasks and they've been seen through to completion, credit those who achieved the work.

"Recognizing that success is because of your team is not only right, but it has the added benefit of making those around you more engaged—making you even more successful," writes HBS Online Executive Director Patrick Mullane for Richtopia. "It's counter-intuitive, but not claiming success for yourself will lead to more future wins."

The more you thank and credit those you've delegated work to, the more likely it is they will want to help you on other projects in the future.

Honing Your Delegation Skills

Delegating isn't easy; it's a skill that must be practiced and honed over time. But the better you become at aligning the right people with the right tasks and responsibilities, the more effective you'll become at your job as a manager.