

delegate!



the big rocks

David, the feature writer from Business Legends, accepted a cup of Earl Grey from George's administrative assistant and settled again at the table in George's sitting area. Turning to a new section in his notebook, he felt some regret that this series of interviews was nearly at an end, but he was eager to create the feature article from the wealth of information he had gathered. He envisioned a piece that would paint a powerful picture of a business and its leader, a piece that—like its subject—would build logically from foundational philosophy to practical execution.

George held his tea toward David in the manner of a toast. "To you and your article, David. I wish you well. Now that we're down to our last hour, what loose ends would you like to tie up?"

"Another mystery to unravel," David answered. "People—no, I'll speak for myself—I watch you and observe your style for clues. When I think of the massive responsibility you have with a company of this size and all of its moving parts, I tend to think you must be Superman. Since I know that's not possible—no offense—I figure you must be in a constant frenzy trying to keep up with everything. But instead, you seem calm, almost like I would expect if you were on vacation."

"I could guess at your question," George said, "but I'd rather have you formulate it. What problem are you trying to solve?"

"How do you get it all done? Do you work around the clock?"

George glanced at the portrait of his wife hanging on the wall. "No, I don't work around the clock, although I have to admit I did at one time. It nearly cost me more than I could afford, but my wakeup call twenty years ago was one of the best things that ever happened to me. Made me change my priorities in a big way."

"How so? Sounds like a good story."

"It didn't feel like a good story at the time, but I suppose no good story does until you get to the end. One night when I got home at 9:00 for the third time that week, I found my wife, Jeannie, in the bedroom crying. She had just finished putting the kiddos to bed, she was exhausted, and she felt all alone with more responsibility than she could handle.



"I tried to comfort her, but at first she just pulled away. When we finally talked, she said that the kids barely knew me. 'I keep making excuses for you,' she said, 'but I don't even believe what I'm saying. I don't like who you've become.'"

"Ooh," David moaned.

"Hope it doesn't sound too familiar," George said, "but I think it's all too common. We're wired for the hunt. Most of my work feels like recreation to me; it's a challenge I love. But it ends up being empty and unfulfilling if you let it get out of hand. I realized that night that all of my excuses about working hard for the family didn't mean much if I had no real relationship with them. So I did a personal time inventory and made some big changes."

David stopped writing and looked up with a puzzled expression. "I would think that those changes would kill your career aspirations. But here you are, headlining a Business Legends feature. I don't get it."

"It all fits together," George answered. "Everything does. Stone on stone. Structure on foundation. The visible on the invisible. It all connects. You've got to get the big rocks in first or they'll never fit. And if your big rocks aren't the right ones, the time comes when your system just wants to puke them up. Better sooner than later."

"I appreciate what you're saying, but it's still kind of cryptic, like you have to have experienced it already to really understand it."

"Sorry," George continued, "sometimes I forget you're still a young guy. You're right about experience; you can be brilliant and still make foolish mistakes until you get whacked hard enough or manage to learn from someone else who has. Here's the point I was trying to make. It all comes down to relationships. If that's not your highest value—your biggest rock—everything else turns to rust.

"Now, at a very practical level, I reduced my hours in the office and became much more efficient. My need to leverage my leadership skills drove me to become a better leader. I began trying to reproduce myself in others, entrusting them with parts of my responsibilities. I discovered that others, with direction at first—and then less later—learned quickly. They became more valuable and they became more committed to their work."



"You're talking about delegation," David said. "You make it sound so easy, but I've seen some pretty poor examples of it around Business Legends."

"Big rocks again," George said. "Quality up front. Do the process right at the beginning and everyone benefits. Cut corners at the beginning and everyone suffers."

"Is that all?" David asked.

"No, there are lots of details and a process for implementation, but the big thing is making the commitment to it. Remember the Pareto Principle? Twenty percent of your activity gets you 80 percent of your results. That's especially true of delegation. The leaders who rise the highest become masters of delegation because it multiplies their efforts."

"And," David jumped in, "it all rests on the foundation of relationships, right?"

"You're really getting this stuff, David. At least the theory. The test will be the practice."



understanding the journey

After learning to **connect!** with your team and to **invest!** in them, you are now ready to effectively **empower!** them.

Delegation is not a new concept; every leader has had some exposure to it. Sometimes the exposure was positive, but often, not. Many leaders end up complaining, “If I want something done right, I’m most comfortable doing it myself. But I can’t do it all or we’ll never achieve high performance!”

In this module you will learn to leverage your unique role and gifts by entrusting others with authority and responsibilities. This develops them and frees you to focus on the strategic role you alone can play.

Delegation Benefits

The benefits of effective delegation extend far beyond reducing your task list. They include:

1. Increasing your time for more important but less urgent responsibilities
2. Decreasing your stress by focusing on fewer demands
3. Developing your team’s skill base by stretching them with new challenges
4. Motivating your team by demonstrating confidence in them
5. Empowering your team to achieve high performance

Delegation Prerequisite

Assessing your time usage is a crucial step in determining your delegation needs as well as your leadership effectiveness.

- Do you spend significant time in strategic planning, or do urgent demands frequently postpone it?
- What percentage of your time is spent doing high-level planning and execution uniquely appropriate for your leadership level?
- What percentage of your time is spent doing work simply because you can do it faster or better than anyone else on the team?

Although the desire may be strong to retain tasks you do faster or better than others—particularly ones you enjoy—high performance requires delegating them when they are not core requirements for your leadership level. Many organizations would benefit from leaders who delegate more rather than less.



Quality Up Front

It is easy to underestimate the value of quality at the beginning of a process. The time requirements for pre-delegation and first-phase analysis may seem like too great an investment, but the long-term benefits prove otherwise. And saving time by not delegating at all is clearly a losing proposition.

Delegation Blueprint

For significant projects involving multiple people, think like an architect designing a building. Create a simple delegation blueprint that identifies all major components, allowing you to spot potential holes or conflicts. This also assists your delegate selection in ensuring that delegated tasks are relevant to the delegate's overall responsibility and that each delegate has a direct reporting line to the delegator.

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Plan a structure with a solid base and sufficient support and backup to compensate for the tremors of personnel shifts, illness, or other unexpected but possible damaging events. "Backup" does not mean assigning the same task to more than one person, but it does mean having a Plan "B" ready, including the grooming of someone for your own core responsibilities.

As a foundation for your delegation blueprint, study the four phases of the process for effective delegation we provide in the next section:

1. Define
2. Assign
3. Provide
4. Monitor

These enable you to leverage your position, achieving positive results as you simultaneously develop leadership in those you lead.

"surround yourself with the best people you can find, delegate authority, and don't interfere."—Ronald Reagan

"never tell people how to do things. tell them what to do and they will surprise you with their ingenuity."—George S Patton

getting started

Effective delegation is more than the quick handoff of a task. It occurs in four phases, each of which involves multiple components.

Phase 1 is all about quality up front: taking the time to clearly define what you intend to entrust. Consider each relevant category (five Rs) involved in the delegation process.

Results: Goal

What problem are you trying to solve? What goal do you want to achieve with this project? Be specific enough that you and the delegate have the same picture in mind; the goal—the finish line for this project—should be stated in terms of desired results, allowing flexibility in the process. You may have determined some absolute criteria (must be satisfied) and some relative criteria (should be satisfied in keeping with a reasonable cost/benefit ratio) that define your goal.

Milestones

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Milestones are short-term targets en route to achieving the goal. Depending on the project and how much latitude you are willing to give, milestones may be defined by you or the delegate or both. Any milestones you define become parameters.

Rules: Clear parameters

Parameters are “limiting factors that restrict what can be done or how something is done.” Similar to organizational controls that limit risk, they provide boundaries within which the delegate must operate. Common parameters (some of which may be stated in the goal) include time, costs, regulations, ethics, methods, etc. Your discernment of the delegate’s knowledge and experience will influence how tight the parameters should be; but whatever they are, they should not be fuzzy if





they matter. Give careful thought to potential risks and reduce as many of them as possible in advance.

Roles: Personnel

Selecting the right personnel for a project is important for its success and your sanity. Assess for attitude, ability, initiative, and willingness to tell you if they disagree with you. Although your delegate should already have the basic training and skills required, you can anticipate the need for assistance in taking their skills to the next level. Every investment you make in training and coaching your delegate is an investment in future performance.

Delegated authority

Confusion over level of authority leads to problems. Four simple levels of authority can be defined by these instructions:

1. Act. No need to inform.
2. Act and inform.
3. Inform, then act.
4. Inform only. Do not act.

These explicit instructions provide clarity regarding the level of authority you are delegating. Add qualifications as necessary.

Insufficient authority is frequently a cause for delegate frustration. Sometimes authority commensurate with the responsibility isn't granted; sometimes it just isn't communicated to all of the players. If a delegate is to involve other team members, these members need to know it and treat the responsibility with the respect it deserves.

Delegated authority also extends to required resources. Carefully consider the level of authority needed to get the project done efficiently; if in doubt, err on the generous side.

Resources: Money, Materials, Facilities, Support

What will this project require? What is available? Some of these will become parameters. Ensure that a delegated project has sufficient resources to

complete with excellence; estimate what you would need and realize that a less experienced delegate might need more.

Rewards: Process for recognizing achievement

Define the appropriate level of reward for excellent completion. In many cases, verbal praise is sufficient since people are paid for expected performance. You may have a policy that rewards exceptional performance of a major project; if so, consider whether this project applies.

In Phase 2, you hand over the project to your delegate.

Communication

If this is a substantial project, discuss it in detail with your proposed delegate before assuming the right fit. Communicate the goal and the details you have defined in Phase 1, allowing for interaction and potential modification. Collaborating with the proposed delegate is likely to improve the final guiding document.

A delegate's enthusiastic acceptance is important for achieving exceptional performance. Keep their needs in mind as you describe the project. Invite questions, and communicate your confidence in their ability to succeed.

Concurrence

When you are certain that the delegate understands and accepts the responsibility, finalize the guiding document and hand over the project.



Phase 3, providing resources, continues throughout the project.

Resources

Having defined and refined the necessary resources in Phases 1 and 2, Phase 3 is simply the follow through. Address any necessary control issues, authorizations, clearances, requisitions, communication lines, etc.), whether internal or external, that your delegate will need authority to

handle. Communicate clearly with all personnel who may be involved to ensure their cooperation as needed.

In providing support, make sure the delegate is aware of the help that may be received from other team members with specialized knowledge or skills. Delegates should also know what additional training is available if needed and what level of support you are prepared to give.

Discerning your delegate's preferences with regard to assistance will prevent your helpful attitude from being perceived as interference. Providing support blends in with Phase 4.



Phase 3 provide

Resources

- Authority
- Training
- Money
- Materials
- Facilities
- Support
- Tools

Phase 4, monitoring results, also continues throughout the project.

Results

Phase 4 requires a balance that varies with the project and the delegate. Neglect is dangerous, and micro-management is counter-productive. The word “Results” here is a reminder that effective delegation allows the greatest possible freedom in means or process. Monitoring is primarily concerned with results. Milestones with deadlines provide natural monitoring points.

Periodic or milestone reporting

Routine monitoring can be a combination of periodic or milestone reporting and self-monitoring. Having addressed the known risks in Phases 1 and 2, self-monitoring is largely management by exception: delegates inform their managers when exceptional events require major decisions or when some deviation to the plan presents a threat.

Post-project evaluation

Every project is both an end in itself and a means to further development. Assess and record elements of the process that exceeded expectations as well as elements that required modification or unexpected attention.

Rewards

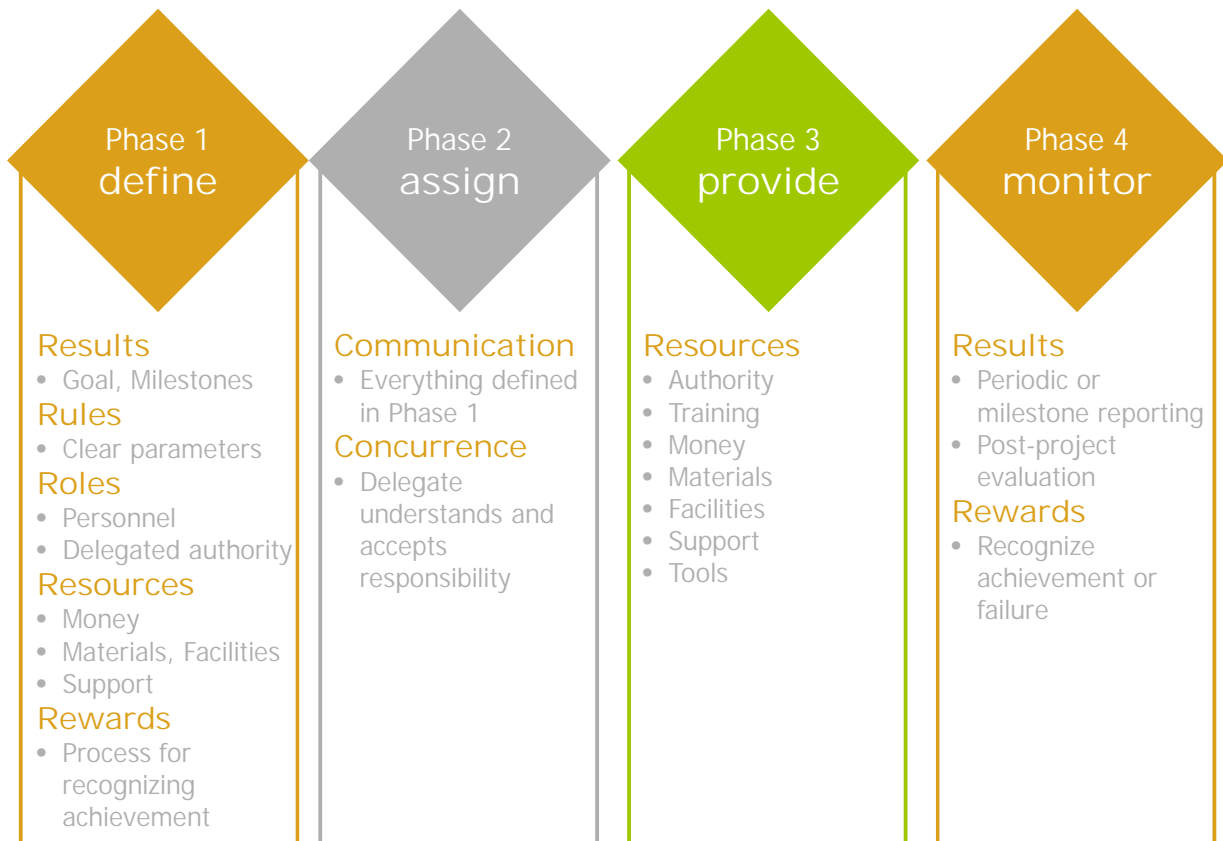
A process for recognizing achievement or failure helps to prevent uneven or inconsistent rewarding, which is de-motivating. Examples of non-monetary rewards include public recognition in a venue commensurate with the scope of the project, verbal or written praise, or a celebration event. A bonus or advancement may also be appropriate.



If the delegation is not successful, a reprimand, growth assignment, or correction of some kind is needed.

Failed delegations are an opportunity for growth when they are honestly analyzed and assessed. Identify the components in each phase to determine where the weaknesses are. Ultimately, the delegator must accept responsibility for an ineffective process, but in most cases both the delegator and the delegate will be able to identify mistakes and areas that were blind spots. Written notes of these findings will help them prevent a recurrence of the same problems.

delegate!





going further

1. Describe how you felt when someone gave you a very important responsibility or project to do.

2. Which of the following areas represents the biggest challenge in your delegation? Why do you think this might be?

- a. Defining clear expectations
- b. Assigning the project, which includes sufficient interaction with the delegate to assure a good fit
- c. Providing resources to ensure that the delegated project is successful
- d. Monitoring and recognizing results

3. How might this have affected the recipients of your delegation and their performance?

4. Select one of your current projects and evaluate how successfully you performed the four steps of delegation. What steps could you take now to correct any deficiencies?

5. How do you think your team relationships and performance would improve if effective delegation were a regular part of your environment?



6. Discuss these questions with your coach.

7. Additional Resources:

- Silos, Politics & Turf Wars (Lencioni)
- Essential Manager's Manual (Heller and Hindle)