

As you probably have discovered, you can't do everything by yourself. So how do you get everything done? We suggest delegating responsibilities to members of your organization. You might be reluctant to delegate responsibilities to members, because you want to make sure the project is done correctly. Delegating properly will help reduce your stress and increase the motivation of group members. Below is a plan to follow to effectively delegate responsibilities to your organizational members, to ensure the project is done successfully.

Steps to Effective Delegating

Step 1:

It is important for you to get to know your organizational members. Learn what skills and responsibilities they like to do and what they do well. Try to keep up with what is going on in their lives. Do they have tests the week you want to delegate a task to them or are they experiencing personal stressors in their lives? The best fit of the person to the job you want to delegate is the most effective. Find new opportunities for leaders who are willing to take on more responsibility than the organization can presently offer. Watch for emerging leaders and allow them early responsibility. Assess, according to experience and maturity, the degree of structure needed in guiding the member to complete the assignment. Try to spread the enjoyable tasks around, giving more members status and value.

Step 2:

Once you have determined who is the best fit for the responsibility you want to delegate, give some thought as to how you would organize it yourself. Determine what is involved to coordinate this responsibility; what are your expectations, timeline and outcome for this responsibility.

Step 3:

Approaching the person you want to delegate the task to can be challenging. Remember, you have selected this person because they have the talent to do the job. Before asking the person to take on the responsibility, find out if they have time to talk to you. Describe in detail your expectations, timeline and desired outcome. If they agree to take on the responsibility, discuss the project; mutually set the goals and objectives. Whenever possible, give the person responsible for carrying out the assignment a voice in the decision making. Give the person the opportunity to ask questions. Once the person accurately understands how to accomplish the job, set times to meet to discuss the progress of the project. Let the person know you are open as an advisor if they need help. Wish the person luck and give positive feedback about how much you appreciate their work.

Step 4:

During the time before your first progress check, remember to share any new information about the project with the person you delegated it to. At your first progress check, listen carefully to what the person is telling you, ask questions to clarify. Give accurate and honest feedback. People want to know how they are doing and they deserve to know. This is an opportunity for you to ensure that no mistakes are being made; however, you do can allow for mistakes to be made without condemning the person. One of your most important roles as a delegator is to help your members learn and grow from both their successes and failures. Let that person do the job. Once you have decided to delegate a responsibility, never take it back (barring impending disaster). Give the person positive feedback once again before you leave and repeat this process until the day of the event.

Step 5:

At the conclusion of the event or during meetings, be sure to support and recognize the work of the person to whom you delegated responsibility. If you thank the person, they will most likely accept another assignment in the future. Be sure to

give recognition to the correct person (do not assume recognition); and let people know who really coordinated the project. Make sure you are teaching others how to delegate once you have mastered the skill; other officers and committee heads should also be delegating tasks.

Possible Benefits of Delegating Responsibility:

1. More creative ways of fulfilling responsibilities are found than those which you could have identified.
2. Followers feel a deeper sense of responsibility and ownership for the organization.
3. An avenue for recognizing good member contributions is made possible.
4. Members gain a personal sense of achievement through completing responsibilities.
5. Followers are trained to later move into leadership roles and advancement becomes possible.
6. You, as leader, have the opportunity to try out some new, growth producing behaviors.
7. Followers are challenged by new and different responsibilities.
8. The load of responsibility is more equally shared among a larger number of members.
9. Followers become more aware of the broad functioning of the organization.
10. Transition to new leadership becomes easier because more members are prepared to step into positions of responsibility.

Possible Costs of Delegating Responsibility:

1. The job doesn't get done.
2. The task isn't completed as you might have liked.
3. Responsibilities and tasks are harder to coordinate.
4. It takes more time to explain how to do something than it would take for you to do it yourself.
5. You, as leader, are no longer seen as responsible for success (or failure).
6. The leader is no longer as visible and "out front" as when he/she is more actively responsible for events.
7. Your power, as leader, is undercut by others taking on more responsibilities.
8. Members get to be overextended because they get into too many things.
9. So many new leaders emerge that there are not enough leadership roles available for all.
10. You, as the leader, don't have anything to do.

Appropriate Time to Delegate is When:

1. There is a lot of work.
2. A member has particular qualifications for or interest in a task.
3. Someone can benefit from the experience.
4. Routine matters need attention.
5. Details take up too much time and have to be divided.

The Time Not to Delegate is When:

1. The task is something you yourself would not want to do (menial work).
2. Someone is underqualified or overqualified for the task.
3. The work is your own specified responsibility.
4. The area is large; or is an unsolved problem, issue or matter dealing with the personal feelings of another; or with confidentiality - the "hot potato."

Remember, your organizational members are your greatest resource. Let them create and put their creativity into action. You'll be glad you delegated the responsibility.

Portions of this handout came from the Student Organization Development Center, The University of Michigan and Roberts, UMCP, 1979.