

# Delegation: A Tool for Contemporary Managers

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**ABSTRACT:** *In this 21<sup>st</sup> century where the business environment has been entangled in the web of competition, it has become very apparent that managers upgrade their leadership skills or styles and learn to build a better human resource base in order to survive in business. In order that the implementation of the management functions or activities, (i.e. Planning, organizing, controlling and motivating) would be effective, managers need to employ the delegation tool. It is in this regard that this paper is compiled in a holistic manner to scan how delegation can be used as a functional tool for enhancing managers' performance and organizational successes as a whole.*

**KEYWORDS:** Delegation, Contemporary Managers, Management functions

## I. INTRODUCTION

In 1962, Alfred D. Chandler, in his pioneer work "Strategy and Structure" [2], shed anecdotal light on the importance of internal hierarchical structures in organizations. Using evidence from the executives at DuPont, General Motors, Standard Oil Company and Sears, Roebuck & Company, he described the importance of creating autonomous divisions and changing the organizational layout towards a more decentralized control structure by delegating power and independence to the lower layers of the hierarchy. In the Paper of his book on General Motors, Chandler refers to Alfred Sloan's restructuring plan for GM as: "In the analysis of General Motor's organizational needs, Sloan's plan began with the assumption that the operating divisions must retain their autonomy. A centralized structure was out of the question. Even the milder type of supervision had met great resistance. Moreover, the plan firmly believed that divisional independence encouraged initiative and innovation".

Aghion and Tirole [1997] [3] developed a theoretical framework to formalize the evidence discussed by Chandler. By distinguishing between real and formal authority in organizations, they concluded that

delegating formal authority to the lower layers of a hierarchy can promote initiative, thus enabling employees to exert higher effort.

There is no generally accepted definition of management as an activity, although many scholars have defined it in their own style, as Drucker (1955) [5] first put it, over forty years ago, management is concerned with the systematic organization of economic resources and its task is to make these resources productive. "Management is an operational process initially best described by analyzing the managerial functions.... Planning, organizing, staffing, directing and leading and controlling". Kootz and O'Donnell (1984) [9]. Basically, management is a process which enables organizations to set and achieve their objectives by planning, organizing, and controlling their resources including gaining the commitment of their employees (motivation).

Planning is an activity which involves decisions about ends (organizational aims/objectives), means (plans), conduct (policies) and results. It is an activity which takes place against the background of the organization's external environment and the organization's internal strengths and weaknesses. Organizing involves detailed organization and coordination of tasks and the human and material resources needed to carry them out. Motivating involves meeting the social and psychological needs of employees in the fulfillment of organizational goals. Finally, controlling involves monitoring and evaluating activities and providing corrective mechanisms.

In order that the implementation of these functions or activities would be effective, managers need to employ the delegation tool. Delegation is a central managerial activity that involves the transfer of authority and responsibility downward through the hierarchy of an organization. It has the purpose of

ensuring the efficient and effective use of manpower in an organization to achieve the overall objectives. In a small organization, one person alone can virtually handle the work so that the question of delegation does not arise, but as the organization widens its scope of operation, the work becomes many for one or few people to handle, and as a result additional members of staff have to be employed. As soon as additional members of staff are employed, it becomes necessary to plan, organize, direct and control their activities. These functions can be materialized if effective delegation is practiced. It has been observed that many organizations have little or no knowledge about the available approaches to delegation. Thus resulting in inefficient performance and reduced profit. It is also clear that even if organizations are acquainted with the concepts and the approaches to delegation, the choice of an appropriate method is sometimes a problem thus making delegation ineffective.

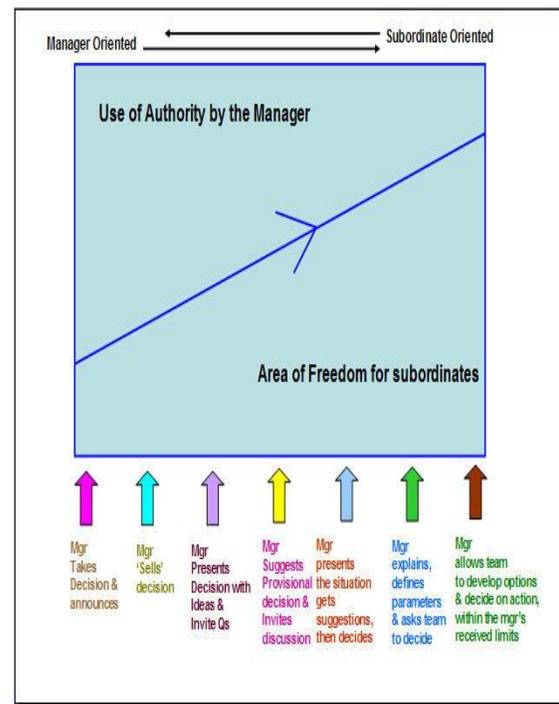
## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### A. THEORETICAL REVIEW

Perhaps nothing is more basic to the work managers do than the process of delegation. Indeed, if one can embrace a common definition of management as being "the accomplishment of work through others," it is delegation that primarily differentiates managers from those who are not considered managers. As common as the term might seem, not everyone defines delegation in the same way. Delegation is defined [13] as the assignment to another person of formal authority (legitimate power) and accountability for carrying out specific activities. D. E. McFarland [12] defined delegation as "The act of delegating is a deliberate sharing of the delegated responsibilities with those whose efforts are needed to fulfil them". L. A. Allen [1] definition also states that "Delegation is the entrusting of responsibility and authority to another and the creation of accountability for performance". For the purposes of this paper, the delegation will be defined in the following way: Delegation is the assignment of one or more meaningful task or responsibilities, either operational or managerial in nature, to a subordinate or subordinate.

In the past few decades, many leadership gurus came up with different definitions of leadership styles. Out of those theories, many of them are based on task – related characteristics. Lewin and Lippitt (1938) [11] proposed classifications of leaders based on how much involvement leaders placed into task and relationship needs. After almost four decades,

Tannenbaum & Schmidt (1973) [14] came up with a continuum of earlier studies with a range of leadership behaviors, ranging from manager-centered (task) to subordinate-centered (relationship). Tannenbaum and Schmidt Continuum model shows the relationship between the levels of freedom that a manager chooses to give to a team, and the level of authority used by the manager. As discussed in Situational leadership below, the number of parameters goes into choosing the managerial style: manager's competence, subordinate's developmental level, the situation. Based on the above parameters, level of delegation takes any one of the seven levels as depicted by the central arrow line.



Tannenbaum & Schmidt concentrated more on delegation & freedom in decision making to subordinates and thereby on the team development. As the team's freedom increases, the manager's authority decreases. This is a positive way for both teams and managers to develop. Tannenbaum & Schmidt defined 7 levels of delegated freedom which moves from manager-oriented to subordinate-oriented. As team develops, level moves from one to the next – the area of freedom increases and the need for manager's intervention decreases. Here are the Tannenbaum and Schmidt Continuum levels of delegated freedom.

- **The Manager decides and announces the decision.**

The manager reviews options in light of aims, issues, priorities, timescale, etc., then decides the action and informs the team of the decision. The manager will probably have considered how the team will react, but the team plays no active part in making the decision. The team may well perceive that the manager has not considered the team's welfare at all. This is seen by the team as a purely task-based decision, which is generally a characteristic of X-Theory management style.

- **The manager decides and then 'sells' the decision to the group.**

The manager makes the decision as in 1 above, and then explains the reasons for the decision to the team, particularly the positive benefits that the team will enjoy from the decision. In so doing the manager is seen by the team to recognize the team's importance, and to have some concern for the team.

- **The manager presents the decision with background ideas and invites questions.**

The manager presents the decision along with some of the background which led to the decision. The team is invited to ask questions and discuss with the manager the rationale behind the decision, which enables the team to understand and accept or agree with the decision more easily than in 1 and 2 above. This more participative and involving approach enables the team to appreciate the issues and reasons for the decision, and the implications of all the options. This will have a more motivational approach than 1 or 2 because of the higher level of team involvement and discussion.

- **The manager suggests a provisional decision and invites discussion about it.**

The manager discusses and reviews the provisional decision with the team on the basis that the manager will take on board the views and then finally decide. This enables the team to have some real influence over the shape of the manager's final decision. This also acknowledges that the team has something to contribute to the decision-making process, which is more involving and therefore motivating than the previous level.

- **The manager presents the situation or problem, gets suggestions, then decides.**

The manager presents the situation, and maybe some options, to the team. The team is encouraged and expected to offer ideas and additional options, and discuss implications of each possible course of

action. The manager then decides which option to take. This level is one of high and specific involvement in the team, and is appropriate particularly when the team has more detailed knowledge or experience of the issues than the manager. Being high-involvement and high-influence for the team this level provides more motivation and freedom than any previous level.

- **The manager explains the situation defines the parameters and asks the team to decide.**

At this level, the manager has effectively delegated responsibility for the decision to the team, albeit within the manager's stated limits. The manager may or may not choose to be a part of the team which decides. While this level appears to give a huge responsibility to the team, the manager can control the risk and outcomes to an extent, according to the constraints that he stipulates. This level is more motivational than any previous, and requires a mature team for any serious situation or problem. (Remember that the team must get the credit for all the positive outcomes from the decision, while the manager remains accountable for any resulting problems or disasters). This isn't strictly included in the original Tannenbaum and Schmidt definitions, so it needs pointing out because it's such an important aspect of delegating and motivating, and leadership.)

- **The manager allows the team to identify the problem, develop the options, and decide on the action, within the manager's received limits.**

This is obviously an extreme level of freedom, whereby the team is effectively doing what the manager did in level 1. The team is given responsibility for identifying and analyzing the situation or problem; the process for resolving it; developing and assessing options; evaluating implications, and then deciding on and implementing a course of action. The manager also states in advance that he/she will support the decision and help the team implement it. The manager may or may not be part of the team, and if so then he/she has no more authority than anyone else in the team. The only constraints and parameters for the team are the ones that the manager had imposed on him from above. (Again, the manager retains accountability for any resulting disasters, while the team must get the credit for all successes.) This level is potentially the most motivational of all, but also potentially the most disastrous. Not surprisingly the team must mature

and competent, and capable of acting on what is a genuinely strategic decision-making level.

Hersey and Blanchard [6] characterized leadership style in terms of the amount of Task Behaviour and Relationship Behaviour that the leader provides to their followers. They categorized all leadership styles into four behaviour types, which they named S1 to S4:

- **S1: Telling** - is characterized by one-way communication in which the leader defines the roles of the individual or group and provides the what, how, why, when and where doing the task;
- **S2: Selling** - while the leader is still providing the direction, he or she is now using two-way communication and providing the social-emotional support that will allow the individual or group being influenced to buy into the process;
- **S3: Participating** - this is how shared decision-making about aspects of how the task is accomplished and the leader is providing less task behaviors while maintaining high relationship behavior;
- **S4: Delegating** - the leader is still involved in decisions; however, the process and responsibility has been passed to the individual or group. The leader stays involved to monitor progress.

Of these, no one style is considered optimal for all leaders to use all the time. Effective leaders need to be flexible, and must adapt themselves according to the situation.

The right leadership style will depend on the person or group being led. The Hersey-Blanchard [7] Situational Leadership Theory identified four levels of Maturity M1 through M4:

High	Moderate		Low
M4	M3	M2	M1
Very capable and confident	Capable but unwilling	Unable but willing	Unable and insecure

- **M1** - They still lack the specific skills required for the job in hand and are unable and unwilling to do or to take responsibility

for this job or task. (According to Ken Blanchard "The honeymoon is over")

- **M2** - They are unable to take on responsibility for the task being done; however, they are willing to work at the task. They are novice but enthusiastic.
- **M3** - They are experienced and able to do the task but lack the confidence or the willingness to take on responsibility.
- I. **M4** - They are experienced at the task, and comfortable with their own ability to do it well. They are able and willing to not only do the task, but to take responsibility for the task.

### B. EMPIRICAL REVIEW

Klein et al [8] studied dynamic delegation--senior leaders' rapid and repeated delegation of the active leadership role to, and withdrawal of the active leadership role from, more junior leaders of the team by conducting a qualitative field investigation of the leadership of teams in an organization. They posit that dynamic delegation enhances teams' ability to perform reliably while also building their novice team members' skills. They also suggest that dynamic delegation simultaneously reflects and tempers the organization hierarchical, bureaucratic structure, engendering coordination and flexibility in response to changing task demands. Liberti [10] studied how delegation impacts the role of Bank Relationship Managers using evidence for a change in a hierarchical structure in a bank. Liberti posit that "empowering managers" increases the time relationship managers spend with their corporate clients, increases perceived effort and reduces the number of complaints the bank receives from its clients.

### III. THE DELEGATION CONTINUUM

LOW	MODERATE		HIGH	
Investigate and report back	Investigate and recommend action	Investigate and advise on action planned	Investigate and take action.	Investigate and advise on action taken.

A word of caution about delegation is necessary because there is one thing it does not include. Former President Harry Truman is said to have had a little sign on his White

House desk that reads "The Buck Stops here!" Managers who delegate should keep this idea in mind because, although authority may be passed along to subordinates, ultimate responsibility cannot be passed along. Thus, delegation is the sharing of authority, not the abdication of responsibility.

#### **IV. PERSONAL ATTITUDES TOWARD DELEGATION**

Although charting an organization and outlining managerial goals and duties will help in making delegations, and knowledge of the principles of delegation will furnish the basis for it, certain personal attitudes underlie real delegation.

##### **A. RECEPTIVENESS**

An underlying attribute of managers who will delegate authority is a willingness to give other people's ideas a chance. Decision making always involves some discretion, and a subordinate's decision is not likely to be exactly the one a superior would have made.

The manager who knows how to delegate must have a minimum of the "NIH (not invented here) factor" and must be able not only to welcome the ideas of others but also to help others and to compliment them on their ingenuity.

##### **B. WILLINGNESS TO LET GO**

A manager who will effectively delegate authority must be willing to release the right to make decisions to subordinates. A major blunder of some managers who move up the executive ladder is that they want to continue to make decisions for the positions they have left. Managers will enhance their contributions to the firm if they concentrate on tasks that contribute most to the firm's objectives and assign to subordinates other tasks, even though they could accomplish them better than their subordinates.

##### **C. WILLINGNESS TO LET OTHERS MAKE MISTAKES**

Although no responsible manager would sit idly and let a subordinate make a mistake that might endanger the company or the subordinate's position in the company, continual checking on the subordinate to ensure that no mistakes are ever made will make true delegation impossible. Since everyone makes mistakes, a subordinate must be allowed to do to some extent some mistakes. It is apparent that some cost would be incurred as mistakes are committed by

the subordinates. However, a manager who is willing to delegate must make provisions for such unexpected cost. Serious or repeated mistakes can be largely avoided without nullifying delegation or hindering the development of a subordinate. Training, counselling, asking leading or discerning questions, and carefully explaining the objection and policies are some of the methods available to the manager who would delegate well. None of these techniques involve discouraging subordinates with intimidating criticism.

##### **D. WILLINGNESS TO TRUST SUBORDINATES**

Superiors have no alternative to trusting their subordinates. This trust is sometimes hard to come by. A superior may put off delegation with the pretext that subordinates are not yet experienced enough, that they cannot handle people, that they have not yet developed judgment, or that they do not appreciate all the facts bearing on a situation. Sometimes these considerations are true, but then a superior should either train subordinates or else select others who are prepared to assume the responsibility. Bosses have misgivings about their subordinates because they do not wish to let go, do not delegate wisely, or do not know how to set up controls to ensure proper use of the authority.

##### **E. WILLINGNESS TO ESTABLISH AND USE BROAD CONTROLS**

Since superiors cannot delegate responsibility for performance, they should not delegate authority unless they are willing to find means of getting feedback, that is, of assuring themselves that the authority is being used to support enterprise or department goals and plans. Obviously, controls cannot be established and exercised unless goals, policies, and plans are used as basic standards for judging the activities of subordinates. More often than not, reluctance to delegate and to trust subordinates comes from the superior's inadequate planning and reasonable fear of loss of control.

#### **V. THE GOLDEN RULES OF DELEGATION**

Carol Caryforth and Maureen Rawlinson [4] identify the golden rules of delegation. They include;

- Explaining clearly and simply what is required and the standard of work expected at the start.

- Allowing your staff the freedom to decide how to carry out the task (though you could ask them to clarify this for you in the early stages)
- Checking that your instructions are understood by encouraging discussion about the task and how to do it.
- Being realistic about what you expect them to do and by what time.
- Being alert for signals that there are problems, but only intervening if absolutely necessary.
- Making certain that your staff know they can always come to you for help, advice and encouragement.
- Giving praise where it is due and constructive criticism only if necessary.
- And don't give out just the boring jobs you hate doing yourself. Identify the tasks, which could be delegated by asking yourself: 'if I were on holiday for the next three weeks, what tasks would really have to wait until my return?' These are the only jobs you should keep.

## VI. WHAT TO DELEGATE?

Deciding on what to delegate can often be problematic, and will be based on whether the aim of the delegation is to reduce personal pressure, develop subordinates or a combination of the two. The sorts of questions a manager needs to ask when deciding what to delegate are:

- What keeps coming up again and again in my job?
- What are the minor decisions I make most frequently?
- What element of my duties takes up most of my time?
- Where will least damage occur should a mistake be made?
- Which tasks are my subordinates well equipped or even better equipped to perform than I?
- Which tasks do I enjoy doing just because I've always done them?
- What jobs if delegated would provide more variety and challenge to subordinates?
- What aspects of my work are directly beneficial to subordinates in developing their skills and experience?
- What duties if delegated will have clearly specified directions and will require minimal control?

## VII. WHAT NOT TO DELEGATE

In the Practice of Management, Peter Drucker [5] identifies areas he terms 'executive action', which he views as management responsibilities that should not be delegated:

- Setting policy objectives;
- Organizing employees into an efficient team;
- Motivating and communicating;
- Checking and analyzing results;
- Setting training objectives.

## VIII. WHY DELEGATION FAILS?

Basically, this will be the result of insufficient knowledge, experience, authority, information or control and will occur when:

- Managers don't delegate enough to know the pitfalls;
- Managers fail to treat each situation as unique;
- There is a communication breakdown of some kind;
- The delegated areas or scope is not defined clearly enough;
- No provision is made for inevitable errors;
- Insufficient checks and control mechanisms are built into the project to prevent disaster whilst still allowing freedom and encouraging the initiative of the subordinate;
- True delegation does not take place.

In short, the manager or supervisor who recognizes the value of effective delegation and takes time to consider how it may be used in particular situations cannot help but see the benefits. Not only is there the welcome - reduction of personal work load and the resultant time to think, but there also are opportunities which increase the authority and responsibility to subordinates to develop and realize their true potentials.

## IX. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

In this paper, we have discussed the need for contemporary managers to decentralize authority through delegation. It has been posited that where the subordinates/employees have the authority and responsibility to use their sense of judgment, decision making on delegated tasks, initiative and drive to

become potent. There are also feelings of belongingness and continuity in the absence of the manager. It relieves managers of burdensome tasks, increases productivity, and leads to subordinate growth and development for the attainment of the organizational goals. The paper also revealed that since the workload was too much for managers, it was an opportunity for subordinates to improve and upgrade their skills and knowledge. Managers were willing to delegate to reap the full benefits of it. However, some managers did delegate but not to an appreciable extent.

The reason being that the subordinates were not competent enough to handle certain technical aspects of the task. The following suggestions have been made to guide managers in the area of delegation:

- Managers should decide which tasks should be delegated and which people should get the assignment.
- They should provide sufficient resources for carrying out the delegated task.
- After delegating tasks, they should be prepared to supervise by going round to check what is going on.
- Managers should establish a system of checkpoints and feedback so that subordinates will remain advised on progress and can offer advice or mid-course adjustments if necessary.
- Managers should give praise where it is due and constructive criticism when necessary.
- Managers should stop giving out just the boring jobs they hate doing themselves.
- Finally, managers should train their subordinates and learn to have confidence in them.

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