

Covenant Community Chat: *How to Delegate Effectively*

The LORD said to Moses: “Bring me seventy of Israel’s elders who are known to you as leaders and officials among the people. Have them come to the Tent of Meeting, that they may stand there with you. I will come down and speak with you there, and I will take of the Spirit that is on you and put the Spirit on them. They will help you carry the burden of the people so that you will not have to carry it alone. Numbers 11:16-17 (NIV)

One facet of leadership is the ability to recognize the special abilities and limitations of others, combined with the capacity to fit each one into the job where he or she will do best. To succeed in getting things done through others is the highest type of leadership. – Oswald J. Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership*

Delegation is the assignment of *authority* to another person to act on your behalf and carry out specific actions. It is the activity of distributing and entrusting work to another person or team. Successful delegation must be accompanied with responsibility and accountability for results. Any leader who refuses to delegate or never learns how to properly hand over responsibility and authority will be limited in their ability to impact others. Leaders who fail to learn the art of delegation or even refuse to hand ministry off to others will forever be hindered and threatened by the success of others. “The degree to which a leader is able to delegate work is a measure of his success.”¹

What are **benefits** of delegating?² When you delegate effectively, 1) you engage more people in the ministry, 2) you share the work load, 3) as a leader you are more effective and efficient, 4) you have more time for your own work, 5) you lower your stress and have more margin, 6) you model the good stewardship of God’s Church, and 7) your church grows for greater Kingdom impact. So...why wouldn’t everyone want to delegate ministry to others?

What are **barriers** to delegating? 1) Perfectionism, 2) wanting to be seen as the expert on everything, 3) fears and insecurities, 4) disorganization, 5) desiring the spotlight instead of

¹ Oswald J. Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership, The Art of Delegation*

² Much of this information was taken from my coaching notes taken under the mentorship of Nelson Searcy.

letting others share successes, 6) fear of being seen as lazy, and 7) lacking of a delegation process in your ministry.

Are the benefits of delegation better than the barriers you will have to cross? Absolutely! But effective delegation takes learning the proper steps, not skipping any steps, and not stopping too soon.

Step One of Effective Delegation: *Determine what you can and should delegate to others.*

Ask questions to begin:

- What are you really good at? (80/20 Rule)
- What are you doing that you're not good at? (80/20 Rule)
- What do you really enjoy doing (what fills you)?
- What do you NOT enjoy doing (what drains you)?
- What am you doing that only you can do?

Dawson Troutman, founder of the Navigators said, “Never do anything of importance that others *can* do or *will* do when there is so much of importance to do that others *cannot* do or *will* not do!” Think about the question Jethro asked of Moses in Exodus 18:14, “*What are you really accomplishing here? Why are you trying to do all this alone while everyone stands around you from morning till evening?*”

Step Two of Effective Delegation: *Clarify the delegated task in writing.*

Write out what you do, step by step. Make it simple. Type it up. Think it through. Test it out. Clarity comes before delegation!

Step Three of Effective Delegation: *Choose the right person.*

Who is available? Who is interested? Cast the net with vision and see what you catch! Narrow down to the person you think is most qualified (not *fully* qualified, but *most* qualified). Do they have the competency, the character, the chemistry, and the commitment to follow through? Do not be afraid to take a risk, just make it a calculated risk and move ahead with the person. “We should be willing to delegate responsibility to emerging leaders the moment they evidence sufficient spiritual maturity and be ready to help while they gain experience by trial and error.”³

³ Oswald J. Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership, The Art of Delegation*

Step Four of Effective Delegation: *Assign responsibility and authority.*

If you only give responsibility away, then you are only giving a short-term assignment. When you give away responsibility *and* authority you give away ministry. Nothing kills the heart of a servant than knowing they have a task to accomplish but not the power to fulfill the duty. Be cautious of asking for too little from your people. If you only rely on *gopher delegation*, “go for this, go for that” then you are undercutting your people’s abilities to excel to new levels.

Levels of Authority

Level 1: I decide for you.

Level 2: I decide with your input.

Level 3: We decide together.

Level 4: You decide with my input.

Level 5: You make the decision.

“The departure of a strong and dominating leader makes room for others to emerge and develop. Often when the weight of responsibility falls suddenly on his shoulders, a subordinate develops abilities and qualities he and others had not suspected he had.”⁴

Step Five of Effective Delegation: *Meet in person to delegate the task.*

This meeting is critical for the success of the person and their understanding of what is being asked of them. Don’t shortcut this step with a simple email or post-it-note!

How to Have a Successful Delegation Meeting

Step 1: Schedule the meeting. Don’t wait for this to happen.

Step 2: Explain the vision and importance of your need.

Step 3: Clarify the job description. Have a job description for everything!

Step 4: Get a commitment and plan any follow up meetings.

Step 5: Clearly establish the timing/deadline of what you need done.

⁴ Oswald J. Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership, The Art of Delegation*

“After he explained each task, he asked the employee to paraphrase back what he or she had heard. Sometimes, the person got it right the first time. Other times, minor points had to be clarified. He was painfully aware of how unclear he had been in the past, and had a new appreciation for why his people kept letting him down.”⁵

Step Six of Effective Delegation: *Establish check-ins and reviews.*

“In the early stages, a wise watchfulness will be necessary, but a resort to interference should be made only if the need becomes acute. The sense of being watched destroys confidence.” Oswald Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership* p.208

Types of Check-Ins and Reviews

Updates: “*Tell me, how’s it going?*”

Support: “*What do you need from me?*”

Encourage: “*I see progress, good work!*”

Adjustment: “*Let’s revisit this part of the process.*”

Agreement: “*Are we still on track?*”

Step Seven of Effective Delegation: *Celebrate and evaluate the process.*

Sometimes you win, sometimes you learn! The key is to celebrate the “wins” with those who have accomplished your desired need. You can celebrate short term progress, improved skills, and overall wins for the kingdom. You must continually communicate how their participation has brought about a greater Kingdom impact! Periodic evaluation leads to continued growth.

Leaders who delegate do so because they are secure in their callings, humble enough to realize their needs, intentional enough to secure a process and people for the task and blessed enough to give away the credit! ***Can you think of Biblical examples of effective delegation?***

“A person may be in a leadership position, but if he isn’t willing to delegate, he isn’t a leader at all — he is a hired hand.”⁶

⁵ Donna M. Genett, *If You Want It Done Right, You Don’t Have to Do It Yourself*, p. 39

⁶ Myron Rush, *Management: A Biblical Approach*