

Delegation

Just What Is Delegation?

1. A technical definition of delegation would be worded as follows:
“The process by which managers distribute and entrust activities and related authority to other people in the organization.”
2. Delegation is getting other people involved.
3. Examples in Scripture:
 - God delegated the naming of the animals to Adam (Genesis 2:19,20).
 - It was Moses who selected worthy men to whom he could delegate the governing of the people of Israel (Exodus 18:13-27).
 - It was the apostle Paul who charged his son in the faith, Timothy, to select faithful men who would extend to a new generation the truth that Paul had himself originally committed to young Timothy (II Timothy 2:2).
4. Successful leaders know **why** to delegate, **how** to delegate, and **when** to delegate.
5. Leaders realize that if someone else can take on a task or responsibility, and can be trained to do so, then it should be delegated.
6. We do not delegate as a means to promote self-laziness, but rather, as a means to stretch, teach, and equip God’s people for a life of greater ministry and influence.
7. Jesus Himself delegated the propagation of the gospel message to the apostles. From the life of our Savior, we know there is wisdom in delegation.

Reasons to Delegate

- Successful delegation occurs when leaders understand and appreciate the many benefits associated with its implementation.
- Delegation is **not** simply a way to dispose of unwanted assignments.
- Delegation is **not** about filling a position with a warm body.
- So many have the attitude, “If it’s going to be done right, I better do it myself.” This attitude on the part of the leader will cripple any church or ministry.
- My story – church here with no staff. It was a great day—a liberating day when I learned to empower others.
- I realized quickly the value and benefits of delegation, and I found ways to **make** it work! Are there sometimes issues associated with

delegation? Absolutely! But the advantages of delegation motivated me to focus on solutions and possibilities, **not** obstacles.

Consider a few of the awesome benefits of empowerment through delegation.

1. As a leader you can accomplish more by engaging others, rather than attempting to do it all personally.

- From a pure production perspective, delegation makes sense. Regardless of your level of talent, ability, energy, giftedness, experience, or intelligence, there is a limit to what can be accomplished by flying solo. In other words, at some point you will reach your maximum level of fruitfulness—and then things begin to head south!
- This is one reason so many ministries (or classes) begin to decline or not be healthy. One person only has so much time, gifts, and abilities. You will eventually hit a wall or signs of unhealthiness will begin to surface.

2. When you learn to delegate, you are then positioned to focus on assignments that are the most critical, high-priority tasks.

- When you hand off (with proper training and appropriate accountability) responsibilities that others can assume, you now have available time and energy to deal with issues no one else can handle.
- Example: there are things that I need to do and focus on (message prep, casting vision, overseeing the staff, prayer).
- But if I get caught up cleaning the buildings or creating the handout, I don't have time to do the things I need to be doing.

3. When you delegate, it allows time for you to target assignments that maximize your spiritual gifts, strengths, and interests.

- To do ministry things that you enjoy! This is refreshing and will help to energize you (acting in WTB).

4. Delegation is a way to grow, develop, mature, stretch, and train God's people.

- Again, delegation is not about getting things off your plate; delegation is about developing people.
- Proper delegation is one of the most powerful tools we have for discipleship. Many people will never grow until they get involved.

Reasons We Fail to Delegate

If delegation is so important and so beneficial to people and to the work of the ministry, why do church leaders fail to delegate?

1. Some leaders fail to delegate because they do not know how.

- Training, developing, and empowering servants is a foreign concept.
- They have never experienced personal mentoring, and they never acquired the skills necessary to the task. When I started in full-time ministry, I was only 21 years old. My experience was very limited, and my skills were almost non-existent!
- But I was determined to learn (by asking questions of more experienced leaders, reading good books, and trial and error)

2. Some leaders fail to delegate because they fear not being needed by others.

- Their mindset is, “I need to hold on to everything because I want people to need me.”
- The problem with this attitude—beyond the fact that it is prideful—is that God’s work is hindered. No matter how gifted, talented, intelligent, or capable you are, you cannot successfully single-handedly accomplish it all.
- Ministry is all about teamwork!

3. Some leaders fail to delegate because they believe no one can do it as well as they can.

- Like reason number two, this excuse is rooted in pride.
- The reality is our churches are filled with people who have the mental and spiritual capacity to learn and grow.
- They may not do it as well as you in the beginning, but they will improve and grow if you mentor them. You had to start somewhere too.
- It is beyond foolish to try to do it all yourself. **You** will suffer, **your family** will suffer, and **others** (that could be serving) will suffer.
- Many of us cling tightly to the roles we have in our church because pride is rooted deeply inside our souls. We have to look to Jesus for fulfillment, not our ministries where we serve.

4. Some leaders fail to delegate because they enjoy doing it all.

- The major problem with this is that, in many ways, you limit the involvement of other church members.
- One of the most effective ways to assimilate new members into the church is through involvement. If we will not allow others to get involved, they will either grow stagnant spiritually, or they will leave

the church, seeking a place where their abilities and gifts can be utilized.

5. Some leaders fail to delegate because they have been wounded in ministry.

- It is a gut-wrenching experience to put your love, time, prayer, and mentoring into someone, and then watch them turn on you and hurt you deeply. Every leader faces this difficult challenge at some point.
- I have experienced this on more than one occasion, and, like all others, I found it to be burdensome.
- The Apostle Paul was hurt by others (II Timothy 4:10,14-16), and it left its mark—a mark not easily erased. Only God can bring the healing that enables you to press on. Only God can provide the strength that allows you to move forward in obedience to disciple yet another, and risk being hurt all over again!
- Like Paul, in spite of the Demases or Alexanders, we must invest in the Timothys. Do not allow a painful experience to rob you of the joy in watching a believer grow into the servant God has destined them to become. The need is too great!

6. Some leaders fail to delegate because they fear rejection.

- The simple reality is, not everyone will agree to serve or accept a new assignment. Be prepared as some good people will say “no.” The fear of being turned down must not stop us from asking.
- Years ago a survey was conducted by the Gallup organization. Through their research, they discovered that 40% of the people surveyed indicated that they would like to serve in the church, but they had never been asked. Let’s start asking . . . and then training!

7. Some leaders fail to delegate because they do not have qualified people to whom they can delegate.

- No doubt, it can be a challenge of finding capable and faithful people. Without question, the problem is real and not easily dismissed!
- Having said that, I do believe there are strategies that may and should be employed to respond to this condition. The first decision is to change your mindset—stop making excuses and stop acting as if there is no hope. At the core of the issue is effective leadership. At present there may be few if any qualified servants, but there are candidates or prospects—and it is the leader’s job to recruit, disciple, mentor, teach, coach, and empower them.

- Remember, leadership is influence. The leader’s task is to influence prospective servants—as raw as they may be—and develop them into what Christ has ordained them to become.
- Far too often I hear ministry leaders complain because they have too few workers. A leader’s responsibility is to change that.
- The heart of real ministry is recruiting, training, and coaching potential servants.
- Leadership is about doing what Jesus did. He hand-selected 12 men, trained them, and they turned the world upside down (Acts 17:6).
- Please do not call yourself a leader if you do not have the energy and ability to attract people and motivate them regarding Christian service.
- The oft quote leadership proverb says it well, “He who thinketh he leadeth and hath no one following him is only talking a walk.”

Delegation Strategies

This is “how to.” A few of the strategies may work in your situation, others will not. The objective is to find what works for you.

1. Create and cultivate a culture of Christian service.

- Be positive about the opportunities that exist within your ministry or class.
- And do not be embarrassed or hesitant to ask people to serve.

2. Determine what you can and cannot delegate.

- Depending upon your ministry position, there will be certain limitations as to what you can delegate.

3. Write a brief description for each ministry position.

- One of our greatest failures is to recruit people to serve and then decline to provide a clear written description of their responsibilities. Such behavior will produce uncertainty and frustration.
- It is a challenge to hold someone accountable for an assignment that is unknown to them!

4. Recruit potential servants.

- The purpose of delegation is not only to fill a position, but more importantly, to develop a person!
- A fundamental goal in leading people should be to help them mature in their walk with Christ and in their service for Him.
- By far the most effective way to recruit believers to serve in ministry is through meaningful relationships. There is no substitute for face-to-face, one-on-one contact. The old adage is true, “more is caught than taught.” Reproducing yourself is a high calling!

- Announcements from the pulpit and invitations printed in the Sunday handout are fine, but the best way to recruit is to follow Jesus' example and go after people individually, following a season of prayer (Luke 6:12-16).

5. Provide adequate training.

- This can take some time, however, this step is one of the most pivotal actions that an effective delegator must take.
- Failure at this point spells failure in the future.
- You can't recruit them and then leave them in the dust while you rush off to do another task. You can't leave them to figure out how to do it on their own.
- As we all know, it is possible—and even probable—that mistakes will be made during the training process. One of the most oft repeated mistakes is allowing the person to practice a new skill the wrong way.
- You see, practice does not always make perfect; sometimes it simply makes people better at doing whatever it is they practice! If they practice a mistake too often, they will only improve at doing it wrong.
- Careful supervision and mentoring are the key. The second mistake is declaring mastery too early. If the coach is too impatient, the temptation is to send the “rookie” onto the playing field of ministry before they are really ready.
- The lesson: provide adequate training—even if it is time-consuming.

6. Give authority along with responsibility.

- For many church leaders, this is a challenging task. Often we are quick to hand off responsibility but hesitant to give away the authority needed to accomplish the task.
- But when we empower, we let go of responsibility and authority—but not people! As the delegator-leader, we still maintain accountability.

7. Offer encouragement to those who serve.

- Encouragement to those who serve under you is like water and air to them – it is essential!
- Providing positive feedback is a central component of good leadership.
- The Apostle Paul did not have the personality that we would normally associate with a warm, caring, sociable person. And yet, as an effective leader, he knew how to encourage. “So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto

us . . . As ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children” (I Thessalonians 2:8,11).

FINAL THOUGHTS

1. When seeking to delegate, look for a person’s natural strengths and interests.
 - As leaders, we often make the mistake of attempting to “fit a square peg in a round hole!”
2. Determine to develop people as you accomplish tasks.
 - In *Leading and Managing Your Church*, the authors write, “As you go about this task, remember that you select people not only for the sake of the task, but for the development of the person. This is especially critical, considering the mission and the primarily volunteer nature of the church.”
 - The church is all about helping God’s people become all that God desires. Delegation is not primarily a way to shift assignments; it is first and foremost a vehicle for growth for willing volunteers!