

Delegation training

You don't delegate accountability, you share it

Make sure the person you delegate to is competent and has the support they need

CEO delegates almost everything to csuite

The person delegating will have areas they're strong and areas they're weak

Spend more time with the people you've delegated areas you're weak with, because it takes more work to get to the same level of understanding of how things are going. It's harder to assess risks in areas you know less about, etc

e.g. spend more time with frontend if your background is in backend

Why delegate?

Not time to do everything

Some tasks are too big

Lacking expertise

Empower others, give them opportunities to grow

Allows people to specialize in what they're good at

Performance = team output, not your own output

If you do a great job on what's assigned to you, that doesn't matter if the people you manage aren't doing the right things

Bad model:

yoyo between the extremes of do it all yourself, and fire-and-forget

when fire-and-forget fails, don't give up and just do it yourself. It's demoralizing and not useful

people do it themselves because they don't trust others, then don't have time to delegate well and fire-and-forget

Example: giles getting really in the details sporadically

If you do it all yourself because no one else knows how, no one else will never know how because you never teach it

Fire-and-forget is very occasionally applicable, when there's a very strong trust

How likely are they to get it wrong, and how painful will it be if they do?

How to handle, e.g. a frontend grad where I have no expertise and neither do they?

Find someone you trust, delegate the buddying to them, and have them report into you

How to handle when daily or weekly checkpoints, they say it's going fine but it's not.
when they say it's fine, probe

Delegation takes time, but doing it yourself takes longer

Keep your time spare, don't fill it up

Unconscious incompetence -> conscious incompetence -> conscious competence -> unconscious competence

Don't assume people's skills are transferable; just because you can use a very light hand for work X doesn't mean you can for work Y

Select the most appropriate position on the delegation spectrum

Be clear on desired outcomes (not: how I would do it; but: what are we trying to achieve)

Stay up to date with progress (based on delegation method) and adjust the level of support as required (e.g. if risk of failure increases, increase your level of control; explain why you're leaning in so they don't assume they're doing a bad job)

Give constant feedback and be honest. Recognize achievements

avoid grabbing it back suddenly, work out the minimum step you need to do

123 feedback: useful when remote or there's a language barrier; useful to stay connected when you delegate, people don't like to keep you in the loop (it feels like bothering you or like they should just get on with it)

Their feedback comes in 3 category:

I'm just giving you information (e.g. progress update)

I want your input

I need X from you to make progress

Having the assignee flag if it's 2 or 3 is useful; it means they can use category 1 more freely and more frequently

What stops us delegating?

- wanting to do it yourself
- being easier or quicker to do it yourself
- lack of trust or confidence that it will be done well
- fear of looking lazy or bossy
- not wanting to burden people who are already busy
- people don't like delegating unpleasant tasks
- feels good to do things yourself, a sense of pride and accomplishment
- not wanting to lose technical skills

Be aware of the natural pull to do things yourself

Mentally take credit for everything your team has done -- it's not arrogant, your job is the output of the whole team and this is a trick to align yourself with that goal

If you enjoy IC work and want to develop those skills, you can. But manage how much time you can

spend on it, e.g. "2 days a week"

Lack of trust won't get better on its own, you need to address the situation and work to improve it.
Not being able to trust people in your team is really unhealthy

People like being asked to do things (as long as you don't tell them to in a snappy way). They like to be trusted and feel valued, and like to feel stretched and being given responsibility

When people are very busy, have a conversation about what they can delegate or pause

You need to be able to manage people who can do things you can't
Have conversations at more abstract levels

Time guilt

if you delegate everything, you won't have enough to do

there's a natural urge to fill that time completely. Avoid that. Allow yourself to have some slack, don't fill that time

you can pick up IC work to fill the time, but don't do anything on the critical path

but if you can keep that time free, you'll find you have more time for strategic thinking and more availability when something's needed

Aim for ~1 hour of slack a day, and if nothing comes up to fill it just take a walk, go home early, etc
if you do fill your time, fill it with stuff that can be dropped easily and doesn't matter

when you delegate, have this conversation with the people you delegate to about how they can delegate
if they're the bottom level and have no one to delegate to, then talk about prioritization