Delegation as a Leadership Style

7 Tips for Effective Delegation

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Your leadership style is situational. Your leadership style depends on the task, the team or individual's capabilities and knowledge, the time and tools available and the results desired. In a recent article, the tell, sell, consult, join and delegate [leadership style model](https://www.thebalance.com/team-building-and-delegation-1916701) was reviewed.

As a supervisor, manager or team leader, you make daily decisions about [the appropriate leadership style to employ](https://www.thebalance.com/want-to-adapt-your-management-style-1917890) in each work situation.

You want to [foster employee involvement](https://www.thebalance.com/employee-involvement-1918100) and [employee empowerment](https://www.thebalance.com/empowerment-in-action-how-to-empower-your-employees-1918102) to enable your team members to contribute their best effort at work.

These tips for successful delegation of authority will help you help your reporting staff members succeed when they are most empowered. And, when they succeed, you succeed. Never let yourself forget the intertwined nature of workplace success.

Leadership Style Tips

1. **Whenever possible, when delegating work,** **give the person a whole task to do**. (If you can't give the employee a whole task, make sure that they understand the overall purpose of the project or task that the task you assign them is part of. If possible, connect them to the group that is managing or planning the work. Staff members contribute most effectively when they are aware of the big picture.)

2. **Employees are more effective performers when** **they feel part of something that is bigger than themselves**.

By giving them the whole and complete picture, you ensure that they feel as if they are a part of the whole initiative. This makes them feel more important in the scheme of things.

People who know the goals, the expectations and the outcomes expected make better decisions about their own work because they have a context within which they are making decisions.

3. **Make sure the staff person** **understands exactly what you want them to do**. Ask questions, watch the work performed or have the employee give you feedback to make sure that your instructions were understood.

No one wants to do the wrong thing or watch their efforts and contribution fail to make an impact. So, make sure that you and the employee [share meaning on the objectives and desired outcomes](https://www.thebalance.com/communication-in-the-workplace-1918089) from each task you delegate.

4. **If you have a picture of what a successful outcome or output will look like, share your picture with the staff person**. You want to make the person right. You don't want to fool the person to whom you delegate authority for a task, into believing that any outcome will do unless you really feel that way. Your employees would rather that you share exactly what you are looking for than that you make them play guess.

5. **Identify the key points of the project or dates** **when you want feedback about progress**. This is the critical path that provides you with the feedback you need without causing you to micromanage your direct report or team. You need assurance that the delegated task or project is on track.

You also need the opportunity to influence the project's direction and the team or individual's decisions.

If you designate this critical path from the beginning, your employees are also less likely to feel micromanaged or as if you are watching over their shoulder each step of the way.

6. **Identify the measurements or the outcome you will use to determine that the project was successfully completed.** (This will make [performance development planning](https://www.thebalance.com/performance-development-planning-1916761) more measurable and less subjective, too.)

7. **Determine, in advance, how you will thank and reward the staff person for their successful completion of the task or project you delegated**. The recognition reinforces the employee's positive self-image, sense of accomplishment, and belief that he or she is a key contributor.

Cautions in Using Delegation as a Leadership Style

Delegation can be viewed as dumping by the employee who receives more work to do. A young employee complained recently that while she was extremely interested in more responsible work and taking on new challenges, she felt that her manager was just giving her more work to do most of the time.

Consequently, some of the delegated work was more challenging; attending meetings during which she helped impact the direction of a developing product was challenging, exciting, and responsible.

She believed her manager didn't understand the difference though, so she spent most of her time doing more work of a mundane, repetitive nature. This workload, that had her working long hours and weekends, interfered with her ability to take on more responsibility and [her family obligations](https://www.thebalance.com/work-life-balance-1918292).

Admittedly, any job has its share of the mundane tasks that have to be completed. Some people don't like filing and some don't like billing clients. Some people also don't like doing the wash or emptying the dishwasher. But, the manager must carefully balance the delegation of more work with the delegation of work requiring more responsibility, authority, and challenge.

The successful delegation of authority as a leadership style takes time and energy, but it's worth the time and energy to help employee involvement and [employee empowerment](https://www.thebalance.com/top-principles-of-employee-empowerment-1918658) succeed as a leadership style. It's worth the time and energy to help employees succeed, develop and meet your expectations. You build the employee's self-confidence and people who feel successful usually are successful.

More About Leadership and Effective Delegation

* [Team Building and Delegation: How and When to Empower People](https://www.thebalance.com/team-building-and-delegation-1916701).
* [Secrets of Leadership Success](https://www.thebalance.com/secrets-of-leadership-success-choose-to-lead-1918614).
* [Lead the Team: How to Be the Person Others Follow](https://www.thebalance.com/lead-the-team-how-to-become-the-person-others-follow-1918610).