

Title:

Developmental Delegation: How To Kindle The Inner Spirit

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Summary:

When you delegate jobs in order to develop people, you build on the greatest resource you have. Here are the 6 steps to doing it right.

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Article Body:

If you manage others, one of your most important roles will be to develop the resources that you have under you and that includes the people themselves. Here is a 6-step guide to how to develop people through delegation.

1. Kindle The Inner Spirit. The first step in developing others is the belief that everyone in the team is capable of growth and development. We demonstrate that belief by being genuinely interested in what they are doing and helping them discover ways in which they can build on their strengths. In this way, developmental opportunities open up almost by themselves. "In everyone's life, at some time, our inner fire goes out. It is then burst into flames by an encounter with another human being. We should all be thankful for those people who re-kindle the inner spirit." (Albert Schweitzer)

2. Get To Know Your Team's Strengths. The biggest disasters in people management arise when we fail to recognize the natural abilities of our team. It's what happened to Rabbit when he went to school.

When Rabbit first went to school, he was delighted with what the instructor told him. "Rabbit, you have fine legs. You hop well, spring well and jump well. With some guidance, you can be an excellent jumper." Rabbit loved every minute of the Hopping class and excelled.

Then the Head Teacher said: "But Rabbit, you don't swim well or climb trees at all well. You must stop the Jumping class and concentrate on swimming and tree climbing."

So, Rabbit left the Jumping class that he loved and went to the Swimming class and Tree climbing class that he hated.

After a while, miserable and dispirited, he begged his parents to take him out of school. "If only I'd been allowed to stay in Jumping," he thought. (Donald Clifton and Paula Nelson)

Moral of the story: Develop what people are already good at and you'll help them excel.

3. Find Jobs That Match Your Needs and People's Needs. The art of delegating lies in finding a match between the potential of the individual and the needs of the business. When you find that match, you hit on a win-win situation: you gain and the individual gains. By contrast, when you delegate jobs that don't need to be done, or to people who don't have any real interest in them, or can't do them, or don't want to do them, you simply de-motivate and frustrate. As a result, people become convinced they're inadequate and lacking in any real talent.

"Don't try and teach a pig to sing. It wastes your time and annoys the pig."
(Donald Clifton and Paula Nelson)

4. Agree A Delegation Plan. When you decide to delegate a job to someone in order to develop their strengths, it is important to create a delegation contract so that you both know what is expected of each other. This contract can include anything you want but useful areas for agreement include: time scales; levels of freedom; levels of authority; constraints; methods of working; worries; how others are affected. You are unlikely to be able to do this without sitting down with the delegatee to agree the contract and then having regular chats as things progress.

5. Let Them Go. Unless your delegation contract stipulates a very tight amount of control by you, you must let the person get on with things without unnecessary interference. OK, that may sound risky. And it is. After all, the delegatee may foul up. Well, that's a risk you have to be prepared to take, since this may be the only way they're going to learn. But unless you let them go, they won't be able to stretch their wings and fly. Delegation is an act of faith on the part of both you and your delegatee. "Giving people self-confidence is by far the most important thing I can do. Because then they will act." (Jack Welch, CEO of General Electric)

6. Keep Your Eyes On. Working out how near or far you need to be in a delegating relationship is the true art of managing others. Too close and you don't give people enough freedom to take risks and learn; too far and they lose hope. One rule is to take your hands off but keep your eyes on. This relationship is similar to parents teaching their children to swim. At the start, they stand right next to them with their hands under their tummies. They

never let go. Then gradually as the children begin to gain in confidence and skill, they move back. First they let one hand go. Imperceptibly. Then the other hand. Then they take a step back. Then another. And eventually they move out of reach to the side of the pool. In the end they leave the children alone and get out of the pool. But all the time and even now, they never take their eyes off them.

Developmental delegation is by far the most important of all the acts of delegation. It is delegation with a purpose. It grows the one resource that is free and unlimited, your own staff. When it works, you increase all your assets at a stroke and both you and your delegatee are the richer for it.