

TRANSCRIPT

PODCAST #7: DELEGATE YOUR WAY TO YOUR GOALS

VOICE-OVER: Here's this week's Raising The Bar podcast for Business To Business Magazine with Business Development Coach Robin Hensley.

ROBIN: "If it's to be, it's up to me". Does that statement reflect how you feel about delegating tasks to others? If so, then you just may have positioned yourself for failure. Did that get your attention? As much as you might want or feel you need to do everything yourself, it is unlikely that you will ever hit your biggest goals if you refuse to let go of work that will free you up to focus on what is most important.

Hello again and welcome to this edition of Raising The Bar's coaching series. I'm Robin Hensley and this week I'll be guiding you through the process of determining what and how to delegate while keeping your eyes firmly fixed on your goals.

First of all, let's talk about what delegation is and what it is not. Webster's defines the word "delegate" as entrusting a task or a responsibility to another person, typically one that is less senior than oneself. The key word here is, of course, "entrusting". It's the trusting part that often stops us from moving tasks from our plate to someone else's. And that suggests the other problem with delegating—the confusion between delegating and assigning.

When you assign a task, it still belongs to you. Someone else is executing it, but you retain the responsibility for it. Assigning a task is a short-term solution.

When you delegate, you move the responsibility for that task to someone else, which frees you up for more important work. Your attention can turn to bigger issues. Delegating a task is a long-term solution. But the benefits of delegation do not stop there. When you opt to delegate, you benefit your business as well as yourself. Delegation helps prepare others for more responsibility and positions them to advance. Offering subordinates the opportunity to take on more responsibility communicates your trust and belief in them and your desire to support their growth. Both are important elements in retention and succession planning strategies. If you're a one-man band, then delegation becomes a more creative process, one that requires seeking out appropriate resources on a per project or on-going basis.

Earlier, we talked about trust as an obstacle to delegation. There is another objection that you may have to turning work over to someone else. And that is time. In previous podcasts, we've looked at how time is impacted by a variety of forces. In this case, time can be perceived

as the enemy. It takes time to delegate, to impart information that will assure the desired result. However, if the time factor is one you are using to argue against letting go of a project, let me reassure you that the investment you make on the front end will keep reaping dividends as you move forward.

Yes, it might take some time to train someone to take that task over and it may take some attention and follow-up from you to help guide the successful transition of responsibility, but in the long run you will have created a solution that helps both you and the person to whom you are delegating. That person will be empowered through increased responsibility and will, over time, just get better and better at executing that task. Of course, you must take the time to choose the right task and the right individual to whom you entrust the work.

Choosing the best tasks to delegate and those to whom those tasks will be delegated requires preparation and analysis. Start by making a list of the tasks you are currently performing. Next, identify those tasks that could, if done by someone else, free you to concentrate on your most important goals. For example, you may be accustomed to doing all your own research or time input or weekly financial reporting and your time would be better spent meeting with clients or developing strategy. Sort your tasks in order of importance and look around your organization for likely delegation candidates. Start by asking yourself five key questions:

- Is this a task that someone else can do, or is it critical that I do it myself? Be honest. Could someone else be taught to do it?
- Does the task provide an opportunity to grow and develop another person's skills?
- Is this a task that will recur, in a similar form, in the future?
- Do I have enough time to effectively delegate this task? And,
- Is this a task that I should delegate or am I just trying to get out of something I really must do myself? Some tasks, though burdensome, really should remain as part of your own to-do list.

There are two other parts of the delegation equation that require your thoughtful attention. They are accuracy and risk. Is "perfect," "good" or "good enough" sufficient to execute this task? Is there a consequence for failing to meet a time requirement for this task that would produce a significantly negative result?

As you assess your resources, remember that you don't have to plunge in and completely let go of control at least not at first. There are, in fact, six levels of delegation. You can choose the level that best matches the task, depending on your degree of willingness to give that task away and the competence level of the person you select. You can choose to ask that person to:

- Research and report
- Recommend action
- Take action-when you say GO
- Take action-unless you say NO
- Take action and let you know what was done or
- Take action without reporting back or involving you again.

No matter where you start the delegation process, you'll find that people will generally rise to what you expect, so be sure to communicate what you expect clearly and often. One caution, however. As others take on tasks, resist the temptation to fill up all your time with new tasks that simply replace the old ones. Instead, allocate a portion of your new availability to those activities you have identified as key to reaching your goals.

As important as delegation is to your overall success, passing the baton to the right person is just as important to that person's success. A mismatch can result in failure for both of you. There are three critical factors in choosing the right person:

- The first is the knowledge and skill level of the person you are considering.
- Second are the individual's career objectives, motivations and style. A person who likes to work independently will resent you if you hover over the task, while someone who needs constant direction and feedback may just be too costly in terms of your time to be a good choice.
- And third, consider the current workload. Will this task add so much to the person's workload that nothing will get done or will it require complicated restructuring of roles? The answer to this last question may actually help you in the long run. If you do have to move multiple responsibilities around, that's your opportunity to realign any number of tasks that will ultimately free you for what is most important.

Finally, here is a ten-step strategy from MindTools.com for successfully delegating whatever tasks you identify.

- Clearly articulate the desired outcome. Begin with the end in mind and specify the desired results.
- Clearly identify constraints, boundaries and lines of authority.
- Include others in the delegation process, empowering them to have input or decide on what tasks are to be delegated to them and when.
- Sync responsibility with authority and accountability.

- Delegate down to the lowest possible organizational level. The people who are closest to the work are best suited for the task, because they have the most intimate knowledge of the details of their everyday work.
- Provide support and availability for questions and monitoring of results.
- Focus on results vs. how the work should be done. Your way, believe it or not, is probably not the only way. Encourage trust and promote success by giving others the room to create their own methods and processes.
- Avoid “upward delegation”. If there is a problem, don’t allow the person to shift responsibility for the task back to you: ask for recommended solutions; and don’t simply provide an answer.
- Build motivation and commitment. Discuss how success will impact financial rewards, future opportunities, informal recognition, and other desirable consequences. Provide recognition when deserved. And,
- Build in measurements and controls by discussing timelines and deadlines, agreeing on a schedule of checkpoints and milestones, making adjustments as appropriate and reviewing work as it progresses.

Seneca, the Roman stoic philosopher, statesman, and dramatist, reminds us that, “The greatest loss of time is delay and expectation. . .”. So, if you are still struggling with the whole idea of letting go, time is the price of your delay. Why not expect good results and just do it?

Until next time, I’m Robin Hensley, with Raising the Bar.

VOICE-OVER: You have been listening to a Raising The Bar program on delegating your way to your goals with Business Development Coach Robin Hensley. For a full transcript of this program, stop by the Business To Business Magazine website at btobmagazine.com or go to raisingthebar.com.

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