

You manage
things.
You lead
people.

*Grace
Murray
Hopper*

DELEGATING

If “getting things done through people” is the definition of leadership, then effective delegation must be the cornerstone of leadership. Delegation, simply put, is assigning responsibility and commensurate authority to others in order to complete a task. But that is often **easier said than done** for leaders.

Empowerment and delegation are not the same thing. A leader cannot give tasks to participants to do, no matter how important those assignments may be, and assume the participants will feel empowered. Indeed, if the leader retains a great deal of power or control when delegating, participants may feel manipulated, unprepared, resentful or victimized. Conversely, if a positional leader has clearly shared authority and responsibility with the group and has trust, then sharing tasks can be empowering and can enhance community. Empowerment is achieved by enabling the involvement of group members.

Principles of Delegation

- Delegation must be clear. It must be plainly understood what is being delegated, what the performance standards are, and what other special expectations or conditions are in effect (signature authority, for example).
- Make sure that the responsibilities delegated match the competence, ability and information base of the person being delegated to.
- There should be a clear chain of command, and individuals must be held accountable.
- The leader must be accessible for problem solving and other assistance.
- Don't delegate only the “crud” work. Delegation tends to encourage initiative and the development of specific skills. To make the most effective use of this benefit, you must provide members with significant opportunities.
- No leader can delegate final responsibility - - that is, responsibility for the ultimate success or failure of the organization or its programs. The leader should be ultimately accountable.

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