

12 tips for delegating effectively

Written by The Editor

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by Rebecca L. Morgan

'But I gave you instructions!'

Have you ever delegated a task only to have it returned to you looking very different from what you had in mind? I have - too many times.

What I have learned, regretfully, is that the reason many of the jobs I have delegated are done incorrectly is that I have given the instructions incorrectly. Sometimes members of staff are timid about admitting when something is unclear, or they think they can work out a way to do it on their own. The following are guidelines I've developed from my own experience as well as from others who have learned how to delegate the hard way.

1. Write out instructions

if the person you are delegating to is not available for discussion, speaks imperfect English, or forgets easily.

2. Put the date and time the work is due on your requests.

If it is not possible to complete the task within the deadline, the delegatee must get back to you and renegotiate the time or get you to give the task to someone else.

3. Log tasks on a job tracking sheet.

List what work was given out and when it is due in. Keep copies of instructions/due dates so that things do not go astray.

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4. Follow up.

Agree to check work in progress. If the person you have delegated to was given a week to complete a task, check with her in three days. Ask, 'How are you doing on X?' Rather than 'Have you finished yet?' The latter puts her on the defensive and increases pressure. You can catch potential problems in the task by checking up early.

5. Acknowledge good jobs, no matter how small.

Work on improving bad ones. Ask, 'How can we make sure this is done on time next time?' Form a team with your delegatee.

6. Allow staff to use their own methods.

You should be concerned about the results, not the method. If you do this, your staff will be more productive and creative and have more self-respect.