



Delegating Magic

SIX STEPS TO EFFECTIVE DELEGATING

BY ANDREA RICHARDS SCOTT

1. Focus on the Big Picture. Leaders must learn to focus on the big picture and let go of the day-to-day tasks. Leaders are strategists, visionaries, and big thinkers. Successful ones learn how to use the magical powers of delegation so they can spend more of their time working on the things that are important for the company's survival and growth. Leaders focus on the vision and select competent professionals to worry about the details. They understand that if they get mired in day-to-day activities, they will never be able to do important activities. Without focus on the vision – the big picture, the leader may begin to see the company slip away or worse crumble at their feet. To some this seems counter intuitive. They feel they must be involved with every detail in order to make the company a success. That may have worked in the early days of entrepreneurial glory, but as an organization grows, the leader must have a hands off approach.

2. Don't Do it Single Handedly. The biggest mistake a leader can make is not letting people do the jobs they are assigned to do. A person with the entrepreneurial spirit is used to being the 'head-cook-and-bottle-washer.' Unfortunately, this type of leader will never be able to grow his organization farther than his reach or faster than he can keep up. Trying to run an organization without help will inevitably lead to bum-out. There are numerous stories of people who've left Corporate America to strike it rich on their own. While working for someone else, they complained of long hours and unreasonable bosses. What they got for their entrepreneurial efforts was worse – longer hours and more unreasonable bosses (now known as clients). It usually at this point that frustrated leaders throw in the towel or makes the magic happen by hiring help.

3. Recruit Qualified People. Before you run off with a half-baked solution, you've got to take into consideration that bringing in new talent can be risky. After all, unless you are skilled at finding the "right" person for the job (much like betting on the right horse or picking winning stocks), you might end up with a magic trick 'gone bad.' You have a couple of choices, here. First, you could try to hire someone yourself. Recruiting the right candidate is a time consuming activity. Remember we're talking about doing less not more. So, you might want to consider using a recruiting firm. You outline the required skills and the firm does all the leg-work. You get a skilled person or a pool of skilled resources to draw from. Of course, if you already have a staff, then it's like a card trick; you'll want to pick the right one. Again, you must be careful with your choice. It's not easy figuring out who to promote. Past performance may be a good indicator for future results.

4. Hand off with Finesse When handing off critical projects, you may want to take some extra time to make sure that the person who is taking on the assignment truly understands what's expected of them. They may be able to pull a rabbit out of a hat, but you don't want to take any chances. I recommend a formal shared expectation meeting or a transition meeting with meeting notes and action items. This way, you have an artifact that you can refer to later. During this meeting, you'll want to discuss current status, goals, deadlines and provide all the details that the person will need to be successful. You want to make sure that they completely understand what is required so you can begin to focus on something else. Encourage questions and keep an open door policy for questions that come up later. Let them know that you have complete faith and trust in their abilities and that you're available for regular status or follow-up meetings.

5. Inspect What You Expect

Here's the tricky part. Some leaders do delegate; then they walk away from the project and do a disappearing act. They forget about the project until everything falls apart. Remember, as a leader the outcome and success of all the projects are your ultimate responsibility. You can delegate authority but not responsibility. Be careful not to micro-manage but stay on top of things. When delegating to someone, always set realistic follow-up dates. These can be formal meetings with the individual or they can be "tickler" notes on your calendar to remind you to touch bases with the project manager to ensure the project is on target and to answer additional questions. The real magic trick is inspecting the project manager's progress to ensure that your expectations being met even when you're not around.

6. Delegation is an Ongoing Process.

Once you've seen the magical benefit of delegating, you'll do it more. Some CEOs walk away from their companies to go work on other pet-projects or start entirely new ventures. If you delegate effectively: letting go of the reigns, recruiting the right people, setting expectations and checking back from time to time to make sure the project is on track, you'll be able to step away with peace of mind while you go off and work on more pressing issues. By delegating, you've magically created more time to do what's important to you.

Andrea Richards Scott, is the co-author of Keys to the Kingdom, A Manual for Success in Today's World. She is a Competent Toastmaster and a Life Coach specializing in helping her clients achieve a Life Without Limits™

Visit www.AndreaRichardsScott.com or write to her at andrea@AndreaRichardsScott.com to find out more about Life Coaching or to book a speaking engagement.