How managers can boost productivity by learning to delegate

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Leaders, by their very nature, like to be in control. That's much of the reason why they became creators, founders, and managers in the first place. But as businesses grow, leaders inevitably need to let go of a growing list of responsibilities and let their teams keep the company machine well-oiled. For many, however, that's much easier said than done.

Managers who struggle with delegation often end up assigning simple, one-off tasks to employees, rather than handing over bigger responsibilities, which they need off their plate. In doing so, leaders not only struggle to stay on top of their own workload, they also hold back the growth of team members. Effective delegation means trusting your team to handle important projects, delegating ownership, and mentoring them when

necessary. Not to mention, CEOs with high delegation skills can generate 33% greater revenue.

Here are some strategies on how to delegate to drive results and cultivate a company culture of growth and development.

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First, recognize when someone else is better for the job. While it's often the leader's job to wear many hats when running a business — be it a sales representative, design consultant, or accountant — there will always be tasks that are better off in the hands of people with specialized expertise. As a manager, it's vital to recognize when someone else's training and experience is better suited to a task than yours.

Maybe you're managing your company's financing, or devising your own SEO strategy — once the business has grown enough, it's time to delegate these types of tasks to a specialist, so you can focus on high-level, strategic projects and decisions. If this person has the right experience, they should be able to take over on a strategic level and not simply work on individually assigned tasks from above.

Managers should be able to spot gaps in their own knowledge and identify where their employees can fill them. This not only gives managers the chance to focus on what they're good at, but also allows team members to feel like they're gaining new responsibilities that are relevant to their own skill set.

Second, invest in training and mentoring your team members. Delegating responsibilities is a vital component of creating a collaborative company culture and supporting the development of your team. Yet, many leaders still have the mentality that if they want something done right, they should just do it themselves.

This not only keeps you busier than you need to be, but it prevents your team from learning new skills. Your goal should be to train your employees to be able to do certain things just as well as you do — when you invest the time to mentor and train them from the get-go, you see the return in the form of more free time to focus on leadership down

the road. In fact, a 2020 study on the factors of delegation success, found that for this to work, support structures are a must, including training, mentoring and easy access to information.

One important thing to remember here is that you shouldn't always assume that your way is the best way. Be open to new ways of doing things, as your team members might take a different approach to you. After all, we're all different, and you can't expect your team to execute tasks in the same style that you do.

Furthermore, you shouldn't be discouraged by an initial dip in performance — it's rare that an employee would effortlessly succeed with a new task on first try. After sufficient training, you can provide more autonomy to your employees, and ask them to use their own judgement around certain aspects of their new responsibilities. For example, "follow up with a sales lead as and when you see fit" is a very different instruction to "send this email template to all sales leads every three days."

Delegation through training will help instill a positive company culture as team members feel like they have opportunities to learn and can ask questions without being penalized. This approach also helps drive business results, as it lays the foundations for more leaders to emerge within the company, who are invested to stay with the business for the long run.

Third, gradually hand over project ownership. Businesses grow, the amount of concurrent projects expands, and eventually, you'll get to the point where you can't head-up each big initiative yourself. When this happens, it's a good idea to involve your team in the project while you're leading it, and gradually hand over the reins until they're comfortable enough to take it on totally.

With big projects like this, make sure you stay engaged — you don't want to remove yourself entirely from what's going on. Follow up during and after the project to get feedback on how they felt going it alone, or on any further support that's needed.

Delegation is a craft that you'll have to continuously hone if you want to leverage it to its full potential. By seeing delegation as an activity that not only relieves your own workload, but supports the growth of your team, you can make sure that you're doing it right.