

LEADERSHIP TR@CKS

ISSUE NO. 9

Let Go and Get 'Mo Dr. Jim Dyke

Retail merchandising genius J. C. Penney (the man, not the company) said it well: *The surest way for an executive to kill himself is to refuse to learn how, and when, and to whom to delegate work.*

Leaders Leverage

Leadership is all about leveraging—multiplying your impact through other people you have enlisted in your vision. A familiar adage sums it up this way: *Many hands make light work.* In the world of visionary leaders it goes like this: *Many hands have great effect.* (Just so you don't forget—Leadership is not just about being more *efficient* and getting *more* work done—it's about being more *effective* and getting more of the *right* work done.)

Work Matters

Just the same, it still boils down to getting work done. That's where delegation comes in. In simple terms, delegation is defined as *the fine art of handing a task over to a subordinate.* I have inserted the phrase *fine art* for a reason—to remind us that effective delegation requires *finesse* as well as *facility*.

Art and Science

Delegation is a function of good management *science*, so there are well-established principles and guidelines to follow (stay tuned for some practical tips). But there is an *art* to great delegation, too—the vital aspect of delegation that requires leaders to know their *team members* as well as they know their own *workload*.

The Art of People

Delegation becomes "fine art" when it helps your *team* as much as it helps *you*. Here's how... The right task or project assignment can introduce a team member to a new challenge and help them to grow and develop. You can also use delegation to tap into a team member's technical expertise, talent, or skill. (When you do this, there's a good chance they will do a better job at the assignment than *you!*) And you can rescue a bored subordinate by assigning them a task that connects with their interest and gifts.

Strong Fences

The key to successful delegation is well-defined boundaries. Keep in mind the formal definition of delegation: *investing a person with authority to act on behalf of another.*

When you delegate a task, you are giving someone *authority*. Be sure to define that authority with clarity and mutual understanding. Here's how...

6 Levels

Use the *6 Levels of Delegation* to bring some of that clarity to your next assignment. Each level represents a well-defined limit of authority and action. Choose the level of delegation that best matches the skills, the abilities, and the expertise of your delegate with the size and scope of the work you are assigning them. Here they are:

Level 6

You decide what to do; you do it and don't report back.

This is the highest level of authority and freedom. It is appropriate when you have the utmost confidence in your delegate—when the assignment is appropriate to a person's capabilities. It also fits when the assignment itself represents a low risk of failure—when the task is simple or maybe just not that important.

Level 5

Do it and tell me what you did.

This still represents a high level of authority and freedom, but implies there is a little more importance to the task. Reserve it for times when you feel the need to double-check what your delegate is doing, or to stay in touch with the work of your team (or your project)

Level 4

Tell me what you intend to do so I can approve it.

This is appropriate for a delegate who needs some guidance and coaching. But notice how it communicates your expectation of *initiative*. It puts the task in their hands, but demands that they take responsibility for planning the strategy to complete it.

Level 3

Study it. Recommend what to do. We will decide together what to do.

This is one of the best ways for you to avoid unnecessary problem-solving. Napoleon Bonaparte was famous for this. He told his subordinates: *Don't bring me problems. Bring me solutions.* Delegation at Level 3 allows you to help your team members develop better problem-solving and decision-making skills, while still protecting them from catastrophic failure.

Level 2

Do the research. Give me the facts. I'll make a decision and tell you what I want you to do. You do it and report back.

This is the first, most basic way of giving a subordinate some measure of independence and trust. And it also underscores the importance of staying connected with your team and being accurately informed about the work you are all doing *together*.

Level 1

I'll tell you what I want you to do. You do it and report back to me (and maybe also: Check in with me while you are doing it.)

This is the "ground floor" of delegation. It is the first step a leader can make in the process of letting go. But it doesn't give a subordinate much by way of trust or independence. It's a short leash, but at least it's a way for a leader to begin the all-important practice of letting go.

Get 'Mo

Use the *6 Levels* to bring clarity and precision to your next delegated assignment. But don't stop there. Download the companion issue of *The Personal Trainer* for many more helpful hints and practical tips.

Leadership Tracks is a resource for growing leaders edited by Dr. Jim Dyke, the Founder and Director of **Corporate Leadership Initiatives, Inc.**—an organization dedicated to equipping men and women with skills and principles pertinent to the role and life of a transformational leader of the 21st century.

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