



When you have been leading something for a long time, it's easy to feel like the ministry couldn't continue without you! Actually that may be true – especially if you haven't trained anyone up to take it on from you. However, generally, we are far less indispensable than we think! So this letter is about the importance of delegation. On the one hand, I have made my worst mistakes in delegating poorly to the wrong people with the wrong process and yet also experienced my best triumphs in helping individuals develop into great leaders as I have delegated well.

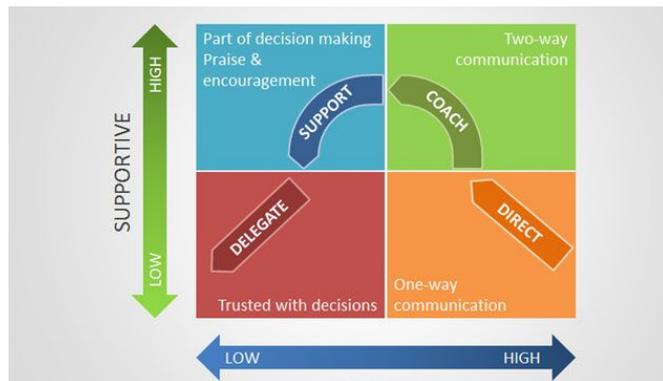
There are a number of challenges in delegating - perhaps you relate with some of the following scenarios:

- I want to delegate some/all of my responsibilities but there's no one around with the right qualities or commitment.
- I have someone keen to take on more leadership but they don't seem to have the full DNA of the mission.
- Perhaps I should be delegating but I like being busy and playing a key role in the ministry.
- I am fearful that in delegating I will lose my influence in the ministry or the individual will take the ministry down a whole new direction that I am not happy with.
- I struggle in asking others to do things for me and so end up not delegating.
- I find it tedious to instruct people on what and how to do something and find it easier to just do it myself.
- I feel others just won't do the job well enough or complete it up to my standard.
- I know it is important to delegate but as soon as I have trained someone up to a role, they move on and I have to do it all over again!
- Add in your situation...

We have to realise that good delegating is part of developing people in leadership skills and provides us with the opportunity of multiplying what we are doing and moving on to other areas of responsibility. But it does take intentionality and forward thinking. When I read the 'one minute manager' years ago, it provided me with a great model to develop in this skill.

One minute manager: It has been one of the most taught leadership models for the past 30 years. Ken Blanchard introduced us to the 4 leadership styles of directing, coaching, supporting and delegating which he called *situational leadership*.

Initially when we explain a new job or role to someone we enter into the directing mode. We can often go through this phase quickly, depending on how complicated the role is. We explain, demonstrate and clarify expectations of the end result. The next stage is the coaching mode, where the



individual is a little more involved, asking questions, gaining clarity and confidence and even making suggestions. The third stage of supporting, sees the individual gaining more confidence, so you take a step back for the individual to take more responsibility and you support them where they need it and provide a safety net. The final stage is delegating responsibility and authority where the individual is on their own to fulfill the role. The idea is that we take people through these four stages to enable them to grow in confidence and skill, gain ownership and become responsible for the task.

The strong visionary leaders tend to direct and then delegate, the more relational leaders tend to coach and support all the time. The challenge is to go through each stage at the right pace for each individual. Of course even when you have delegated a role or responsibility, you still have some kind of reporting relationship otherwise you enter into abdication! If you tend not to delegate at all, then it becomes more of a control issue.

I have always been someone who likes responsibility and have had an ambition for leadership ever since my primary school days where I was leader of the pack in the playground. Probably the first real test though didn't happen until my university days when I passed on the responsibility of leading a thriving Christian union. We had 120 students in small groups around the campus and all kinds of gatherings during the week for teaching, fellowship and outreach. I remember passing on my role with a little fear and trepidation – would this new leader be able to do a good job? Could he build on what had been developed? Would he be able to recruit a leadership team? So many questions. Back then I didn't understand about mentoring and processing with someone, so it was more of the 'direct then dump' process. Poor guy. This university role was just a one year commitment so it was a little easier to pass on. However when we take on roles of ywam base leadership, ministry or church leadership, understanding some principles becomes vital. Here are a few I have learned over the years:

Span of interest: Everyone has a span of interest in a role they take on which varies from 1-3 years up to 7-10 years. Having completed a term of 10 years, you have generally given your best efforts and ideas into the role and after this time there can be a tendency towards plateauing. If you only start looking for someone to delegate to at this 10 year point, you will often run into problems. It's very hard for someone to step into a role that you have been

doing for 10 years if they haven't worked alongside you for a good part of that time. It's also difficult for someone to gain the trust from staff and leaders as well as the ownership for the role if they come in from the outside. The longer you are there, the harder it is for someone to fill your shoes. Remember too, if you have been in the role for 10 years you need to find someone at least 10 years younger!

Leaders need a domain: I remember a conversation with several of my key leaders who was serving on the LDC (leadership development course) with me some years ago, before we started multiplying the training internationally. They commented to me that they were bored! "Oh!" I responded, a little shocked. In our little conversation that followed I quickly discovered that their need of influence, innovation, and desire to have domain were not being met. I asked them if they would like to lead an LDC in another part of the world – their response – a resounding "yes." I learned an important lesson that day. For these guys, leading a school created a domain they could fill and gave a whole new motivation that would keep them going for many years to come.

Pioneering: If you are a pioneering leader and find it difficult to delegate, you will end up re-pioneering the same ministry over and over again. As a pioneer leader, you can set the stage with your initial vision and recruit people into the team but then it's best to pass it on to someone, in order to free you up to focus on the next vision. You can't just keep adding on visions without making sure someone is implementing and developing the previous one.

Perfectionism: I have been developing a skill in this area all my life and only over the last years have been receiving grace from God to undo all that learning. Not so easy! Perfectionists struggle to pass things on because the job just won't be done quite up to the standard you desire. You can tell if you are a perfectionist if:

- You only get involved in a new project if you know there is a very good chance you will succeed.
- Your waste bin is filled with paper of re-writes for the presentation of the new project.
- You have to reprint the schedule for the seminar, because some of the details have changed and the formatting wasn't done quite right.
- The thought of failure in anything is the worst thing that can happen to you.
- Being average is never good enough, you need to be excellent.
- You spend huge amounts of time to perfect something and would rather sacrifice sleep and food than let something be less than it can be.
- Add your own idiosyncracies...

One of the challenges of delegating major ministry roles is that the people you need are visionary, initiators who will want to make the job their own. That means they will probably want to change some of the stuff that means a lot to

you – that you spent time to develop. Are you OK with that? If not, you will probably have a hard time delegating. I know too many people who have never quite found the people they are looking for. They are looking for people to take on their exact vision and do exactly what they have just been doing! How many people want to do that? Normally a fat zero. If you do find someone who wants to do exactly what you have done, they will probably not be innovators and they won't last long because they are not developing it into something new – like you would have done.

Micro-management: No one really wants someone looking over their shoulder all the time, pointing out the details they missed, correcting this and that, suggesting a better way to do it, etc. Mentoring through the 4 leadership styles is one thing, micro-management is totally another. STOP IT! You may well have opinions about the colour of the paint used for the redecoration but if you keep stepping into details like this, you will undermine the leadership of those you have delegated to and cause all kinds of frustration. However, there's a fine line between being hands on and very involved in the ministry compared with delegating to the point that you become disconnected with the leader, the ministry and what's going on. Another area to watch for, is having too long a mentoring transition into a delegated role that can easily feel a bit OTT, or even lacking in trust to be let loose on your own. So be wise in the time and process for handing over responsibility.

Risk of inexperience: The joy of delegation is that you get to develop younger leaders. This could mean they won't be as experienced as you are and perhaps not do quite as good a job initially – but give them time and they will catch up and probably exceed you! But it's always a risk. Sometimes it works well and at other times it just doesn't. That's life. Some rise to the challenge you give, others just don't quite fit the role, feel insecure, or don't embody the same values and vision. So it's always wise to put an evaluation in place 6 months or a year down the road, which can be beneficial for the individual and for you.

Discerning potential: Bring people alongside you who you believe in and can see potential in. We all have eyes for different people. I am looking for people who can initiate and implement vision. Action men and women! But also people with a teachable heart, a godly character and a spirit open to God. Create room for people you can see developing. Establish groups for potential leaders, for those you want to come alongside and encourage.

Recruiting the right people to help: I am very aware that I can't really function effectively for very long without a secretary. So as the need of more administration arose, I prayed hard and refused to take on projects that would put me under stress without the necessary people to support. As a secretary joined me, overnight my capacity increased enormously. Suddenly I could take on all kinds of projects because there was someone who loved the detail, could help follow everything through and keep me organised in the process.

I have always known that I was not strongly motivated in pastoring people. Of

course, I recognised that people needed encouragement, a listening ear, counsel and all kinds of time. I apply myself as much as I can but this is not an area of strength. So again this is a role that I need to recruit. Whenever I am able to staff my weakness on a team with a pastoral leader, the team is helped, the pastoral leader is released and I can breathe a sigh of relief.

I could go on - I have learned the lesson of holding a vision and not allowing myself to jump into it until someone joins who is committed to the vision and able to run with it. When my time is full and yet I receive a fresh vision, I become the project owner and holder of the vision. My job then becomes looking for and recruiting project leaders.

What are the jobs only I can do?: I am obviously not indispensable and others could do all my jobs but then I have delegated my role and not just an aspect of the overall vision. There are always meetings that I am the appropriate one to attend, documents that I need to write due to my relationship and experience, places where I am the best person to speak. There is often a fine line between what I actually need to do, what I feel I need to do and what I do in practice. Sometimes we need a good healthy discussion with people who know us well, to help make it clear where we are needed and not needed. We all like to feel needed and the general rule on delegating tasks is - if someone else can do it 60-70% as good as you can, then delegate. This is how we all grow. I remember the first hour lecture that I was asked to speak in a DTS. All I can say is - I made it to the end. Were people encouraged? I don't know, but for me it got me off the starting block and each time I shared, the better I became in my teaching ability.

A Biblical Model: Jesus had 3 years to complete his mission and pass on the leadership of his disciples. The moment he met Simon Peter, he knew there was something special about him and he saw potential in him to be more than a *fisherman* but to be a *fisher of men*. Later he could see him becoming a rock, a foundation stone for the kingdom he had come to set up – this took eyes of faith. As soon as Jesus had recruited the 12, he created extra space to connect with Peter, James and John. There were special revelations, experiences and conversations that would help in their training. Jesus used their successes and failures to teach them and develop them as leaders. After a little less than 3 years, they still weren't ready, (we never feel we are) but the time had come. Peter's denial was a final experience that dealt with his pride and broke him to the point of being ready. After a night of failed fishing, Jesus met with Peter over a fried fish breakfast on the beach. Jesus affirmed Peter in his role to feed the sheep and now a humble Peter rose to the challenge with a fresh reliance upon his master and not his own strength. Peter stepped up to this new leadership role of the 120 and had such anointing in his preaching that many thousands came to the Lord in the following weeks. We read the authority in him was such, that people were healed as his shadow fell on them as he passed by. Jesus did a good job of delegating wouldn't you say? Oh that we could follow in his footsteps in this regard.

Jesus went on to delegate the task of disciplining the nations to the 12 and those who would come after them, including us, and in order to do that successfully, it's going to take a lot of intergenerational mentoring, releasing and delegating.

Until next month

Steph

P. S. Try out this little test to see what kind of delegator you are!

Circle T for true, or F for false

1. Always delegate to the team member who has experience with similar tasks. T or F []
2. The person you delegate to should have as much information about the task as possible. T or F []
3. Controls should be built into a delegated task from the beginning. T or F []
4. In delegated tasks, monitoring the method is as important as getting the desired results. T or F []
5. The crucial decisions involved in a delegated task are still considered the territory of the delegator. T or F []
6. Make the delegated task seem like a challenge even if it's a little mundane. T or F []
7. Delegating means assigning work. T or F []
8. Don't offer advice when delegating. T or F []
9. Use the same procedures and systems of accountability with every team member when delegating to avoid favouritism. T or F []
10. If a team member fails in a delegated task, expectation was too high and so do not delegate this task to him or her again. T or F []

Answers:

1. False: If you repeatedly delegate similar tasks to the same people, they won't get additional opportunities to grow. It also short-changes less experienced team members who need a chance to develop.
2. True: The more background information you give the person who is about to do the task, the faster and easier the delegating process works. For more experienced team members, you may be able to provide some information and then give them ideas on how to obtain additional information on their own.
3. True: Controls not only help prevent disaster, they also give you the confidence to delegate.
4. False: This is one of the most common pitfalls of an inexperienced delegator. Results are everything. Demanding that other people use your method can stifle initiative and creativity needed for successful delegation.
5. False: This is another common mistake poor delegators make. With true delegation comes the right and responsibility to make decisions.
6. False: Deceptive characterisation of delegated tasks insults team members. And it erodes trust.
7. False: True delegation includes handing over the right and responsibility to determine what work must be done, how it will be approached, and who will do it.
8. False: Let people handle tasks their own way, but give them as much advice (and vision) as you think they need before they get started. Make yourself available to answer questions, but don't constantly peer over their shoulders or solve their problems for them. Learning to solve problems is part of the development process.
9. False: Tasks are different, and so are people. The difficulty of the task as well as the experience and skill of the person must always be taken into account. When you delegate, tailor the system of accountability to fit the delegatee.
10. False: Don't give up on a team member because of a single failure. It might be due to circumstances beyond the person's control. The failure could even be a result of your method of delegation. Examine what went wrong and why.

Scoring:

Give yourself one point for each correct answer.

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| 9-10 | You're a top notch delegator. |
| 6-8 | You know the fundamentals, but keep learning. |
| 5 or less | You've uncovered a serious weakness in your leadership skills. |