The Control Freak's Guide To Delegating

*Thinking that you are the only one who can accomplish something is an excuse to remain in control. Here's how to let go and get more done.*

If you feel like you’re never able to get everything done, the problem might not be the number of hours in a day. Maybe you should brush up on your delegating skills. Trying to do too much is a common problem for high achievers, but when you’re overworked, you’re overwhelmed and the quality of your work suffers.

This is especially a problem for people who are Type A, says Melissa Heisler, author of *From Type A to Type Me: How to Stop "Doing" Life and Start Living It*: "They struggle with delegation due to a desire to control," she says. "They think they can do it better or faster. They see time to teach others to do tasks as wasted time. They are afraid of the ramifications if things are done incorrectly so they feel compelled to do it themselves. And the result is inefficiency and low morale."

Control issues are a function of perfectionism, says Penny Zenker, author of *The Productivity Zone*. "We have 60,000 thoughts a day, and only 5% are new," she says. "People who have trouble delegating often think, 'No one can do it as well as I can. They won't meet the quality I am looking for. They don't have the experience. It requires me.' All of these are excuses to justify to themselves why they should remain in control."

If delegating tasks is an issue for you, there are things you can do to make the process easier. Here are 11 baby steps to help you (calmly and effectively) hand off tasks:

1. **Figure Out What Stops You From Delegating**

   Is it giving up control? Trusting another individual? An inability to effectively communicate your expectations or manage others’ work?

   Make your fears concrete so you can look at them and innovate solutions.

   "Delegating is a layered experience, and uncomfortable for many," says Donna Lubrano, adjunct faculty at Northeastern University College of Professional Studies. "Write down, 'If I delegate, (bad thing) will happen.' Make your fears concrete so you can look at them and innovate solutions."

2. **Calculate Your Hourly Rate**

   Just because you can do something doesn't mean you should. To understand why your time is better used growing your business or career, calculate your hourly rate and determine how much it’s "costing" you to do the task yourself, says Zenker.

   Determine how much it’s "costing" you to do the task yourself. "It isn't just your salary, but the value to the business of what you could be generating in income," she says.
3. Identify Tasks You Can Let Go

Make a list of tasks you could outsource. "It’s the 80/20 rule," says Heisler. "Where are you spending most of your time? Is it being spent on strategy or high-level projects, or are you trapped in doing more day-to-day repetitive tasks? Repetitive or simple tasks can be taught."

4. Choose The Right Person

When you delegate, consider who has the right skills, talent, and values, says John Manning, president of Management Action Programs and author of The Disciplined Leader: Keeping the Focus on What Really Matters.

"You’ll know it’s a good fit when you don’t have to spend time micromanaging," he says. "You may need to provide initial training to beef up weaker skills or a bit of coaching that facilitates this change, but the right person should work out quickly with these additional, upfront measures."

5. Start With A Low-Risk Project

If you’re not comfortable delegating, don’t hand off a career-changing assignment. Pick something small, says Lubrano. Tasks such as scheduling appointments, uploading documents, or researching a project can easily be fixed if necessary.

6. Create An Outline

To help with the fear of inefficiency, create an outline of what needs to be done. Develop the process and standards that allow you to delegate with assurance that the job will be done to the standard and quality expected, says Zenker.

"Checklists and other support tools help to ensure that the process is followed," she says.

7. Delegate The Outcome

Don’t dictate how things need to be done; instead, note the expected outcome.

"This empowers the person doing the project to make it personal and to fit how they best work," says Heisler. "It is then also important for you to let go of the idea that there is only one way to get things done. Focus on the results, not the process."

8. Invest In Clear Communication

When delegating to your team, make sure people understand what they are going to do and the outcome you want. Communicate the goal of the assignment, resources available, deadlines, support structure, and success measures, says Manning.

9. Formalize Your Follow-Up
Everything you delegate should be part of a system that tracks and follows up on progress against measurable goals.

"Establish a specific deadline with milestones from the start, systematically checking in and checking up on progress before the final deadline," says Manning. "Use numbers and follow-up reports to determine what’s happening, instead of some fuzzy line of questioning like, ‘How are you doing?’"

10. Expect Glitches

Miscommunications are bound to happen, especially in the beginning. Plan for them in your timeline and expectations, says Lubrano. It will make you feel less stressed.

11. Set A Finish Line

Many managers delegate tasks with an internal sense of urgency that they never communicate to the employee, and then become frustrated when the task isn’t completed by their unspoken deadline, says David Dye, author of *The Seven Things Your Team Needs to Hear You Say*. Avoid this by setting mutual appointments for delivery.

"This is the ‘secret sauce’ that prevents managers from delegating, then wondering six weeks later, ‘Whatever happened to that project?’" he says. "Schedule a brief appointment in both of your calendars where the team member will look you in the eye and return the completed project or task back to you. You bake the accountability into the assignment and ensure it is done without additional follow-up or time wasted tracking down missing projects."

Source: Fast Company, Stephanie Vozza, 11.18.15