

Delegation of Authority - the Why and Especially the Wherefore

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Key Concepts

1. **Delegation of Authority** - the directed process whereby members of an organization may reach their personal potential and development through the act of being given power, whilst the manager divides this power amongst underlings. The employees are given the opportunity to experience new and various experiences within a flexible and developing system.
2. **Leadership** - the ability of a person or group of people to lead others toward a cooperative goal. The action of leadership is directly related to influence and creation of change and therefore, is intimately related to the ability of influencing motivation.
3. **Decentralization** - the process by which authority or central roles in an organization are divided or spread out. The opposite process is called centralization. Decentralization stems usually, from three principle reasons:
 - a. The inability of one person to deal with all the issues.
 - b. Creation of a balanced system which may otherwise face the obstacles when only one person holds all the authority; this principle, when upheld in government, is called separation of powers.
 - c. The desire to include other elements in decision making.
 - d. The managerial perception which encourages decisions being divided between headquarters lines and division lines.
4. **Development of leaders** –leadership of employees is a matter of ‘state of mind’ related to the high involvement in everything concerning the goals of the organization and the organizational environment. It is important to emphasize that leadership of employees is not to exchange existing managers or to grow an employees’ union. Employees having leadership orientation are characterized by accepting high levels of responsibility, being enthusiastic and caring about occurrences at the work place and will interested in realizing their personal potential in the framework of the organization.

5. **Decision making** - The ability to make decisions is an important quality for leaders at all levels, from presidents and prime ministers to the lowliest managers of a business organization. Each person has his own personal style of making decisions. Each person is the result of all the decisions he has made throughout his lifetime up to the present time. The ability to make wise decisions is actually one of the most important skills a manager needs to possess. Making decisions in an organization is a process of identifying and solving problems, of asking questions and finding answers. Decisions are usually made in conditions of uncertainty. The future is unknown future and sometimes the past is suspicious past, this chapter will lead you to an annex of studying varied techniques which you can use to improve your skills in making decisions in a world of uncertainty, change and uncontrollable circumstances.
6. **Relationships based on trust** – Trust includes economic, psychological and sociological aspects (Lewicki & Bunder, 1996). Together with these there are several factors which often appear in the literature dealing with trust, such as: reciprocal relationships, meeting obligations, skills and expertise, risk management and vulnerability, interaction, integrity, generosity, openness and frankness.
7. **Development of employees** – professional promotion reflects the development of an employee's career, expressed by promotion in status in the organization, and improved working conditions both professionally and personally. Usually a promotion is expressed by receiving tasks in larger and more responsible areas, leading to a rise in the organizational hierarchy, and accompanied by a higher salary. From the view of the organization, a professional promotion is a way to observe the model for career promotion, and from the view of the employee, promotion is a way to observe the stages of professional development.
8. **Organizational authority** – the privilege given to certain role players to make decisions on behalf of other role players. The delegation of authority given in an organization to a role player and not to a specific person. The skills/personal qualities are not a justified function for enacting authority. Organizational authority is legal, anchored in policy, procedures and contracts.

9. **Hierarchy structure** – a system of level built like a pyramid, at the top of the pyramid is the head of the organization while the base of the pyramid is made up of the lowest employees. As the manager climbs to the top of the pyramid, so he becomes more senior and his responsibility and authority grows in breadth. Monetary compensation (salary, benefits, etc.) also grow. The hierarchy structure requires discipline, declaring in no uncertain terms who is more senior, who gives orders to whom. According to the hierarchy structure – orders come down from the top to the bottom, while the reports come from the bottom to the top. Instructions for reporting are transferred through regular and constant channels called chain of command.
10. **Cooperation** – the organization can function efficiently as a system of coordinated actions, only if the people in it are able to cooperate in an effective manner. However, in order for this to occur, you must act consciously to improve the combination of employee activities in the organization.

Abstract

In this article I shall present the advantages and disadvantages of delegating authority. I will address the questions: are there cases when delegation of authority is ill-advised? What is the proper measure of delegation of authority to underlings? When are certain patterns of decentralized leadership more effective than others – certain patterns of leadership more suitable for bringing about more efficient organizational results (Leithwood et al 2006, p.13)

Decentralized leadership has a beneficial impact on school results and on students' results (NCSL 2004, 2004a, 2006). Moreover, in order to create pools of talented leaders, managers and other senior personnel staff who will not be satisfied with centralized leadership, that is “leaving more power and influence to the experts”, but also will develop leadership (Elmore 2006, p.25). If so, decentralized leadership is connected to the development of leadership, management, talent and practical pedagogical development.

Additionally, when enhancing the influence of experts, these same experts must bear responsibility for the application and influence of their power (PwC, 2007). From this point of view, leadership does not end with the division of leadership with others, but needs sophisticated understanding of the reasons behind decentralized leadership, that is, focused-learning leadership, and of all its ramifications – development of leaders in the organizational

framework and the issues that are the responsibility of direct managers in their specific areas of responsibility.

“Delegation of authority” – this is one of the more widespread tips that new managers hear.

The reason for delegation of authority does make it possible for the manager to free his time to perform more important tasks (planning, coordination, structure), sometimes at the expense of everyday tasks. Delegating authority solves the organizational dilemma in decision making by preventing bottlenecks.

When not to delegate authority

1. If there is no real need for saving time in order to perform the task ourselves.
2. If there is no one that we trust to perform the task properly
3. Critical tasks whose weighty responsibility justifies direct involvement.

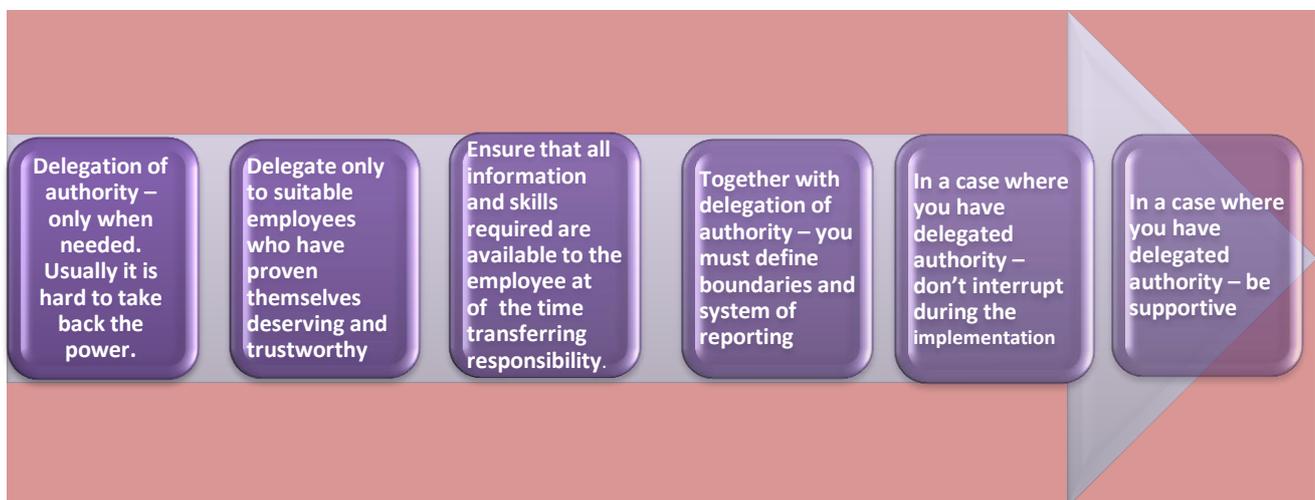
Obstacles that prevent us from delegating authority

1. “Delegating authority will take time to explain to the employee exactly what I want done.”
2. “No one can do the work better than I, and that is why I will do it.”
3. “How will I know what is happening, if I don’t do the work myself?”

There are also a number of psychological obstacles:

- subconscious desire for power
- Fear of competition with the employee
- Price or special attraction to certain tasks

Rules for Delegating Authority -



How to choose the amount of authority delegated to the employee

After laying down the basics of delegation of authority it is important to be acquainted with the different levels of delegation of authority in order to suit them to the employee or the specific managerial task. This may be very relevant for management of staff and also for managing colleagues in a matrix.

Usually six levels of delegation of authority may be identified (Sandler A., 1992).

1. **Messenger boy** – “Find the problem and I will decide what to do”
2. **Analyze and suggest** – “analyze the problem, show me alternatives, recommend one for my approval.”
3. **Analyze and make a plan of action** – “analyze the problem, report to me on what you plan to do, but don’t go forward without my approval.”
4. **Analyze and act** – “Analyze the problem, keep me updated on what you plan to do. Do it, unless I say otherwise.”
5. **Delegate and report** – “Go ahead, tell me what you’ve done. Update me on the result.”
6. **Full delegation** – “act, contact me on the issue only if necessary or in case there is a problem.”

The more we progress with delegation of authority, we give more and more reign to our employees. For instance: in the passage from level one to level two, we expect the employee to analyze alternatives and suggest one. In the passage from level four to level five we allow the employee authority to act without our confirmation, but ask to be updated on the result.

Considerations in choosing the correct level:

- **Skill level of the employee** – the more tenure and expertise an employee has, it may be assumed that the task will be performed with greater facility, both from the professional point of view and on a higher level within the organization and with colleagues.
- **Complexity of the task**: the simpler the task, the less amount of involvement required from the manager.
- **Importance of the task**: depending on the level of importance for the success or failure of the organization, so will the involvement of the manager be greater. It is possible to delegate authority, but the responsibility will always belong to the manager.

- **Measure of trust between the employee and the manager:** a higher level of delegation authority requires a high level of trust between employee and manager.

Time factor: sometimes there is a deadline which forces a delegation of authority and as a manager you must focus more resources and formal motivational skills. On the other hand, sometimes it is the pressure that makes us perform tasks simultaneously, requiring us to delegate authority at the expense of quality of performance.

Employee development and raising motivation – one of the best ways to raise motivation is to delegate authority. It is wise to choose the correct level and to clarify to the employee the value this holds for him and his personal promotion.

Examples of mistakes in delegation of authority

Two possible mistakes in delegating authority which may come about after deciding on the level of delegation that befits us: the authority to delay or not to approve.

In many organizational processes it is required to make yes and no decisions, to approve or to veto, usually by a certain role player or committee whose authority (and responsibility) it is to make decisions.

Mistaken delegation of authority occurs when the manager decides to transfer partial authority to his employee: the employee only has enough authority not to approve. In a case when he wants to approve, he must approach his manager.

This has two negative repercussions:

1. **On a personal level:** the employee who has received partial authority will in most cases feel frustrated in the limited independence. Also his authority has become damaged in that his work environment knows that he has no authority to approve, so the escalating management will be made more frequently. In this case, the employee will be used as a default, and his authority will grow ineffective. In the mid and long terms, the manager who delegated him authority will not save himself from making decisions or the time he needs to do so.
2. **On the organizational level:** this case contributes to extraneous bureaucracy, since, in order to approve a decision, two functionaries will be needed instead of one: if the employee “does not approve, then there is the need to go to the manager for approval.

Additionally, there may be more approaches that will not be approved, since this is the easiest solution on the part of the employee who only received partial authority. In extreme cases, there is an entire hierarchy of managers who may say “no” but may not say “yes”. Then the bureaucratic danger is greatedened. Examples of this are very widespread on issues of budgeting, organizational changes and more.

We learn from this that the manager who chooses to delegate authority, should make sure to give the authority to ‘approve’ together with the authority to ‘disapprove’, in the proper measure.

Ambiguousness toward delegation of authority

An important facet of delegation of authority is clarity to all involved, so they will know exactly the limitations of the authority they have been given. Otherwise, one of two negative situations may arise:

1. The others don’t know about the authority delegated and so they still go to the original manager for decisions and approval. In this case, the organization does not benefit from delegation of authority such as: leaving time for the manager, treatment of managerial bottleneck, development of the employee, etc.
2. The others mistakenly think that authority has been delegated, or does not understand the limitations of this delegation. This is a dangerous situation, since it may be that a particular employee may make a decision outside of his delegated authority limits, and different elements may act according to this decision. The gap usually appears during inquiries held later on, when the answer is “but that is the decision we were given.”

We may learn from this that the manager who chooses to delegate authority should know not only his employee, but also the elements pertaining to the relevant fields of work. Ensure that definitions and boundaries are clear to ensure that the manager may reap the maximum benefit from delegation of authority and prevent extraneous misunderstandings.

Learning –focused management is characterized by cooperation, and a growing number of mid-level leaders by role players. Senior managers and leaders create and maintain leadership at all levels, so that despite decentralization of leadership, the most important thing is the decentralization and learning and development centered leadership.

Therefore it is important for today’s school leaders – in fact it always has been – but as

management of schools has become an intensive and more complex task, so the need to share leadership tasks with others grows, and with it the responsibility for development of additional leaders.

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