



Dedication to Delegation

The Manager's Guide to Happier Employees
and a More Productive Business

by John Farr



One of the most effective ways to retain good employees is to keep them productive. The best workers will want to successfully accomplish their tasks, goals and objectives each day of their working life. They have an internal, almost innate motivation that is a sense of accomplishment as their reward for their efforts. They then find the job satisfying and, if with a feeling of satisfaction of their needs, they will usually provide better customer service and contribute to the salon and the managers' success. It's important to understand that as a salon manager, you are judged by the aggregated success of your salon and not just your own individual actions.

Salon managers have many assets at their disposal. Of these assets, their staff is among the most costly and has the greatest potential for either success or failure. The truly effective manager has to know how to assign tasks and projects, and how to distribute the work to those who will get it done. And, accepting the fact that salon employees are not busy with customers every minute of every shift, there is much that can be done to add to the salon's customer appeal, such as a consistent commitment to cleaning, "deep" and otherwise. But are delegation opportunities a strength for you? Or is it a management skill that needs more development? (Hint: few managers of people are truly good at this, so don't feel bad if you have to at least admit to yourself that you are not yet a delegation dynamo.)

Answer this set of questions and see if there isn't work to be done on your delegation efforts:

- Do you seem to be working overtime more often than not?
- Do you take paperwork home after you've worked full a day or week?
- Are unfinished salon tasks piling up?
- Are daily operations so time-consuming that you have little time left for the planning process and other important matters?
- Do you try to maintain control of all details so salon tasks are done correctly?
- Do you frequently have to postpone larger salon projects?
- Are you bothered in your off-work hours by constant, unexpected emergency calls from your salon?
- Do you lack confidence in your employees' abilities to handle more responsibility?
- Do you often find yourself in a bad mood and complaining when your employees' work performance doesn't live up to expectations?
- Has your personal morale and the morale of your employees been declining?

- Do your employees come to you for every decision, including the most insignificant ones?
- Do you feel that you have to “hide” in your office to get things done?
- Have employees stopped suggesting their ideas to you?
- Does it seem that your salon’s operations are never as productive or efficient when you’re away?
- Do you feel that you’re giving up control as a manager if you ask for your employees’ assistance or suggestions?
- Do you believe your title and salary obligate you to always, or often, work overtime?
- Does it seem that things get really “messed up” if you leave your salon for a day to attend a managers’ meeting or a work event?

If you answered “yes” to most of these questions, it’s likely that you’re either not delegating enough or you’re not delegating efficiently. It’s also likely that you’re headed down the path of “retail manager burn-out.” The ideal position to reach as a good manager is where your employees carry out most of the routine activities without your day-to-day direction. This will leave you time to plan, think and improve your own effectiveness and work strategy. Most importantly, it gives you time to create new strategies of improvement for the salon and staff.

Delegation is just another tool to increase productivity and create an environment where your employees will want to do a good job. It can be defined as “giving someone the responsibility of a task to complete and the training and the freedom to complete it.” Delegation is a process by which a manager examines the various responsibilities and duties at hand and, rather than performing the tasks themselves, assigns the work to others.

Most salon managers don’t fully understand the skill of proper delegation. Instead of as a dynamic tool to motivate and train their employees to realize their potential, they use it to dole out tasks they don’t like doing or to shift blame for failure onto the shoulders of their staff. Proper delegation underpins a style of management that allows your staff to use and develop their skills and knowledge to the fullest. Without it, you won’t get all that you can from your staff.

Delegation is about entrusting your authority to others. You allow them to initiate and operate independently, and they assume responsibility of certain tasks for you. If something does go wrong, you are still responsible, since you are the manager. The critical goal of delegation is that, as a manager, you should be judged on the productivity of your personal actions as well as your entire team’s.

Why Don't Managers Delegate?

Delegation is not a natural talent for everyone. Like any other management skill, it has to be developed. The majority of workers in any industry, according to most productivity studies, are under-utilized because of the undeveloped delegation skills of their bosses.

Here are some reasons why delegation skills are not developed, preventing most tanning salon managers from inspiring more production from their employees:

1. Managers Don't Feel They Have The Time

In the "heat of battle" of everyday business, managers often believe that it's easier to do something themselves than to take the time to explain or train an employee on what has to be done. Yes, it's true that most managers can usually get a task done faster by doing it themselves; but, in fact, if the salon manager invests time up-front in training and developing people to take over ongoing tasks, eventually the time they save will significantly outweigh the time that was initially invested. Besides, there is only so much that the salon manager can get done accurately and on a timely basis by themselves.

2. They Fear Mistakes Will Be Made

Many salon managers are perfectionists and don't want to accept anything less. It's understandable, however, that early in the delegation stages, things might get done incorrectly, or not be quite up to par. Good delegating managers allow their staff to make some mistakes and will then work with the employee to correct them. With time, most employees will learn to do their jobs properly... sometimes even better than the manager!

3. They Like To Work

Many managers were promoted because they were good at their sales associate role. And, people usually enjoy doing things with which they are skilled and comfortable. So, many salon managers revert back to spending too much time "associating" and not enough time "managing." Doing a job yourself will probably get that particular task done most completely; but if your staff is standing around while you're working, then your salon's total productivity is way below its potential.

A good manager, especially a new one, needs to reject the temptation of continuing to perform all the functions they did in their previous position. Instead, they should focus on grooming and developing their employees to perform those functions as well as themselves!

4. They Feel Guilty

Some salon managers feel guilty if they pass off any work to others. Delegating tasks

makes them feel as if some of their employees will view them as being lazy or not doing their share. This is especially the case when an associate is promoted from within the staff and now has to delegate tasks to former peers. It's important to be clear this is not just a way for you to do less work; it's that you need to free your time for more important managerial responsibilities, the "other work" that can't always be done by someone else.

5. They Don't Want To Deal With Employee Resistance

Your staff will sometimes try to avoid new and additional delegated projects assigned to them if they see those tasks as undesirable. This is exacerbated by salon managers who don't show appreciation to the staff or discourage them by appearing overly critical of their efforts. This leaves staff with the feeling that nothing they ever do, no matter how much they step up to the plate, is it ever good enough.

6. They Fear Surrendering Their Authority

Whenever you delegate, you surrender some element of your authority, not your responsibility. Effective delegation, on the other hand, ensures that you have adequate time to do your overall job and do it well, it ramps up your "leadership power."

7. They're Insecure About Creating A Competitor For Their Job

Some managers are fearful to delegate because they feel that if the employee performs too well, it may make them a threat for the manager's job. This "performance paranoia" can create a distance between the manager and the employee and could cause employees to lose trust, creativity and initiative.

Good leaders/managers know how and when to let go and they know how to put aside their own egos and share the spotlight. They realize that an well-performing employee is a direct reflection upon them. Conversely, a non-productive worker is also a reflection upon them, but not a flattering one. While it may appear to them that they have nothing left to do, in fact they now have the time to think, plan and improve operations.

8. They Lack Confidence In Their Staff

Often a salon manager will question whether an employee is up to the task and that only they, themselves are capable of doing things right. Delegation, in fact, brings out the best in your staff. A less-competent employee will be even less productive unless you invest time in them. Even unskilled employees can be effective at the right level of instruction, stimulation and ability.

9. They Lack The Proper Training Skills

Effective delegation often doesn't occur because associates are not well trained and, therefore, don't complete assignments to the manager's or company's level of expectation. However misguided, the manager could conclude that the best option is to do the work themselves, and ensure the job gets done correctly and on time. This becomes a continuing circle of bad training, poor performance, low expectations and declining employee confidence.

10. They Delegate The Wrong Tasks

Much of the delegating that does take place is ineffective because the tasks assigned to employees are consistently meaningless, un-motivating and, in some cases, demeaning. (There are always the dirty or thankless jobs to be done and someone has to do them; however, they should be mixed with tasks that are either more pleasant or are somewhat challenging and interesting for the employee. A good manager understands what it is that employees like doing!) As a result of the perception that they're always the recipients of unpleasant tasks, an employee might react badly to a new assignment, which may lead to less productivity and an increased belief by the manager, that delegating does not work.

When it comes to the dirty jobs, many managers nobly announce, "I won't ask my employees to do anything I won't do." Frankly stated, the person who has been selected to be a boss should not set themselves up to do everything that his or her employees do alongside of them or instead of them. It's good that employee see that you don't see yourself as being above all of the tedious or dirty jobs; however, managers who spend an inordinate amount of their important scheduled hours dusting shelves, for example, when someone who costs much less per hour could do that job, are wasting valuable company management time.

Managers sometimes have to jump in and swing a mop or empty trash, but they must remember that their chief duty is to spend their time strategizing what needs to be done to improve the overall business and directing the activities of their employee team members. A manager, who takes pride in the great job he did himself vacuuming while the merchandise wall is in shambles, is not realizing the company's true priorities.

11. They Have Poor Communications Skills

Many delegation efforts fail because the employee is not given all of the details of what needs to be accomplished. This includes when it needs to be completed, as well as the needed authority or freedom to get the job done. For example, if you want to collect more sales dollars while maintaining a high level of customer satisfaction, associates need the proper training and the liberty to handle up sell opportunities. If not, this leaves them powerless

and results in the usual response to a customer of, “I’m sorry but I can’t handles the issue of your membership fees today or you won’t be able to tan today” or “I’ll have to talk to my manager first before I could possibly change your current tanning plan.”

Note: This is a somewhat demeaning position to place associates in and it doesn’t encourage them to think on their feet. They will of course from time to time make less than perfect decisions regarding customer service issues, but small mistakes should be one of the best lessons for all workers, managers and associates.

12. They Just Don’t Know How To Be A Manager

Very few companies offer effective managerial training for their managers. When they do, delegation usually is a low priority. Senior management spends more time on skill building for quicker pay-offs, such as cost and inventory control procedures. Today’s entry to middle- management levels are often well versed in meeting payroll budgets, but not developing productivity for that payroll through training in delegation skills.

So, Why Delegate?

Of course, reluctance to effective delegation means that, as a manager, you continue to carry the weight of your job on your shoulders alone. Before long, this weight is increased by other projects that come your way from your boss or from employees who find it easy to leave them to you.

And why shouldn’t they?

If employees feel that the manager doesn’t have confidence in their abilities, then why should workers show any initiative or desire to be part of the company’s progress? Real leaders/managers know that what they accomplish by themselves is nowhere near the potential of getting the most from all of their salon resources - especially their human resources.

Once a manager starts to effectively delegate:

1. They have more time to do the things that are truly the job of the salon manager. Some of their tasks may be done even better and more effectively by one of their employees.
2. Their employees are allowed to evolve and progress by receiving enriched and challenging training and experiences. By training employees to perform higher-level tasks, you are preparing them for higher level jobs (if appropriate) and preparing them for emergencies. They’ll also learn to think more independently and develop better problem solving skills.

3. All employees are utilized to their fullest potential, contributing to the manager's effectiveness.

If you, as a manager, don't delegate, you'll be continually "fighting fires," you'll miss deadlines, and your performance as a manager will be poor because you are trying to do too much.

Determining What To Delegate

The first step to proper delegation is to determine what to delegate and what you should do yourself. When making this decision, take a long term view – you want to delegate as much as you can to develop your staff to be as good as you are. Determine what you need to delegate and what you can delegate. (A good rule of thumb is to delegate tasks, but retain strategic and motivational functions.)

Start by looking at the activities that you used to do before you were promoted. Tasks that you can do well are the easiest for you to explain to others, so you can more easily instruct them to take over.

There are some tasks that members of your staff have more experience with or can do even better than you can. These tasks should be delegated to them. Don't relinquish your responsibility because they are "experts," but let them make the decisions without your constant input. (Note: Make sure that you learn and understand their decision process so that you can pitch in if needed or so you can train others.)

Don't hesitate to delegate some decision-making assignments and not just menial tasks. Establish the boundaries of these decisions so you can live with the outcome, because some mistakes in judgment will inevitably be made.

Distribute the more mundane tasks as evenly as possible across your staff and intermix the more exciting and interesting ones just as widely. Delegate not only the performance of the task but also its ownership. This means make the employee accountable for accuracy and completion and then let them own the praise or critique of the results.

What's The Difference Between Assigning A Task And Delegating?

Task delegating implies ownership. The employee is responsible for results more than just for the process. This enables innovation. The employee is empowered to change or develop the process to accomplish the goal most efficiently and effectively. With delegation, your staff has the authority to react to situations without referring back to you.

For example, if you tell you're your AM part-timer that the trash baskets need to be emptied on Monday and Thursday, they will be emptied on Monday and Thursday. If that associate is working on Wednesday and the trash baskets are overflowing, they will still only

be emptied on Thursday. If you said to empty the trash baskets as often as necessary, they will decide how often and adapt to unusual circumstances. As the “coach,” you might suggest a regular schedule, but leave the decision to the associate.

Delegation is about relinquishing some of your authority but not final control. You cannot alone dictate what is delegated or how that delegation is managed. You need to obtain the input and agreement of your staff to ensure that each delegated task is workable.

While you should delegate as many tasks as possible that are not cost effective for you to carry out, ensure that you do not delegate excessive control to your team. Remember that you are ultimately responsible for the success or failure of what you are trying to achieve. Effective delegation involves achieving the correct balance between the proper amount of control and when to allow your staff to perform their jobs in their own way.

What Should A Salon Manager Delegate And Why?

What’s best to delegate?

A manager is best to delegate tasks or activities that fall into the following categories:

- Problems or issues that solicit suggestions or employee ideas.
- Duties or tasks that fall within the normal job task description of the employee.
- Tasks that guide employee talent in a positive direction toward salon and organizational goals and needs, and toward the person’s development and growth.
- Problems or activities that, if well handled by the subordinate, could conserve the boss’s valuable time.

Here are some everyday examples of delegation opportunities in a tanning salon:

1. Setting And Re-Setting The Merchandise Wall

Some of the most valuable and important square footage of the salon’s sales floor is the Merchandise Wall. The products and how they’re arranged are one of the main images that your business has. Without a maintained image of order, sequence, depth of copy and overall impact, you could very well confuse or even lose a major portion of your customers.

This is one of those areas that can and should be delegated intermittently to non-management staff with the proper training. Anything you delegate should, of course, be a task that someone has been trained to do. Clearly resetting a merchandise wall requires more than a brief set of instructions. Not only does it require understanding of the issues of spacing and positioning, but it also requires knowledge of extracting data from the POS system to determine sales activity.

If you delegate this important weekly project and you accompany it with proper training and monitoring, you will end up with an employee who is much more aware of product sales trends. This person then becomes a more valuable salon and company resource, not only to customers for recommendations, but also for feedback for future purchases.

2. Re-Stocking The Merchandise Areas

Concessions, sell-thru tables and displays, counter merchandisers, end-caps and all areas of customer activity need maintenance and refilling on a daily basis. These are important tasks, but they are repetitive tasks that can be trained.

3. Negotiating Penalties And Fees

Additional penalties and fees add to your salon's profits, but also can be a source of frustration for employees and customers. To not delegate responsibility and authority for handling these situations can be a mistake. If associates neither have the training on how to handle sales dollars or the freedom to negotiate with the customer to resolve the situation, you could create customer service nightmares. If you don't allow associates to resolve these issues for themselves, they could run into problems when the manager is not available. Plus, it is simply demeaning to an employee to appear to be incompetent to make a decision.

The key to a customer leaving happy or at least not upset from a penalty situation is to ensure that your associates are trained on how to access customer rental history data, explain why and how the amount owed on the customer's account is there and negotiate the amount that will satisfy the customer and resolve the situation. It should be every employee's goal, from the associate to manager, to be sure that all these situations are resolved on the spot with each customer.

Don't allow customers to leave with a "fee barrier" between them and the company. If you do, they might never come back!

4. Cleaning And Maintaining Fixtures And Merchandise Aisles

It's vital to present a clean shopping environment for customers, and these tasks need to be done consistently and can be done well by employees who understand what to do and when to do it. There is no "expertise" here that would require long periods of training or education. Every new employee you hire should have had some cleaning and dusting experience in his/her lives.

Some managers even delegate the maintenance of specific sections of the store to each associate on a long-term basis, giving them responsibility for cleaning those sections each time they come into work. This often encourages ownership and pride for these employees.

5. Merchandise Product Prepping

Once again, this is an important task, but one that can be clearly defined. It is repetitive and is not subject to individual interpretation or judgments. The only potential downside to delegating this task is the same as any duty you assign – if it doesn't get done on time, you have a problem! Timely management monitoring and follow-up are critical.

6. Setting Up And Changing Merchandising

Once more, this is a highly repetitive and easily trainable set of tasks. There is some judgment required such as ensuring that the posters displayed are current and in an esthetically pleasing manner.

7. Shopping For And Buying Of Supplies

When company or salon policy allows, a trained associate could make those runs to purchase products and miscellaneous supplies needed for your salon's day-to-day salon operations. However, you might want to limit the liability of your delegations. You could be comfortable giving a fairly new associate \$50 for paper towels and supplies, but probably not \$1,000 to buy four new TV monitors. Also, you would need to know if your business insurance covers employee liabilities when they're traveling on company business.

And, what's not?

Conversely, some things are best not delegated. Here are some general rules or guidelines for when tasks and duties should be handled exclusively by the salon manager:

- Duties or tasks that are not only outside of the employee's normal duties, but ones they are not trained in nor do they seem to have technical, emotional or mental capacity or competence. Don't set your workers up for a failure!
- Duties or tasks that, if not completed on a timely or accurate manner, can cause large economic loss.
- Duties or tasks that, if handled poorly, could cause legal ramifications or embarrassment to the company's image or its reputation.
- Duties or tasks that, if done improperly, could cause serious criticism from senior management toward the manager.
- Duties or tasks that would require very private or personal employee knowledge that should be kept to only a few individuals within the company.

Here are ten specific examples of tasks a tanning salon manager should probably not delegate:

1. External Business Partnership Relationships

A manager should probably not delegate tasks that involve working with the local media (print, TV, radio etc) or with local retail promotional partners in setting up local promotions, advertising and cross merchandising opportunities.

This often requires some background and experience in advertising, public relations, negotiating partnerships and the ability to commit to participation (use of their names, logos, cost contribution, offers etc.). Someone not experienced might partner with the wrong service or retailer and could incur unexpected costs, impair the company's image or simply set up a promotion that gets lost in the consumers' consciousness because they chose a partner that few consumers view highly. Often, this is not even delegated to a salon manager but remains within the decision guides of more senior management or owners.

2. Staff Scheduling

Subordinate members of the management team (shift supervisors, assistant managers) should eventually learn how to schedule the staff. However, until the manager has complete assurance of their abilities to do this and be able to handle the predictable staff complaints and challenges, it is something the manager should do him or herself. There is too much potential for staff morale issues, labor law issues, and probably worse, shifts without workers!

3. Extreme Customer Complaints

Certain customer complaints require the experience, skill and tact of a manager. It takes personal maturity and some life experience to diffuse an emotional customer blowup. If done properly, you will likely retain a customer. If not, the customer's anger could be the subject of a community public relations nightmare. These situations become quite personal, much more than that of a dispute over late fee collections where there is no implied "morale" issue.

4. Resolving Internal Staff Disputes

Resolving a dispute between two associate level employees, especially one that is taking place in front of customers, is a task best handled by an experienced manager. One employee should not be responsible to resolve the conflicts of other employee peers.

5. Charity-Related Decisions

Businesses frequently get requests from local charities to place donation boxes on the store's checkout counter, or to be allowed to solicit donations on the sidewalk. For consistency's sake, the manager or above-level management should always make these decisions.

Involvement in the local community is a good public relations vehicle but it can be tricky to determine who and who not to affiliate with your business. The challenge often is where to draw the line?

If any employee can make these decisions, you could have your windows and counters filled with local charity opportunities or public notices and not have the appropriate space to sell profitable merchandise. Making these decisions takes good mature judgment and adherence to company policy.

6. Price Reductions And Markdowns

Deciding when to mark down prices can be tricky and needs mature management control. These decisions require in-depth knowledge of POS data systems, a "feel for the flow" of revenues on a per-product basis, and a solid understanding of any restrictions to mark down product by either the company or a specific manufacturer. A mistake here could cost the company much in the way of lost potential revenues, either by marking down prices too low or too late, continued excess inventories or possible early-sale penalties with certain revenue-sharing programs.

7. Handling Employee Theft Cases

Confronting or accusing a customer or an employee must be handled with caution and solid judgment. This is always helped by experience and an unemotional approach to the facts. If done impulsively this could lead to loss of customers, low morale and worse, some nasty legal issues.

8. Authorizing Days Off Or Vacation Time

Deciding which employees can take days off or vacation time is a manager's responsibility. To avoid employee disputes and claim of unfairness, the manager must be centrally involved in who is granted time off and how frequently. With each person that has the authority to make these decisions, the chances rise dramatically for miscommunications and hurt feelings.

9. Planning And Conducting Staff Meetings

The manager should be the one individual to make the final decision on when meetings

are held. That person has the overall responsibility for the staff schedule and the resultant payroll expense. However, the planning of topics to be discussed and who will lead those conversations could be delegated and shared with individual staff members. The more they feel a part of the meeting's planning process, the more they will feel as if it's "their" meeting.

10. Determining Salon Layout

Managers should take input from salon employees as to how the movie and or game categories are laid out. However, there can't be multiple approaches to how this is done nor can several employees feel free to move around product categories at will. There are many issues to consider in product placement and among them is traffic flow, adjacency of categories, security of high- theft goods, etc.

The Next Steps

1. Select The Right Person For The Job

Give some thought to which employee you delegate your tasks. Don't automatically select your best employee for the most challenging task. A sub-par worker may shine when given a job that pushes them to exert their abilities and normal efforts, or if it is something in which they have expressed interest. On the other hand, don't make the challenge too great - you want them to stretch, not break. The act of delegation should accomplish your task and also build confidence in your employees. A task that they're not trained for may very well frustrate and de-motivate them.

For example, assigning a new associate to re-categorize the salon fixtures or resetting your merchandise wall on their first days of work sets them up for failure. It's unlikely that they would have the knowledge or experience to get the job done and done correctly. However, you could strive to help the new associate become proficient in their customer transaction skills. They should be able to handle these tasks with little frustration and some immediate feeling of accomplishment. (Note: There might be situations where you need to delegate a task to someone who may not be fully ready, based on a certain urgency of the moment. Be sure to assess the risks of this and maintain close communications.)

How much of a job you can delegate will depend on the ability, experience and reliability of your employees. Good employees can carry out more with less intervention while inexperienced or unreliable people need closer supervision to get a job done to the correct standard.

Factors to consider when deciding to whom to delegate a task are:

- Do they have the necessary skills, or do they need more training?

- Do they like to work on the specific tasks you're assigning to them?
- Do they want some adventure beyond their routine jobs?
- Do they have a passion to show you what they can do?
- Is the task one that involves interacting with people, or working on their own? Most employees have an easier time with a delegated task when working on their own. A task that involves achieving through other people's cooperation requires some finesse and collaborative skills.

If you aren't sure which of your employees have certain skills, it's often interesting to simply throw the project out to them and see who volunteers. You might be surprised at their interest and initiative. By doing this, some employees will react to some delegated tasks or projects that could be viewed as incentives. Remember, there is nothing more powerful than assigning a task to an employee who wants to do it. If several people want to work on the same task, make it a team effort. They'll be more demanding on each other than even you!

2. Prepare The Employee

When you delegate a job, explain how it fits into the overall picture of what you are trying to achieve. In entrusting someone to do a job, you must ensure that:

- They know what you want.
- They know the importance of the job or task.
- They know the guidelines within which it should be done.
- They have the authority to complete it.
- They know how it is to be done.
- They know the deadline for completion.
- They know or the occasional internal reporting checkpoints of when you want progress reports.

These all depend on clear communication of your expectations (what, when, how and to what level of quality of completion), the extent of their freedom to adjust or alter the assignment and the available sources of relevant information and knowledge to help them finish the job or task.

Ask yourself the question, "What exactly is it that you want your employees to do and why?" This may seem like a simple question; however, when you tell them what it is that you want done, make the objective as clear as possible while leaving room for ingenuity and

initiative.

Example: “The floor around the merchandise wall needs to be vacuumed. I would appreciate it if you would get this done tonight before the salon closes. A clean floor where most customers walk is important to our image and doing it tonight sets up the salon for the morning opening.”

Notice, in this case, that the clear “what” was accompanied by an equally clear “when” and “why.” (This is not to suggest that all of these elements must be spelled out each time with each employee on the same task.) After all, you and they should know the specific task or job they need to accomplish, when it is to be accomplished and maybe most importantly, why. Sharing with your employees the “what” or “why” you want something done helps them to understand your rationale and it assumes they have the basic intelligence to see your logic.

In the absence of any explanation, employees might assume that you don’t think they are worth your time to explain or your consideration of their feelings. Sharing the “why” helps people understand the importance of the task and motivates them by making them feel that what they’re doing is important to the overall success of your salon.

Some tasks may appear so simple and tedious that one could say, “A monkey could do this job!” Possibly a primate could perform some of the delegated tasks, but a primate can’t understand relative importance, nor can they learn as effectively or formulate suggestions as well as the employee. No task is unimportant unless it is thought to be so by uninspired or uninformed employees. Your job as the delegating manager is to point out each task’s importance as a piece of the bigger picture. That being said, be careful not to delegate only seemingly meaningless tasks, since no employee grows when they are not challenged.

Also, tell the employee why you’ve selected them for this task. This shows that you haven’t selected them because you’re looking for just anyone to do grunt work. Your explanation might be that they have done well with this task before or it may simply be that there is no one else at the moment that can do it. Sometimes we have to face that reality. It shows that you have given some thought to match the project and the person’s abilities. Finally, share your positive expectations for their success on the assignment with the employee. (If you don’t have such expectations, then you’ve chosen the wrong person for the assigned task.) Employees tend to perform up or down to our expectations!

Delegate gradually. If you present someone with a task, which is daunting – one, which they feel they can’t handle – then the task won’t get done and your staff will be discouraged and unmotivated. Instead, build up gradually – first a small task leading to a little development, then another small task which builds upon the first, and so on. This is the baby steps concept. (Remember Bill Murray in the movie, “What About Bob?”) Each task delegated should have enough complexity to develop that staff member... but just a little.

3. Inform All Concerned

In most cases, where you are delegating an ongoing responsibility, you will also be delegating the employee decision-making authority. Be sure that all others on your staff are aware that you have delegated this authority. Otherwise you might be not only placing the employee with whom you've entrusted authority in a difficult situation with his or her peers, but you're probably also holding up progress.

4. Let Go!

Once you've decided to delegate a task, let your staff get on with it. Give them some freedom to brainstorm alternative ways to get the same task done. Who knows? The method they develop may be better than yours! More often than not, you'll be surprised and rewarded with the new approaches that employees develop when they feel secure enough to suggest creative alternatives. This is because they may be closer to the day-to-day repetition of that job or task and the fact that most often two heads (or more) are usually better than one.

Always reinforce their efforts in creating a new approach even if it is obvious to you that it may not be the best way. Tell them if you don't think their approach will work as well, but tell them why. Always reinforce their creative efforts.

Stand back and let them do the job without standing over their shoulder and watching their every move. Walk away completely! If you constantly hover over them, it demonstrates that you don't have confidence in what they're doing. Also, this hovering might cause them to ask you questions during each step of the way. (This is one reason some managers feel it's easier to do the task themselves.)

The key here is to not only give responsibility for the project, but also the authority and autonomy which will motivate the employee to stay with the job through completion. Let them do what you want done, but don't forget that you're ultimately the one who has the most at stake for the job's completion.

5. Coach And Re-Train

Delegating is far from done once you've assigned the task. You need to feel confident that the job is getting done properly and on time. It would be fatal to throw the employee into the deep end of the pool with a new responsibility and expect them to keep their heads above water without keeping an eye on them and keeping a lifeline handy. It's also a mistake to sporadically wander up at odd or inopportune moments asking for progress reports.

Agree up front on how often you want to be updated. This way the employee won't feel that your impromptu checkpoints are because you question their abilities or progress. Instead, they'll feel encouraged by your continuing support.

During these all-important checkpoints, be careful to steer the employee down the correct path if they seem to be losing focus of the delegated assignment. This means you might have to help set their priorities. Sometimes, employees might pay attention to one area of the assignment and not be working on the substance of what you want done. Also during these progress checks, reassess whether they're meeting your expectations of "when." Your idea of when the project will be completed needs to be consistent with theirs. This will also illuminate if you've dedicated enough resources for the employee to complete the project or if they are capable of a quality completion.

The important point is that you remain very approachable to your employees so that they don't feel that you're so important that you can't be bothered. A good leader should always be busy giving guidance and helping their people to achieve and grow.

However, there is the danger that with "open access" – you become too involved in the task. Avoid letting yourself make decisions that an employee is capable of making. Since the idea is for the employee to be making these decisions for you, don't let them cop out to make it easier. In those cases when you need to coach them through a decision, refuse to do so without getting from them a clear statement of alternatives, pros and cons, and a recommendation.

Encourage independent decision-making. With you being available to check the decisions, they should feel freer to do so. If they make the wrong decision, tell them and explain very carefully why. If they are right, congratulate them and suggest possible modifications, letting them decide if they want to accept them or not. And unless your solution is significantly better, accept theirs. It will cost you little, but reward them a lot.

6. Mistakes Happen

Hopefully you have very high achievement standards. When you delegate a job, it doesn't always have to be done as well as you could do it – if you had the time to – but only as well as is necessary. Never judge the outcome based on what you would have done, but rather on whether it fits the purpose. Only judge it by whether it meets the criteria and minimum standards that you set at the time of delegation.

You have to allow for failure or tasks not done perfectly. With appropriate monitoring, you should be able to catch mistakes before they are catastrophic - if not, the failure is yours.

When mistakes happen, you first want to get them fixed. You'll probably need to get involved and coach the development of a solution. Deal with the solution, not with the cause. (Look forward, not backward). If part of the failure was because you did not properly guide them, then take ownership of your own error immediately. Don't try to set yourself up as

someone who never makes a mistake, since that will lose creditability and respect.

Once you work with the employee on a solution, then you can go back and analyze the cause. If something was done wrong, say so directly and specifically. Your objectives are to ensure that the employee understands what the problem was, feels confident to resume and implements some procedures to prevent recurrence.

You want to create an environment where your employee looks for and anticipates mistakes. Rather than berating them for causing errors, praise them for prompt and intelligent actions in spotting and dealing with them.

At the end of the day, you are still ultimately responsible, and you need to be watchful for situations when delegation becomes a disaster. While constant intervening and micro-managing employees are not an effective ways to delegate, it's also not effective to let the employee drown in their own mistakes that could force you to thread a lot of water as well.

7. React If Delegation Isn't Working

To avoid bad delegation choices for you and your employees, here are some signs that are early indicators of problems:

- You sense the employee you delegated a task is procrastinating on finishing or even starting the task! You've asked for progress updates and they keep putting you off with, "I've been so busy I haven't been able to do much," or, "I'll get back to you about it."
- The employee is continually asking you to extend the project or task deadline or completion time or day. "If I could only have another week, day, hour, I could..." Some delays are inevitable given the sometime insanity of working in retailing, but if this is a reoccurring pattern, it probably signals a larger problem.
- The employee's ego gets out of control and they delegate your assignment to someone else. And what's worse, they don't seem to know or care about the status of the task being done.
- Regardless of all of your coaching and assistance, it seems obvious that the assignment is becoming a disaster in the wrong person's hands.
- When a delegated assignment does not seem to be going well, here are a few things you can do for damage control:
- Communicate openly and honestly. Either tell the employee that their progress on the task is considerably behind your expectations and that you need to rescind the responsibility, or give them some help and refocus their task. Be frank about what's not going well and ask them to be just as honest as to why they think the project or task is not going well. They might relay to you some issues that they had no control over, or of which you were unaware. If you accept this, then act immediately to

correct the situation while emphasizing that you want them to remain with the project to help you correct its course. Completely eliminating the employee at this stage might defeat them considerably. Also, you don't want the reputation of being everyone's lifesaver when things turn sour.

- Protect the person's self esteem. Explain your views of the actions they should have taken but didn't, and those they did but shouldn't have. Always be sure to end the conversation with a comment or two on what aspects they did do correctly. Maintaining or enhancing self-esteem is an important quality of an excellent manager.
- Ask for their suggestions on what needs to be done to avoid the delegation disaster. Sometimes people know the right directions, but for a variety of unexplained reasons, they don't take them.

8. Evaluate The Finished Product

Only accept finished work. You have delegated a task to take a workload off yourself. If you accept tasks turned back to you when they are only partially completed, you'll need to invest your own time to finish them. Most importantly, the employee to whom you've delegated won't get the experience needed to complete projects in the future.

Of course the employee needs to hear any and all aspects of their work that could have been executed better. They also need to feel your appreciation for their effort, if not for their actual achievement. They'll work all day for a boss who recognizes how hard they tried!

9. Give Appropriate Recognition

Remember when you critique the employee's finished product, the end result is a reflection on you both. You guided them, but they made it happen. Compliment what went well and let the employee bask alone in the spotlight of this achievement. In other words, don't take credit for what they did. (Your bosses will appreciate that your guidance made possible most of what happened.) Public recognition both reinforces the enjoyment of success and sets a standard for other employees.

Summary

If delegating is a new experience for you, don't be overly cautious. Start with basic tasks that aren't critical. Work your way up to the point where your employees are doing everything they can do well and you're performing your requisite managerial responsibilities. You will then be managing your subordinates and managing your time as well.

Once you've delegated everything, what do you do then?

You still need to monitor the tasks you've delegated and you need to continue to develop your staff to help them exercise their authority well. Remember, there are managerial functions that you should never delegate, such as motivating, team-building, training, counseling, performance reviews, etc.

As a manager, you have a responsibility to represent your team to your bosses, and you are responsible to develop the effectiveness of your team. You'll now have the time to plan strategically to better understand the intricacies of your salon, build its business and hone your management skills.

These tasks will expand to fill your available time. Delegation is a mechanism for creating that opportunity for you to truly perform your job as a professional manager.

But, what if you can't get yourself to delegate?

- Determine the reasons. Look through the most common reasons discussed earlier in this chapter. Which most apply to you?
- Practice at eliminating these reasons. Delegation is a skill that is learned through practice and it only gets better with repetition.

Remember, the ability to delegate properly is one of the most important functions a supervisor must learn. Effective delegation is a must because, no matter how effective a manager is, they will always have more work to accomplish than their time or individual abilities can manage. Effective leaders get more accomplished and in the long run, this gets noticed by their bosses. Good delegation gives you the opportunity to be noticed for your leadership skills and for your employees to be noticed for their current as well as potential capabilities.

Now is the time to observe your future "stars" and to affect good training opportunities. Effective delegation produces achievement and growth of employee skills resulting in higher staff self-esteem. It also gives your people a better overall understanding of your business and its challenges, and helps free you up to tackle the larger more intense potentials. The bottom line on delegation is to bring problem-solving and decision-making down to the lowest levels of your organization and to get your employees involved and productive.



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