Be Better Books

EFFECTIVE DELEGATION

OMAGBITSE BARROW FCA

DELEGATION

Effective Delegation

Delegation is about transferring the responsibility for a particular task or activity to another person, usually someone who reports to you and ensuring that the person takes responsibility for handling that task and ensuring that it is done properly. It is very important to make the distinction very early that delegation does not therefore mean not being interested in the success of the delegated task or abdicating responsibility. It still requires you to be interested in and provide support to ensure that it succeeds.

Why Delegation?

Delegation is important for a number of reasons primary amongst which are:

- It ensures that the organization or team achieves results through and with people. Some people have described leadership as working with and through people to achieve results, and delegation is one of those practices that gets others involved in achieving results

- In addition, and closely related is the fact that nothing of significant value has ever been created or achieved by one person working alone. You therefore need a team of well-motivated people working at different levels of an organization or team to achieve results. Delegation therefore becomes necessary so that at different levels of the enterprise, people are responsible for delivering on different things

- Thirdly, delegation allows you to manage time and resources more effectively. When you delegate, you are able to optimize the human resources that you have available, freeing up yourself to attend to other issues especially other issues that perhaps only you can handle satisfactorily.

- Delegation therefore bolsters productivity in the work place, ensuring that the right people are assigned to the right task, that the works is shared evenly amongst your team members.

- When you have an effective system for delegation within your team, you find that you are able to build potential successors and deepen the skills and capabilities of your team members. The more you delegate effectively, the more your team members will be able grow into higher levels of responsibility and handle more complex work challenges.

Why does Delegation Fail?

When you hear leaders make statements like…'I cannot trust anyone to handle this", or team members saying "In spite of all my contributions, it is only my boss that gets all the credit", then you know that there is a problem with delegation within that team. Delegation failures happen when leaders and their followers do not handle delegation properly. Then, they get uninterested in delegation, and avoid it altogether.

Here are the reasons that follower's give for delegation failure:

Reason	Corresponding Language/Thought
Complacency	Let me just focus on my own work, after all it is not my father's business.
Fear of Criticism	"Tunde is too high-handed; you can never impress him"
Over-filled plates	"I am already neck-deep in work and struggling! Why can"t Afia get someone else to do this or do it herself"
Lack of Skills	"I do not know what to do, I have not done it before"
Lack of self-confidence.	"I am too scared, I do not want to mess this up"
Lack of incentives	"All this extra work and and I still have nothing to show for it"

Then, here is what their leaders say:

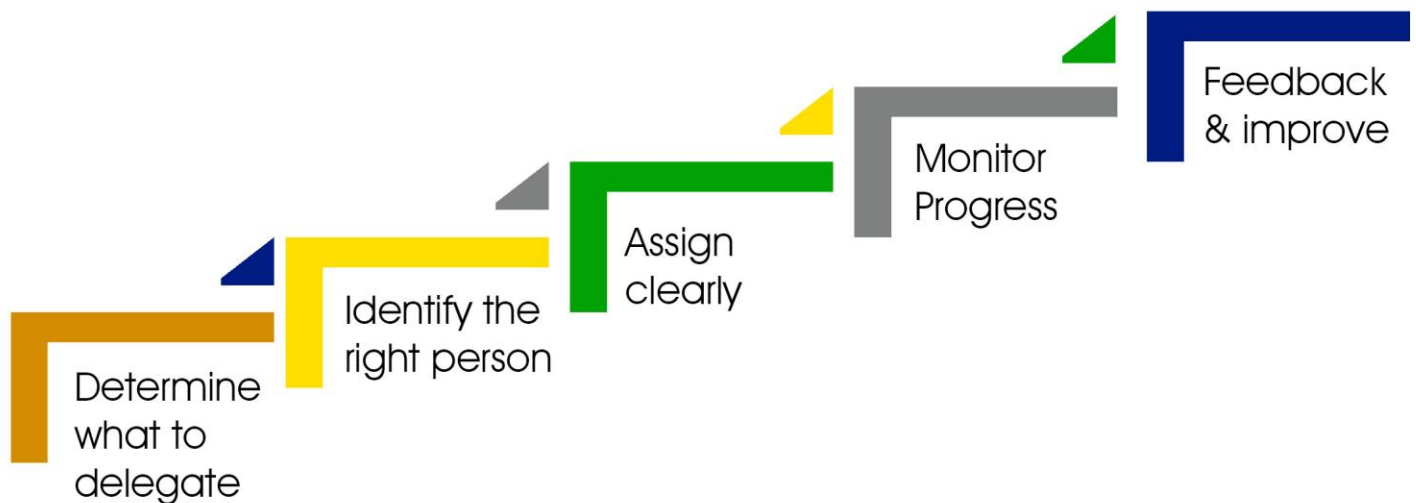| Reason	Corresponding Language/Thought
Insecurity	"If I delegate of all of this important stuff, Kwame will start to shine, and I will start to outline my usefulness"
Fear of Failure	"The last time I worked with Aisha on a project, she just did not get it, and she almost messed things up"
Past Experience	"What is the point! Each time I try, I end up still doing all the work"

Lack of Skills	"Honestly, I am not good at delegating. It is a lot easier and safer to do it myself"
Lack of trust in team members	"These guys will just bungle the entire transaction and we will lose the customers. I cannot take that risk".

If you identify with any of these reasons and because of that hold back from delegating effectively, or observe that your team members themselves do not respond well to delegated responsibilities, then you must start to work on turning around this mindset. You can achieve this by applying some of the behaviours and skills for effective delegation that will be the subject of the sections that will follow in this resource.

Steps to Effective Delegation

To ensure that you delegate effectively, you should go through this five-step delegation process:

- Determine what to delegate
- Identify the right person
- Assign clearly
- Monitor Progress
- Feedback & improve

The first step is to determine what to delegate. The truth – you cannot delegate everything, and in the same vein you cannot chose not to delegate anything. We will explore some criteria to help you identify what is most appropriate to delegate and the reasons why.

Once you have decided what you want to delegate, you must take time to identify the "best man/woman for the job". Where you do not match the right person to the task you will not achieve the positive result that you desire. We will also be looking specifically at some of the key considerations when taking a decision to choose the right person for a specific task.

Assigning the task clearly is very important. Some managers go the extra-mile and rightfully so to sketch (draw) their instructions, write them out in memos, create a work-flow or a project plan rather than just giving out verbal instructions. Even when all of these are done, you may still find that the team member does not execute properly. However, it is much better to err on the side of over-communicating and using a variety of communication methods, than relying on a verbal instruction. We will also explore the concept of how to engage your team members better using the framework of the 3Es while delegating tasks and assignments in a subsequent section.

In addition to the clear instructions, you still need to follow-up and monitor progress. A lot of delegation failures could be avoided if managers had very effective systems for tracking the performance of their team members and if a culture of monitoring and reporting has been well established within the team. Various teams use a number of means to achieve this. With the rise of digital communication tools like instant messaging and chat groups, leaders are able to drive accountability around team tasks and projects by creating such groups on mobile devices, so that projects and tasks can be monitored in an open and transparent manner.

In addition, teams use weekly or even daily meetings or briefing sessions to monitor and track progress, and some leaders have a system of checking in with their team members at specific times during the day to get feedback on tasks and projects. Another very effective approach to monitoring delegated tasks is „management by Walking Around" (MBWA) – managers walk around the desks of their team members, observe their work, intervene in the challenging situations they may be facing and make improvements as they do so.

Finally, the delegation cycle will be incomplete without managers giving feedback to their team members in a manner that motivates and challenges them to improve on their performance. Feedback should be professional – given in a non-prescriptive unemotional manner that is also specific. When managers give feedback in a professional manner, their team members can take better ownership of the delegated tasks and work towards improvement. When feedback is unprofessional and focused only on blaming the team member, fear and more cover-ups persist, undermining performance even further.

What Should I Delegate?

Like we highlighted earlier, you must strike the delicate balance in between delegating everything on one extreme, and delegating absolutely nothing on the other. Here are five criteria that can help you decide whether or not a particular responsibility or task should be delegated:

Tasks that will challenge and stretch others	Tasks that you have become an expert in
TTasks that you have taught others	Tasks that prevent you from taking up bigger challenges

Tasks that are not so sensitive that you cannot afford to do yourself

The task has to challenge and stretch others: You should look for tasks that will actually challenge and stretch your team members, help them to acquire new skills especially in areas where they have no prior experience. So if one particular team member has done something several times before and become an "expert" at it, then perhaps this will be a good time to give the assignment to someone else, so that this new person will be challenged and stretched.

Tasks that you have already mastered: Once you have achieved mastery of a particular task or activity, then it is perhaps "ripe" for delegation. This way you can transfer your expertise to someone else and free you up to learn new things and acquire new skills.

Tasks that you have taught others: If other people are already conversant with the skills to deliver on a p[articular task, then there is no need doing that task by yourself going forward. Continue delegating such tasks, in fact – go beyond delegating and make them a part of the person's job expectations or deliverables. This way you are actually transferring primary responsibility to that person.

Tasks that prevent you from taking bigger challenges: Depending on the level of positional leadership that you occupy, you may need to spend more of your time dealing with strategic long-term issues concerning your organization, rather than being bogged down with everyday operational issues. Once you sense that too much of your time and resources are focused on operational and tactical rather than strategic issues, then you should start looking at some of those operational and tactical issues with a view to delegating them

Tasks that are not too sensitive: Managing the risks of the tasks that you delegate is important. An important criterion will also be to ensure that the tasks being delegated are not too sensitive, so that delegating them does not expose you and your organization to unnecessary risks.

To Whom Shall I Delegate

Just like it is important to be clear about what we should delegate, it is also important to be clear about to whom you should delegate. Unfortunately, some people within your team at any given point in time or regarding a specific type of assignment may not be the most appropriate people to assign a task or responsibility.

These six criteria are therefore useful in helping you decide who is most appropriate for a particular task, but they are also a useful guide for the kind of capabilities that you should challenge your team members to acquire, and the areas of development that you should pay attention to as you lead and manage them. So, if a particular person comes up short when it comes to any of these areas and because of that is consistently passed over for new and challenging assignments, then that person is a candidate for performance counselling around those specific areas. It means that such a person is not "carrying their weight" and represents a weak link in the team.

So, when looking for someone to delegate a task, and when trying to build the capabilities of your team members to be able to take on new and challenging assignments, you should focus on these six elements:

Competence	This is evident by the person's proven and demonstrated ability to handle some or all of the sub-tasks related to the assignment. Competence comes from deliberate practice, self development and evaluated experience. It is not necessarily a function of someone's educational background or qualifications.
Ambition	Your team members should have a healthy and measured sense of ambition – they should be driven enough to see new tasks and responsibilities as an opportunity to learn and grow and should recognize that real growth in a career is not just about ascending to higher positions or remuneration, but more importantly to being able to achieve higher levels of responsibility, even when the promotion or salary increases lags slightly behind.

Some people say that your promotion and salary review should be struggling to catch up to your achievements. In a similar vein, the things you have achieved will always speak for you, so it is more important to focus on "achieving" rather than being rewarded.

However, managers should not take this for granted, and should work hard, exercising all the influence they have within the organization to ensure that those who are really taking on more, get the recognition and reward that they deserve. |
| **Capacity** | Some people struggle with even the most mundane tasks that they are already assigned. Their work requires multiple levels of review and they just have not developed themselves to the point where they can get it right the first time. Such people are not good candidates for delegation. It means that as their leader you need to invest in building their capacity to take on more. |

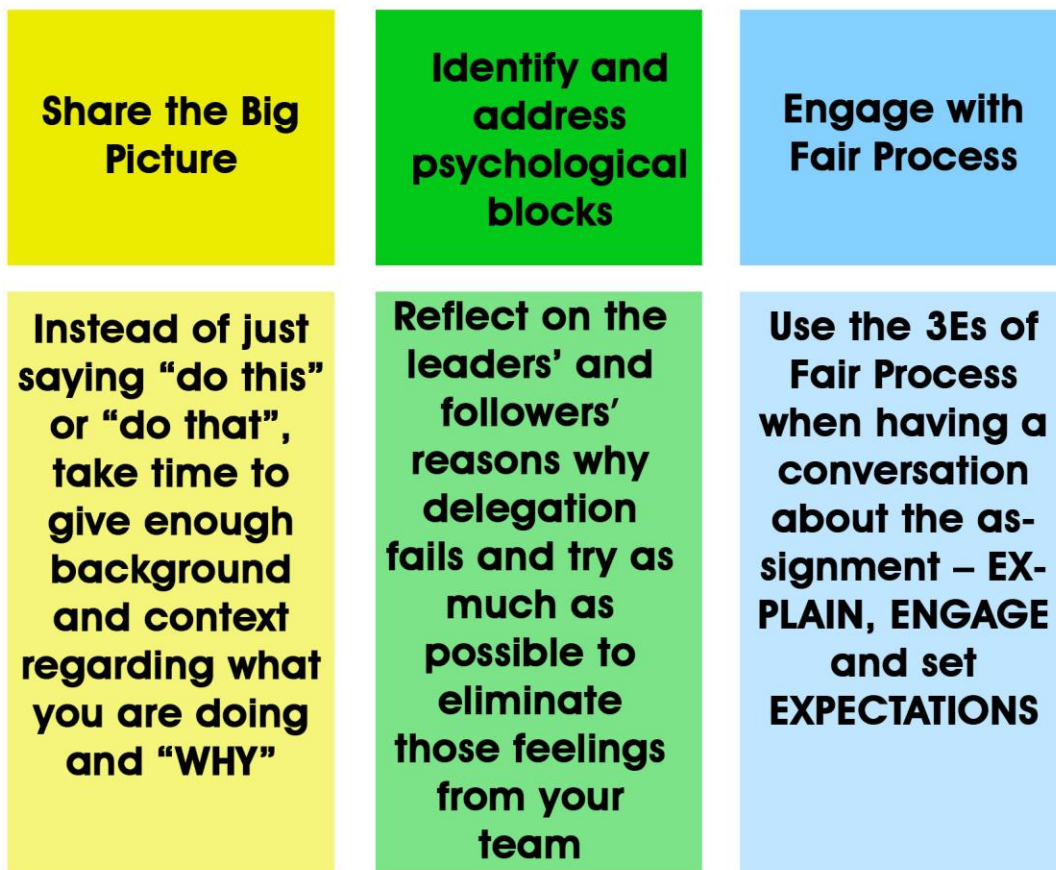| Learning Agility	There are some people who seem to just have a way of understanding and interpreting your instructions and are prepared to "hit the ground running" at a moment's notice. These are the best candidates for delegation. For those who struggle, this is an area of development to which they should pay attention. Learning agility is developed over time firstly out of intrinsic motivation, and then deliberate practice and exposure. For example, the Customer Service person who is able to understand and interpret a new task that relates to the launch of new technology solution or app, is the one who may not have a background in Technology, but has developed an interest in it supported by lots of reading and exposure to content and material in that area. The one who is inquisitive – asks questions and just has a fire within him or her to learn.
Commitment	Your team members who will do well with new and challenging assignments are those that recognize that being effective at work is not about "resuming on time" and "doing the work assigned", but about stretching themselves beyond 100%. Most employees struggle to be compliant, great employees go beyond compliance to the higher level of "commitment". You should evaluate your team members for their level of commitment, and challenge them to higher levels of commitment.
Discipline	Finally, discipline is the hall mark of effective execution. So if your team members do not use to-do lists effectively, manage their priorities effectively, and are not good at tracking their own performance and communicating effectively, then they will struggle with the tasks that you delegate. Focusing on these sub-skills for disciplined execution is important in ensuring that your delegation is truly effective.

The Psychology of Effective Delegation

In the earlier section we looked at some of the reasons why leaders and their team members may not engender effective delegation – one party either failing to delegate or the other not responding properly to assignments that have been delegated. From the conversations it was clear that a lot of the root causes stemmed from some underlying psychological block. The idea is to get your team members to take "ownership for the things that have been delegated, rather than just see them as mere tasks that have "fallen off your plate" To enhance the quality of delegation in your team you need to pay attention to addressing these potential psychological barriers, and applying these three steps:

Share the Big Picture	Identify and address psychological blocks	Engage with Fair Process
Instead of just saying "do this" or "do that", take time to give enough background and context regarding what you are doing and "WHY"	Reflect on the leaders' and followers' reasons why delegation fails and try as much as possible to eliminate those feelings from your team	Use the 3Es of Fair Process when having a conversation about the assignment – EXPLAIN, ENGAGE and set EXPECTATIONS

Tools for Delegation

There are potentially hundreds of tools or approaches that leaders can use when delegating assignments. We will however be limiting ourselves to three of such tools/approaches here that have proven to be very effective as follows:

Handles: These are iterative steps to take you from where you are to where you want to be. When delegating, use handles to break down a process or goal

into manageable chunks of performance. The handles can be written down and the team member can stick it on their desk or the wall above their desk, so that each time they need to perform a particular task, they can refer to the handle. A larger version of a handle will be a procedures manual, but handles can be applied even to non-operational things like writing a memo or a letter. Handles are a very powerful way of transmitting capabilities within an organization and building a culture around the way certain things are done. When you really get good at using handles, you can create mnemonics that will help people remember these handles, and even create desktop and wall posters that will further integrate them into the organizational culture.

Here are some examples of handles that we have used quite often in coaching and mentoring leaders across a variety of areas:

Designing a Presentation	QSETA	A great presentation should begin with a **Q**UESTION, **S**HORT **A**NSWERS, **E**XPLANATION or EVIDENCE, include **T**RANSITIONS and have a Call to **A**CTION at the end
Giving Effective Feedback	POINT	When giving feedback you should include the **P**LUSSES, **O**PPORTUNITIES, **I**SSUES and **N**EW **T**HINKING
Sharing your Vision	3Es	When selling your vision to your team deliver your message by **E**XPLAINING, **E**NGAGING and then setting clear **E**XPECTATIONS.
Managing Change	ADKAR	To get someone to change, you must ensure that these five elements are in play – **A**WARENESS, **D**ESIRE, **K**NOWLEDGE, **A**BILITY and **R**EINFORCEMENT.

You can think about handles that you can develop to transfer specific skills to your team members. To achieve this, try to break the performance of the task or assignment into three to five steps or actions that you can document and explain to your team members as you delegate that task to them. You don't always have to create a fancy mnemonic, but if you are able to you will find that it enhances their ability to remember the steps/actions and apply them.

Handles help to ensure that there is clarity on what is expected of the team member, and that the ability of the team member to perform is enhanced.

So imagine, you have delegated a presentation design to a team member, and as you delegate, you support him with the QSETA framework and a conversation on how to use QSETA, this will greatly improve their chances of success. If you just went ahead to delegate without a specific handle to support, there would be a potentially larger gap between what that team member achieves and what you intended. The idea therefore is that the handle helps you ensure a better result from the delegation.

Case Study: The Company Secretary

Jawara is the Company Secretary at a Banjul-based Telecommunications Company. He has assigned Aminata with to Directors ahead of each meeting. To help Aminata, he creates a simple handle:

FIVE STEPS TO PREPARE BOARD PAPERS

1) Edit and finalize previous meeting minutes.

2) Confirm agenda and resolutions with Chairman and CEO

3) Print, bind and package the board papers.

4) Despatch through the mail room with very clear instructions

5) Follow up with board members with an email, call or text message within 24 hours to confirm receipt.

Road Maps: Many people are visual learners, so beyond just telling them about a handle or tool, you can create a road map that outlines every step required of them as they make their way to completing a task. Road Maps may include flow charts and flow diagrams that show the various steps in a process or cycle. They could be a project plan that shows the various steps and activities required to deliver on a project. Road maps require you to draw or sketch, and for those who are visual learners, it can be very helpful in taking them from where they are to where they need to get.

Case Study: The Autism Walk

Vou is working with her team in Abuja, Nigeria to plan for the Autism Walk in April. She needs to ensure that her team members are carried along and understand all the important steps in the process. She also needs to ensure that all the steps are carried out in the right order. To achieve this, she sits with her team to create a storyboard that helps them to visualize the project and tell the "story" ahead of the event, providing a powerful road map that guides all their activities

AUTISM WALK - ROAD MAP.

Identify different routes	Select Preferred route	Send request to FRSC
Follow-up on FRSC	Receive FRSC Approval	Dry Run the Activities
Pay for Ambulance	2nd Dry Run	Autism Walk Day.

Laboratories: Laboratories create an opportunity for managers to simulate the actual performance of a task for their team members before the actual task/performance. The idea is to create a safe place where the team member can practice, make mistakes and get feedback, while ensuring that all the elements required for a simulation exists. For example, on an aircraft simulator, trainee pilots will be exposed to bad weather, possible mechanical failures or even plane hijack scenarios. Your simulation using a laboratory should similarly ensure that as many "real-life" elements are in play.

With laboratories, people who are new to a particular role or responsibility can get better prepared and you as their manager can manage the risk of their possible failures and mistakes better.

Case Study: From Administration to Research

Ayanda has just been transferred from the Administration Deparment to the Research Department of a Government Regulator in Pretoria, South Africa. It is a new challenge, as she has very little experience in research, besides her Masters Degree Thesis from about 10 years prior. The Executive Director has asked Ayanda's Head of Unit (HOU) to prepare an import report for an important stakeholder within a very aggressive timeline. All the other Senior Research Analysts are away on various similarly important assignments and projects, and Ayanda⊠s HOD is stuck with her newbie. What options are available to her?

Option	Consequence/Impact
HOU does all the work herself	This way she is certain that the important stakeholder is satisfied, and there are no mistakes. The problem though is that Ayanda does not really get the opportunity to learn, and who knows this same situation may arise in the not too distant future.
HOU assigns some work to Ayanda and does some of the work	While this is very useful, the challenge is that it is very likely that the HOU will assign the least complex tasks to Ayanda, meaning that she has not had a grasp of the "full picture" related to the task, and in future may still not be ready for the task.
HOU assigns everything to Ayanda	This could be career suicide. Imagine if Ayanda fails out of her inexperience. This could have huge ramifications for the entire Agency.

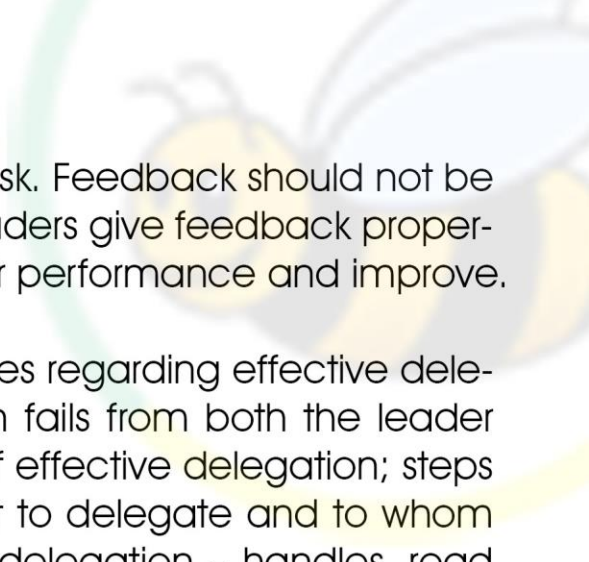| HOU assigns some work to Ayanda and does some of the work	She tells Ayanda to carry out the entire task with a slightly longer timeline. She then goes ahead to complete the task and submit to the Executive. She pretends to Ayanda that she Ayanda is 100% responsible for delivery and simulates all the typical "pressures" that such an assignment will have – calls and reminders from the ED. She even solicits the ED's cooperation in creating this laboratory. During the period, Ayanda will get valuable coaching and feedback from her supervisor. She will eventually produce a report, and her manager will get a chance to truly evaluate her capabilities and learning agility. She will be better able to manage such a task by herself in future, and the HOU would have effectively managed the "newbie" risk.

Delegating with Integrity

Delegation as you will no doubt agree is one of the very important acts of effective leadership and management. It means that like other acts of leadership, it has to be done with a very high sense of integrity.

One simple but powerful framework that is useful in evaluating the ethics of your delegation is the analogy of a tour guide vs. a travel agent. When leaders delegate they can either do it as a tour guide – one who „holds" the hand of his team members, "shows" them the "ropes" and guides them from the front-lines through the task – like a good tour guide should, based on their own experience with similar tasks. Travel agents may know the destination, but because they may never have been there before, they are unable to provide "on the spot" guidance to the team members. Managers who adopt a travel agent mentality, send their people on assignments without following them on the journey. They swivel around in their arm chairs barking out orders and expecting results without allowing their hands to get dirty. So, as you delegate important

Another important element of delegating with authority is giving effective feedback. Feedback should be profession, unemotional and focused on business results in a manner that inspires and challenges your team

members to improve their performance on the task. Feedback should not be insulting, demeaning or too prescriptive. When leaders give feedback properly, the team members are able to better own their performance and improve.

We have looked at a wide variety of practical issues regarding effective delegation. We reviewed the reasons why delegation fails from both the leader and the follower's perspectives; the psychology of effective delegation; steps to effective delegation; criteria for selecting what to delegate and to whom you should delegate; and the tools for effective delegation – handles, road maps and laboratories, before ending with a conversation on the ethics of delegation.

Armed with all of these and the accompanying toolkit, you should be better equipped to delegate more effectively, free yourself up for more strategic responsibilities, build your next generation of leaders and bolster overall productivity within your team and organization.

Toolkit

- Why is delegation not working?

- Checklist for Effective Delegation

- How ready are your people for delegation?

Why is Delegation not working?

To assess the challenges you may be having with being effective at delegating with your team, assess yourself and your team using this assessment tool, and develop an action plan for the areas that require improvement.

Please tick as many of these statements that are true about your team

Team members do not generally feel that they need to go the extra mile in their work.	
Team members are criticized quite strongly, and are therefore very afraid of criticism.	
Team members have expressed concerns about the volume of their work being too much.	
Team members complain that they need training to be able to deliver on their work goals.	
Team members are concerned about work incentives and conditions of employment.	
You feel that exposing too much to your team members may be dangerous.	
You are concerned that your team members may "mess" things up when you give them very sensitive tasks	
You are not very confident in your capabilities to delegate	
Your past experience suggests that delegating has not been very effective in your team.	

Identify the areas that you ticked and come up with an action plan to address the issues raised:

Issue	Action Plan	Timeframe
	18	

Checklist for Effective Delegation

Next time you delegate a task ensure that you follow each of these steps. Use them as a check-list

Step	Check
Determine if this task should be delegated	
Identify the right person to delegate	
Assign the responsibility clearly suing the tools for delegation.	
Monitor Progress and Performance on the Task.	
Give feedback and improve performance.	
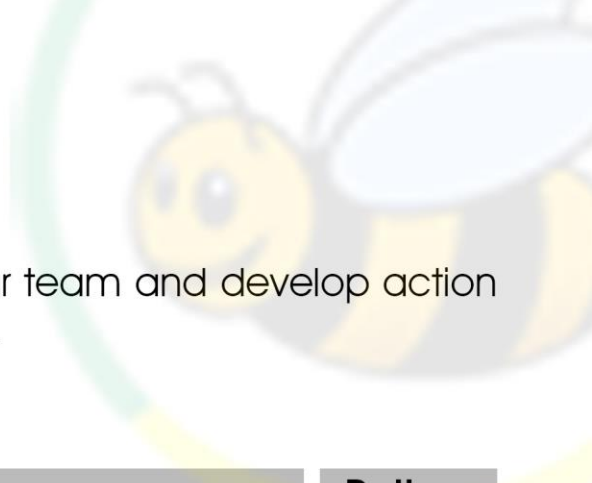
How ready are your People for Delegation?

Use this assessment to evaluate members of your team and develop action plans to improve them in areas of their weakness.

Team Member's Name_____

	Rating (1-10)
S/He is an expert at the work that they do	
S/He is a keen learner and learns new things very quickly.	
S/He has the capacity to take on more challenging and complex work.	
S/He is purposeful, and sets ambitious goals for self development and achievements.	
S/He is disciplined focused and prepared to make sacrifices for the team and the organization.	
S/He manages time, priorities and deadlines effectively	
S/He is purposeful, and sets ambitious goals for self development and achievements.	
S/He is disciplined focused and prepared to make sacrifices for the team and the organization.	
S/He manages time, priorities and deadlines effectively	

Development Plan

Areas requiring Improvement	Suggested Interventions	Timeline

The Complete Mentoring Series:

Leading Self

Leading Yourself
Creating your Personal Vision
Understanding Your Personality

Leading People

Giving Effective Feedback
Listening Effectivelly
Managing Conflict
Building Relationships
Coaching
Mentoring
Influencing your Boss

Leading Transformation

Making Change Happen
Creative Problem Solving
Decision Making

Leading Results

Setting Goals
Effective Delegation
Monitoring Performance
Appraising Results
Managing Meetings
Designing Presentations
Delivering Presentations
Managing Projects
Managing Time and Energy
Fostering Teamwork

CONTACT US

Be Better Books

Be Better Center, 6 David Mark Close, Behind Adisa Estate, Apo-Gudu, Abuja

+234 805 195 3276
www.bebetterbooks.biz

Be Better Books