

## Delegation: some pointers

### The five anchors of delegation

#### 1. Describe the desired outcome

Make sure the person is clear about what you want them to achieve in the delegated task both in terms of the process as well as the outcome. If you have a lot of confidence in them, you may feel able to leave the process to them and simply describe the outcome but if in doubt - explain.

#### For each task delegated specify:

- the desired outcome
- any timescales involved - both end times and critical path times
- the resources available
- any other colleagues who must/might be consulted/involved
- the processes and procedures to be followed

#### 2. Provide the necessary tools

Make sure they have everything they need in order to do the task as well as possible. This may mean freeing up their time or helping them to reprioritise. It may mean training or who to go to for advice. It may mean simply ensuring that they have access to the only computer in the office when they need it!

#### 3. Set up checkpoints

If the delegated task is new to your staff member, it is a good idea to ask them to come back and check with you before committing themselves or the organisation to any major decisions. How often you ask them to do this and in what level of detail will depend on how much confidence you have in them in the first place.

#### 4. Follow up and coach

A delegated task means a learning opportunity for the staff member - otherwise it feels like dumping! Make sure that you support the learning process by reinforcing good work through praise and encouragement and developing weaknesses by positive suggestions and discussion.

#### 5. Praise in public

If you have delegated something that went well, make sure you give the credit to the person who did the work. If you have delegated something that went badly, make sure you take the blame yourself. This is part of what being 'tough at the top' means.

## Different levels of delegation

### **Carry out the work under my constant supervision**

Most commonly used with new members of staff. The delegator is in constant contact with the task until the staff member is able to perform it reliably themselves.

### **Carry out the work in this way and consult with me before taking any action**

Both the process and the outcomes are specified by the delegator. The staff member will plan the work but must consult before committing themselves or the organisation to any risky decisions.

### **Carry out the work as you see fit but report back to me before taking any action**

Here the process is left to the staff member's discretion but the delegator retains final control before the final decisions are taken.

### **Carry out the work and report back regularly on what you've done**

Here, the process is left to the staff member's discretion and they have freedom to act but must report **after** the fact. This level will tend to be used only with people in whom you have a reasonable level of confidence.

### **Carry out the work and report back only when you encounter difficulties**

This is the level of delegation we have with our senior teams. It is assumed that their decision making and performance levels are problem-free unless they tell us otherwise.

### **This is your project - achieve the objective(s) in whatever way you see fit**

This is the highest level of delegation and, in reality, used very rarely. At this level, the staff member has complete discretion and carries complete responsibility (though not accountability) for the task.

Remember that it is best to negotiate the appropriate level of delegation with the person doing the work. They may wish to take the whole task over and be fully responsible for it or they may wish for a lot more guidance and support. You may be happy to hand over the work and trust them to get on with it or you may wish to keep a tighter hold on it, at least at first. If you discuss this with them and explore options and ways forward you can clarify expectations between you and minimise misunderstandings. This will help diminish your potential anxiety about delegating the work as well as letting your team member know exactly where they stand.