

Delegate | Christin Smith Myers

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Years ago I worked for a boss who was insistent upon making his own travel arrangements. I was finally able to convince him to let me handle it by making sure I had all of his preferences clear: Favorite airline? Window or aisle? Front or back? Early or late flight? Direct flights only? Budget? Favorite rental car brand? Mid-size or full-size? Preferred hotels? Account numbers/rewards numbers? It probably took us 15 minutes to hammer out those details one time, and that information allowed me to take care of all future flight, hotel and rental car arrangements, saving him countless hours. Considering that his pay rate was at least 5 times higher than mine, it sounds like a worthwhile investment of 15 minutes and some trust, doesn't it?

Yet how many times in the last month have you made any of these statements?

- "I'm the only one who can handle this."
- "If you want something done, you've got to do it yourself."
- "No one else can do it as well as I can."
- "It would take me too long to teach someone else."

And how many times were one of those sentences preceded or followed with, "I just don't have enough time to do everything on my list!"

I've been working on improving my delegation skills for years, and I still say these things sometimes. But if you don't let other people try to handle things, they'll never learn how. And you don't know who could actually do it better than you if you don't give people the opportunity. And as the example above shows, it might not take as long to teach someone as you think, and even if it takes a while, the time you'll save in the months or years to come makes it worthwhile.

Delegating is a great time management tool. If it isn't your specialty, consider these tips:

- Start with something small. Both you and the other person will feel better if the stakes are lower at the beginning.
- Focus on the desired end result but not the process. You might want to share with them how you've traditionally done the task, but leave them some space to figure out the way that makes it work for them. (Unless they ask for your process, in which case you should definitely share!)
- Provide feedback. If it works out great, let the person know. If there are some ways they can improve, give them that feedback as well.
- Just because it doesn't work out the first time, it doesn't mean it won't work the next time or that you should stop trying. You probably didn't master the task the first time either!

Need more time back in your schedule? Let go of some tasks. If you can't delete them altogether, see if you can delegate them.