

Bonus Worksheet!

DELEGATION

Real change requires real effort.¹

- Marshall and Kelly Goldsmith

Kevin

Kevin was a would-be leader who was stuck in a management mindset. He had just taken over a failing branch of an investment firm with the mandate to turn it around. When I met him, his calendar was so full that at any given moment, no matter where he was, there was somewhere else he should have been. His meetings were double booked. His employees were constantly looking for him. The only time he could get any of his own work done was after hours, when his family wanted him home. Kevin desperately wanted to be a leader thinking about strategic direction and planning for the company's growth, but he couldn't extract himself from being a manager of time, people, and tasks.

If all Kevin wanted to do was get through the day, maybe his routine would be okay. But Kevin saw himself as a leader - someone who had a bigger vision himself, his clients, and his company. Jumping from task to task as if he was playing an interminable game of hopscotch was getting him nowhere.

If your life sometimes feels like Kevin's and you want to find a path out of the maze, one direct route is delegation. To do this, you can follow this useful advice:

"You should only do what only you can do."

This wisdom was shared with me by my friend and mentor Dr. Meggin McIntosh, the "Productivity Professor" (www.meggin.com). I find it great guidance for smart delegation. It means that the highest, best use of your time is to maximize your unique strengths and talents. Everyone else can do the rest, ideally using their own. What's so brilliant about this strategy is it makes the most of *everyone's* talents - yours and the person to whom the work is delegated - to get the work done in the most efficient and agreeable way. When you delegate, you transfer actions to others that you ought *not* to be doing so you can do what you *must* in order to be your best as a leader.

The things *only you* can do might include:

- areas of your unique expertise
- activities that rely on your personality, strengths or style
- maintaining important relationships
- specialized learning
- systems or processes that leverage your strengths.

If you look at your action plan and mark the things that *only you* can do, you're likely to find only *some* actions fit these criteria.

¹ Marshall and Kelly Goldsmith, "Why Coaching Clients Give up - and How Effective Goal Setting Can Make a Positive Difference."

The things *someone else* could do probably include:

- administrative jobs
- activities that do not rely on your personality, strengths or style
- anything you can outsource to someone else.

If you're brutally honest, you will find that most of the time the items on your action plan could actually be done by someone else. That doesn't mean your part isn't important. Quite the reverse: it means your talents are *too* important to be wasted doing things other people can and should be doing.

What makes delegation difficult? It sounds like this.

"It's just easier if I do it myself."

"No one else knows how to do this."

"This needs to be taken care of right away."

"It's my responsibility."

"But I like doing this."

You can justify every one of these delegation-dodging statements. It is easier to do things yourself, and delegation does take longer. Plus, it feels good to get things done. But when the weeks go by with no discernable action toward your vision, your thoughts tend to sound more like this:

"Why do I always do this to myself?"

This was exactly the question Kevin was asking himself when I came upon him late on a Friday afternoon.

Kevin

While other people headed out for the weekend, Kevin was popping open a soda and getting ready for a few hours' work.

I had been encouraging Kevin to delegate some of his work to capable colleagues. He was not doing the things only he could do: strategizing for growth options and clarifying the new vision for the company. He was doing things many others could do. Expense reports. Calculations. Project management.

Perhaps now because he was spending his weekend working, he was ready to start looking for ways to delegate.

The notion of delegating was hard for Kevin. He gave me several good reasons for not delegating, and I agreed they were tough.

· It was easier for Kevin to do the work himself. (That didn't mean it wasn't a good idea.)

· Kevin's colleagues didn't know how to do the work. (That was only because he hadn't taught them.)

· Kevin's tasks were all urgent; there was no time for training. (That was because he was doing everything else, so he was constantly behind.)

Once Kevin accepted the fact that delegating would take time, effort, and attention, he started to open up to the possibilities.

"I used to get frustrated because I felt like I couldn't delegate to anyone else. Either they weren't capable of doing what I needed them to do, or they wouldn't do it the way I would do it, or they wouldn't do it the way I needed it to be done, or it would take too long. It took me a really long time to learn that what I needed to do was be sure to hire the right people and delegate the right tasks to them." - Lillian Denton, general manager of a Fortune 1000 accounting consultancy

"Delegation is one of the hardest things to do and the most important to master as a leader. In order to do it well, you need to give people the

1. time
2. resources
3. responsibility
4. and authority

to succeed." - Max Maxwell, State Superintendent of Schools

Maybe he could train Marti to attend client meetings without him. He would save almost five hours a week!

Maybe he could show Dimitri how to run the weekly reports. He'd save another two hours!

Maybe he could train all of his staff to come to him with solutions instead of questions, hoping he would solve their problems. He would save at least two more hours!

I tallied up the savings: almost nine hours a week. In the one hour Kevin invested finding ways to delegate, for every week he had just bought himself one full free day. Now that's what I call a return on investment.

Kevin still had to follow through on his plans to delegate in these ways, an effort that would take several weeks. But soon Kevin had replaced his hands-on management style with a freer, more empowering approach that allowed his team to work together more closely and for Kevin to be a real leader focusing on the growth of the business.

Chances are you already know how to delegate. You do it all the time. Whether you have a teenage neighbor mowing your lawn or an organization with ten-thousand employees doing the work, somewhere in your life you are getting others to help you achieve your goals.

But I'm going to review the steps of delegation here anyway - not because you don't know how to do it because I want you to think about delegating anew. You have a bold vision for your life and leadership. Every time you do something yourself that someone else could do for you, you are saying that *that task* is more important than living and leading well. It's not.

To delegate, take a hard look at your action plan. If you had a capable person whom you could trust to help you, what tasks would you ask that person to do? Circle them. You can also think about the things you hate to do, wish you didn't have to do, or that you like to do but know take up too much time.

Now consider the possibilities. If you could delegate these tasks to someone else, who

would you choose? What would it take to make that happen? Most important, what would you get to do instead, once you'd delegated this tasks? Ask yourself: are those gains worth a few hours to train someone to take over these tasks and do them well? If so, you've found the ones to delegate. Get that person on the phone and set up a time to start. The two of you can make a plan for transferring the tasks to the person who will take over the job, and you can get on with the business of doing "what only you can do."

Effective leaders don't do everything themselves; they empower others. Leaders need to understand what each role really ought to be and appropriately distribute the work. Delegation takes energy, time and trust. In the end, though, it provides opportunities for everyone to be stretched, challenged, and respected. Don't reward yourself with so much work you can't possibly succeed; reward yourself by choosing activities where you can add the most value and give others the chance to shine.

Exercise

1. Make a list of five things you've done this week that in theory, someone else could do.

2. Choose one. Which of these actions would give you the biggest "return on investment?" Which will free you up the most?

3. What would it take to delegate this task?

- Who could do it?
- What it take for them to be able to do it?

- | | | |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Time | <input type="checkbox"/> Money | <input type="checkbox"/> Preparation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Asking | <input type="checkbox"/> Nothing | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |

4. Make a commitment. What will you do and when will you do it?