



Delegate To Elevate

By Joelle K. Jay, Ph.D.

If you are looking to be more effective and intentional with your time, and, ultimately, elevate yourself to a higher level of leadership, you are probably discovering that the delegation is becoming essential.

Delegating tasks on your endless to-do list is a necessary reality if you're going to free themselves to achieve those "big bets" and your long-term goals.

So why can task delegation be a struggle for many leaders?



The answer is simple: It takes time and effort. It's tempting to avoid it altogether.

If you hear yourself saying, "It would be easier to just do this myself," think again. Remember those big goals of yours! You won't achieve them if you're trapped in the day-to-day minutiae. Instead, let's look at an approach to delegation that can get you the support you need to succeed.

Broken down, delegation also means training others to do the task that you need done.

You may need to confront your own insecurities about quality control here; the person to whom you delegate may not do the task as well as you do. That's okay. They don't need to do it as well as you, and they don't need to do it the same way as you. They just need to get it done – and by the way, if you choose selectively, you will be giving them the opportunity to stretch and grow as they do.

You may also need to calm your fears about whatever cleanup may be ahead if things go badly. Delegation runs the risk of failure. No wonder that cautious side of you wonders again if it wouldn't just be better to do the task yourself. But be strong – the likelihood of failure is far less if you take responsibility for helping the people to whom you delegate to do the task well. In fact, if you teach them thoroughly and coach them along the way, you may free yourself from the task for good, as you will have trained a capable other to do the task in your place. It bears repeating: If you insist on doing every task on your list yourself, you'll never rise above the level of your to do list. You'll always be doing the same work.



Mastering the skill of delegation is what can free you to rise to the next level.

Here's a handy technique to get you started. The next time you need to delegate tasks, just remember this method: the ODC. An ODC is a message you deliver to the person who will do a task.

- The "O" stands for Outcome. What outcome are you trying to achieve?
- The "D" stands for Deadline. When you want the task to be done?
- The "C" is for "Clarification." What detailed directions can you provide, and what questions do you and your task-doer need to discuss?

Here's an example of ODC in action. You have traditionally planned the end-of-the-year party for your team, but this year you're focused on delivering a high-impact client engagement and don't want to take time away from this critical project. You choose Michael, the new coordinator on your team, to take on the party.

You're ready to delegate.

Promising yourself that you will let Michael do things his way, and promising Michael that you will do everything you can to help him succeed, you launch the ODC.

"Michael, I would love to have you take on this new project. The outcome is to have the final end-of-the-year party planned for our team, and we want to have it completed by June 10th. What questions do you have, Michael? And, before you start, let me show you some of the criteria that we want to use."

It's an easy, quick reminder of how to transfer information from your brain into someone else's. You don't have to talk Michael through all of the details. You don't have to explain to him what last year's party looked like, you don't have to give him all of your files, unless Michael wants them. You can trust Michael to do things his way. He knows the outcome, he knows the deadline, he's had a chance to ask questions, and you've given him enough detail.

Now if you check in with Michael every other day to make sure he's on track and keep giving him the opportunity to ask questions, he will have taken on the whole project. You have one giant piece of work delegated to someone else, and you are free to concentrate on something bigger. Michael gets a new opportunity, and guess what: you do, too. The whole thing is as easy as remembering "ODC."

For more strategies to take control of your time and cultivate better personal leadership skills, see Joelle's book: [The Inner Edge](#).



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