

Why Lack of Delegation Isn't Your Real Problem (That is just an after-effect)



If you struggle with delegation as a Manager, chances are you were an exceptional Individual Contributor (IC).

It is in the nature of things; you can't have one without the other.

But there is good news.

You can get better at delegation, with a small mental shift — a change in Perspective.

Perspective Shift

Consider the two activities that trip most of us:

- Fear of Public Speaking
- Lack of Delegation

Although the end result is the same — inability to do them well — the reasons are different. Fear of public speaking is real; You actively fear standing in front of an audience.

In the case of lack of delegation, you don't fear delegating per se.

Instead, 'you value something else more', such as:

- You want to understand the issue for yourself
- You take satisfaction from doing a job well
- You want to avoid errors in the task
- You want to help your team

The end result is: You don't delegate enough.

This perspective shift is crucial if you want to improve at delegation.

In the book, 'MindWorks: A Practical Guide for Changing Thoughts, Beliefs, and Emotional Reactions,' author Gary Vann Warmerdam writes in detail about how to bring change in ourselves.

One of the points he mentions is — before one can change a belief, and consequently their behavior — one needs to lessen the emotional impact of the belief.

And the way to do that is to change one's Perspective on the issue.

How does Perspective Shift help?

Perspective shift lets you take an issue from an emotional level to an intellectual level.

Once there, you can compare — intellectually — what you are doing Vs. what the situation demands.

And change your behavior accordingly.

Warmerdam writes:

“When you change your perspective of the issue, not only do your thoughts and beliefs change, but so do your (negative) emotions.

The facts won't change, but the interpretations you make, and therefore the emotions you feel, will change. Your beliefs will seem smaller, less valid, and changeable.”

An Example

I have a person 'Narendra' with whom I interact for work.

'Narendra,' I realized — after he had worked for me for some time — is a big mouth. He claims to know big, big things. But when I put him to it, he comes up short.

Initially, this annoyed me, and I used to pull him up.

Of late though, my frustration with Deepak has gone.

It struck me — 'Narendra is a big mouth, not deliberately, but because he is like that. It is just his nature.'

Once I accepted it — my perspective changed - it no longer annoys me. I now take his big mouth into account and plan my work accordingly.

How does Perspective Shift help with Delegation?

Once your perspective shifts — You don't lack delegation skills, but that it is the end result of what you are doing — you will shed the negative charge you feel on the subject of delegation.

With this new (positive) emotion, you will find it easier to convince yourself of the change that is required.

You will realize, "Okay, X are the things I valued as an Individual Contributor. Now, that I have become a manager, I need to start valuing Y."

You will then find it easier to incorporate the how-to's of delegation — whom to delegate, how to delegate, authority vs. responsibility, etc. — as per the situation.

The positive upward spiral will speed up your ability to delegate.

To help you adopt this new self-talk, I have made a poster that you can use as a reminder

I don't lack Delegation Skills. It was the end-result of what I was doing till now	
What I Valued Earlier	What I Value Now
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Understand the Issue myself• See for myself• Do it Myself• Strive to do it perfectly• I know better	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Focus on important items• Trust my team to do diligence• Develop the people / team who will do it• Good Enough is Good• We collectively know better

My Experience

Ever since I have come to see the above perspective, it has helped me to shed decades-old beliefs, of me not being good at Delegation.

- I have stopped the negative self-talk — “I am not good at delegation,” “I get sucked in details,” “I am a perfectionist,” etc.
- I find it easier to keep the big picture in mind.
- I find it easier to let go, to trust others.
- And when things do go wrong, I don’t have the urge to figure in minutest detail why it happened, of how it could have been avoided, etc.
- I find it easier to help the staff correct the mistake, and see how it can be avoided in future.

I find myself lighter, easier to imbibe the new values dictated by the situation.

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