

# Delegating like a boss

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The most effective leaders don't do everything themselves: They delegate, freeing up time for more essential work while giving others the chance to develop.

It isn't always easy. Delegating can be difficult because many people link accomplishments with working hard. They may also fear being viewed as bossy or lazy. But delegation can help advance careers. "If you're focusing on the most important things that need your attention, you're going to make more impact on the organization and more impact on your career success," said Joel Garfinkle, an executive coach and author of *Getting Ahead: Three Steps to Take Your Career to the Next Level*. "Shift the mindset from 'I'm going to do everything myself' to 'I'm going to let people learn.'"

Here's how to get started:

**Think about what you can give up.** Consider what only you can do and keep that. Anything confidential, essential, or sensitive likely needs to stay with you. Client meetings might be kept, but scheduling those meetings could be passed along to someone else. But don't focus on just the mundane tasks, Garfinkle said. Delegate things that will help colleagues enrich their jobs and feel empowered.

**Identify to whom you can delegate.** People have to have the "skill and the will," said Lisa Barrington, a workplace strategist and speaker based in Phoenix. An employee with more experience may not be interested, but a lower-level staffer may be willing to take on the task. You can also consider peers at your level, provided they can benefit from the work. Remember that everyone can "get bored if they're not trying new things or learning new things," Barrington said. Of course, beware of overloading someone.

**Do the heavy lifting early.** To ensure the task is done properly, delegating requires ongoing communication. First, explain that this is a growth opportunity, provide detailed instructions, and be specific on outcome expectations. "The more you're involved upfront, the less time you need to be later on," Garfinkle said. Then, set up check-ins to discuss progress and issues. Express gratitude for a job well done.

**Alter guidance.** Be available for questions, and be willing to make adjustments as needed. Then, as the person masters the task, reduce your oversight. "You can pull back on the direction to more of a guide," Barrington said. Then, let them "come to you if they need to."

*Dawn Wotapka is a freelance writer based in Georgia. To comment on this article or to suggest an idea for another article, contact [Chris Baysden](#), senior manager of newsletters at the Association of International Certified Professional Accountants.*