

Executive Challenge #7:

“I know I’m not delegating as much as I probably should, but...”

What are the biggest challenges facing successful business people today? In my work as a certified executive coach for C-Suite Executives, Directors, Managers, and Entrepreneurs, there are many recurring themes that seem to surface. One at a time, I’ll be sharing with you 12 of those top challenges along with hints, tips, and steps you can take to avoid or eliminate altogether these key issues that might be holding you back from achieving the kind of success you are aiming for.

Challenge #7: “I know I’m not delegating as much as I probably should, but...”

As a leader of an organization, let’s face it: You can’t do it all yourself. So, you know you have to delegate, and you do genuinely try. But lately, you’ve found your to-do list getting longer... you spend most of your time in back-to-back meetings... your normal workday has extended to 12+ hours... and you’re working weekends just to catch up. If this is the case, you’re probably not delegating enough.

Most senior managers *know* they need to delegate as much as possible so they can decrease their workload to focus on higher-level responsibilities. “Definitely, Brenda,” many senior managers say, “I want to delegate more, but...” Then, they fill in the blank with one of the following statements. Do any of these sound familiar?

“If I do the task myself, I know it will be done *right*.”

“These projects are too important to screw up.”

“My direct reports just don’t have what it takes to get the job done.”

“It’s simply easier for me to do it myself.”

“It takes less time if I do it alone.”

If you relate to any of the comments above, it could be a warning sign. While this type of thinking might work for a lower-level manager, a senior-level executive cannot afford to consistently give in to delegation fears. Refusing to delegate can not only derail your career but also potentially cause your business to fail.

The truth is that delegating is important for more reasons than just lightening your workload. Truly effective delegation is a ‘win-win’ for everyone involved. It improves your team members’ job satisfaction and develops your employees’ abilities, setting up your company for greater

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long-term success. The higher up the ladder you go, the more this holds true, so learning to be an effective delegator is critical to success at the executive level.

But, are you as effective at delegation as you can be? Here are ten tips for better delegation:

1. **Are the questions you're being asked too simple?** If your team is turning to you with questions that you find easy to answer, that's an indication you're not delegating or training your team enough. Use each simply question you get as an opportunity to teach the more basic tasks in your organization, freeing you up to answer the truly tough questions.
2. **Delegate the *entire* task.** People contribute most effectively when they're aware of the big picture, so try to delegate the entire task whenever possible. If, for some reason, you can't give an employee the whole task, make sure he or she understands its purpose. When your team understands the reasons for a certain project, mistakes are less likely, and they'll be motivated to do the job well.
3. **Give crystal clear instructions.** Your employee needs to understand *exactly* what you want him or her to do. Don't assume your instructions are understood; ask questions to make sure your directions are clear, or ask them to repeat instructions if you need to.
4. **Paint a picture of success.** If you know what successful outcome of a task looks like, make sure you make that clear to the individual assigned to the task. The stronger and clearer your vision of success, the more likely the desired outcome will be reached.
5. **Establish a *measurement of success*.** Quantify the outcome whenever possible. It makes success less subjective and your desired objective even clearer. It also allows you to hold the responsible person accountable to a specific, measurable goal so that you'll know you've reached what you set out to achieve.
6. **Allow ample time to meet the goal successfully.** Most likely, the people you've delegated to will be on a learning curve, so give them ample time to succeed. If you don't, you run the risk of setting your employees up for failure.
7. **Set key times for reporting back to you with progress updates.** Make sure you set milestones at a time when your input will be most critical. This will not only stop you from micromanaging your direct reports, but it will give you a chance to influence the project's outcome at just the right moments.

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8. **Allow for plenty of “small failures.”** Recognize that “failing small” can be a great way for your team to learn. After all, isn’t that how you learned some of the best lessons in your own career? Allow enough time for the project so that, in case there are small failures, there’s enough time to recover, learn from those failures, and get back on track.
9. **Avoid the “that’s not the way I would do it!” syndrome.** Remember: There’s more than one way to skin a cat. What you have delegated is to get from point A to point C. *How* each person gets there is up to the individual. Make sure to stay focused on the final objective.
10. **Be clear about what’s in it for the person who takes on the job.** Make it clear to your employees what success with a project or task will mean for their own jobs, careers, and even salary or promotion possibilities, if applicable.

Learning to delegate successfully as a leader takes time and energy, but the outcome is well worth it. While it may seem that good delegation requires more time up front, as you develop your team’s abilities, you will begin to see increased time savings. By helping your team develop and meet your expectations, you’ll also build your employees’ self-confidence. And, let’s face it: People who *feel* successful usually *are* successful.

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In one of her recently released books, *Would YOU Want to Work for YOU™? How to build an executive leadership brand that inspires loyalty and drives employee performance*, Brenda brings her many years of transformational coaching successes, insights, examples, and real-world stories to the rewarding task of helping leaders reach their full potential.

After earning her MBA from Harvard, Brenda spent the bulk of her career as an executive in Fortune 100 multinationals, building brands across dozens of countries spanning four continents. Now, as President of her own company, Brand Development Associates International, she travels the world speaking, training, and coaching individuals and companies to greater success through creative, yet practical, corporate and personal brand development. Visit www.BrendaBence.com.

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