

## **Effective Task and Responsibility Delegation Leadership Toolbox**

### **Podcast Transcript**

*Centennial Student Union & Student Activities  
Minnesota State University, Mankato*

Welcome to the Student Activities Online Leadership Toolbox. My name is John Bulcock, and I am the Assistant Director of Student Activities for Greek Life and Off-Campus Housing at Minnesota State University, Mankato. I am going to be your podcast guide. Today we will be talking about effective task and responsibility delegation for student leaders.

We've all heard the old adage: "If you want something done right, you've got to do it yourself." In the world of student organizations and leadership, this could not be further from the truth. This mentality can lead to burnout, a lack of productivity, a failure to help others develop skills, and a lack of creativity. This being said, delegating responsibility can be one of the most uncomfortable and worrisome things for a relatively new leader to do. According to Carter McNamara, delegation can sometimes be a major challenge for new leaders to learn because they are concerned about giving up control or struggling to have confidence in the abilities of others. Supervisors and leaders who can effectively delegate can free up a great deal of their own time, help their organization members to cultivate expertise in learning, and can develop their own leadership skills -- skills that are critical for problem solving, goal attainment, and learning.

To begin with, we need to distinguish between delegating and directing. When we direct, we tell others what the task is and how to accomplish it. When we delegate, we tell others what the task is or what the goals are, and we allow for freedom in the determination of how to accomplish the task or goals. In both directing and delegating, the leader retains ultimate responsibility for the completion of the task, but delegation allows for ownership by another team member. This can be a motivator and can create buy-in and a willingness to help.

Expert and Consultant, Marcia Zidle, offers ten tips for effective delegation:

First, she suggests that delegation must take place early so that planning may be more effectively completed.

She indicates that selecting the correct person to delegate to is the second item of concern. We must match skills and abilities to the task or goal which is to be completed. We also must make sure that the proper training has taken place and that the team member has the right resources.

The third tip Zidle offers is the need to be able to communicate both the rationale for delegation and the benefit it will provide.

Communicating the rationale is not as difficult as ensuring that we can inform the person being given responsibility how it will benefit them.

Zidle's fourth suggestion is to delegate the entire task to one person.

This gives the person the responsibility, increases their motivation and avoids ambiguity in accountability. Otherwise, different people will have different ideas about who does what and when.

Setting clear goals and expectations is the next tip: Being clear and specific on what is expected and giving information on what, why, when, who and where are important factors in this process. You might leave the “how” to the other team member. Make sure you are prepared to accept input from others as well as to confirm and verify task goals and expectations.

Tip #6: We must delegate both responsibility and authority to complete a goal or task. Ensure that the team member is given the relevant responsibility and authority to complete the task. Let them complete the task in the manner they choose, as long as the results are what you specified. Be willing to accept ideas from them on task fulfillment.

As leaders, we should provide support, guidance and instructions. Pointing others to the resources they may need to complete the task or project is important, especially when they may not know the resources available to them. It could include people they need to coordinate with and information crucial to their task. Also, make sure you are willing to be a resource yourself.

Taking a personal interest in the progress of the delegated task will help keep the communication lines open and allow for consistent feedback. Request to be updated on the progress of the task, and provide assistance when necessary. Be careful not to be intrusive which can

give the perception that you do not trust the other person. Provide ongoing feedback throughout the task completion process.

If you're not satisfied with the progress, do not take the project back immediately. Rather, continue to work with the other person, and ensure they understand the project to be their responsibility. Give advice on ways to improve as this ensures accountability and dependability.

The final thing Zidle suggests is that we evaluate and recognize performance. We should evaluate results more so than the methods utilized. We should look at any needs for improvement and recognize successes as soon as possible.

When delegating, it is important to make sure that all involved are clear as to what the expectations are and that regular follow-up is done.

The art of delegation is something that is not mastered overnight. It will take some time to get used to, but in the end, it will help create a better team and allow the leader to better utilize his or her time. It will also build trust and create stronger relationships.

This podcast was presented by Student Activities at Minnesota State University, Mankato. We hope that you have found the information helpful. Find other leadership podcasts at [www.mnsu.edu/activities/toolbox](http://www.mnsu.edu/activities/toolbox).