



BOSSYPANTS

HOW TO DO IT WELL

BY ANNE BONNEY

“THE greatest leader is not necessarily the one who does the greatest things. The greatest leader is the one that gets the people to do the greatest things.” – Ronald Reagan

Many leaders fail when it comes to effective delegation in the workplace. Whether they have an inherent distrust for their people, a death grip on control, or a lack of comfort giving direction, delegation is one of most challenging leadership skills to get right. But when they do, their team fires on all cylinders.

The first step to effective delegation is nailing the setup. It takes a little planning and some time, but it gets easier the more you do it. And in the end, your time invested will be worth it. When you're planning to delegate, ask yourself who, what, when, why and how.

WHO?

There are many reasons to delegate:

- To take advantage of someone's strength
- To give someone the opportunity to try something new and learn
- To give someone a task he or she enjoys or that has greater visibility within the company
- To allow you to focus on items that require your specific expertise and authority

When considering to whom to give a task, think about the above reasons. Ask yourself if you need quick and efficient output, or if it's a great development opportunity. Trusting a new person with a new project can be scary, but it could be an opportunity to see what she can do. And if you nail the rest of this setup, she'll have a greater chance for success.

One warning: When it comes to the “who,” we often have our go-to person, that one team member who always delivers good, quality work on time. Often, we rely too heavily on that person, and that can be demotivating for him or her. The reward for good work is... more work!

On the flip side, if the work is desirable, it can be demotivating for the rest of the team; they never get the chance to learn and shine. Beware of singling out anyone. It can really compromise your effectiveness as a motivating leader.

WHAT?

What is the task you need completed? What are your expectations? What does success look like? Be super clear on this. Have you ever been asked to do something, but walk away with no idea exactly what is wanted? It's confusing, disorienting and demotivating! If you want someone to be motivated to complete your task well and on time, be sure he understands what you need him to do.

Ask the team if they have any questions and make yourself available for questions along the way.

WHEN?

By when do you need the task completed? **BE SPECIFIC HERE!** I can't stress that enough.

“ASAP” might mean by 3 p.m. today for you, and it might mean by next week for your delegate. “When you can” for you might mean by the end of the week, but for your chosen “who,” that could be next January! Be specific with date and time if applicable.

In my leadership workshops, sometimes managers say they're uncomfortable being bossy. Saying “I need this by Friday” feels bossy. If that's the case, explain your project and timeline. How about saying, “This research is to prepare for the staff meeting a week from Friday, and I'll need to plug it into my presentation. Can you get it to me by this Friday? That would give me time to incorporate it and practice so I can make our team look good in front of the company. Will Friday work for you?”

Giving someone the reason for the deadline will give her a sense of urgency and asking if it works for her will make it seem less bossy. Be ready for: “No, but I can get it to you Monday.” You might need to compromise, but at least you won't appear bossy.

It also works to ask your delegate when she can get it done. If the delegate comes up with the date, she'll be more committed to it. You won't feel like a bossy-pants, either. You can negotiate more toward the date you want if necessary.

WHY?

This is a big one. Adults like to know why things are happening. It helps them put the task into context so they don't think it's just busy work. When your team understands what the end goal is, it also helps them problem solve. Be sure to let them know why something needs to be completed.

HOW?

Lastly, if at all possible, let them decide how they're going to do the task. As the old saying goes, "there's more than one way to skin a cat", and we all have our favorite way. (ok, that's kind of a morbid analogy, and I've never actually done that, but you know what I'm saying.) As managers, sometimes we have to let go of our death grip on control and allow someone to do a task their way. It may not be the way we'd do it, and we may think our way is more efficient or better, but if their way gets you to the end goal you need, gets the task off your plate, and was done in their way, they'll feel better about the outcome, trusted and empowered, and you just killed 2 birds with one stone. WINNER!

Anne Bonney is a change expert, leadership trainer, professional speaker and author who resides in Traverse City. After a 20-year career in leadership and education roles ranging from Boston to Tucson, she left corporate to share her energetic, fun approach to positive leadership with audiences. She is thrilled to facilitate a leadership seminar on September 19 for Grand Traverse Woman Magazine and looks forward to seeing you there! Visit her at www.annebonney.com.



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Follow these **five** guidelines when planning your delegation, and you'll have a much better chance at success. It takes a little time to plan and be ready for the delegation, but it's a worthy investment for ease in the future. Your team will feel successful and empowered, and you'll have more time to focus on bigger priorities.