

How to encourage greater initiative by using the delegation ladder...

When you ask anyone to do a job, you have an opportunity to share the level of initiative you expect.

Share the level of initiative you expect and you encourage your people to perform at a more productive and valuable level.

With more initiative in your business you also make the business less reliant on you so you can do more valuable work or enjoy more free time.

Here's some valuable tools to help you make the most of this edition of Business Bitesize.

STOP: answering your people's questions for them and encourage recommendations from them instead

START: Sharing your expected level of initiative for each piece of work you delegate

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The ultimate aim is to get your people doing work brilliantly, achieving the expected result and you only get involved when they routinely report results either weekly or monthly.

When your people routinely report results either weekly or monthly your delegation skills (and their initiative) are at the top of the ladder.



The Delegation Ladder

Support tools and Resources

Level 5: Encourage your people to ‘Do It and Report Routinely’

To have the confidence to get to level 5 you'll need to see your people perform consistently without your involvement and report instantly the work is done (level 4).

When they consistently deliver to your expectations or beyond, each time they report instantly, you can agree with them a ROUTINE REPORTING PROCESS, weekly or monthly.

At this stage they own the work and the result and you have delegated up to level 5.

Key requirements needed from you: willingness to let go; setting up routine results reporting; commitment to routinely reviewing results.

You know it's time to step up to level 5 on the ladder when your people consistently report instantly on great results.

If the results are less than perfect on most occasions then you must continue to expect your people to REPORT INSTANTLY when a job is done (level 4) or maybe step back a little and return to making RECOMMENDATIONS (level 3).

Level 4: Encourage your people to ‘Do It And Report Instantly’

To have the confidence to get to level 4 you'll need to see and hear your people regularly make well-judged recommendations about what to do and how to do it (level 3).

When you rarely find fault with their recommendations you can encourage them, expect them, to start ‘trusting their judgment’ and doing it without making a recommendation, but REPORT TO YOU IMMEDIATELY it's done.

Key requirements needed from you: be readily available immediately after a job is done; see any mistakes as learning opportunities; agree specific process/time for reporting instantly.

You know it's time to step up to level 4 on the ladder when you see and hear consistently well-judged suggestions and recommendations about what needs to be done and how it should be done.

If suggestions are weak, only partly thought out, or wrong, you must continue to help your people improve their ability to generate useful RECOMMENDATIONS (level 3).



The Delegation Ladder

Support tools and Resources

Level 3: Encourage your people to 'Make Recommendations'

To have the confidence to get to level 3 you'll need to see and hear your people regularly ask well-judged questions about what to do and how to do it.

When you consistently hear great questions it's time to put a stop to the questions and ASK THEM FOR THEIR RECOMMENDATIONS, their suggestions, about what to do and how to do it.

Key requirements needed from you: recognise questions are being asked; don't answer questions; acknowledge the question but ask for their thoughts, suggestions, and recommendations

You know it's time to step up to level 3 on the ladder when you see and hear consistently well-judged questions about what needs to be done and how it should be done.

If the recommendations are naïve, only partly thought out, or wrong, you must continue to help your people improve their ability to ask good QUESTIONS (level 2).

Level 2: Encourage your people to 'Ask Good Questions'

To have the confidence to get to level 2 you'll need to see and hear your people do what you ask them to do. Any hint of a question from your people must be encouraged as much as possible, no matter how daft, naïve or irrelevant the question.

Key requirements needed from you: recognise good work; ask good questions about the work; encourage/insist they ask questions too.

You should step up to level 2 on the ladder as soon as you can.

If you don't create an expectation for questions some people won't ask and they'll forever wait to be told what to do.

Level 1: Encourage your people to 'Wait until told what to do'

Because new people or new tasks require detailed and careful instruction it's OK to set an expectation on certain tasks so your people wait until told.

If however you have too many people who remain permanently in a 'wait til told' mind-set on everything they do you might ask yourself 'are they the right people for my business?'

Key requirements needed from you: be clear about what you want doing and how you want it done, why it's being done and when you expect it to be done; show (rather than tell) people how it's done and watch them do it too; ask good questions about the work.



The Delegation Ladder

Support tools and Resources

IMPORTANT: One of your team can be working at all 5 levels of the delegation/initiative ladder at the same time.

Some aspects of their job they can own because they have proven themselves to be capable of doing the work and responsible for the result.

Other work can be new to them and need to wait till told to be sure it's done well or done safely. And they can have other aspects of their job at other levels on the delegation/initiative ladder.

Your job as leader or manager is to judge which level of the delegation ladder is relevant to each job of work they do.



DO agree targets routinely in advance
DO seek understanding/purpose of targets
DO agree next steps for improved results
DO use performance measurement tools to demonstrate results
DON'T let them report instantly! Set up regular KPI reporting

DO suggest they stop recommending and do it, AND report instantly it is done
DO refer back to the many correct recommendations they have made
DO make them aware you are making this decision and any cock ups are yours not theirs
DON'T allow their recommendation! Encourage them to 'trust their judgment' and report back immediately

DO seek understanding of the reasoning behind their suggestions
DO ask about the process for assessing performance of their recommendations
DO agree actions and time/process for assessing results
DON'T answer their questions! Insist they make suggestions/recommendations

DO ask them what questions they'd like to ask
DO set diary time for them to create the opportunity for them to ask questions
DO refer to their roles and responsibilities often and prompt questions
Do insist they ask questions about the work, the outcome and how it's done
DON'T tell them what to do! Ask them what they should be doing to achieve their results

DO agree to roles and responsibilities - expectations
DO help them ask you good questions or even make recommendations
DO agree next steps for improved results
DON'T let people stay at this stage