

Stewardship Delegation

Stewardship delegation sets a context for successful performance.

Stewardship delegation, whether in an office or a family, basically means you have a clear, upfront, mutual understanding and commitment regarding expectations in five areas.

1. **Desired Results.** This delegation focuses on results, not on methods. You specify the quantity and quality of the desired results, outline the budget and schedule, commit people to getting results and then let them determine the best methods and means within established guidelines.
2. **Guidelines.** Guidelines represent correct principles, often summarised in the form of standardised procedures. It is best to have as few of these as possible; otherwise you get too much into methods delegation. Guidelines should also specify what not to do, what activities simply do not work. 'Sacred cows' should also be identified.
3. **Resources.** Identify the various resources (people, budget, etc), which the steward may draw upon to accomplish the desired results within the specified guidelines. You may want to identify yourself as a resource and indicate ways in which you could help.
4. **Accountability.** Specify when progress reports are to be made, together with what criteria or standards of performance are to be used, in evaluating results. These criteria are the essence of the accountability process. Accountability means the steward accounts for his or her performance based upon the criteria he or she helped develop. It does not involve evaluation by the boss or the parent because their evaluation has already been built into agreed upon, desired results.

Accountability is the key to stewardship delegation. When people know they are responsible to get results and give progress reports, they are set free and feel a sense of responsibility to do whatever is necessary to accomplish those results within the guidelines, drawing upon the resources identified. If there is no accountability, little by little people lose their sense of responsibility and start blaming others or circumstances for their poor performance.

5. **Consequences.** Consequences could be stated in terms of financial or psychic rewards, such as recognition, appreciation, advancement, new assignments or new opportunities for training and development. Consequences have positive and negative sides and both sides should be stated and understood up front. People can then evaluate themselves.

Stewardship delegation saves time.

Sometimes people say, "I don't have time to delegate. I can do it faster myself." That's generally a sign that they're operating in Quadrant I, the crisis quadrant and that they're thinking about 'go-fer' delegation. People who understand stewardship delegation usually see that it saves time in the long run.

Stewardship delegations come from Quadrant II, the quadrant of assets and opportunities. It usually takes extra time in the beginning, but like any Quadrant II activity, it will create time in the end.

The Five Levels of Initiative

People develop their initiatives through five levels.

Stewardship delegation helps people develop initiative. The development process moves them through five levels, or stages:

- Stage 1:** Wait for instruction. At this level there is no initiative
- Stage 2:** Ask what to do. Here the person begins to take initiative by asking. He or she expresses interest and awareness, but still has no notion of what to do
- Stage 3:** Recommend. The person begins to see the job clearly and creates ideas for doing it.
- Stage 4:** Act independently, but report immediately. Here the person acts on his or her own initiative, but reports quickly to assure that his or her actions are correct and what he or she has done correlates with everything else.
- Stage 5:** Act independently and report routinely. Now we trust the person to act on his or her own, with confidence that periodic review will be enough to keep things on track.

Stewardship delegation allows people to move through the five stages. 'Go-fer' delegation arrests their development at stage 1.

Covey, S. (2004) *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*. London, UK: Simon & Schuster