

Delegating: March 2016 Idea Exchange



Our brilliant members and colleagues discussed:

- We don't delegate because we DO trust our team but we DON'T *necessarily* trust expertise. Deep down, we are worried that we could do it better/faster ourselves, or that we're the only ones with the knowledge, right now, to complete the project successfully.
- Letting go of “your” timeline and “your” vision so the person you are delegating to can create a vision and timeline—that meets expectations—that they are more invested in.
- Knowing your team's/volunteers' expertise—delegating to people's strengths.
- Ask the person you're delegating to about having more/less on their plate. Try: *“This is an A priority project, do you have bandwidth for that? Can we move a lower priority project off your plate?”*
- Tailor your delegation to make it meaningful for **you**, not just delegating for delegating's sake.
- When your team asks you about delegating project to a volunteer, remember that there is an opportunity cost of re-assigning the volunteer to another task (other projects or shifts may be left uncovered).
- Ask: what's in it for the volunteer/staff person (*“When you're working on this project, will it have a meaningful impact for you? Or your fellow volunteers [staff]?”*)? Why is this relevant for the volunteer? Putting that into the project planning documents as well, asking and documenting *“What does this project mean for you?”*
- Good project management and delegation includes up-to-date job description for events, projects that are included in the project management documents.
- Think about communicating priority to your staff/volunteer so that they feel empowered to share/manage back to you. Like: *“This is my priority”* *“This is not my priority”* *“Can you help me understand what the most important task is from these three options?”*
- Learn to delegate even your favorite projects!
 - You'll be seen as someone who shares in both the high- and low-profile or “fun” and “less fun” projects.
 - You'll allow other people to have moments of inspiration and joy from those “favorites.”
 - You'll help them stay engaged and retained.
 - It's a form of political capital and very good for team morale.
- That happens when you delegate a project and that person comes back every 5 minutes with a question? First, make sure they have the resources they need to be successful. If it's an intern or someone very new to the organization, you can also ask them to gather 3 questions

and do check-ins every few hours instead, or document their most common questions in the project management document so that you're retaining the knowledge for their use, and future projects!

- We talked about being less “flat” in your organizational chart, having layers of volunteers, lead volunteers, a leadership council, etc. That's where people can go with feedback, lead volunteers can train volunteers and talent identify new volunteers, and take on higher-level projects that are good for delegating.
- Delegating back to the boss: be honest. Try saying: *“It's awkward to talk about this, and I'm grateful that we can have open communication!”* Give a menu of things you're working on, ask for help prioritizing and he/she will take back some, even with numbers/letters (A, B, C priority), prioritize and then ask for help in delegating to appropriate team/volunteers.
- The “Golden Rule of Delegating”: Delegate the way you would want to be delegated to!
- Asking volunteers to find their own replacement, for large projects offer 2-3 year terms for volunteers so that there is turnover in a **good** way.

Tools

- [Some templates from Etsy](#)
- [SBAR](#) documents or discussions (Situation, Background, Assessment, Recommendation) can be helpful for framing a new project
- [Asana](#), [Trello](#), [Basecamp](#)
- [Spectacle](#)
- [Boomerang Gmail](#), [Boomerang Outlook](#)
- [Denver Open Media Foundation](#) for learning more about Google Docs and tech tools
- Public white boards with project goals, dates, achievements
- Lists! Laminated, too, so that repetitive projects can use them multiple times

Articles

- Obstacles to Delegating ([INC. article here](#))
- Benefits to Delegating ([HBR article](#))