

Are you Struggling with Delegation in a Hybrid World? Six key steps to keep you on track.



"The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place"
George Bernard Shaw

Hybrid working, which for many people pre-pandemic was a pipe dream, has now become an established workplace norm. A recent whitepaper by OKTA across Europe, (Oct 2023), found that 45% of European organisations are working in some form of hybrid up to 3 days a week. Deirdre Murray of People Resources identifies the challenges of delegating in a hybrid environment and outlines six practical steps to implement good delegation no matter what work format is in place.

Are you one of those line managers who thinks that no-one does the job as well as you and that often it would simply be far quicker if you just did it yourself? This is an even great challenge in a hybrid environment, particularly when sometimes it might be difficult to make contact with employees who may be in the office at different times or working flexible hours. Do you really trust your employees to do the job properly and happily take on the martyr role? Do you catch up on work at weekends and think you're being super-productive? However, when you sit back in the cold light of day, you realise that you've just picked up a ton of very handsome monkeys that are not even yours to feed. As Dr. Stephen Covey's tells us in his HBR classic, *"Who's Got the Monkey?"* (1974), you have now succumbed to the demands of your employee.

Recent studies by Gallup have identified that the individuals taking on the greatest burden post-pandemic are frontline managers. With all the recent difficulties in the war for talent, it is often the middle manager who has had to pick up the slack. In an article penned by HR Review (U.K.) 2022, Stefan Avramtchev, Founder of Just Promoted, states that many frontline managers managing multi-site teams and working remotely themselves are experiencing the highest levels of stress. This means that they are not getting the same level of support in coaching and mentoring from leadership as they did prior to the pandemic.

Within a hybrid team, poor communication and misunderstandings can be a real issue if not managed correctly; in many cases you may even have to book a phone call as an appointment with someone, when previously you could just lift the phone spontaneously to them. We're talking all the time, but sometimes not in the right format, or at the right time, or to the right person or about the right thing. As George Bernard Shaw reminds us, *"the single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place."*

One of major challenges that causes a lot of overwhelm among many of my clients, is in the area of delegation to employees who may all be working in a hybrid fashion on different days and different hours across multiple time zones. No matter whether you work in a hybrid capacity or not, the principles of good delegation do not change. As Dan Pink outlined in his excellent book on motivation, "Drive," there are **3 key factors that promote strong motivation: autonomy, mastery and purpose**. I always tell people to think of a plug – there's and AMP in a 3-pin plug. If you can answer these 3 factors regarding anyone's role as you delegate, then you're on the right track:

Building Strong Motivation in a Hybrid Role:

Autonomy:

Employees want control and responsibility over what they do. They don't want half a job, they want responsibility for the whole job and to have a clear line of sight over what they are accountable for.

Mastery:

We want to be competent at what we do. Determine what level of training or expertise is required for the role and ensure that the employee has the capability to be successful in the role. Ongoing learning and development is vital. And lastly,

Purpose:

Do they understand where they fit in? How does their work they do contribute to the overall vision? Is what they are doing in line with the overall purpose of the organisation?

There are 6 Key Steps to Effective Delegation:



Delegation Tips- Six Key Steps

The first 3 are about managing control:

1. Early delegation

Take time out to examine your own key responsibilities. What work needs to be done by you that can't be delegated? Then focus and plan your delegation to your team members so that you're not caught 'on the hop'. *Delegate for growth, don't just delegate*. What aspect of work would build succession planning, allow the individual to grow and develop on-the-job? Planning allows you to bring work forward so that you can start much earlier.

2. Clear Briefing
Define the task and purpose clearly and seek agreement on deadlines and objectives. How will the task be done? What resources are available? How will it be reviewed? What priority is it to be given? Who is involved?
3. Review
Be systematic about follow-up. This is one area that managers tend to neglect. They delegate the task and then assume it is being done, only to be grossly disappointed a few weeks' later that nothing has happened. Lack of follow-up is a major weakness in most people's delegation skills. In fact, most people rely on their memories for the work that has to be delegated or has been delegated which can lead to serious problems.

The last 3 principles are about managing risk: By controlling risk you let trust flourish as the employee will know that you have their back.

4. Latest Time – Allow for “Eleventh hour”
Identify and agree the absolute deadline when a task needs to be completed. What is the *real* deadline? If it is not done by that date there must still be time allowed in the planning for re-delegation or re-organisation as a last resort.
5. Delegate the Whole job
Delegate whole blocks of work rather than smaller parts of several projects. This means the whole job is dealt with by one person who has sole accountability for it so they can tackle a complete project and develop their skills and experience at the same time.
6. Hands Off – Don't micromanage.
There's nothing worse than being a control freak and micro manager. Once you have delegated a task, agreed timelines and objectives, then hands off! Let the person work to complete it. Don't hover over his or her desk checking how things are going. If you do, you will become involved in the work for the wrong reasons and you'll collect a load of lovely monkeys as the person will have delegated everything back to you.

Good delegation takes deliberate practice, even if it's painful to let go. You're delegating for growth and you and your employees as well as the overall organisation can only benefit.

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