

Delegation

Delegation...some people love it; some people hate it. Those of us who are control freaks have a hard time letting go sometimes. Our inner voices are screaming, "If I do it, at least it'll be done the way I want it done." Those of us who delegate everything away say, "Well, it'll happen, so why should I care?!?" Well, it's important for student leaders to delegate tasks and items so that people feel a part of your organization, but it's also essential that you don't delegate yourself out of a job. Use a careful balance between doing work yourself and passing along tasks to others. This tips sheet gives you some ideas on how to effectively delegate with your club or organization. Think about how to best balance your work!

Rules for Effective Delegation

- Choose the right person for the task.* Ask yourself: Who can do the job best? Who can do it most quickly? Who would gain the most from the experience? Can the job be re-designed so someone with less experience can handle it?
- Explain the job.* Make sure the selected person knows why the job is important and knows the steps involved to complete it. Be specific about your goals. Put instructions in writing whenever possible. Encourage questions.
- Mutually establish completion points and deadlines.* Make sure you and the person you assigned the job to have agreed on a timeline for steps and deadlines for the job.
- Give support and encouragement.* Encourage your members to use their skills to complete the task. Let them know you have confidence in their skills, knowledge, and creativity. Give them the authority to do the job, and remember to praise their progress. Help clear any obstacles that may develop.
- Set up controls.* Even though the job has been delegated, YOU are still responsible. Set up times to meet and check on progress, but don't keep so tight a hold that the job gets delegated right back to you.
- Be ready for mistakes.* If you are delegating well and allowing people to try new things, sometimes mistakes will happen. The important thing is to help the person find a way to fix it. DO NOT take away the responsibility; help them work through the problem. This helps develop new leaders for your organization.
- Delegate democratically.* Be sure to have members take turns with the "unpleasant" tasks. Just because someone is willing to do the grunt work doesn't mean he or she likes it. Everyone deserves a chance to make a meaningful contribution, and everyone should take his or her share of "unpleasant" tasks.
- Recognize and reward.* Once the job is completed, recognize your group member(s) on a job well done. Say thank you, and make sure they get the praises they deserve. Recognition is a great motivator for getting group members to pitch in the next time you need help.

Why We Have a Hard Time Saying "No"

- The fear of letting somebody down.
- We feel that it is our role as leader to say "yes."
- We let our personal relationships bias our decisions.

When to Delegate

- When there is so much work to get done and you need to spread it around.
- When you feel someone else has the "right stuff" for the job.
- When someone else expresses interest in the job.

- When you think a person(s) could benefit from the responsibility.

When Not to Delegate

- When the job is your responsibility alone.
- When you would not be willing to do the task yourself. If you want others to feel valued and appreciated, you have to delegate appealing tasks and not just the menial ones.
- When a group member does not have the background or desire to complete the task.
- When the task is so important, that the group member has more to lose than win by taking it on.

Members of the Office of Student Engagement (OSE) staff are available to assist you with any questions you have regarding leadership issues. The OSE is open Monday through Friday 9 a.m.—5 p.m. For more information, please contact the office at 410.337.6124.