

Does It ALL Have To Be Done By YOU?

Delegation is a common theme addressed by time management experts. We're told that when we get overwhelmed, we need to delegate some of our responsibilities to others. However, if you're like me, you probably wonder, "**Who** could I delegate anything to?" You may be self-employed, or you may be an individual contributor who has no direct reports. For years, I let the advice regarding delegation go in one ear and out the other. I simply felt that it didn't apply to me. It wasn't until very recently that I started to look at the pearls of wisdom regarding delegation from a different perspective. Yes, it's true that since I am self-employed, I don't have any *employees* to delegate *to*. But that doesn't mean I can't still utilize the highly valuable tool of delegation. I will share how delegation has greatly benefited me in the hopes that it will open up some new horizons for you.

Like many people, I have experienced the feeling of not having enough hours in the day to accomplish the many tasks on my to-do list. While using the various time management tools and strategies I've learned over the years has had a profound impact on my personal productivity, I still had some responsibilities which either weren't getting done or were being done in a less than ideal fashion. In some cases, I didn't have the necessary expertise for the task at hand, while at other times, I simply had greater priorities which took precedence. The thought of hiring someone to help me with certain tasks had crossed my mind, but I believed that since I was basically still in the start-up phases of my business, I couldn't afford it. However, I decided to check out this possibility anyway. I was pleasantly surprised to learn that things weren't as costly as I had believed and that in many cases, a little bit goes a long way! I learned that an expert can often complete a task in less than half the time it would take me to do it. I also learned that there are high school and college students out there who would welcome part-time work assisting me with administrative tasks. Furthermore, they could do most of the work remotely!

To make a long story short, I have delegated – or outsourced – a variety of tasks during the past few months, both to experts and to highly capable students. I have freed up my time and energy for the things I do best *and* the things which I enjoy. And the best part is that it hasn't broken the bank!

Here are some questions and exercises to get you thinking about delegating in both your personal and professional life:

1. WHAT could you delegate?

- First, make a list of all of the tasks or responsibilities involved in your business or career, as well as the activities required of you in your personal life. Just brainstorm and write down as many things as you can.
- Next, identify the tasks that you enjoy and those at which you excel. Keep on doing those things!
- Finally, pinpoint the responsibilities that you really don't like to do and/or you are not good at. Then answer the magic question, "Do these tasks **HAVE** to

be done by ME?” Don’t just give an “off-the-cuff” answer here. Think about it for a few minutes... I’d be willing to bet that at least *some* of these tasks *do not* have to be done by you!

2. To whom could I delegate?

- Take your list of tasks from the exercise above and divide it into 2 categories: those tasks which require particular expertise, and those tasks which require little or no specialized knowledge.
- For the tasks which are more specialized, do some checking around regarding service providers and pricing. It is likely that services won’t cost as much as you think. For example, you could hire a virtual assistant for a few hours to update your website or create a mailer for you. You could also hire a bookkeeper to maintain your finances, working only several hours per month!
- For responsibilities which *do not* require particular expertise, investigate the possibility of hiring an intern from a local high school or college for 1-2 afternoons per week. This intern could help you with errands or general office tasks. I have recently hired a college student to assist me with research and it’s one of the best things I’ve done for my business! She’s doing an excellent job and I am freed up to work on other tasks related to my business.

3. **Start now!** The advanced assignment, for those who are ready and willing, is to delegate at least *TWO* of your least favorite tasks during the coming month! These don’t need to be business tasks. You could have your house cleaned once or twice during the month, get your car detailed by a mobile detail service, or order take-out for a few of your family meals. Use your imagination and have fun with it!

I would love to hear about your experiences with delegating and outsourcing. I would also be happy to answer any questions you may have on this topic. I wish you a happy, healthy, and time-abundant month!