

Delegation

A key part of your role as a personnel manager is to delegate successfully. Delegating means passing responsibilities to others. Whether the person handles that responsibility well or not depends in large measure on how you delegate the job.

Most people respond positively to being given responsibility if they are confident they can handle the job. Most of us enjoy the feeling of power that comes from being in charge of some aspect of a job. When an employee enjoys the work and responds positively to responsibility, the quantity and quality of work are enhanced.

Leadership Styles

Which of the following quotes sounds most like you?

- *“I tell ‘em what to do, how to do it, and when. There’s no other way. Someone has to call the shots on this ranch.”*
- *“It is usually a mistake for me to finalize production commitments before checking with the crew members. After all, they know what’s happening out there.”*
- *“I put most problems into my foremen’s hands and let them take it from there. My role is to make sure they know what needs to be done and then get out of the way.”*

Each of these statements represents a different style of farm management.

There are many ways to categorize leadership styles. Research has shown that managers have a tendency to use the same leadership behaviours or process regardless of the people they are trying to influence or the context of the specific instance. One’s natural leadership style may be more or less effective depending on the people and the situation.

Your effectiveness as a manager is dependent on the style of leadership you choose to use. It is important to recognize that no one style is best, rather a mix of styles determined by the people involved (both leader and followers) and the situation is best.

One method of categorizing leadership styles distinguishes them according to the extent to which a leader involves the followers. As you read the following descriptions, think about which style seems to be most natural for you to use. The four types are:

Tips on Delegating

- Assign responsibility and authority
- Give clear instructions
- Invite questions and discussion
- Provide feedback

Making Style Fit the Situation

- directive/telling - “do it or else”. Managers with this style tend to expect immediate compliance with their directions and solicit very little or no input.
- authoritative/selling - “seeks input”. Managers who use this style tend to manage by providing clear instructions, solicit some input (without leaving any doubt as to who the boss is), monitor behaviour, motivate by both discipline and reward and see influence as a key part of the manager’s job.
- democratic/participating - “let’s all decide together”. Managers with this style are known for encouraging participation and human resource development. They tend to believe that individuals and groups function best when allowed to work together and therefore tend to feel close supervision or detailed instructions are not necessary.
- empowering/delegating – “colleague, partner, delegator”. Managers with this as their preferred style see themselves as developing human resources and are concerned about high performance and standards. They allow people the flexibility to set goals and objectives consistent with their own farm goals, and determine how to address their tasks and problems.

Depending on the people and situation, each of these styles is appropriate to use. Each has advantages and disadvantages. While you probably feel more comfortable using your natural style, having the flexibility to change your style to suit the circumstances could greatly enhance your effectiveness as a leader.

No one leadership style is best. The most effective style depends on the people involved and the situation.

Knowing the advantages and disadvantages of each style will help you decide when it is most appropriate to use it. It may also be appropriate to use different styles with the same employee depending in the stage of development of the employee.

Paul Hershey and Kenneth Blanchard of the Center for Leadership Studies have developed a “Situational Leadership” model that illustrates how to effectively lead an employee or follower to a position of authority. The model is based on the four leadership styles. The following lists how

to use these styles when delegating, the advantages and disadvantages of each, and when it is appropriate to use them.

Directive/Telling

Delegation Process – Step 1

- When you first begin to work employees into a new area of responsibility, you must tell them what to do. You are very much involved in the job yourself and your relationship with the employee is one of primarily teacher-student and involves considerable one-way communication.

Advantages:

- short term efficiency - fast
- clear line of authority - people know who is in charge and what the desired action is
- can be very productive, especially for the short term

Disadvantages:

- people don't like it
- inhibits growth and development
- may lead to high turnover
- loss of potential good ideas

Appropriate:

- when new tasks involved
- with new or inexperienced employee
- when goals are not being met
- if urgency involved
- if employee is reluctant to take on task
- if task is highly result-oriented

Authoritative/Selling

Delegation Process – Step 2

- As the employee or follower advances in competence and confidence, you begin to involve him or her in decisions; to “buy into” the

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- responsibility. Now your relationship with the employee is becoming one of sharing in decisions.
- Advantages:**
- efficient and timely
 - clear who is in charge
 - way of exercising power without intimidation
 - develops immature people
 - decisions are in the best interest of the organization
- Disadvantages:**
- not conducive to the growth of mature individuals
 - some mature people may not like it or may resent it
 - could lead to turnover as people mature
- Appropriate:**
- as employee gains experience and competence
 - when employee has some understanding of job
 - when employee needs direction and encouragement

Democratic/Participatory

Delegation Process – Step 3

- As you progress through this stage, the employee shoulders the majority of the responsibility and you are shifting from selling the person on taking responsibility to participating as needed.
- Advantages:**
- involves people
 - opportunities for growth
 - keeps people happy (short run)
- Disadvantages:**
- time consuming
 - losers may sabotage organizational goals
 - majority decisions aren't always in the best interests of the organization
 - change becomes a source of conflict and may be avoided

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- Appropriate:**
- when employee is familiar with task
 - when employee has high level of competence
 - when employee/employer share ideas and decisions

Empowering/Delegating:

Delegation Process – Step 4

- The employee (follower) now has the knowledge and the confidence to take on the responsibility completely. You are there to give support when needed and to evaluate performance. You have turned over the authority to the follower and, therefore, are freed to carry out other management tasks.

- Advantages:**
- encourages growth and development in mature individuals
 - long-term productivity
 - mature people respond well
 - works well if you have committed followers
 - encourages maximum creative effort
 - frees management discretionary time

- Disadvantages:**
- doesn't work well with unwilling, unable followers
 - followers may not follow
 - problems may arise with strong individuals abusing power

- Appropriate:**
- when employee has ability to take responsibility for making and implementing decisions
 - when employee has interest and desire to make and implement decisions

Examples of Delegating Authority

Example 1: From Picker to Orchard Supervisor

Marie has been picking apples on your farm for five years. You feel she is a natural leader and it is obvious she has the respect of the other workers. You feel you must relieve yourself of supervising in the orchard if you are to effectively manage this farm.

Step 1 Telling

You inform Marie of your decision to promote her to orchard supervisor. She is pleased and scared at the same time. You tell her you will work with her until she feels comfortable in her new role. You then give her some tasks such as discussing with pickers about what we might do to make their jobs easier, and you offer training tips where it appears to be needed.

Step 2 Selling

You talk with Marie about decisions you are making, how and why you handled a particular problem in a particular way. Encourage her to make suggestions and ask questions.

Step 3 Participating

She supervises in the morning and you supervise in the afternoon or you in one orchard and she in another. Then compare notes, including feedback from the workers.

Step 4 Delegating

You turn the job over to her, support her if she asks for it, and check with her regularly at coffee breaks or when an opportunity presents itself. At the end of the season, review her performance with her.

Example 2: From Milker to Herdsman

Your herdsman just left to start farming on his own. You decide to promote Joe, one of the milkers who has been with you for some time, to herdsman.

Step 1 Telling

You inform Joe of your decision. He is pleased but worried that he may not be able to handle the job. You assure him and let him know you will help him as long as he needs you. You then train him to do one of the tasks (such as keeping the breeding records) and monitor his progress.

Step 2 Selling

You discuss with Joe how and why you make certain decisions. He may be concerned about supervising older milkers, but you assure him of your support and suggest how he might approach such a problem (he may see fewer problems when you point out how much of supervision is supporting and affirming those supervised).

Step 3 Participating

You and Joe share the various herdsman tasks and decisions with considerable two-way communication.

Step 4 Delegating

Joe takes full responsibility. You are available if and when he needs your support. You review his performance with him and discuss relevant issues at staff meetings. You are relieved of herdsman responsibilities.

Adapting Your Leadership Style

No one leadership style is best. The most effective style depends on the people involved and the situation.

Consider the following examples about leadership styles.

Appropriate styles of managerial leadership
adapted from Paul Hershey and Kenneth Blanchard; "Lead" 1981*

Directions: Assume you are involved in each of the following situations. Read each item carefully and think about which alternative you think would most closely describe your behavior in the situation presented. Circle only one choice.

1. You have formed a work group on your farm to improve productivity and quality. This group is far overdue in making requested recommendations for change. Attendance at group sessions has been poor. Their meetings have turned into social gatherings. Potentially they have the talent necessary to help.
 - A. Redefine goals and supervise carefully.
 - B. Incorporate group recommendations, but see that the objectives are met.
 - C. Allow group involvement in setting goals, but don't push.
 - D. Let the group work out its own problems.

In this situation, you are dealing with people who are reluctant to take on tasks and who are not meeting their goals. A directive or telling approach would therefore be most effective. A would be the best answer.

2. The observable performance of your group is increasing. You have been making sure that all members are aware of their responsibilities and expected standards of performance.
 - A. Emphasize the importance of deadlines and tasks.
 - B. Engage in friendly interaction, but continue to make sure that all members are aware of their responsibilities and expected standards of performance.
 - C. Do what you can to make the group feel important and involved.
 - D. Take no definite action.

In this situation, your employees are gaining experience and competence. You have been giving them directions and feedback. In this instance, B would be the best choice.

3. You are considering changing to a structure that will be new to your group. Members of the farm work team have made suggestions about needed change. The group has been productive and demonstrated flexibility in its operations.

- A. Define the change and supervise carefully.
- B. Be willing to make changes as recommended, but maintain control of implementation.
- C. Participate with the group in developing the change but allow members to organize the implementation.
- D. Avoid confrontation; leave things alone.

Here, you are dealing with employees who are productive and competent. They have communicated their ideas to you. Here, a democratic or participatory style is called for. C is the best choice.

4. Recent information indicates some internal difficulties among the farm workers. The group has a remarkable record of accomplishment. Members have effectively maintained long-range goals. They have worked in harmony for the past year. All are qualified for the task.
- A. Act quickly and firmly to correct and redirect.
 - B. Try out your solution with workers and examine the need for new practices.
 - C. Participate in problem discussion while providing support for workers.
 - D. Allow group members to work it out themselves.

In this situation, a group of employees who have proved to be competent and able to meet agreed-upon objectives has encountered some difficulties. Because you know they are trusted employees, it would be best to use empowering or delegating style. Leave them to work it out themselves (answer D).

Discussion:

In each of these situations, the A response describes a directive style response; B describes how a person using the authoritative style might react; C describes democratic responses and D an empowering or delegating response. Did you find you circled more of one letter than the others? If so, this may be your natural leadership style.

However, because the most effective style depends on the people involved and the particular situation, being able to adapt your style is important.

Being able to be flexible in your choice of leadership style is an important ability for a manager to have. Realize, however, that learning to adapt your style to the situation is a gradual process.

* Full testing and scoring is available from *University Associates of Canada*, 4190 Fairview Street, Burlington, Ontario, L7L 4Y8