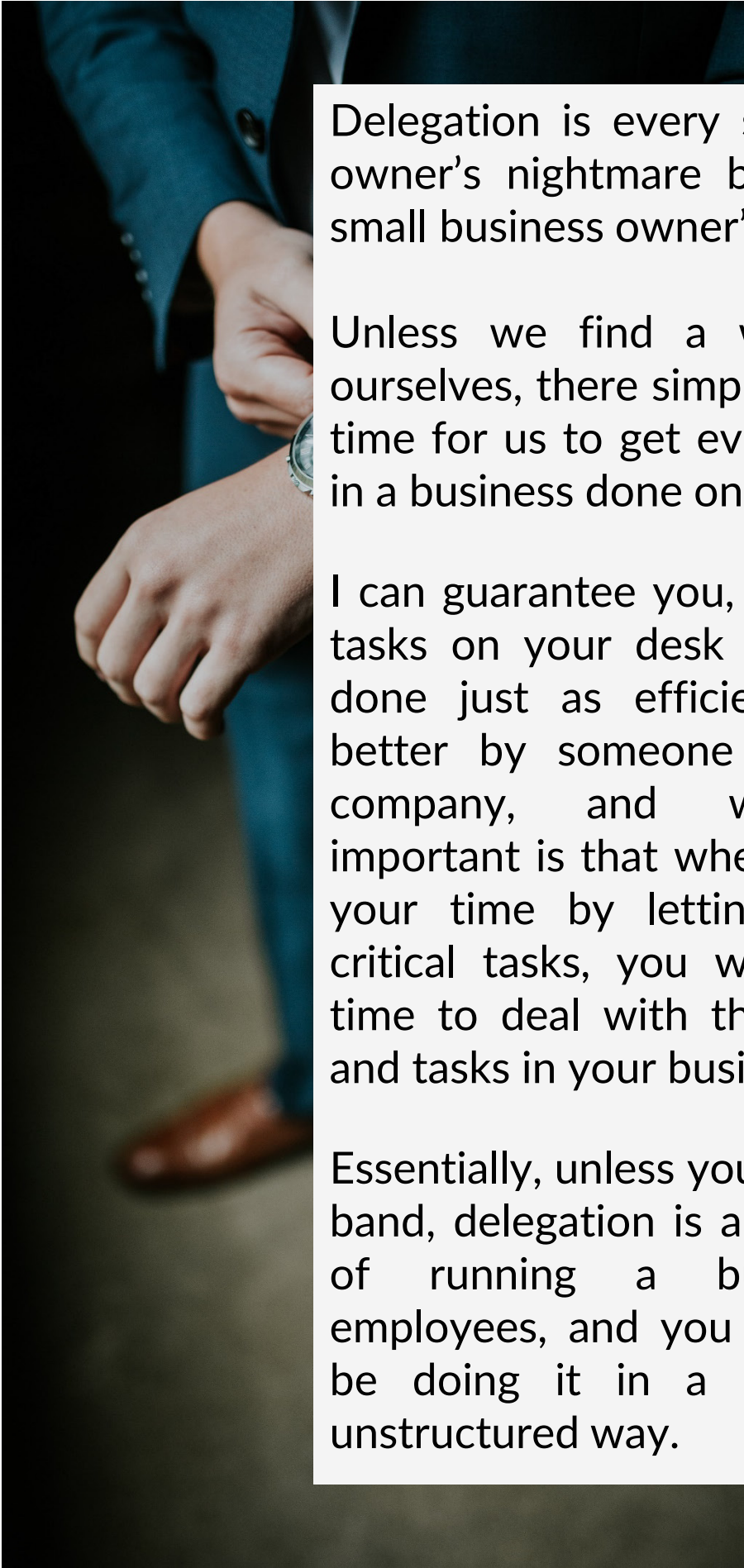




# THE ART OF DELEGATION

*"If you can't manage you, you can't manage other people"*

JOHN STRANGE



Delegation is every small business owner's nightmare but also every small business owner's necessity.

Unless we find a way to clone ourselves, there simply isn't enough time for us to get every single task in a business done on our own.

I can guarantee you, that there are tasks on your desk that could be done just as efficiently or even better by someone else in your company, and what's more important is that when you free up your time by letting go of less critical tasks, you will have more time to deal with the critical jobs and tasks in your business.

Essentially, unless you're a one-man band, delegation is an integral part of running a business with employees, and you might already be doing it in a more or less unstructured way.



What I want to talk to you about in this article, is how you can structure your delegation in a way that ensures you get the right person to do the right job, and ensure that the task is done to your satisfaction every single time.

A lot of small business owners find it very difficult to delegate and will typically have a handful of excuses ready for anyone suggesting that they let go of some tasks.

Two of the most common excuses are: **“It’s faster to do it myself”** and **“my way of doing things is best and/or more productive”**

The truth is, if you learn how to delegate the right way, your excuses won’t be valid.



# WHEN TO DELEGATE



**WHEN DONE RIGHT, DELEGATION IS A WIN-WIN.** However, just because you know how to delegate effectively doesn't mean that you can or should delegate just anything. To figure out whether to delegate a task or not you need to ask yourself five questions:

- 1** Is there anyone else in my business who has (or can be given) the necessary information or expertise to do this task? If it's a critical task, this might not be the case.
- 2** Will the task provide an opportunity to grow and develop the employee's skills? People will be more motivated to take on a task that will help them develop.
- 3** Will this task reoccur in your business? If yes, then it is definitely worth considering delegating it to someone else, who can take over this particular task from you every time it occurs in the future.
- 4** Do you have the time it takes to delegate the task effectively? If you don't have the time to adequately train your employee as well as answer all his/her questions about the task, then you might have to wait until you have the time. Remember you also need to allow time for rework if that is necessary.
- 5** Is this a critical task that shouldn't be delegated? If the task is critical for long-term success of your business (for example strategic planning tasks) you need to handle it yourself.



## **Other questions you need to ask yourself before delegating a task:**

- Will there be enough time to redo the job if it's not done properly the first time?
- What are the consequences if the job isn't completed on time?
- How important is the quality of the job done? Is an "adequate" result good enough?
- Would a failure be crucial to your business? How much would failure impact other tasks in the business?



A close-up, slightly blurred photograph of a man in a dark suit and red tie, looking down at a chessboard. The focus is on his face and the chessboard, with the background being out of focus.

# WHO CAN I DELEGATE TO?





You can't just delegate to the first person you spot walking past your office. You need to know whether the person you delegate to is capable of taking over the task.

In your assessment of who to delegate to, you need to consider these areas:

**The experience, knowledge and skills of the employee as they apply to the task in question.**

- What knowledge, skills and attitude does the person already have?
- Do you have time and resources to provide any training needed?

**The employee's preferred work style..**

- Is the employee independent?
- What does the employee want from his or her job?
- What are the employee's long-term goals and interests, and how do these align with the task proposed?

**The current workload of the employee.**

- Does the employee have time to take on more work?
- If the employee takes this task on board will he or she have to offload other responsibilities and workloads?





## **Top Tip. Be Patient!**

When you first start delegating you might find that other people are slower than you with the tasks.

Remember that you are the expert in the field and have done the task a hundred times or more, whereas the employee you have delegated to is still learning.

Be patient! If you chose the right employee, and you are delegating the right way, you will soon find that the employee becomes competent and reliable.

A photograph of two men in dark blue suits standing at a wooden table. They are high-fiving each other with their right hands. On the table, there are two white coffee cups on saucers and a small notebook. The background features a large window with dark wood frames and a patterned curtain with small floral motifs. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting a sunny day.

# HOW TO DELEGATE





## HOW TO DELEGATE

There are basically 6 steps to successful delegation and the more times you implement them, the easier and faster it will become until one day it's just automatically the way you go about delegating in your business.

All it takes is practice.

### **Step # 1 – Prepare**

If the task isn't thought out and prepared, and if the results are a moving target, it will be difficult for the employee to deliver the expected result (since you aren't clear on what's to be expected).

You must make time to work on what exactly it is that you are asking for and remember the saying that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. It is cheaper to prepare than to repair.

### **Step # 2 – Assign**

Once you've mapped out exactly what you're looking for in a task, you then need to convey that information to the person responsible. You must make sure to include clear information on timing, budget, and context, and make sure to include clear expectations for communication and updates on the task or project.





## Step # 3 - Confirm Understanding

One of the most common mistakes that happen in delegation is assuming that the employees understand what you want them to do, rather than making sure that they do.

Confirming whether they truly understand the task will only take you about 60 seconds, but it is the most important determinant of success or failure of the task.

The best way to confirm understanding is to have the employee repeat the task you just assigned him or her in their own words.

You can be creative about how you elicit the paraphrasing from your employee so that instead of saying “Now what did I just tell you?” you can ask the employee “How would you explain this task to a fellow employee?”.

You should also ask the employee if he or she thinks they have the tools and resources to be successful as this demonstrates whether the employee understands what the task will require.



## Step # 4 – Commitment

This is another part of the delegation process that most managers skip.

Managers often assume that the employees have accepted the tasks they've been given.

Try and think of delegation as a relay race. One of the most important parts of a relay race, if not the most important part, is the handing over of the baton to the next runner.

Runners training for these races spend a huge amount of time learning the handover skill. This is no different to a workplace delegation. Commitment means making sure you've successfully handed over the baton/task to the next runner.

You must confirm that the employee is committed to the expected results, as well as to the process that's been set out (including the schedule, budget, and tools), and you must make sure that the employee's overall goals for the task are aligned with yours.

Make sure the employee is aware of any consequences for the company and for himself/herself if he/she fails to deliver on the desired outcomes.



## **Step # 5 – Avoid “reverse delegating”**

Many small business owners are extremely overworked. Sometimes, this is because their employees are better at delegating than they are.

Often, the owner or manager ends up completing tasks they had originally delegated to others because those tasks somehow end up back on their desk.

This is often called “reverse delegation.”

If you have made sure that the previous 4 steps have been completed, it should rarely be necessary for you to take back a project or a task.

If an employee reaches an impasse, treat it as a learning opportunity instead of saying “here, give it to me, I’ll do it myself”.

Instead, coach the employee through it and make sure he or she has the resources and knowledge needed to complete the task. It may take a little more time the first time, but you’ll now be sure that the employee knows how to complete the project next time.





## **Step # 6 – Accountability**

Two-way communication is a key part of delegating.

Finding out at the completion date that a deliverable hasn't been completed or has been done unsatisfactorily is the nightmare scenario of delegation.

That's why you need to make sure your employees are accountable for the task.

We've dedicated a whole lesson to this and will be talking more about the whole concept of accountability shortly.





# EXTRA TIPS

## EXTRA TIPS



### **Don't Over-Delegate**

Delegation doesn't mean shifting work you should be doing to someone else's plate—it means getting those tasks you shouldn't be doing off of yours.

It's important to know the difference.



### **Don't Micromanage**

Once you've successfully delegated the task, back away from the project.

To succeed (and to help your employee succeed), you have to let go.



### **Offer Feedback**

Each time you have delegated something, provide feedback on the end result (both positive and constructive).

It will make sure you're getting exactly what you need and it will help the employee to get better at the task over time.



### **Say Thanks**

It's important to remember that someone just saved you some time and is providing value on your behalf.

Saying thanks will get you a long way and the employee will be much more likely to accept a task from you next time.





## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Having worked with small businesses for more than 40 years, one of John's greatest frustrations has been watching people giving their lives to their business, supporting their communities and providing employment, only to find that when it comes time to sell, either they are unable to, or unable to sell for what they hoped, and so their dreams get shattered.

John firmly believes that there are answers out there, and has made it his life's mission to help as many small businesses as possible to find these answers, taking back control of their businesses and finally achieve the freedom and the financial stability that they dreamt of.

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