

Delegation Matters: Great Leaders Are Great Talent Developers

Description

This is the tale of two perceptions. One (held by the leader) is â??I donâ??t want to overwhelm them.â?• The other (held by the employee) is â??I am not getting the opportunity to develop. My leader holds on to things I could do or would like to do instead. Maybe my leader does not trust me?â?•

I was talking to the president of a small organization. He had just finished one-on-ones with many people in the organization. He is not regularly at all the sites where the companyâ??s workers are located, and he wanted to get to know these people better. His goal was not to interfere with the onsite top leader, but rather to build relationships. He shared with me that at one location, people said they feel they could take on more of the items that their supervisor is currently doing. They were a bit confused as they want to learn more for their skill and career development.

We know that for many employees, the decision to stay in a role is influenced by skill and career development opportunities. So why do some leaders, like the one described above, not delegate tasks they are doing? Is it that the leader does not think the employees can handle certain tasks? Or are there other reasons?

During the company presidentâ??s meeting with the leader of this area, he noted that there are things she is doing that others could do. He mentioned that by doing those things herself rather than delegating them, she is missing out on doing other tasks that would help her own career growth and help the organization. The person then shared that she is worried about employees having too much on their plate.

We notice at times habits or characteristics in others that we have in ourselves. The president shared with this leader: â??I get it. I struggle with delegation also.â?• He explained that delegation is hard for him because he falls into different traps. One is â??It is faster to do it myself.â?•

I was involved in creating a video series on supervisory conversations. One featured a nurse manager and a nurse who worked in the unit. The idea was to show a very positive conversation, with the manager thanking the nurse and reviewing the impact she has on the patient care unit. When the conversation was coming to a close, the nurse asked the manager, â??Why am I not being asked to be a preceptor?â?• For those not in healthcare, a preceptor is someone who assists a new employee in

adjusting to the role; some may call this person a buddy or a mentor. The manager was taken aback. She explained she felt the nurse was doing so much now she could not ask her to do more. The nurse shared she loves to teach and so it was part of the job she would enjoy.

In situations like this, the solution comes down to deeper communication with each individual on what they aspire to, as well as each person being self-aware about their own role and ability to develop others. The main role of a leader is to be a talent developer. The ultimate outcome is that those we help to develop in turn will develop others.

Here are a few tips:

Hold up the mirror. What are you holding on to that others can do? In past articles, my suggestion has been to list what you do and put the tasks into three columns: *What can only I do? What can others do with my continued involvement? What can someone else do completely if their skill is developed?*

Have those you lead review the list and discuss which items they want skill-building in. Some may be ready right now, and the issue has been the â??I canâ??t ask them to do moreâ?• thought. Identify which items they will assume, what is needed for them to be able to handle the activity, the process of the handover, and the timeline for making the switch.

When you hire someone, clarify actions that you have been doing but that you feel they need to take over. I find leaders will often assume responsibility for a task with the thought that someone else will take it over once they have been in the role longer. However, if not explained in that way, the newer person will not see the job responsibility as theirs. The conversation goes like this: â??Because you are new and I want you to be successful, I will handle this duty for now. However, eventually it will be yours.â?• Be very clear that what you are doing is temporary and it will become their responsibility as they gain experience.

Donâ??t assume that people are overwhelmed and canâ??t handle new tasks. Let the person decide. Without the leader realizing it, a person can feel they are not trusted or believed in. Have consistent development conversations.

Self-assess regularly. People tend to gravitate to what they like the most. This does not mean it is the best for the organization. Yes, it is great that one enjoys certain job duties. However, does it keep you from taking on other tasks that are more important for your role?

Delegation and talent development go together. Great leaders are great developers of talent. People are more likely to stay if they feel they are being invested in. Be sure that you offer people every opportunity to learn new skills. It is good for them, good for you, and good for the organization.

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