



## DAVID POSEN

### **Delegating: Stop multi-tasking and start multi-plexing**

Imagine this scenario. Tiger Woods is playing at the recent Canadian Open Golf Tournament and you're invited. You watch him tee-off, after which he picks up his bag and walks down the fairway with his caddie, Steven Williams, strolling beside him. When he gets to his ball, he pulls out an iron himself, hits the shot, replaces his divot and continues walking toward the green, chatting occasionally with Steven. On the green, he takes out his putter, removes the flag, and putts out. Again, carrying his own clubs, he proceeds to the next tee, washes off his ball, pulls out his driver and prepares to tee-off again. It strikes you as rather odd that the World's Greatest Golfer hires a caddie and then does all of his tasks himself.

It's not just odd. It would actually be crazy. Yet this is what thousands of people do in the workplace every day. Despite the fact that they're buried under mountains of work, they do it themselves and end up staying late to get it all done. There's something wrong with this picture.

There's an old expression: "If you have a dog, why should you bark?" Delegation is an important skill but one that most people don't do very well.

I've talked to scores of patients who have staff they can delegate to but who are still doing too many things themselves and wondering why they can't finish their work. Many people do two or three things at once (e.g. reading their mail while talking on the phone) in order to "save time." But instead of multi-tasking, they should be doing what one of my patients suggested when he said, "I wish I could clone myself." I call it "multi-plexing." I told him that, if he trained his assistant properly, it would be like duplicating himself. He was amazed at how well it worked.

#### **Four main reasons why people don't delegate:**

1. They feel that no one else can do things exactly the way they want them done.
2. They have trouble giving up control.
3. They feel they don't have time to train someone to do the tasks.
4. They don't want to overburden other people, especially those who are already overloaded.

Let's go back to Tiger Woods. I used to think that having a caddie was about luxury and privilege. But really it's an arrangement to maximize efficiency - so that Tiger can concentrate totally on his playing. Dan Sullivan mentors entrepreneurs in Toronto. His company is called The Strategic Coach. One of his teachings is, "Delegate everything but genius." As he puts it, "Frank Sinatra didn't move pianos." Other people could do that. What Frank did was show up and sing.

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It's wasteful for self-employed professionals or people in management to be fielding routine phone calls, addressing their own envelopes, or running errands. I was slow to learn this message, but now I can personally attest to the tremendous benefits that result - less pressure on me and an increase in my work output.

But aside from benefits to the delegator, there are also benefits to the delegate. In an efficient workplace, everybody should be doing all the tasks they're capable of and taught new skills to increase their capabilities. This isn't about overloading people or "buck passing." It's about utilizing their intelligence, skills and talents to the maximum level. The result is that workers feel valued, trusted, and respected. They also feel challenged, proud of the responsibility they're given and validated by the contribution they can make. This makes for employees who feel stimulated by their work and proud of their achievements. When done properly, delegating is a win-win. When it's done badly, it can be unfair, exploitive and even abusive.

### **Guidelines for successful delegating:**

1. Pick the right people.
2. Give clear instructions. Take time to teach new skills.
3. Confirm understanding (of the assignment, time for completion, etc.)
4. Stand back. Give them room to maneuver.
5. Supervise periodically.
6. Be available to coach, advise or give feedback.
7. Hold delegates accountable for their work (quality & timeliness).
8. Modify your expectations as required. Avoid Perfectionism.
9. Be sensitive to your delegate's current workload - and help him/her to re-prioritize when necessary.
10. Give praise often - and always say "thank you."

Delegating is an important aspect of good time management - which in turn leads to improved work-life balance and reduced stress. It involves a trade-off: you get to make the best use of your time in exchange for giving up some control. It also acknowledges that you can't do everything yourself. Delegates may not do tasks as well as you would do them - although they might surprise you and do them better.

So the next time you see Tiger Woods walking down the fairway with his caddie doing all the work, don't look at it as privilege. See it as an excellent example of appropriate delegation that allows Tiger to display his legendary talent.

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