

# **Mastering the Art of Delegation**

## **Seven Steps that will Help Improve Your Productivity**

By Roxanne Rivera

Do you have trouble “handing off” work to others? You’re not alone. Many women feel uncomfortable with this vital leadership skill. The same impulse that led our mothers to head up the PTA, volunteer to spearhead the church bake sale, shuttle the neighbor’s kids around, scrub the house from top to bottom, and cook all the meals keeps today’s women overworked, overloaded and overstressed in the workplace. For whatever reason, we simply feel compelled to do it ourselves.

A recent study hosted by Catalyst, a U.S. research organization recently reported that both men and women perceive men to be better at “take charge” skills, namely, the art of delegating. As a matter of fact, delegating is conventionally viewed as a masculine skill, and with good reason. Women are naturally perceived to be caretakers and nurturers. Delegation simply doesn’t line up with society’s long-held perception of the helpful “little woman” who gets her validation from preparing nourishing meals and keeping a pristine home. (And yes, this stereotype is outdated, but old expectations die hard!)

That said, if you can learn to cultivate the delegation skills I know you already possess—after all, our foremothers had no problem handing out long lists of daily farm chores to their (remarkably unspoiled) children—you will immediately start to notice your career and your credibility skyrocket. When women allow themselves to delegate in (and out of) the office, suddenly the workload lightens a bit and their professional lives begin to take a turn for the better.

Like everyone else, you have a certain number of hours in the workday. You need to spend them in the most effective and productive way possible—and that means getting rid of tasks that are keeping you from using your true brilliance.

Delegation is necessary when we encounter pieces of our job that are not our core responsibilities. For example, your time may not be well spent photocopying, filing proposals, and typing up memos when you could simply delegate these tasks to the company receptionist who is paid to do such things. If you’re like many women, your first impulse is to just assume the extra load so as to not make an underling feel demeaned. And you might feel particularly reluctant to ask a male colleague to handle a task—even one that falls more in his area of expertise—when you could stay late and do it yourself.

I can’t stress enough how important it truly is for women working in male-dominated industries to delegate. When your male coworkers see that you are brave and competent enough to dole out appropriate responsibilities to appropriate parties, they will respect you all the more for your assertiveness and insight. Read on to learn the steps you can use to start delegating in your own job!

- Decide what task or tasks you can delegate.**
- Decide to whom you will be delegating this task.**
- Define to this person exactly what the task is, why you are delegating it to him, and make sure that you spell out the objectives of the task.**
- Establish a deadline for completion of the task,**
- Do not look over the person's shoulder. Allow him to complete the task alone unless he comes to you with questions.**
- Express your appreciation when the task is complete. Fortunately, women more readily give praise than men, so this is a given.**
- Remember, ultimately, you are responsible for the completion of the task.**

However unnatural it may feel to delegate, you *must* get comfortable with this critical leadership tool. If it helps, try to look at delegation like this: by allowing your employees to take on more responsibility, you're allowing them to increase their skill set. You're developing them so that one day in the future they can leave the nest (their old, limiting jobs) and soar to new heights. In doing so, you fulfill your deep feminine need to bring out the potential in others.

Now stop feeling guilty and start delegating—and watch your career take off!