

Effective Delegation by the Board and Senior Management: From Control to Empowerment

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Recent trends in corporate governance have revealed that effective leadership for high productivity is highly reliant on delegating roles and empowering employees and/or subordinates rather than controlling their day-to-day activities. Control is a notion that describes leading and supervising individuals involved in carrying out an activity. In essence, it amounts to imposing rigid requirements on workers without any room for discretion or participation in decision-making, which often severely restricts what staff can achieve. On the other hand, delegation deals with the handing off of responsibility for particular duties from one person to another in accordance with parameters and criteria, such as subordinates' qualifications and capacity for the job, set by the management or officer in charge. In order to do a variety of tasks diligently and efficiently, the delegation process also entails giving these participants some authority and exceptions that may suit their designated functional purpose. Closely related to delegation, empowerment is based on increasing each employee's capabilities and promoting their involvement in decision-making by giving them the confidence and ability to handle some administrative responsibilities as well as all the essential authorities for this administrative position. They will become leaders as a result, able to carry out all tasks without consulting the Senior Manager and to make a variety of judgments, but is only effective if boundaries that cannot be crossed have been strategically established.

However, despite the close similarity between delegation and empowerment, it is of importance to note the unique characteristics that differentiate one from the other. When work is delegated, the senior management will outline the requirements, specify the best method for completion, establish deadlines, and monitor the employee's progress. In contrast, empowerment means giving the employee access to more information about the organization and giving him or her the freedom and authority to decide for themselves and take responsibility for their work. Following this, we proceed to discuss each segment individually, with keen focus on the key elements that are essential for effective leadership by the board and senior management.

Delegation strings along three elements that are vitally important, namely: Responsibility; Authority; and Accountability. Starting off with responsibility which can only be assigned but not delegated, it is crucial for assigned tasks to be specified in terms of the desired outcomes rather than the minute details of how they must be carried out. On the other hand, authority basically means you can appoint your teammate to act as your agent but only within the limits of the delegated/transferred authority. Finally, accountability is defined as a teammate's moral obligation to carry out the tasks entrusted to them.

There exists different means in which delegation can be carried out. The first method is by following the manager's directions exactly, without changing them in any way, commonly referred to as 'do as I say'. Other managers prefer to direct their subordinates to research on the subject, collect data, and report their findings to management who then decide what has to be done. At the same time, other managers opt to let their delegates recommend the best course of action based on their research, and management thereafter only gives a go-ahead to proceed if they find the recommendation suitable. The *modus operandi* above place the burden on management to give a final say. Inversely, the manager may choose to use delegation techniques that entrusts their subordinates with complete authority. By this, the employee may either make decisions and later inform their manager on what action was taken, or completely act independently without being required to provide feedback.

For the board and senior management to conduct a successful delegation process, they must:

- Specify the objectives for which the task is being delegated;
- Clearly define the employee's duties to help them learn or comprehend what is expected of them;
- Outline the levels of authority to subordinates since each employee has a different level of authority dependent on the task assigned;
- Motivate and encourage all subordinates to work efficiently and with their best efforts;
- Provide all employees with the necessary training for their jobs;
- Manage staff by keeping accurate performance reviews; and

- Ensure the manager remains accountable for his personnel.

In contrast, for the board to implement a fruitful empowerment program, they must ensure that policies on empowerment have the core elements engraved in them, namely:

- Autonomy, an individual's choice and agency in decision-making;
- Competence, which is the effectiveness, confidence and mastery in one's work;
- Community, involving genuine connection, belonging and significance to others; and
- Fulfillment, defined as the intrinsic motivation and connection to the organization's mission.

To guarantee efficacious employee empowerment, senior management ought to adopt high standards for success, give people authority that is equivalent to their responsibilities and communicating their obligations, assist individuals get the training they need to accomplish these objectives, offer them adequate information and knowledge, offer feedback on performance, credit delegates for their successes, trust them, allow them to fail, and always treat them with decorum and respect.

For boards that are looking to incorporate both delegation and empowerment in their leadership styles, we have compiled a few guidelines that have been tested and proved to be successful. First, it is crucial to build your team by utilizing the targeted outcomes and assigning the right task to the right person, i.e. ensuring you commensurate them with your employees' skills and interests for overall efficiency. Be sure to establish a plan regarding the amount of time and/or money that should be spent on the delegated tasks and provide all the necessary resources and tools. Also, set up a proper authority who is in charge of follow-up, especially for complex and protracted projects and communicate to your team whom they are to report or get instructions. When communicating with your team, be calm, tolerant and patient throughout the entire process since building expertise and leadership skills amongst your employees is a work-in-progress. Being upbeat and adaptable fosters positive participation. Most importantly, keep in mind that training seldom results in perfect output during the first few weeks thus inspiring innovativeness and creativity amongst your employees by allowing room for failure.

Delegation and empowerment skills are important for good corporate governance practices, which lead to a number of positive results for the company. In particular, delegation and empowerment encourage employee motivation and job satisfaction, talent retention and low employee turnover, time management, efficiency and productivity amongst staff, improved creativity and innovation, improved processes and procedures, and allows employees to demonstrate their skills and gauge their potential. More so, senior management gets to devote more time and capacity to high-level tasks, build a rapport of trust with employees, activate the team's communications skills and spirit, help team members become competent professionals, and identify and train potential successors for the board and other management categories.

In conclusion, it is paramount to balance between control and delegation and/or empowerment. Both control and empowerment have a place in the Board's and Senior Management's monitoring responsibilities. As beneficial as empowerment is within a company, quality and security can only be attained through a small amount of control. Trust and employee empowerment go hand in hand in this equilibrium, but there are also significant and well-understood control mechanisms put in place to prevent boycotts caused by misunderstanding or willful disregard of the rules. It is also crucial to strike a balance between accountability and delegation. Employees must be given more accountability for the results as they are given more freedom to choose how they operate.