



What do others do?

Leadership nuggets collected from the world of business, psychology, sport and the creative industries (and more!) and what we can learn from them.

Delegation

It's easier to do it myself... maybe, but that isn't the point.

Delegation is hard for some of us. We may think that's because it's easier to just do it ourselves. But if we are honest with ourselves, what is behind that belief?

- If someone else does it better than me, how will I feel about my role here?
- I am time poor and can't make the time to train someone else.
- There is too much in my brain that is not written down, the thought of getting it down on paper is worse than just doing it.
- What if they mess it up and it isn't to my standard?
- There isn't anyone who can do what I do as well as I do it.
- Even if they could do it, I won't like it as I will think I could have done it better.
- You can add your own!

There are many different approaches to delegation some we will like, and some will make us uncomfortable. What can we learn from how others delegate and what could we try? Here is a list of some familiar names and what they did, or try to do.

1. **Prioritise:** Mark Zuckerberg of META reportedly starts every working day deciding what his most important task for that day is, everything else is delegated.
2. **Subtract:** Steve Jobs said deciding what he was NOT going to do was as important as deciding what he would. We have to subtract from our list and divide the work if we want to add.
3. **Important vs urgent:** The Eisenhower Matrix helps us work out what is urgent and what is important. Those tasks that are not urgent or important could perhaps be delegated.
4. **Think 80%:** Sara Blakeley, the CEO of Spanx said if someone can do the job 80% as well as you can then give it to them. We should not be waiting for perfection (especially when what we mean by perfection, is doing it how we would!). Good enough is sometimes good enough. We must be open minded enough (and gracious enough!) to admit sometimes others can do it as well (or better) than us.



5. **Paint 'done':** Brene Brown talks about painting what 'done' looks like. If people do not know what is expected for them you may be disappointed with what they do. Sometimes, it isn't them that is the issue, we are! We have let them go without clarity and therefore not set them up for success.
6. **Be flexible:** Ex-Amazon boss Jeff Bezos said that he wanted to be stubborn on the vision but flexible on the details. If we get this mixed up and are stubborn on the details then we can start to micromanage, the opposite of delegation!
7. **Eyes on, hands off:** Be there to guide and watch but do not meddle when you have delegated. Keep an open door for your colleagues to ask questions and check in with them regularly. We want clear delegation where they know it is theirs rather than confusing delegation when we keep taking it back.
8. **Collaborate more:** Anahita Dalmia, co-founder of Alterea (who promote immersive theatre experiences), says that when you are genuinely collaborating in a 'we are all in this together' culture, delegating becomes much more natural.
9. **No rules, rules:** At Netflix, they delegate to people who are given the freedom to innovate and be flexible. They do this by only employing A-players, having a culture of feedback that is honest, constructive and timely and they reduce controls on things like travel, holiday leave and expenses. The rule is always 'in the best interest of Netflix'. They delegate that judgement to people. Until they get evidence that they can't...then that is a different story!
10. **Think in levels:** There are different levels of delegation for different tasks. We don't usually delegate everything to 1 person, we usually delegate smaller things to them. We need a way to make that clear. Tim Brighthouse and David Woods have a great framework for this (*found in my book 'Time to Think 2: The Things That Stop Our Teams and What To Do About Them'*).
 - a. Look into the problem. Give me all the facts. I will decide what to do.
 - b. Let me know the options available, with the pros and the cons of each. I will decide what to select.
 - c. Let me know the criteria for your recommendations, which alternatives you have identified, and which one appears best to you, with any risks identified. I will make the decision.
 - d. Recommend a course of action for my approval.
 - e. Let me know what you intend to do. Delay action unless I approve.
 - f. Let me know what you intend to do. Do it unless I say not to.
 - g. Take action. Let me know what you did. Let me know how it turns out.
 - h. Take action. Communicate with me only if the action is unsuccessful.
 - i. Take action. No further communication with me is necessary.

Delegation can build teams and build people. It can give you capacity to focus where only you can. Perhaps, the words of John C. Maxwell are helpful here, 'If you want to do a few small things right, do them yourself. If you want to do great things and make a big impact, learn to delegate'.