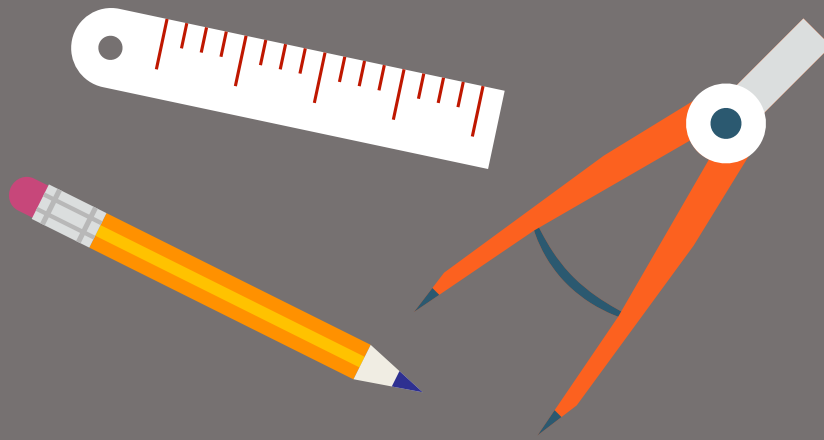


10 Things To Never Say When Delegating



PRACTICAL TOOLS

10 Things To Never Say When Delegating

How you delegate a task has a lot to do with the chances for success or failure of the delegation project.

10 Phrases To Avoid At All Costs

1. "This is so easy, anyone can do it."

Managers who say this are probably well-intentioned. They're trying to make the employee to whom a task is being delegated less nervous.

However, it comes across as totally insulting, "Any idiot can do this, so that's why I'm asking you." Never minimize the importance of the task you are delegating, and don't doubt the skills of the assignee.

Someone who feels appreciated and trusted to do something important will do a better job. A better way of framing the assignment: "This task is important to the project; that's why I'm trusting you to do it."

2. “That’s not the way I would have done it.”

Second-guessing employees and insisting things be done only one way leads directly to micromanagement and discourages others from taking responsibility for tasks and achievements.

So long as the solution works, does it matter if the employee did things differently? The project benefits because you now have two viable approaches to an issue.

It is much better to praise the initiative: “I hadn’t thought of doing it this way, but you actually came up with a great alternate solution!”

3. “I’ve asked another employee to handle the task as well.”

Some people think of this as a way of inspiring healthy competition, but it usually has the opposite effect.

Instead, colleagues become obsessed with being the one to win recognition for getting the project right. That means they don’t share information, and they don’t collaborate effectively, or they start shifting their responsibility to each other, so that no one feels responsible any longer.

Don’t make it a competition, but make it a teamwork challenge instead: “I want you to work with a colleague on this, but you each have your own areas of responsibility.”

4. “I know you haven’t finished that part yet, but I need this right now!”

Having “emergencies” every couple of days won’t help and will actually hinder productivity. All that multi-tasking and switching around just isn’t good for team morale.

Try not to pull people randomly off their other assignments to meet a deadline with one particular task.

Emergencies do happen, but here's a better way of dealing with them: "We have had to amend the schedule, and this task should be next when you've finished your current task."

5. "I know you've never done anything like this before, but I believe you might be able to handle it."

Everyone wants the chance to improve his or her skills, but is it really fair to put someone in that position without adequate preparation or training?

The project might not be run in the most efficient way, either. If no one has the required training or experience, stand ready to dedicate your time to brief them if you want to receive worthy results.

In any event, don't undermine the employee's confidence; build it up instead like this: "We will make sure you learn this skill; in the future you'll be able to handle it on your own."

6. "Just see what you can do, and we'll see if it fits."

Vagueness and lack of specificity will almost guarantee failure. If the employee can't possibly get a good idea about what you want, then how can he or she deliver it?

Most likely, you'll waste a lot of time.

A better approach is put together a list of possible solutions and ask the delegate to come up with different options, so you can select the best approach.

To test their analytical skills, you might say something like:
“Here’s what’s important for evaluating the possibilities.
Now see what you think the best solution could be.”

7. “I’m going on a business trip for a week. Things need to be done when I get back.”

Disappearing right before a project is due is not ideal, especially if you’re going to be out of touch for part of the period. When crunch time is approaching, you need to be available.

You need to give them a way to check with you: “I’ll be available at (specific windows of time) to answer any queries.”

8. “You should have shown it to me before the deadline.”

If you find yourself wanting to say this, it usually means you failed to properly set up the project.

Your goals might have been crystal clear to you, but your people can’t read your mind, and they didn’t get enough guidance.

The only way to know if a project is on track is to set up milestones and checkpoints with the delegate so you’re not disappointed in the end when it’s too late to do much about it because of a looming deadline.

To forestall you ever having to utter the above phrase, try this:
“Is the project on track? We should meet to see where we are before the final deadline.”

9. “Why did you think you had the right to make an important decision by yourself?”

An employee who hears you say this will be mortified and will probably never make a decision again on his or her own. And it probably wasn't his or her fault.

Delegation is about allowing others to make some decisions, but if the people performing the delegated task didn't know their responsibilities, authority and the chain of command, you could get some nasty surprises.

It should be clear what decisions the delegate can take on his or her own, and which ones require your permission.

Instead of appearing to yell at them, assume the blame for not having made it clear and for future reference, give them an outline of project team responsibilities so they know what decisions they can make.

10. “It's not exactly what it's supposed to be, but I'll finish it myself.”

Your employees should have known the standard they needed to achieve. If you have to finalize it, what was the point of delegation anyway?

You might try giving them a chance to do some final fixes and deliver a usable work product. Just taking it away from them without letting them know what's wrong is a huge de-motivator.

It is better to say something like: “This isn't exactly right; let's talk about how it can be fixed.”