

Delegation

By the end of this course, you should be able to describe the benefits of delegation for both the CEO/Advisor and team members, use the *100 Items to Delegate* worksheet to prioritize what tasks to delegate and to whom to delegate them, and utilize the best practices of delegation to get more done and achieve better balance.

Overview:

Imagine your favorite football team. The quarterback can't snap the ball to himself, drop back to pass, block the defenders, run down the field to catch the pass, and then dance in the end zone after the touchdown, right? No. It takes teamwork – everybody doing what they do best. All the players execute their individual assignments for the collective good of the whole. When it comes together like that, good things happen for everyone.

Getting to the “ideal team” in your firm means you must delegate. As your office grows, so does the amount of work it takes to run the business. At some point, you must recognize that you can no longer be the only one doing everything. So, you need to decide how to offload much of the daily minutia that consumes your time.

Imagine your life when you know that you have trusted team members doing both administrative tasks and even making decisions that you have to make now. You will be freed up to focus more exclusively on building your firm, client relationships, and personal hobbies! Delegation can be daunting, but it isn't complicated.

The process involves the following:

- **Step 1:** Understanding how delegation helps the entire firm grow by helping both the advisor and team members become more effective and productive.
- **Step 2:** Choosing what to delegate and to whom to delegate.
- **Step 3:** Using the best practices of delegation to transform the long-term effectiveness of everyone in the firm.

Step 1: Understand the benefits of delegation, for both the CEO/Advisor and team members.

Many CEOs/Advisors often have trouble letting go. There is a desire to control everything. However, advisors who learn to delegate realize that if they hire A+ team members (see the *Recruiting and Hiring Talent* course for more information), that many tasks, even important ones can be done even better by team members. Delegation is both frightening and freeing. However, when effectively executed, delegation is almost like magic in how it can move a team to new heights.

Most advisors understand that delegation will allow them to spend more time doing their most important activities, such as prospecting and client meetings. However, many advisors don't realize that delegating to team members also helps the team members develop skills, decision making abilities and confidence. When team members are more capable and confident, they become proactive in the

delegation process. They let the CEO/Advisor know what they can do, further freeing up the advisor's time. When done well, the delegation process actually becomes team driven. That's when the advisor knows delegation really works! It is a positive, self-generating cycle!

Let's flip it around and look at what happens if you don't delegate. People who are extremely proactive often end up doing everything they can, which usually means that the CEO/Advisor is completely overworked, and doing low-value activities. Additionally, the team never grows in their own professional capabilities, because they never have the opportunity to do something outside of their comfort zones. When the team doesn't grow, neither does the firm.

Now that you understand and hopefully embrace the firm-wide reasons for delegation, use the **100 Items to Delegate** worksheet to determine what tasks to delegate and to whom to delegate them.

Step 2: Determine what to delegate and to whom.

Understanding why delegation works so well to propel a firm forward often helps advisors really embrace the delegation process. Now that you know why it's important, the next step is to use the **100 Items to Delegate** exercise to determine what to delegate, who is currently doing the assigned tasks, and who should be doing the tasks. As an advisor, the goal is to delegate as many of the items on the list to the appropriate team members as possible.

The list is divided into five categories: clerical and administrative, client service and planning, marketing and client experience, office management, and systems and technology. The list isn't inclusive of every activity performed in an advisor's practice, but it will get you started and help you begin to look at your day-to-day activities for those tasks you could delegate.

To help you get started, here is how you can use the worksheet:

Step 1: Complete the worksheet by putting a checkmark in the appropriate box for each task. The options are: *Advisor*, *Team Member*, and *Not Performed*.

Coach Tip: The **100 Items to Delegate** list is really a starting point. After using the list, consider conducting a team exercise to see what additional tasks are being completed and by which team member. Add your additional tasks to the master list.

Step 2: Select 1 or 2 tasks from your 100 Items to Delegate which you would like to delegate to a team member. The goal here is to take at least 1 or 2 of the tasks per month and delegate to a team member. After deciding the first few tasks to delegate, assign the task to the appropriate team member based on who has the skill, capacity, and desire to do so.

Step 3: Once you have determined the first few items to delegate and have decided on who will be responsible for the task, use the following process to ensure that delegation isn't just a paper exercise. Follow these five steps to ensure a successful process.

- **First**, train the team member on the task to be performed by walking through your expectations. Expectations can best be shown by examples of what "done well" looks like. After showing the example, show the team member your current process for getting to "done well." Some tasks may mandate a very specific process, such as the way to execute trades or compliance-related tasks, while other tasks might allow for some flexibility.

- **Second**, the team member should observe you performing the task. As you are training, have the team member take detailed notes to use later as or update your current process manuals. See the course called ***Systemize Your Firm*** for more information.
- **Third**, observe and evaluate the team member as they perform the task.
- **Fourth**, release responsibility for the task to the team member.
- **Fifth**, periodically verify that the team member's work on the task adheres to the process.
- **Sixth**, if it's relevant to support the new assignment, inform the rest of the team of the change in task ownership.

Coach Tip: Remember the **power** of acknowledging team members' accomplishments. This person just expanded their value to you and your firm and took something off your plate! No matter how small the delegated task, reinforce their follow-through with a *"Thanks for stepping up to take this on."* or *"Great job with xyz."* or *"It's so nice to be able to rely on someone besides myself!"* Just a few words make the difference between someone feeling dumped on and someone feeling appreciated and happy to **accept more responsibilities in the future.**

When delegating, empower your team by giving them some latitude on how the tasks are carried out. It is likely that some tasks can be conducted differently and more efficiently than the advisor would do them. Encouraging team members to find better ways to do tasks gives them ownership in the process.

To reward your team members for the new responsibilities they are assuming, incorporate the delegation of tasks into your bonus goals. See the course entitled ***Team Compensation and Benefits*** for more information.

Along with training on the actual task, give the team member a set of guidelines to help them be more independent in the initial stages of taking over a task (or project). These include:

- Provide a clear timeframe or deadlines for when the task should be done
- Tell them when and how best to check in with you if they have questions
- Give them permission to use their best judgement on how the task should be done
- Parameters for when to consult you before moving ahead – such as involves money, other resources, unforeseen risks, etc.
- Agree on how often to update you with progress

Coach Tip: When you're handing something off, the team member may not be initially enthusiastic. Rather than making the hand-off a one-way process of telling someone what they will do (for example, in first four the bullets above), Make the hand-off a collaborative effort by asking questions to engage their buy-in. People are much more motivated when they have some say about things. It also demonstrates your trust and respect – two things that strengthen **loyalty** and **commitment**. Ask:

- *"What do you think is a reasonable deadline to have this completed?"* Agree or negotiate the deadline, and:

- “What is an efficient way for you to check in or update me?” “Can I expect an update once a week? What’s reasonable to you?” Agree or negotiate, and so on.

You get the idea. Now they’re telling you how they will be accountable.

Going forward, continue to follow the newly developed systems to guide your team through the process - and revisit the **100 Items to Delegate** list every 6 months to keep your calendar clear of the little things that can add up. Additionally, look for tasks that should be assigned to different team members, based on time or skills.

Don't be surprised if you have several things you can delegate right away. The faster these items get off your plate, the more time you will have to do the revenue-producing activities needed to move your practice to the next level.

Coach Tip: If you need to get things off your plate but don’t have anyone on your team with the skill, capacity, and desire to do those things, it may be time for outsourcing or your next hire. To learn more, see our courses on **Outsourcing and Strategic Partnerships** and **Organization Design as a Foundation for Growth** for next steps.

Now that you have a plan for delegation, move on to the next step for some high-level delegation best practices.

Step 3: Utilize the best practices of delegation to get more done and achieve better balance.

You now have a plan to start delegating tasks that will free up your time for high-value activities. Here are additional best practices to help make your delegation skills even more effective

- The 75% Rule – if someone on the team can do something at least 75% as well as you can, then Delegate It!
 - Advisors often wait until someone on the team can do the task perfectly before delegating and releasing the task. This keeps the task at least partially on the advisors plate, which continues to limit the amount of time the advisor can spend on high-value activity.

If you delegate the task when the person is around 75% as capable as you, the additional skills they learn -- not just about the task, but associated tasks – will outweigh any initial “wobbles” or minor mistakes that cause inconvenience as they get up to speed. Additionally, “letting go” (take a deep breath) when the team member is 75% effective, allows the team member more latitude to improve the process as they increase skill level.

Coach Tip: Most leaders think that anyone can delegate – “Just tell them what to do.” However, delegation is definitely a learned skill, from the clarity involved to choose the right task for the right person, to the patience with the process.

- There are multiple levels of delegation from low to very high!
 - The lowest level of delegation requires a lot of CEO/Advisor direction, instruction, and accountability checking.
 - The middle level of delegation sees team members beginning to make decisions, informing the advisor of the plan, and moving forward unless otherwise directed.

- In the highest-level delegation, the CEO/Advisor isn't even part of the process. Your team is so capable and your trust in them is so great and apparent, so much that they act in alignment with your goals and priorities, only letting you know how many wins they have, or when they really need your input.

It can take a long time to move team members from low- to medium-level delegation. It takes time and trust. Some team members will never be capable of or trust themselves at the higher levels of delegation. Team members should always be challenged (and rewarded) to get to their highest-possible level. The more team members you have at the highest delegation levels, the more successful your firm will be and the more balance the CEO/Advisor can have in his or her life.

Coach Tip: "Trust but verify." It can be an easy mistake for the CEO/advisor to miscalculate readiness for hand-off. Don't assume a high-performing, effective team member will be equally as effective in every task immediately. While you may have confidence that a person *can* do the task, check to make sure they don't need more training than you would expect to be 75% *able*. Ask them to be sure, so you set them up for success.

At the beginning of the process, you may consider creating a rating system so that you can quickly articulate your expectation and the level of autonomy. An example would be "I need you to do X and this is a Level 1 task." In this case, a Level 1 task could be one where the delegator has already trained the team member how to conduct the task, and the expectation is that the delegator will expect the team member to follow the procedure and report on completion. *The Delegation Worksheet* can be used as you develop your delegation abilities.

To use the Delegation Worksheet, complete the following steps:

- **Step 1:** List who the task or project is assigned to. A task can be assigned to a team, but you should always list the name of one person who is ultimately accountable for completing the task.
- **Step 2: Create a task or project description (title) that is clear and direct.** Examples would be:
 - Enter new prospects into CRM
 - Place daily trades
 - Schedule annual client review web-meeting sessions
- **Step 3: Describe what "Done" looks like.** This is the measure of completion, not the process.
- **Step 4: Circle the frequency of the task.** This can be:
 - Once
 - Weekly
 - Etc.
 - Other – an example would be as needed for CRM

- **Step 5: Note the completion date.** This should work in conjunction with the frequency. If it is a “once” task, list the actual due date. If it is a repeated task, list when completion is expected. If the task is daily, list by when each day (e.g., noon or close of business).
- **Step 6: Circle the Interaction Level:**
 - **High** interaction requires frequent, planned interaction. This level of interaction is most appropriate when someone is first learning how to complete the task, or when someone is new to the firm and the Advisor needs to determine if the team member will follow through as expected.
 - **Medium** interaction is as-needed, where the person delegating (or person delegated to) checks in on an as-needed basis for incremental completion reporting, directional guidance, or incidental training.
 - **Low-Level** interaction is reserved for situations where there is a lot of trust that the team member will follow-through (always gets it done) and confidence in their high level of technical ability to complete the task. The primary responsibility of the CEO/Advisor at this level is a clear understanding of the intended outcome.
- **Step 7: Detail the training needed to complete the task.** This can range from none to the person needing to take a course on how to complete the task.
- **Step 8: List the available resources to complete the task.** Examples would be:
 - “Talk to Mary to have her show you how she does it.”
 - The process can be found in the CRM process manual.
 - The software has a very useful internal tutorial section
- **Step 9: List any notes that the other steps don’t include.**

Coach Tip: The worksheet focuses on outcome. However, sometimes detailed steps of the process are part of a successful outcome, as in placing trades or a compliance-related activity. Allow flexibility and creativity as much as possible, but not when a mistake can have negative consequences.

See other Carson Coaching Online courses that complement this Delegation course well:

- *Maximizing Advisor Productivity*
- *Time Management*
- *Organization Design as a Foundation for Growth*
- *Team Performance Management*
- *Outsourcing and Strategic Partnerships*

Summary:

Delegation allows the CEO/advisor to focus in high-priority, revenue-generating activities, but it requires trust and a process. The most successful and fulfilled advisors have learned the importance and skill of delegation. When advisors learn and use the process, the opportunities for growth abound.

Remember the football team analogy in the introduction to this course? Now you have the why and how to understand how to put it all together – GO TEAM!

FAQs:

- **What are the worst mistakes I can make when delegating?**
 - The worst mistakes leaders make when delegating are to delegate a task or project without clear direction of the outcome and/or timeline, and not ensuring the person to whom the task is delegated is properly trained to complete the task.

The next-worst mistake occurs when the team member doesn't complete the task up to the standards of the CEO/Advisor, THEN the advisor blames the person for messing it up. If you do this,

1. The team member hasn't had proper support to have learned anything new, and didn't, and
 2. The team member will be gun-shy about stepping up in the future, or worse, feel resentful or less confident and start wondering if they might be better off at something (somewhere) else. If neither of these are your intention, do your part in prevention:
 - Be clear with outcomes and timelines,
 - provide training, and
 - check incremental progress the first few times the person does the work. If they make small mistakes, show them the right way for the next time and move on. The incremental check-ins help make sure the task is on track before large deviations become a problem.
- **I like to be in control and delegation makes me feel anxious, especially with high-stakes tasks, like anything to do with compliance or client-facing communications. How do I overcome this issue?**
 - Start small with just a few low-stakes tasks, building to higher-stakes tasks over time. In essence, it is a trust issue – trust meaning “confidence through observation over time.” You need to trust (with initial reasonable verification) that team members will do high-quality work and they confidence that you trust them. You will see what they can and can't do, then you can create higher-stakes development opportunities as they build skill and confidence.
 - **I find that delegation results in a lot of my time taken up in training and follow up. Isn't it just easier to do myself?**
 - Yes, but only in the short run. Effective delegation is a moderately low time investment in a significant long-term payoff -- a little like the story of Lincoln saying, “If I had eight hours to cut down a tree, I'd spend six hours sharpening my axe.”

- Delegation, training, and follow-up are the same as sharpening your axe. If you don't delegate, it's like spending eight hours hacking away at the tree with the back of the axe.
- Would you rather teach your team to fish, or keep doing the fishing forever?
- Spend the time deciding what to delegate, who to delegate to, and providing training and follow up, and that time will be a time multiplier for you in the future!
- **I know I should delegate more, but I'm so anxious about what could go wrong, I never get started. How can I take first steps?**
 - Anxiety and fear about "what-ifs" are natural inhibitors to taking a new course of action with anything. Acknowledge that your feeling is real, but that it's no reason not to begin using the steps outlined in this course to take one thing at a time. Making it work is a process of tactics, as well as working on yourself. Work with your if you have one!
- **How can I guard against being a micro-manager while still ensuring things are going OK?**
 - Remember and put into practice the tips you learned in this course, that are specifically designed to help you "let go."
 - Establishing guidelines for the team member to "safely" work independently on delegated tasks
 - Being clear about expected outcomes and timelines
 - Communicating clearly (and engaging buy-in!) about how often they should update you, so you can be comfortable
 - It can be challenging – especially when you're new to delegating – to overcome the temptation to hover or become a (well-meaning, but self-sabotaging) critic lurking in the wings. Put tactics in place to help yourself get out of your own way of success:
 - Physically remove yourself from being able to watch the delegate all the time.
 - Ask a trusted partner or colleague to give you a supportive reminder when they see you unknowingly – or knowingly -- sabotaging the team member's independent progress.
 - Establish a mantra or reminder phrase and repeat it to yourself when you notice that your behavior is diminished (*"I will wait for our check-in meeting to ask for an update"*, *"I am not the only person who is capable"*, etc.)

Resources:

Learn more and download the resources referenced in this document from the [Delegation](#) course in Carson Coaching Online.

- **100 Items to Delegate Exercise**
- **Delegation Worksheet**