

A good leader takes decisions and delegates

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Given the speed and frequency of the changes and developments we are experiencing (or perhaps suffering), it is increasingly important to be able to take decisions, create a climate of trust and delegate.

Employees expect their managers to be able to take decisions, to be organized and to know how to delegate.

Taking decisions

A decision is not a good decision until it has been taken – anon.

The worst decision is the one that was not taken – Zig Ziglar

I have often been complimented on the fact that I take decisions quickly. This creates confidence and a sense of security, and above all gets things moving. Here are a few principles I have followed throughout my career:

Let's suppose I have taken a decision...

a) It was the right decision, a success, everything is fine.

b) It was the wrong decision, but I have learned something. I am adding a brick to my building by analysing why I got it wrong.

In addition:

1. **Avoid unhelpful information** and, above all, too much information
The best example of what I mean is the menu you find in some Asian restaurants. When I am faced with an A4 page offering 50 different dishes, I am flummoxed and have trouble deciding what to choose. What do you think I choose in situations like this (a clue: always the same thing)? I normally choose a dish I am already familiar with. Another possibility is to refer to my fellow-diner and ask him what he is having... and choose the same thing.
2. **Be intuitive and aware of the signals your body is sending you (somatic signals).** You feel "uneasy" about a decision... Something in the pit of your stomach says "Be careful" or "Don't choose this person"... We receive millions of items of information without being able to analyse them thoughtfully, but our unconscious takes them in and retransmits them through somatic signals... So pay attention to what your body is saying. I can think of three occasions when I recruited members of staff and later regretted it. My intuition had warned me. But under pressure of time (in two cases) and pressure from my boss (one case), I went ahead and took the wrong decision.
3. **Go outside and get a breath of fresh air.** My best decisions have been taken, and my best strategic thinking done, on my mountain bike when I've been out for a ride in the evening or at the weekend. A change of scene, fresh air and physical movement are helpful when it comes to decision-making.
4. When you wake up in the morning, **be attentive to your first impressions**, the thoughts going through your mind. All night, you have "slept on it", your unconscious mind has been at work and may have some fruitful suggestions to make.

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5. Finally, **make up your mind** and say just “Yes” or “No”!
Set a deadline in your diary, an end date you must stick to. Often, the longer we wait, the more the mind is paralysed by doubt.

Delegation

Definition: delegation as a process (from the Latin *delegare*, meaning to send, to entrust or to transfer) refers to the transfer of responsibilities, and therefore of practical tasks, from an authority to departments or functions that are in most cases subordinate. Delegation is one way of sharing out the work to be done.

Well-planned delegation is an aspect of effective management. It's the only way of being sure to have time to concentrate on your core tasks. A person who delegates is directing others. Someone who is good at delegating develops the skills of his or her employees.

When deciding whether and what to delegate, ask yourself what added value you bring, what you are paid for, and if you are keeping overall control.

When I ask participants on my training courses why they don't delegate, the answers they give are often excuses for not delegating. For example: “It's quicker if I do it myself”, or “It will be done better if I do it myself”.

Here are a few important principles to remember when delegating:

1. Delegating implies trust: **trust in the person you are delegating to, as well as confidence in your own abilities.**
Indeed, if I lack confidence in myself, if I am afraid of losing my position, I will find it difficult to delegate.
2. The **TCR** (Task, Competence, Responsibility) principle
A task is transferred to an employee with the competence required to do it well. The responsibility for this task then rests with him/her. The person doing the delegating retains the overall responsibility. Under the TCR principle, I must make sure that the person concerned is capable of performing the task, and therefore has the necessary room for manoeuvre to do the job and take decisions independently within the established framework.
3. **Transparency in also informing other members of the team.** If a task is delegated transparently, the others members of the team will have the information required to help the person who has been given the responsibility or to coordinate their activities with those of the person concerned.
An ideal modern management tool in such cases is a blog. More than 10 years ago, when I was manager of the Training and New Media Department at Swiss Post, we were using a blog as a management tool at group level. The “New Media” team were using it already and persuaded me to roll it out to the whole department.
A blog enables us not only to publicize information and decisions, but also the tasks attributed to the different members of the team. This makes for transparency: everybody is kept well informed. I have

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made use of this tool at all stages of my career.

4. **Keeping an eye on things.** I show interest by asking more or less regularly how a project is progressing, if all is well and/or if the person concerned needs support. Confidence is a balance between trust and control. If we have a relationship of trust, the interest I show will not be seen as control, but as support. Then the person concerned will not hesitate to tell me if something is wrong and I will be able to do something, provide support.
5. Finally, any significant delegation process needs to be concluded with a **debriefing and feedback**. This makes it possible to learn, improve performance, and strengthen cooperation and trust in one another.

Self-reflection

- Do you really delegate?
- How often do you check the work you delegate? Why?
- Do you clarify mutual expectations before delegating?

Take decisions, delegate and always hold a debriefing session. Each new piece of information will be added to the millions stored in your subconscious, and this will help develop your **intuition**.

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