

DELEGATING RESPONSIBILITY

How can you help people in your organization prepare for future leadership positions and free up more time in your schedule so you can do other things? **Delegate**. Delegation is the key to any successful organization. Sharing responsibilities keeps members interested and enthusiastic about the group. You can make members feel unimportant and become apathetic if you do not share the responsibility of making the organization a success. Everything cannot fall to one person or the organization and that person will suffer.

Benefits to the Group:

- Members become more involved and committed
- More projects and activities are undertaken
- There is a greater chance that projects will be completed and successful
- Increased opportunities for members to develop leadership skills
- More of a chance to fill leadership roles with qualified, experienced and excited people for the future
- The organization operates more smoothly

Benefits to the Leader:

- Not being spread too thin and, therefore, less likely to burn out
- Gain satisfaction in seeing members grow and develop
- Acquire more experience in executive and administrative functions
- Reduce stress

Delegate when:

- There is a lot of work
- A member has particular qualifications for or interest in a task
- Someone can benefit from and take ownership in the responsibility
- Routine matters need attention
- Details take up too much time and have to be divided

Don't delegate when:

- The task is something you would not want to do
- Someone is not qualified or overqualified for the task
- The work is your own specified responsibility
- The issue is an unsolved problem, or a confidential matter

How to Delegate:

- Ask for volunteers by a show of hands or passing around a sign-up sheet. Interest is a great motivator; however, this method can be impersonal and you could be stuck with the responsibility if no one signs up.
- Ask or suggest someone. Sometimes a member lacks self-confidence and won't volunteer; asking him or her demonstrates your confidence in him or her.
- Assign a committee. This takes the pressure off an individual and reinforces organizational structure.
- "Best fit" of the person with the task is the most effective. Try to spread the enjoyable, responsible and recognized tasks around, giving more members, ownership, status and value.

Checklist for Effective Delegation

- _____ Choose the appropriate people by interviewing and placing your members carefully. Consider their time, interest, and capabilities. Specific responsibilities to be delegated to a particular person must be appropriate for growth of that person at that time.
- _____ Explain why the person(s) was(were) selected for this task.
- _____ Delegate segments that make sense, not bits and pieces of a task.
- _____ Discuss the task at hand. Discuss ideas, and mutually set goals and objectives. Whenever possible, give those who will be responsible for carrying out a program a voice in the decision-making.
- _____ Clearly define the responsibilities being delegated to each person. Explain what is expected of the person(s) and what the bounds of authority are. Be sure that an agreement is reached on areas where the person can function freely. The end result is important, not the various steps.
- _____ Find out how you will know when they need help. Make sure they understand you are willing to assist, but must first be told when and how you can help.
- _____ Give accurate and honest feedback. People want and deserve to know how they are doing. This is both an opportunity for giving satisfaction and encouraging growth. Allow for some risk-taking and mistakes.
- _____ Support your officers and committee chairs by sharing information, knowledge and plans with them. It is incredible how many errors are made simply due to a lack of information or communication.
- _____ Really delegate. Most responsible people do not appreciate someone looking over their shoulder, or taking back parts of their assignment before they have a chance to do it. As a leader, it can be hard for you to let go; you like being the doer. Let them do the job. Delegating does not eliminate work, it simply changes it. Your members are your greatest resource. Let them create, and let them put their creativity into action!
- _____ Stress the importance of evaluation. You must not overlook the need to evaluate and measure the extent to which your actions conformed to your plans, if the plans went well, or if the original plans were appropriate and worthwhile. Use appropriate feedback techniques. One of your most important roles as a leader is to help members learn and grow through both their successes and their failures.

This is one of many handouts available to you. Feel free to meet with any Student Activities staff member for more details about this topic or any others related to leadership or your club or organization. We also have open advising hours every Wednesday from 3 p.m to 6 p.m. The Office of Student Activities is located in the University Center, on the 2nd floor, or by telephone at (503) 370-6463. Visit our website at www.willamette.edu/dept/osa or email us at wustudentinvolvement@gmail.com. Adapted from the Office of Student Activities and Leadership, University of Michigan.